



# *TIME MANAGEMENT*

## GETTING ORGANIZED AT WORK



# What is Time Management?

Time management refers to a range of skills, tools and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing specific tasks, projects and goals. This encompasses a wide scope of activities, and these include planning, allocating, setting goals, delegation, analysis of time spent, monitoring, organizing, scheduling, and prioritizing.



# Key Concepts

## Goal Setting

- Setting goals is essential to time management.
- Unless you know where you're headed, how can you tell that you are expending your efforts in the right direction?
- Setting goals ensures that all techniques for using time efficiently will help you to achieve your core objectives.



# Key Concepts

## Prioritizing:

- In order to work effectively, you have to make sure that the most important tasks are the ones you work on first.
- Those of secondary importance or medium value should follow.
- Even those with little or no value have to be done, but will fall toward the end of the priority list.



# Key Concepts

## Planning:

- The concept of planning is central to time management.
- We need to allocate time specifically for the purpose of planning – in other words, to allow time for allocating the rest of our time.
- Only by thinking through activities in terms of priority, and the time they will take, can we draw up effective diaries and schedules, to ensure that our time is spent as productively as possible.



# Key Concepts

## Delegation:

- At managerial level, where time management really becomes an essential skill, it goes hand in hand with the skill of delegation.
- If you have too much work you cannot hope to get through it all in the time available, no matter how effectively you use your time.
- The answer is to reduce the workload, and delegation is the most effective way to do this.
- Not only does good delegation cut down on the number of tasks you have to get through, it also helps to develop junior staff and extend their skills.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

Time management is a broad-reaching discipline that encompasses everything from the big issues of core objectives and goals, down to small details. Many people, especially those with a natural tendency towards efficiency and organization, develop their own personal techniques for making better use of their time.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

There are certain basic principles you need to abide by if you want to practice good time management, whatever your particular role and responsibilities. Without these, you cannot hope to make the best use of your time. This section describes the 10 key steps you need to follow in order to be confident of squeezing more value out of the same number of hours you work now.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 1. Clear your desk

Clearing your desk is not just a matter of making all those untidy piles of paperwork neater. It entails getting rid of everything unnecessary from your desk.

- Enter all notes and reminders into your diary or planner and then trash the original scraps of paper.
- Dispose of all the papers, reports, files and reading materials that you've finished with and which are no longer relevant.
- Dispose of all the papers, reports, files and reading materials that you know you're never really going to get around to doing anything about.
- Get rid of all the filing and other material that needs to be kept or passed on, but not stored on your working space.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 1. Clear your desk (cont)

Once you've cleared everything from your desk that shouldn't be there, the next step is to make sure that everything you need frequently is there, and in the most sensible place.

- Make sure the phone is on the most convenient side of the desk for you to use it, and make sure essential items are close to hand, each in their own allocated space.
- Have a space to move your keyboard into when you're not using it so that it doesn't occupy important space when it's idle.
- Ensure that there is a large, empty working space in the middle of your desk, which is only ever occupied with the papers you're working on now. Not this week, but right now. As soon as you move on to the next item, put these papers away and clear the space again.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 2. Set Goals

Once you have a clear desk, you can start to think clearly. So sit down and work out your goals. Only by thinking through your core objectives can you be certain that you are spending your time not only efficiently, but also on the most effective, important and productive issues.

- Work out what your goals are, both long term and short term.
  - o Perhaps in the long term you want to speed up delivery time in order to improve customer service.
    - Give yourself a specific target and a realistic timeframe in which to achieve it.
  - o In the short term, you might aim this month to find out what the constraints on delivery times are, and to talk to everyone in the department to get their view of the problem, and their suggestions for resolving it. Next month's goal might be to research how other organizations meet faster delivery targets, and to find out all the options.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 3. Plan your Diary

You might keep a diary or a planner (which includes space for writing down goals, "to do" lists, and so on). You may have this on your computer or you may use a pen and paper version. It really doesn't matter, so long as you have a system which:

- Works for you;
- Gives you plenty of space for including reminders, to do lists, goals and so on; and
- Doesn't entail having to duplicate information in more than one location, which wastes time and can cause hiccups if both locations aren't fully up to date

What matters is that you have all your information in a single location, which has plenty of space to hold all the data you need it to.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## Yearly Planning

Your daily planning should begin at the start of each year. If you're doing this for the first time, get a diary/planner/software and start now.

