

T.A.R.D.Y. Technique Will Keep You On Time

Scheduling appointments efficiently will keep your clients happy and relieve you of daily stress

By Esco Buff, CF, Ph.D.

A poorly arranged schedule can take on a life of its own, causing a lot of wasted time and aggravation for you as well as your customers. Many farriers face scheduling challenges every day. Most of these are due to not thinking about all the variables that can affect your schedule.

There are five aspects of scheduling that must be taken into account to avoid scheduling problems. The five dimensions can easily be remembered by using the acronym T.A.R.D.Y.

T Is For Travel

The first aspect in scheduling is "Travel Time." Many farriers are not realistic about travel time between appointments. How long will it actually take you — with traffic, lights, speed limits, etc., — to travel to your next location? For example: Customer A is 20 minutes from Customer B. In this case, the variable seems easy to figure out. But don't underestimate the time. If you do, you'll find yourself rushed — and increase your chances of getting a speeding ticket.

A For Appointment

The second aspect is "Appointment Time." Are you and the customer in agreement on the appointment time? Does anyone else need to be there? If so, they need to be in agreement on the time as well. (Beware that the more people attending an appointment, the greater the chance of a scheduling problem.)

I would also make sure that your

personal and business calendar are in the same appointment book or computer program to avoid scheduling conflicts as well as rescheduling telephone calls.

R And The Rules

The third aspect of scheduling involves the "Rules." (See Respective Responsibilities, *AFJ*, September/October 2009; Pages 33 and 114.) You need to develop a firm and consistent policy for appointments. This needs to cover important topics such as what is to be done if you or a client is running late.

How long will you wait if a customer is late or does not show up? What phone number to call?

My suggested rules are:

- Everyone benefits from developing a consistent trimming and shoeing maintenance schedule. It allows for accuracy in planning, record keeping and providing the optimum results.
- Before leaving the barn, I will schedule your next appointment at an appropriate interval.
- I don't normally work on weekends.
- When working out my schedule, I try to allow enough time to deal with unforeseen circumstances for all of my customers.
- I ask for your cooperation with scheduling.
- You will be notified if I'm going to be more than 15 minutes late.
- You must notify me if you will be late for or are unable to make an appointment.
- Please show up early for your appointment in order to have your



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horse ready and available by the scheduled appointment time.

These respective responsibilities set up the scheduling grounds rules for me as well as for my clients.

D For Duty

The fourth aspect in scheduling is the time it will take to do the task or "Duty." This is probably the area where the most farriers miscalculate.

You need to account for more than how long it takes you to trim, or trim and shoe a horse. You also need to build in time for unloading your tools, answering questions, educating your customers, rest, loading your tools and doing the paperwork, scheduling and billing. Each farrier needs to develop a time schedule that takes into account all these additional seconds and minutes.

A schedule that I have used for years that keeps me always (almost) on time follows:

If I have to trim one horse at one stop, I block out 1 hour.

If I have two horses to trim at one stop, I block out 1 hour for the first horse and 1/2 hour for the second.

While it usually takes me less than an hour to actually trim both horses, blocking 1 1/2 hours gives me the extra time to talk with clients or barn staff, unload and load my tools, do the bill and schedule the next appointment. Any left over time from those 90 minutes makes it easier to get to my next appointment, get gas, stop to eat or do any other errands that crop up during the day.

Here are some additional examples of how I block my time:

- Trims: 1 hour for the first horse and 1/2 hour for each additional trim.
- 2 Shoes: 1 hour for the first horse and 45 minutes for each additional horse.
- 4 Shoes: 1 1/2 hours for the first horse and 1 hour for each additional horse.

If I have one trim and two horses that each need 4 shoes, I schedule a total of 3 hours, with the greatest amount of time for the first shod horse (1 1/2 hours) plus 1 hour for the second shod horse, plus 1/2 hour for the trim.

This works well for me, but you will need to figure out a system that works best for you.

Looking back at our first example. Let's say Customer A's appointment was at 9 a.m. and was to trim 2 horses. I set aside 1 1/2 hours for this appointment. Customer B, you'll recall, was a 20-minute drive from Customer A. I will set an 11 a.m. appointment for Customer B. You'll notice that I have built a little extra time into my schedule.

Y Is For You

The fifth and final aspect in scheduling is "Yourself." You may not be in total control due to unforeseeable scheduling problems, but you will be more in control by taking the five aspects of T.A.R.D.Y. into account. When you are in control of your schedule, you'll be on time and will be more relaxed. You and your customers will be happier.

You will also have built in extra time to add that additional last-minute horse or to tack on a lost shoe and still stay on time for scheduled appointments.

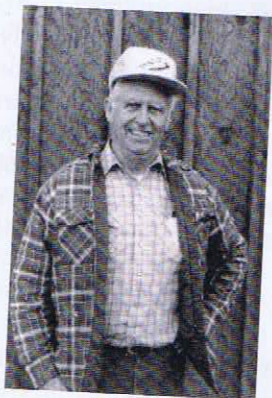
Customers become unhappy with farriers who run late, have to reschedule appointments at the last minute or fail to show up. Simple time management techniques will keep you on time and help keep your customers happy. **Q**

Harry Patton

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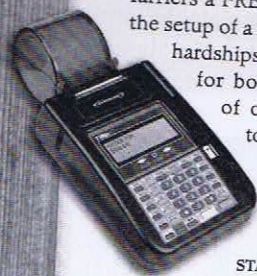
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