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How I did it: Juggling my time



To save my business -- and my sanity -- I needed a system to budget my time.

As told to Josh Hyatt, Money Magazine contributing writer
December 26, 2008: 7:45 AM ET

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(Money Magazine) -- **NAME:** Michele Harris

AGE: 39

BUSINESS: SMARTI SOLUTIONS, a New York City firm that matches businesses with advertising and marketing agencies

STARTED: 2001

START-UP COSTS: \$70,000, financed on credit cards

ANNUAL REVENUE: \$325,000

HOW I GOT THE IDEA: I was climbing the corporate ladder at a big ad agency -- after a 10-year career, I had reached v.p. -- when I got laid off. Suddenly I had to think, "What could I do to support myself that wouldn't leave me at the whims of a company?" I had a Rolodex of industry contacts. So I started leveraging that, doing freelance business development. That grew into my helping mid-size companies find ad and marketing agencies that meet their criteria.

WHAT DIDN'T WORK: For the first few years I was going after any customer I could. Soon I was spread thin. I knew I needed to spend part of every day looking for new business. But I didn't have time to do that, manage the clients I had, send bills and buy supplies. I was a marketer with no time to market myself.

WHAT DID WORK: I figured out a way to prioritize my time. I use a calendar on Microsoft Outlook that I can color-code (any calendar will work): Blue is new business, orange is marketing, yellow is financial stuff. I use shades too: Light blue is a conference call, dark blue is a meeting. Sometimes it looks like a rainbow. I spend half an hour a day setting up the next day's calendar. Believe it or not, it's the entire key to my sanity.

MY ADVICE: Be prepared for all the juggling you have to do, and find a way to make sure you're not falling behind. All I need is a glance at my calendar to see how I'm doing.

Need help with your business? Submit your questions to the editors of *Fortune Small Business*, *Money Magazine's* sister publication, and to other small business owners at cnnmoney.com/askfsb. ■

Building your small business



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Markets	Last	Change
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S&P 500	930.91	27.66 / 3.06%
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U.S. Dollar	1 euro = \$1.385	-0.015

January 2, 2009 3:32 PM ET

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