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DESIGN YOUR OWN TRAVEL-LEARNING PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

Your travel time to and from work, on business trips and during vacations can become a self-managed learning experience. This article describes how to analyze your travel time, allocate your time to specific interests and how to utilize your time more effectively and enjoyably.

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INTRODUCTION

We have become accustomed to prices going up food, clothing, shelter and even the cost of learning and training. Today it costs more to go to seminars, workshops and training sessions. However, we can adapt use the telephone for conference calls . send messages by "computer mail" obtain audiotapes of presentations at professional meetings.

In an era when everything is coming up computers, how do we cope with the technology? One way is to take an inventory of the technology available and blend this into your work, leisure and social responsibilities. Let's look at audiotapes for example. At my office I have a "hand-held" audiotape cassette player as well as access to reel to reel audiotape equipment. In my automobile I have an 8-track tape player that can be converted to a cassette. At home I have both 8-track and cassette tape players plus, I also have a cigarette package sized tape recorder-player.

ANALYSIS OF TRAVEL TIME

Like most people, my job involves some travel. I have about a 20 minute drive to and from work each day for a total of 40 minutes in-the-car-time. Frequently, about three to four times per month, my job requires a trip of two to three hours driving time. Occasionally, I take cross-country trips by automobile of 8-10 hours duration.

For example, my travel time to and from work, figured on 50 weeks per year, five days per week, at 40 minutes per day, totals to 167 hours. Considering three trips of two hours each on a monthly basis equals 72 hours, and three trips per year of 10 hours driving time is another 30 hours. Approximately 270 hours on an annual basis are spent in travel time which is equivalent to attending six college courses of three semester hours credit each. How can this "down time" or so-called non-productive time be used?

Audiotapes (8-track and cassette) are accessible, portable, and available in a variety of interest areas. In addition to providing information about a local area (re: Margaret Holt article on "Welcome to Tapes"), audiotapes are available on "how-to-do-it projects" (e.g. guitar lessons by Homespun Tapes, New York). Professional development (e.g. Adult Life Cycle Conference Audiotapes from the University of Kansas), includes music appreciation and a variety of other interest areas.

CASE EXAMPLE

Let's allocate the 270 hours of "in-the-automobile" driving time to some professional development, leisure and personal interest activities. The majority of travel time (62%) is short duration, 20 minutes to and from work for a total of 40 minutes per day. Approximately 27 percent of the time could be spent using audiotapes of 30 or more minutes in length and 11 percent of the time could be invested in long-term listening of up to 10 hours duration. It is doubtful that anyone could listen to instructional tapes for eight or more hours, but it would be possible to listen to a series of tapes from a conference or workshop that might extend for two or three hours with occasional breaks.

Professional Development: One of the skills required in my current position is the ability to meet and lead (e.g. teach, train, facilitate) individuals from diverse backgrounds. I recently located a series of audiotapes that should be helpful in developing my skills. The package is described as:

RELATIONSHIP STRATEGIES CASSETTE PACKAGE*

People are different and have to be treated differently. "Relationship Strategies: How to Deal with the Differences in People" is an eight-segment cassette tape album that covers recognizing the differences among people; achieving openness, directness and flexibility; identifying one's behavioral style; style-to-style relationships including "styles under stress" and practical approaches to dealing with "socializers," "thinkers," "directors" and "relaters."

The cassette album, which includes a workbook and six behavioral style profile questionnaires, is intended for salespeople, managers and other professionals who must assess

and accommodate others' personalities. The album costs \$60.00 plus \$2.00 for postage and handling. Cathcart, Allesandra and Associates, Inc., PO Box 2767, La Jolla, CA 92038.

Leisure: One of my avocational interests is learning how to play the guitar. I have taken lessons from instructors at University Continuing Education centers as well as informal instruction from friends. Obviously, listening to tapes and trying to play the guitar while driving is impossible (I have tried it, and believe me, it is dangerous). However, tapes are available on a variety of guitar playing methods which could be listened to while driving long distances with family and friends.

