

## The Modern Editor Podcast – Episode 25: How To Find Time To Get Things Done

**Tara Whitaker:** [0:03] Welcome to *The Modern Editor Podcast*, where we talk about all things editing and what it's like to run an editorial business in today's world. I'm your host, Tara Whitaker. Let's get to it.

**Tara Whitaker:** [0:18] Hello, welcome to today's episode. We are going to be talking about finding time to get things done. And I know that is the big million-dollar question, right? There's no one definitive simple answer. I'll lead with that. This isn't going to be a simple, well here, you just do this. It's much more layered than that, which of course, is probably understandable. But that's why we're going to talk today, and we're going to dive into those layers. And I'm going to share with you how you can figure out for yourself and your situation this whole concept around time.

**Tara Whitaker:** [0:55] Now, this is not going to be a “just wake up earlier” or, you know, “work while you're standing in the checkout line or at the doctor's office” sort of advice. Honestly, that sort of advice infuriates me, because that only works for some people, if not, very few people. And it's not, it doesn't dig into the actual issue or the underlying reason why we somehow don't have enough time. So, we're going to take a step back first, and we're going to see where you're spending your time. And then, only then can we figure out how to move forward. You know me by now, if you listen to this podcast episode, or you have been one of my Freelance Editors Club members or coaching client, I always take it back. Take it back, go to the foundation, and then go from there. And that's no different for this episode. So, I'm going to share with you how I figure out this whole thing about time for myself, the exact process that I use, and then give you some ideas on how you can incorporate that into your life and your business.

**Tara Whitaker:** [1:59] First things first, right off the top of the bat, I want to start by saying this one thing. If you remember nothing else, just remember this: time is not a renewable resource. Once we spend it, it's gone. We don't ever get our time back. We can always make more money and always do other things, but we can never get back our time. And I know that's a little heavy, maybe a little bit of a gut punch. But it's an important lesson to remind ourselves of. I have to remind myself of this pretty much daily, because there's the scarcity mindset around so many things. And with time, I don't want you to have a scarcity mindset, but I do want you to be very mindful about how you spend your time because we only get so much of it. Right? So, keep that in mind. Time is not renewable; we cannot get it back. All right, heavy stuff out of the way. We're done.

**Tara Whitaker:** [3:03] All right. Let's figure out where our time is going, how much of it we have to focus on the things we want to focus on, and how to make sure we stay on track. So first off, where does our time go? Chances are, if you're anything like me, you know where some of your time goes, but probably not all of it. I definitely don't. Because it is incredibly easy to get bogged down with small tasks. And we're moving from one thing to the next. And because a lot of us are solopreneurs we're wearing all the hats; we're doing all the things. I don't know about you, but at the end of the day, sometimes

I'm like, what the heck did I even do today? Even though I worked my butt off, I couldn't tell you what exactly I did. Does that sound familiar? If it does, you're in the right place.

**Tara Whitaker:** [3:51] So the simple—"simple"—answer to this to figure out where your time is going is to do a time audit. Now, I know that sounds a little fancy, but it's literally keeping track of everything you do. Now, I suggest doing this for a week. I know that's a long time, so if it needs to be shorter, obviously you do what works best for you. But you're going to write down everything you do every day. Now into the nitty-gritty of this, I suggest 15-minute increments, because anything less than that gets really in the weeds. But you could also do 30 minutes, especially if you're focusing on like a big project at a time, like editing. I don't want you to keep track of *I'm still editing, still editing, still editing* every 15 minutes. So of course, just like with anything we talk about on this podcast, take what you need, take what works for you, and leave the rest.

