

Work Smarter, Not Harder: Ideas For Professionals With AD/HD

Busy professionals with AD/HD are a mainstay of Sandy Maynard's coaching company. Sure, they're smart and successful, but they're often disorganized and forgetful.

"One man was really close to bankruptcy," Sandy says. "It's not that he wasn't working and earning money. He just never got around to invoicing his clients."

AD/HD executives are frequently "big picture" people who get the job done but don't sweat the details they don't care about — but their companies do. Failing to turn in expense reports, keep records and receipts, send out invoices, and organize belongings and priorities may have disastrous consequences.

Here's how Sandy helps her clients tackle the trivia.

NAIL THE DETAILS

One of Sandy's clients, an attorney, could never find his travel, meal and hotel receipts when he got home from a trip. Another client, a sales executive, knew exactly where the receipts were, but never got around to filing expense reports. In the end, he lost \$25,000 in expenses charged to his personal account since he turned in his report after the deadline.

The solution: Sandy has the attorney carry a thin plastic wallet (the kind used for traveler's checks) in his breast pocket at all times. Every taxi, travel and mail receipt goes into the wallet immediately. When he returns to the office, he hands the wallet to his secretary who sorts the receipts and submits an expense report.

The salesman who lost the \$25,000 doesn't have a secretary but does need help. Sandy insisted that he hire someone just to file expense reports once a month. "People have to face up to the fact that they may need help," Sandy says. "In this man's case, it was more than worth it."

SWAP SERVICES

Sandy's "close to bankruptcy" client was a leadership trainer who went on one job after the next without billing for work he'd already done. By the time it caught up with him, he didn't have the cash to hire a helper.

He and Sandy contacted a local university with students who aspired to leadership training careers. They found a student who was willing to take care of the trainer's invoicing in exchange for having him teach her the trade. Within a few months, the money was rolling in, and he offered her a paying job.

MAKE MEETINGS

It's difficult for self-employed people to prioritize and stick with tasks, and having AD/HD doesn't help. One of Sandy's self-employed clients, a software designer, got off to a great start every morning, but fell apart in the afternoon and couldn't complete his work. He frequently forgot to take his midday Ritalin, too.

As he and Sandy brainstormed, he realized these problems didn't exist when he was employed and working in an office. Sandy suggested he might need to build some artificial structure and accountability into his daily routine.

They agreed to have "fake board meetings." Sandy called him daily at noon and he'd report on his progress so far. Then, the two of them made a structured afternoon plan that spelled out his priorities and kept him on task. The call also served as a reminder to take his Ritalin.

Pretty soon, he learned to do this for himself without Sandy's help. "Sometimes people need to slow down, take a deep breath, and regroup before going on to the next step," Sandy says of AD/HD adults. "If you don't have a coach to do this with, ask a colleague or a friend."

Time after time, successful executives with AD/HD credit their ability to face their weaknesses as well as their strengths. By defining what you do well, and getting help with what you don't, you'll work smarter, not harder.