Personal Interests: Audiotapes can also be used for inspiration, motivation or just plain relaxation. Selected tapes can help you be a better public speaker, a better salesperson or someone who can manage their own time wisely. Also, a collection of your favorite musicians or speakers could be a great help to making your journey more enjoyable.

Designing Your Own Program: Each year I try to set aside some money to purchase three categories of audiotapes for listening in my automobile: professional or career related; personal development; and relaxation or enjoyment. In order to get the best use of my money, I select a particular topic for the career related category such as managing more efficiently, active listening, and problem solving. I also list some personal interest topics or activities like playing the guitar, gardening and learning how to conduct community meetings. Relaxation topics of interest include how to manage stress, listening to music, and listening to humorous stories. I may buy other tapes, but by listing these topics I can control my tendency for impulse buying.

It is difficult to plan a year's worth of listening to audiotapes because of the availability of new and interesting tapes, so I do it on a weekly basis. I look for tapes that are 20-30 minutes in length which I can use in my daily travel to and from work. I also look for sets, packages or "albums" of tapes that could be listened to on short trips of two to three hours, as well as become a part of a listening program on longer trips.

One way to make sure you have the tape topics and time length you want for short trips, such as travel to and from work, is to record your own. A good article on this topic is "Becoming Your Own Audio Producer" by Judson Smith, published in the July, 1982 issue of Training magazine, pages 14-18. Excerpts from books, meetings, conferences, concerts and musical records are just a few of the possible sources of information for your own self-directed learning.

I review magazines, journals, publishers' lists and reports from professional associations to identify professional and personal interest topics. Most of the relaxation tapes are bought in music stores which have popular, classical and country/western music. "Story teller" tapes

can be found in record/tape stores as well as recording your own stories told around campfires, at family reunions and from personal interviews.

CONCLUSION

One of the benefits of using audiotapes is their flexibility. Depending upon the content, they can be bought commercially, from professional associations or you can do your own recording. A weekly listening agenda, 20-30 minutes each, could include such topics as:

Conference Speaker on Stress Management (Self-Recorded)

Managing your Time Wisely (Commercially Recorded)

How to Conduct Community Meetings (Professional Association Tape)

Atlanta Symphony (Self-Recorded)

How to Call Wild Turkeys Using a Mouth Caller (Commercial)

A round trip of two to three hours duration (e.g. Athens, to Augusta, Georgia) might include several different tapes on such topics as:

How To Deal with The Differences in People (Commercial Set of Tapes)

Waylon and Willie in Concert (Commercial)

Tips on How to Sell Training Programs to Corporate Managers (Self-Recorded from magazines and journals)

An extended travel experience of 8 to 10 hours would be divided into several 20-45 minute sessions on selected topics with breaks for non-listening time as well as to use the radio or citizen band (CB) radio for travel information, weather and finding the nearest bathroom.

Time Management (Self-Recorded - Tips for Books/Journals)

Stress Management (Conference Session - Commercial)

Don Williams, Tom T. Hall, Chris Christopherson (Commercial)

Interviews with Peter Drucker, Malcolm Knowles (Professional Associations)

Breaks: FM Music Stations, Weather Information, CB Radio for local and long haul information

Futures, Issues, Technology (Conference, World Futures, Society Meetings)

Quiet Time ("Nothing" . . . Time to Think (Reflect/Enjoy)

Audiotapes are also available on loan from local and regional libraries, religious institutions and community groups. Catalogs of commercially prepared tapes can be ordered from publishers and from mail order firms. Professional associations routinely arrange for recording conferences, meetings, workshops and lectures. Best of all, you can make your own listening agenda by tape recording interesting interviews, concerts, lectures and special events that are of particular interest to you! Invest in yourself . . . use your travel time wisely . . . it's a precious resource. *Cited in Training and Development Journal, September, 1983, p.85.