

The Collector Chronicle

North American Recovery

July 2023

America's Collection Authority

LAST MONTH'S LUCKY WINNER

The lucky winner of our client prize for June is Wise Home Solutions. They have been using our agency since 2021! We will be sending them a gift basket from the Chocolate Covered Wagon. Enjoy!



THIS MONTH'S PRIZE

This month we will be giving away a gift basket from the Chocolate Covered Wagon. Each client who sends new accounts during the month of July will have their name entered into a drawing. At the end of the month, we'll draw a name, and if it's yours, you'll win the gift basket!

***Don't miss out on your chance to win!
Send new accounts before the
end of the month!
Good luck!!***



**CHOCOLATE
COVERED
WAGON**

Time Management

By: David J. Saxton

President, North American Recovery

Being a debt collector is a tough job. (Talk about stating the obvious. Haha.) My first collection job, at the ripe old age of 18, was calling people and asking them to bring their fifteen-dollar-a-month gym membership current. I called the people who were 30 days behind. They called that a 30-Day book, and it was actually a book. They printed the information for the past-due accounts on five lines across the entire sheet of old-school green bar paper.

Here is a picture of green bar paper for those of you who don't know what it is. This stuff is 14-7/8 inches wide by 11 inches tall. You can order some



from Amazon by clicking here: [Amazon.com : Sparco 1/2-Inch Green Bar Paper, 20 lbs, 1 Part, 14-7/8 x 11 Inches \(SPR02177\) : Computer Printout Paper : Office Products](https://www.amazon.com/Sparco-1-2-Inch-Green-Bar-Paper-20-lbs-1-Part-14-7-8-x-11-Inches-SPR02177-Computer-Printout-Paper-Office-Products/dp/B000000000)

There were three consumers per page, spaced so that each "account" had room below it for the collector to make notes detailing what they did when they worked the account. That's right, handwritten notes and a green bar, bound book. Seriously. I would manually write my notes on the page, fold it back, and then work on the next three accounts. All day long, day after day. My base pay

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was \$4.25 an hour, but making commissions was where the real money was. When you added my commissions on top of my base wage, I ended up making around \$15/hr. That was back in 1988, when the minimum wage was \$3.35 an hour. So, for someone right out of high school, that was pretty good money.

Back to my 30-day book. Being a 30-day collector meant you were a newbie and were learning the ropes. We also had 60-day books, 90-day books, 120-day books, and the "Federal Recovery" collectors. Sounds scary, right? It did to me back then. The Federal Recovery (oooooh) guys were tough, seasoned collectors who didn't take any BS. I've never told anyone this, but when I started as a new collector, I really wanted to be a Federal Recovery guy. But that's a story for another day.

For today's article, I wanted to share with you the schedule I developed in this first job that helped me make the money I wanted and, not so coincidentally, resulted in an eventual 24-month streak where I was the top collector every month out of a group of 30. Not too shabby, if I do say so myself. So, how did I do it? Let me tell you.

I realized early on that I was going to have to motivate myself. No amount of micromanaging by any boss was going to get me to achieve the success I wanted. It was going to have to come from within me, and I was going to have to hold myself accountable. Once I internalized the thought and bought into that concept, the rest was easy. Well, not actually easy, but at least I had a plan and a process. With good old-fashioned hard work, I was certain I would achieve my goal (and be able to feed my wife and infant daughter, clothe them, and keep a roof over their heads).

Here's how it all started.

Arriving at work on time and being ready to work

I made sure that I was never late. I just didn't let it happen. Unless, of course, there was some sort of unforeseen and unavoidable natural disaster or an act of God. But anything short of that, I was always on time. And usually at least ten or fifteen minutes early. Mostly early.

I got to work early so I could take care of my personal "non-work" items (read: non-moneymaking). Things like going to the restroom, grabbing a cup of coffee, saying "hi" and visiting with my buddies, making a bite to eat, or anything else I needed to do before I clocked in and started working. Once all of the non-money-making stuff was out of the way, I would punch in five minutes before my shift and start performing the revenue-generating thing\$.

Once on the clock, I got right to work. The first thing I did was read and process any letters we received from my consumers. That's right. We didn't have email back then. Nor did we have mobile phones, texting, the Internet, social media, scanners, fax machines, microwaves, TV, radios, cars, etc. Uh, just kidding; we had the last four things. I just thought it would sound funny if I kept going. Anyway, we didn't have most of the things we take for granted today. So, I would open envelopes and read letters the consumers had sent to me. I'd then find their account in my book and make a note regarding what their letter said. I would, of course, work these accounts first once I started making calls. After reading letters, I would



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July 2023

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check any voicemail messages. It would all take about thirty minutes. Once I'd completed those items, I started making outgoing calls and making money.

How my day was structured

I divided my day into four distinct work periods. I did this to give myself mini-goals so that I could achieve small successes throughout the day. I was religious about following this schedule and diligently stuck with it. If someone interrupted me during these periods, I politely told them that I'd get back to them on break or lunch because I needed to hit my numbers. (Three mouths to feed, three people to clothe, and we needed shelter as well—great motivators indeed.)

My day looked like this: the first two hours, from 8:00 to 10:00, I made outgoing calls. Then I'd take a twenty-minute break. Back at it by 10:20 and again, making outgoing calls until 12:30. Then, lunch from 12:30 to 1:00. Back on the phones from 1:00 to 3:00. Afternoon break from 3:00 to 3:20, then one more hour of outgoing calls before I went home.

Having this specific, rigid schedule really helped me apply the right amount of energy at the correct time throughout the day. I knew how long I'd be getting after it, and this really helped me get into the "zone." Focus and intensity for two full hours, blocking out all distractions and creating an environment where I was extremely efficient and effective. No distractions; No bouncing back and forth between different tasks. Just two full hours making outgoing calls and doing my collection thing. I learned to love the structure and consistency of this schedule. It really helped me thrive and experience significant success.

Standardizing my day and religiously following this schedule has stayed with me throughout the years. The system I used when I first started is what my collectors use today and have used for the past 30 years. It works well for them too.

As I get older, I realize I've always applied this type of scheduling and structuring to just about every aspect of my life. I've decided it's just how my brain is wired. It's one of the reasons my company has been around for 30 years and why I plan on it being around for at least another 20 or 30 more, if not longer.

While it's helped me immensely, my rigid structuring of everything can be a bit frustrating for some of my loved ones because I'm not much for spontaneity. I prefer plans, structure, scheduling, etc. But I must admit I'm learning to go with the flow much more than I used to. I don't like it as much, but I'm becoming more agreeable, and I know my daughters appreciate it.

All right, enough of this; I have a schedule to get back to. Thanks for reading. Have a great month.



The Collector Chronicle is published monthly by NORTH AMERICAN RECOVERY for prospective and current clients. Please direct questions or comments to the editor, Dave Saxton, at DaveSaxton@North-American-Recovery.com.

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