**Tara Whitaker:** [4:49] Now I use good old pen and paper. That's just what works for me. But you can also use an app. Two of the ones that are most popular are Toggle—which is T-O-G-G-L—or Harvest. And I'm sure you can get super fancy with those. Like I said, I use pen and paper. I take a piece of paper out for each day, and I literally draw lines for every 15 minutes. I've also done a template in Canva, if you want to do that, too. But every 15 minutes, and then I write down what I do in those 15 minutes. And it's, it's tedious. It sounds tedious, and it is tedious—real talk here. But it is so stinking helpful. You can get as detailed as you want with this. I don't put down things like bathroom breaks or running to the refrigerator for a snack or anything like that. But you certainly can if you want. My only suggestion is to not go so far into the weeds that you start resenting the actual time audit because then you're not going to do it and it's not going to be helpful. And then what's the point? So do what works for you. Whatever that is, I guarantee, it'll reveal things to you that you had no idea. Either you spent time on or spent that much time on.

**Tara Whitaker:** [6:09] Just as a quick example, I am always appalled and slightly embarrassed when I do this to see how much time I spend on social media. And I don't mean intentional social media for my business. I mean aimlessly scrolling. And it's bad. And I know it's bad. I think I've talked about this before. I've definitely talked about it inside the Freelance Editors Club. But it got to a point where I was like, I've got to change this. So now during my time audits, I'm very aware of it. And I also am a big fan of using the screentime function on my iPhone to get it under control. But the time audit really, really helps me see, *Tara, what are you doing, you're spending so much time on this*. And I'm going to use this example again in a little while, so, it's it's gonna go here throughout.

**Tara Whitaker:** [7:01] But it's always interesting to see how much time you spend on certain things and what you spend your time on. And the only way that you're ever going to realize this is by writing it all down and keeping track of it. Because at the end of the day, you're going to sit down and go, *Whoa, I did that. I don't remember doing that. I can't believe I did that for this long*. But if you waited until the end of the day to remember what you did all day, you're not going to remember. I'm certainly not. I can't remember what I did two minutes ago, which is why I have to write it down.

**Tara Whitaker:** [7:32] Do the time audit for as long as you want. I suggest a week. You're going to write everything down. Then what? Now you're going to assess and analyze where that time is going. Now, you might need to do a little mathing here. Not a lot, I promise we don't do math here. But you're going to tally up how much time you spend on certain tasks. Now, whatever categories work for you is what you're going to go with. For me, I do things like how much time do I spend on email? How much time do I spend on social media? How much time do I spend editing? How much time do I spend on the podcast, the Freelance Editors Club, my hobbies, household chores, things like that to give you an idea. And then you're going to add up the time and see what you're spending on for each of those categories.

**Tara Whitaker:** [8:20] You can probably do this in the app, maybe, somehow? Like I said, I don't use the app. I'm more visual, so I use a big piece of paper and sticky notes for each of the categories. And then I write the hours that I spend for each of those categories on the sticky note. And then I put them in order of, you know, what I spend the most time on to what I spend the least amount of time on. I've also put it on the wall. If you have, you know, too many sticky notes for a piece of paper—whatever works for you. But you're going to figure out how much time you spend on the categories that seem to be most prevalent on your time audit. Then, I mean, you can break it down even more.

**Tara Whitaker:** [8:58] So, if you say okay, I spent ten hours a week on social media. If you kept track of this during the week, how much of that is productive, and how much of that is scrolling? [chuckling] Hmm? If you feel a little bit called out, that's okay. I feel called out too, and I'm the one talking. How much time do you spend trying to make decisions? This one I put on there because I'm totally guilty of this. I'll sit here and stare at my computer because I can't make a decision. I track that. I really do. How much time do you spend figuring out what you're going to eat that day? Meal planning, shuttling kids to different activities, negotiating bedtimes (that's a big one in my house right now). All of that, add it up and see how much time you're spending on that week.

**Tara Whitaker:** [9:47] It's shocking. It's shocking. It's very eye-opening. But now you have that big picture of where your time is going. And this is where the big questions come into play. This is what's going to hit home maybe a little bit. The first question is, is this where you want to be spending your time? That applies to any of the categories, or overall. Ask yourself that question as many times as you need to. Look at the editing category. Is this where you want to be spending your time? Look at the social media category, the household chores category, and figure out if it's yes or no. Is doing this (whatever category it is) getting you closer to accomplishing your goals? Is it in alignment with your purpose and core values? Does it bring you joy, or contribute positively to your mental health?

