

Miniatures Marketplace - August 2001

FINDING TIME FOR THE "BIG ROCKS"

by Barbara Schuckman
Miniatures BY BARB

While preparing this article, I came across a story worth passing along. It's message is important for all of us both personally and in our businesses.

An expert on time management was speaking to a group of business students. To illustrate her point the following demonstration was used. She placed a wide mouthed mason jar on the table in front of her. Producing several fist sized rocks she carefully placed them one at a time into the jar. When the group answered yes to her question, "Is this jar full?", she reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. She dumped the gravel into the jar and shook it. This caused the pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the rocks. When again the group assumed that the jar was full, she reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. As she poured the sand into the jar the group watched the sand fill in all of the spaces left between the rocks and gravel. Once more the group considered the jar full. They were proved wrong when a pitcher of water was poured into the jar until the jar was filled to the brim. The time management expert then explained the point of her demonstration to the group of students. If you don't put the big rocks in first, you will never get them in at all.

What are the "big rocks" in your life? Are they time with your loved ones, your faith, your education, your dreams, a worthy cause, teaching or mentoring others, expanding your customer base or brightening up your shop window? As small business owners our responsibilities are considerable. We need to choose our priorities and make time for them. Make a short list of "big rocks" in your personal life and make time for them. Then make a short list of "big rocks" in your business and make time for them. The rest of the "stuff" will fit in between.

One of my business "big rocks" is to expand my line of handcrafted miniature accessories into new fields. My goals are to increase my customer base and bring the joy of miniatures to people who never thought of collecting dollhouse miniatures. MIAA, the Miniatures Industry Association of America, is holding a trade show in August in the same facility as a gift show. It is a handcrafted gift show with on site delivery. I have carved out some time to create new items that I think will crossover into this field. I really had to work at finding the time to do this while still filling my orders, doing the never ending paperwork, designing new product etc, etc, etc. But, I am finding by putting the "big rock" first I have time for the rest in-between.

Have you always wanted to attend a trade show, but do not have the time? Make the time. You will be glad that you did. Seminars, net working, show specials, seeing new products first hand and meeting the manufactures are just a few of the benefits you will find when you make time.

Have you been meaning to organize your shop, but don't have the time? Pick a time. Jump in and do it. The benefits will be worth it. You may find the minis that disappeared last month. You might get some new perspective on the layout or displays in your shop. You might find some

room to hold workshops. Or, you might even find some space for that new line you have been anxious to carry.

How about advertising? Have you been meaning to find new avenues of marketing your shop? Now is the time. Is there a local paper you can write an article for. This would be great free advertising and can position you as an expert. Then use the article when communicating with the people on your mailing list. Oops! You always intended to start a mailing list? Now is the time. How about a newsletter? If you are starting a mailing list why not start a newsletter also?

Have you been thinking of bringing a crossover line into your shop? Maybe now is the time. What would work well with the miniatures you sell? The idea is to bring new customers into your shop. Your enthusiasm will excite them into collecting miniatures.

Or have you been planning on starting a web site when you have the time. I have been guilty of that. Let's find the time, now.

What is the "big rock" you would like to accomplish in your business? Tomorrow, first thing, do the research or preparation to tackle that goal. You may be surprised to find that you can find the time to accomplish your goal. When leading seminars at trade shows I often hear shop owners say that they don't have time to do all that they want to do. Mountains get built one "big rock" at a time.