

# Productive to the Max

**P**roductivity

**P**erformance

**P**rofitability

## **Holiday Planning**

### **MaxTips! November 2005**

*"Twas six days before Christmas and all through the house  
So much was amiss, I felt like a louse  
The presents were scattered, unwrapped all around  
And the decorations, in boxes, were all on the ground  
The soot in the chimney unfortunately was still there  
With hopes that Dear Santa would not slither down bare!!!  
The children were nagging, and tired and worn  
With visions of unpurchased gifts to receive Christmas morn  
While back at the office was accumulating a trail  
Of telephone calls and faxes and tons of e- mail  
When really at this time we don't give a care  
It's Christmas..a season to savour and share"*

Are you starting to feel the pressure? The holidays are fast approaching and you have so much to do, so many gifts to buy, so many preparations to begin. Where to start?

Before you even start to plan (and I sincerely hope you have already started), take a long hard look at what is really important to you at this time of year. Your own beliefs and traditions will provide the basis for the celebrations. What is your idea of the perfect festive season? Is it family, friends, simple traditions, giving to others, simplicity? Think back on past holidays. What do you remember fondly? What do you remember with regret? Are there some traditions you would like to uphold; some you wish to challenge; others you wish to initiate?

This issue of MaxTips provides you with sane and sensible tips to survive the holidays. Long after the presents have been unwrapped, the food has been consumed, the celebrations have wound down, all you have left are memories. Make them special.

### **Do it NOW!**

Hire someone to clean

- Get the family together in a meeting and distribute chores
- Decorate your outside early
- Remove everyday accessories and items to make room for new ones
- Store your decorations in the order that you put them out. Take pictures of the room and put them on the outside of the alphabetized and labeled box in which you store the decorations
- Only clean what is necessary; speed clean; dim the lights
- Set up a Christmas organizing centre with EVERYTHING you need for the holidays. Create checklists, binders and have all supplies on hand.
- Wrap the boxes your decorations are stored in and store them under the tree. They are then easily accessible after the holidays

## Be a scrooge with your time

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- Set up a Christmas calendar
- Have a master gift list that is regularly updated
- Overestimate the amount of time everything takes (multiply by 3)
- Make travel plans and reservations for houseguests early
- Use up all the food you have to make room for the new goodies
- Reduce cooking time; make only family favorites
- Organize cooking bees; baking bees; cookie swaps
- Have prepared, simple food available at all times
- Hold your parties in the afternoon so you don't have to provide a meal
- Gather all those recipes you have cut out all year, photocopy them onto a page and place in a binder by category
- Buy gift cards only in the amount of your budget. This way you won't exceed your budget
- Theme your gifts
- Put thank-you money in envelopes now, ready to distribute
- Use Christmas cards as decorations
- As soon as you receive a Christmas card, address a card to send to that person next year
- Shop, cook, buy, prepare, rehearse, rent and organize-EARLY!

## If not you, then who?

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- Adjust your expectations. Not everything has to be perfect
- Stick to routines as much as possible
- Determine the easiest and fastest way to do everything and do it! Use the internet and online shopping.
- Have everything wrapped and sent
- Find things to do that benefit you and others
- Anticipate the letdown and take steps to deal with it

- Factor in times for stress, pampering and relaxation

## MaxTip of the Month

If all else fails:

1. Tell everyone you can't cook
2. Tape the word "NO" to your phone
3. Adopt a tiger
4. Go to a hotel and let them do all the work
5. Convert to Judaism. We don't celebrate Christmas
6. Pour a glass of eggnog and disappear
7. Just lie back and enjoy

Nov 2006

### **Budget your money, your space, your time and yourself in order to enjoy the festive season.**

Think it's too early to organize for the Holidays? Think again. There are now 35 days until December 25. That's 840 hours. Considering you spend at least 8 hours a day working, hopefully 6 hours or more sleeping and a few more hours attending to the necessities, that leaves just 280 hours or approximately 11.5 days to prepare. So get going-now!