**Tara Whitaker:** [10:39] Because let's be honest, you know, sometimes you just need a mental break, and a 15-minute scroll on TikTok is not the end of the world. It's great—it can be a good reset. So that can be joyful. That can make you happy. Three hours every night? Maybe not. But that's up to you to decide, right? I'm not gonna sit here and tell you that that's good or bad. That's for you. But those are the questions you have to

ask yourself, because that three hours of scrolling might be great. But just remember, you're not going to get those three hours back. Those three hours that you had of that 24-hour day, went to scrolling TikTok. And for me, with this being a big issue of mine, I was appalled. That's not how I wanted to spend my time. I wanted to be reading books for fun, I wanted to be crocheting, I wanted to be watching a Netflix series with my husband, like, there were so many other things I wanted to do. But I was addicted to stupid TikTok scrolling.

**Tara Whitaker:** [11:34] So, these questions might be a little difficult. But this is where the heart of it is. This is going to show you and give you major clarity on where your time is going and where it might be going that you don't want it to be. And only when we answer these questions honestly, can we then move forward with intention and reclaim or redistribute our time. Because if things are out of alignment, everything is out of alignment. And you're going to realize that right here in this process. So, take your time with this. It's not a rush. It'll probably take you longer to actually do the time audit, because that's a lot of writing, and it's a week of your time. Then, ask yourself those questions. And it's going to blow your mind, I promise.

**Tara Whitaker:** [12:20] So once you do that, you're gonna figure out how much time you want or need to be spending in each of those categories that you came up with. So, I went through with the social media example I mentioned earlier. So, let's say that you spent ten hours a week on social media. And you're like, okay, maybe two of that was spent productively for business purposes, the other eight, probably was just scrolling. And it's not something I want to do. I don't want to spend my time on that anymore. Okay. So now you can write down on that sticky note, two hours was productive, eight hours can be redistributed. And hold off on this, then we're going to talk about this a little bit. So technically, you have eight hours to, again, redistribute. Do that for all of your categories. That is where these little pockets of time are going to add up.

**Tara Whitaker:** [13:20] So, if you need 20 hours a week, [whoops] to edit a project, and you did your time audit, and you only spent ten hours editing, you know that you need to find ten hours somewhere else in order to get your project done. Is that going to come from less social media scrolling? Is that going to come from waking up earlier? Which, like I mentioned at the beginning, sometimes that's an option, other times it's not. Could it be working later at night after the people in your house are asleep? Again, totally depends on you. If someone told me to wake up earlier when I had a newborn, in order to get my stuff done, I would have probably punched them in the throat. So, this is not me telling you to wake up earlier or stay up later. But this is where finding those categories where you can redistribute your time and seeing what you can do maybe just in the short term to get some things done. The right answer is the thing that works best for you. Period. Okay? This is where you're going to start taking control of your time.

**Tara Whitaker:** [14:25] So, you've already figured out where you're spending your time, you've done the math and figured out how much time is going to those categories. You know how much you want and need to be spending your time on. You know, if you have a little extra time by making some changes. Now is where we start making those changes. And the first thing I'm gonna say is do not try and change things or any habits

all at once. That's just not going to end well. You're not going to revolutionize how you spend your time in a week. This is going to \*haha\* take time. Okay? But start small. Maybe even pick the smallest thing—the easy wins—so you can gain some momentum. But pick something small to start working on.

