HOW MANY SHOES ARE IN YOUR BACKSEAT?

As a business owner, you’ve probably been told that you “wear a lot of hats.” I never really thought about what it meant until the other day when I was heading from a design consultation to a job site. Once I arrived on site, I wanted to change out of my nice dress shoes so they wouldn’t get ruined by the mud. As I reached into the backseat to grab a pair of work boots, I realized they weren’t the only pair of shoes I had on hand. All in all, I had five pairs of shoes in my truck: a pair of dirty New Balance shoes, a pair of nice running shoes, two pairs of work boots, and my dress shoes.

By the end of the day, I had changed my shoes two more times as I went from a design consultation to a job site to the gym to home. It was then I realized I’m not a man of many hats—I’m a man of many shoes.

“I REALIZED I’M NOT A MAN OF MANY HATS—I’M A MAN OF MANY SHOES.”

I—like you—am pulled in so many different directions. In the space of a few hours, I can go from looking professional while meeting with a customer to knee deep in mud while...
installing a lighting system, to running around a field while playing “fat guy” softball. Then, to wrap up the day, I have to make time for a night out with my wife or a playdate with my kids.

As business owners, spouses, parents, and more, we need to be experts at managing our time and expectations. It’s easy to run through the day at 180mph, impulsively reacting to every problem that arises. However, this leads to sky-high stress levels, disorganization, and missing out on the most important aspects of our lives.

There is still much I have to learn, but these are six lessons I’ve picked up that have helped me to better manage my time and responsibilities:

**PLAN YOUR WEEKS ON SUNDAY AND REVIEW EVERY MORNING**

Take 30 minutes each Sunday night to create a plan for the upcoming week. Then take 10 minutes each morning to review your plan. This will help you to stay on top of your schedule and avoid missing important meetings, events, and deadlines.

**HAVE A SYSTEM TO ORGANIZE ALL YOUR TASKS**

Clear out the clutter in your mind by writing down your to-do list. Find a reliable place to keep your list like a task manager app, a notebook, or a dry erase board. This will help you organize your thoughts and your tasks.

**IF SOMETHING TAKES LESS THAN 5 MINUTES TO COMPLETE, DO IT NOW**

Now that you have a to-do list, it’s time to get things done. Unfinished tasks are burdensome. Even if your to-do list is a mile long, focus on knocking out the small items before they become overwhelming.

**MAKE TIME FOR THINGS THAT GROW YOUR BUSINESS**

Schedule time to plan your marketing campaigns, your trade alliances, and your business growth. Difficult customers, tight deadlines, and daily stressors will always demand your time and attention, so it’s important to set aside time to assess your business and make plans for future growth.

**INVEST IN WHAT’S IMPORTANT**

When the pressure is on, “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” This simply means that when we’re flying through life at a breakneck speed, we tend to only take care of the most pressing issues that arise. This leads us to neglect other important areas in our lives. So schedule time for your family and friends—even when life gets busy. Time flies by quickly, so it’s important to make time to spend with your loved ones.

**REMEMBER TO REST**

Everyone needs a day to rest and recharge each week, and you’ll perform so much better when you take care of yourself. If you’re anything like me, this may be the hardest advice to take. It’s so easy to neglect rest, but it’s integral to become a well-rounded person.

It’s difficult to balance being a business owner, a husband, and a father. We all have many shoes to fill, and not a lot of time. However, if we take steps to manage our time better, maybe we can have enough time to throw a pair of golf shoes into the back seat.

-Patrick Harders, Co-Owner
Introducing the Updated SL17 Riley!

Last year, we released the SL17 Riley. This innovative fixture offers your customers brilliant and unobtrusive lighting for their walkways, garden beds, and more. After months of feedback, we’re ready to reveal the updated fixture with three new exciting features:

- The Riley is now a single unit, which means it will take up less space in your trucks and take less time to install on the job site.
- The head of the fixture pivots 15 degrees, so you can easily adjust the angle of the fixture.
- Finally, we made the screws lie flush against the side of the fixture to give the Riley a more sleek and elegant look.

Like the first version of the Riley, the body of the fixture is cast from marine-grade, virgin brass with an antique finish and the fixture comes standard with two 7’ long 316 stainless steel stakes. Its 18 LED chips provide a beautiful, even spread of light.

For more information about the SL17 Riley, visit: www.Sterling-Lighting.com/Product/Riley

Power Tools: The L2 Line Layer

In our last newsletter, I wrote about the different kinds of hand tools I like to use when we’re out at an install. This time, we’re ramping it up a bit by looking at my favorite power tool I’ve found for prepping an installation: the Lineward L2 Line Layer.

If you find yourself doing long trenches all the time, this tool will make life easier for you and your crew. All the years I’ve been in the lighting industry, I’ve tried out a number of different trenching tools. Out of them all, this one is my favorite. I’ve been using it for over seven years now. As the scope and size of our projects have increased, we’ve ended up using it at least once a week—if not more.

Technically, the L2 is not actually a trencher. It’s a line layer. However, that gives it a few advantages over your typical trenching tool. For example: instead of picking up dirt and laying it off to the side, this machine slices open the ground and lays the wire down—all in a single motion. Think of it as a sewing machine on tank wheels.

After the wire is laid, you run the L2 back over the trench to flatten the ground—and that’s it. It’s a quick and easy process that leaves the property looking just as pristine as it was before you arrived.

The cost of the L2 Line Layer is going to be anywhere from $10,000-$16,000, depending on what options you select. However, when you put into perspective how many hours this tool will save you, it’s a minor investment that will quickly pay for itself many times over.

For more information about the L2 Line Layer, visit Lineward’s website at www.Lineward.com
Do you keep track of your customers with a spreadsheet, a file cabinet overflowing with papers, or even sticky notes posted throughout the office? Unless your office personnel and salespeople are masters of organization, managing your customers’ information can be difficult and messy.

However, with the proper CRM software, you can manage all your contacts with ease, save precious time, and gain leads more effectively! So how do you find the right CRM for your company? Just remember these three words: integration, optimization, and expansion.

Integration

Even after you switch to a new CRM, it should still integrate with QuickBooks—and any other programs you regularly use. After all, integration is one of the most important aspects of a CRM! Visit Apps.Intuit.com to learn about QuickBooks-friendly CRMs.

Optimization

Your new CRM should be able to streamline your processes. Whether you’re following up on leads or scheduling an appointment with an old customer, with the proper CRM, all the information you need should be stored securely and available right at your fingertips.

Expansion

Finally, take into account if your CRM will be able to grow with your company. As your marketing increases, you want a system that will help automate processes—such as automatically creating new contacts from online forms or scheduling emails for maintenance reminders.

To learn more about choosing the right CRM for your company, visit our Grow Your Business page at Sterling-Lighting.com/Video-Library/