**It is essential that you begin by determining exactly how you relate to the meaning of this time of year. Take a long, hard look at your likes and dislikes; from traditions, to food, to time spent with others. Do your holiday customs serve your own values and beliefs? What do you fondly remember from the past? What would you like to forget? What are you not doing that you used to love? Establish a meaningful structure for the holiday and you will be well on your way to planning a remarkable festive season.**

Budget well and early. Open a Christmas bank account. Buy gifts on sale, at garage sales or flea markets or make your own. Once you determine a budget for each person, take only that amount of cash or gift card with you to shop. Divide into envelopes for each person on your gift list. Keep a notebook handy with all measurements, sizes and preferences. Use

one credit card for all your Christmas purchases. Best of all, continue to buy throughout the year to obtain the best choice and avoid the last minute rush.

## **Declutter to Decorate**

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Follow the basic organizing principles and declutter your environment now. Create an area or room dedicated to holiday items. Place all your decorations, information, gifts, wrapping paper etc in that area. Divide the area into zones for each of the items. Get rid of what is no longer useful, necessary, in good shape or appropriate. Donate to the less fortunate. Alphabetize, label and containerize all the items. You are now ready to decorate!

Tips for decorating for the Holidays:

- Decorate in layers so if you can't do it all at once, it still looks nice
- Decorate your front door early as a symbol
- Invite others to help
- Remove every day accessories to make room for Christmas ones
- Store your breakable decorations in labeled, foam egg containers
- Store your decorations in the order you put them out. Take pictures of each room and put them on the outside of the alphabetized and labeled box in which you place the decorations
- Wrap boxes that decorations come in and put under the tree. Then they are ready to be packed up later
- Wrap wreaths in plastic and hang in a closet
- Use garment bags for lawn decorations
- Hang linens on hangers in the closet
- When you buy new lights, key in a written description on the tag attached to each light. Make a list of where the lights are located, how many there are and where you bought them
- Take an empty coffee can, make a slit in the top and put the receptacle end of the light cord in it. Wrap the string around the can, store extra bulbs and extension cords inside, then replace the lid. Store colored lights in a dark place to keep bulbs from fading.
- Hold a Christmas Party to trim the tree

## **Maximize Time**

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To make the best use of your time, perform these tasks early:

- Assess candles, glassware and liquor
- Take tablecloth, runners and napkins to the cleaners...hang on skirt hangers or layered skirt hangers and add a softener piece
- Check safety items; batteries, medicines, fire detectors
- Arrange clothes, accessories, haircuts and pet grooming
- Hire cleaners, caterers and order food
- Inventory supplies

- Make travel plans and appointments
- Mend everything
- Set up photo sessions
- Invite anyone and everyone early

To make the best use of your cooking time, consider these suggestions:

- Always have the basics on hand for entertaining
- Buy liquor in bulk and have it delivered early
- Cook and freeze early
- Don't go grocery shopping-use up what you have
- Double up your dinners this month
- Inventory freezer and cupboards
- Make simple meals over the holidays
- Organize a cooking bee or a cookie swap
- Plan meals out
- Put all recipes you need only for the holidays in a separate binder
- Have parties one after another to use the same décor and food
- Hold an open house from 1-5 so you don't have to provide a meal
- ***Tell everyone you can't cook***

## Take care of Yourself and Your Family

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It is essential to cultivate a calm and quiet environment over the holidays. It is not necessary to fill up every minute. By factoring times in for rest, relaxation and pampering you will be able to embrace the stress of the season and dwell on the joys, not the challenges.

Try some of these ideas to make the season more relaxing:

- Focus on health habits and regular bedtimes
- Allow family members to choose one activity each and encourage every one to participate
- Hire a limousine to drive around and see the decorations. Serve hot chocolate with marshmallows.
- Go on a Christmas picnic
- Keep up regular routines as much as possible
- Set up activities tables for the kids- puzzles, games
- Let the kids color the Christmas cards

## **MaxTip of the Month**

Be original when you wrap gifts this year. Use a paper tablecloth to wrap a very large gift; use bags, fabric, newspaper. Wrap in all one color. Wrap and tag gifts as soon as you get home. Cut up Christmas cards and use as gift cards next year. Best of all-skip gifts that require wrapping and give gift cards and gift certificate