**Tara Whitaker:** [15:12] I'm gonna keep going with the social media thing. If you spend too much time on social media, maybe your small step is to put app limits on your phone so the app will not be accessible once you hit that limit. If you're finding that you're doing a lot of admin type stuff that you just don't have the time to be spending on, see if you can hire a VA for a couple of hours a month. Are you shuttling your kids too much between activities? See if you can create a carpool system with other parents. Like something small, just to get some time back. And you're going to “earn back” that time and put it into a category where there's a time deficit. So back to the editing example, if you need ten hours, social media—you said you could figure out how to give eight back, maybe that eight goes to editing. Where did the other two come from? Maybe it's by hiring a VA, maybe it's by doing the carpool or whatever the case may be. But we're trying to find that “balance,” which we all know. You know what I'm talking about with that—there's never going to be perfect, but we're trying to keep the balance. And keep in alignment with your overall goals and purpose.

**Tara Whitaker:** [16:30] So then once you have that small thing under control, start with the next one. And keep going until you're “done,” whenever that may be. And honestly, you're probably going to continue to do this on a regular basis. I try and do this every quarter. We all know life happens, things creep in, priorities shift. So, it's not a perfect strategy. But it is a good reset to do it every quarter for me, because it's just good to keep track of, right? Like I said, things creep in and pop up. You kind of go off the rails, you get distracted, what have you. So, the quarter timeframe works for me, but do what works best for you. And like I said, it's not going to be this— I expect it's not going to be fixed in a couple of days or a week. It's better to take your time. Haha! That was unintentional, but nice.

**Tara Whitaker:** [17:32] Take your time. And do it intentionally, and what works best for you and your season of life and your situation. Because of course, there are tons of caveats to this, right? Every human being is different and unique. But this is a good starting point to help you figure out where the heck you're spending your time, and how you can make those adjustments to reallocate, reorganize your time, so that you're in alignment with your purpose and your values and your goals. Because at the end of the day, your time is precious. We don't get it back. This goes into like—

**Tara Whitaker:** [18:11] I'm getting a little sidetracked here. But this is coming from personal experience. It's so important to know where we're spending our time. And I don't want to get super deep or philosophical here, but you know, we only get one life. And what are we going to do with it? Where are we? What are we using our hours for? Do I want to be on my deathbed going, *Oh, I'm so glad I scrolled TikTok for 30 hours this week*. Probably not. And that's on me. If you want to spend 30 hours on TikTok, that is totally fine. But for me, I realized I had to make a change. And the only way that I could do that is by doing the time audit and figuring out where my time was going,

where I think it should be going, and making those tweaks so that I was spending time on those things that mattered.

**Tara Whitaker:** [19:01] So, there you have it. I hope that was helpful. I hope that made sense. I hope it inspires you to take a look at, you know, how you're spending your time, both business and personal—it all intertwines with time. And so many of us as freelance editors, became freelance editors to have flexibility to be able to spend our time doing what we want to do. So we would be doing ourselves a disservice if we didn't do that. We have the flexibility to be able to do what we want. And let's make sure we're doing that. Right? So, let's do that.

**Tara Whitaker:** [19:37] I do this with my coaching clients all the time, especially with new editors because it's very hard to go from a full-time employee position to a full-time freelancer position. It's a whole mindset shift. It's a whole time-change shift. And I love helping them spend time— Spend time? [chuckle]—figuring out how to spend their time intentionally, you know, with focus and clarity so they can build those sustainable and profitable businesses that work for them. Because every coaching client looks different. Everybody's time audit looks different, and everybody's priorities are different, which makes it so fun.

**Tara Whitaker:** [20:20] So, if you want to dive more into a time audit or helping you figure out what you should be spending your time on, I'd love to chat. You can always grab a free 15-minute chat with me, go to [tarawhitaker.com](http://tarawhitaker.com) to grab a time in my calendar, or you can always send me an email at [hello@tarawhitaker.com](mailto:hello@tarawhitaker.com). So, keep, keep, keep track of that time. Let me know how it goes. And until next time (ha-ha!), keep learning, keep growing, and know that you've got this!

**Tara Whitaker:** [20:52] Thank you so much for tuning into today's episode. If you enjoy *The Modern Editor Podcast*, I would be so grateful if you left us a review over on iTunes. And as always, you can head to [tarawhitaker.com](http://tarawhitaker.com) to connect with me and stay in touch. We'll chat again soon.