At the beginning of each year (or right now if that's where you're starting), enter in your diary or planner all the dates you already know about for the entire year:

- Regular meetings;
- One-off events (trade shows or conferences);
- Regular events (such as a weekly lunch with your boss);
- 15 minutes of diary planning time at the start of each month;
- Personal time (days off for personal functions); and
- At least a whole day each month specifically for working towards your goals and developing ideas and projects for meeting your overall objectives.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## Yearly Planning (cont)

Try to increase the days set aside for goal-setting and developing ideas to two or more a month, if you can. Whole days are the most productive – don't allow this time to be sliced up into several one- or two-hour sessions. Remember, this is time for doing the most important things you can possibly spend your time on at work, so treat it with respect.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## Monthly Planning

Schedule yourself time at the start of each month for diary planning. Enter in the diary all the key tasks you didn't know about at the start of the year. If your diary looks overfull at this point, now is the time to clear some space.

- Cancel any unnecessary meetings;
- Make apologies for any meetings you won't have time to attend;
- Defer any tasks you need to that can reasonably be deferred;
- Delegate tasks if possible; and
- Streamline activities
- Don't, however, reduce the time you have allocated for working on core objectives and goals.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## Weekly Planning

You can do weekly planning every Monday morning: it should take only five minutes. Set aside time, or blocks of time, for the following:

- Delegating and monitoring delegated tasks
- Catching up with phone calls (maybe 10 minutes twice a day)
- Keeping on top of correspondence and emails
- Being available on the phone
- Begin available face-to-face
- Dealing with miscellaneous tasks
- Having a daily walkabout to keep in touch with your team.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 4. Keep a Daily "To Do" List

Each day, there are numerous tasks too small to schedule in your diary individually. Many of these are scheduled under categories – phone calls, emails, and so on – while others come under "miscellaneous." But how do you know what all these tasks are?

They should all be written on your "to do" list. Every morning, when you open your diary or planner, it should contain a list of things you have to do that day:

- Calls you have to make;
- Facts you need to check;
- An order to put in for materials;
- A quote to obtain from a supplier; and
- All of the remaining activities.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

So how does this list arrive in your diary? Well, you put it there.

- Every time you say to anyone, "I'll call you on Tuesday," make a note in your diary for Tuesday.
- Every time you say to anyone, "I'll make sure I get the order in on time," write yourself a note on the relevant date.
- If you say to someone, "I'll expect to hear from you by Friday," mark in Friday's diary that you need to follow up if you haven't heard.
- As soon as you say, "I'll have it on your desk on June 30," write a note for June 30, and one for a day or two earlier, if you think you'll need to be forewarned.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 5. Prioritize

We all know that there are days when you simply can't get through everything on your list, and get to all your meetings and appointments for the day, and complete major tasks. That's where prioritizing comes in. You need to impose an order on the tasks, to ensure that those that remain undone at the end of the day are the ones that can wait anyway.

### Importance

Begin by allocating each task a grade according to how important it is, "A" most important and "C" least important. Measure importance against the objectives for the job. If a task is necessary for you to achieve your goal of raising customer satisfaction, it rates an "A" grade. Organizing a retirement party for a coworker is a "C" task. That doesn't mean it doesn't need to be done – tasks that don't need to be done should never have made it on to the "to do" list; they should have been dumped before that stage – it just means it isn't as important as your "A" or "B" tasks.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## Urgency

Before you can prioritize your workload for the day, you'll also need to establish urgency.

- Some things just have to be done today – like ordering training materials for next week's course, when the supplier needs five days advance warning for delivery.
- Other things may be crucial to the survival of the whole organization, but they can still wait a few days, or even weeks.
- Urgency has nothing to do with importance. Some of your "C" tasks may well be very urgent even though they're not really very important.
- Allocate each task a grade "1" or "2", where "1" is urgent and "2" is not urgent.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## Order of Priority

All your tasks are now graded according to both importance and urgency. So what order should you tackle them in? Here's the order of priority:

1. "A1"
2. "B1"
3. "C1"
4. "A2"
5. "B2"
6. "C2"

In other words, you should work through the urgent tasks in decreasing order of importance, and then work through the non-urgent tasks in the same way. Even the bottom tasks on the list will eventually get done.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

There is one point to add to all this: although you must do the urgent tasks first, you don't necessarily have to spend very long on them. "C1" tasks, in particular, should be done quickly or delegated; don't waste time on unimportant tasks, however urgent. Once you are in the swing of practicing good time management, you should find that you have many fewer urgent tasks in any case, since most of them will have been tackled before they become urgent.

By the way, if you find that you never get to the end of your tasks and the backlog constantly piles up, there's something wrong. You have to cut down your workload or you will become stressed and your job won't get done effectively. To remedy this, if you are working as effectively as you can and you are using the best time management techniques, you should either:

- Delegate more work;
- Identify tasks that can be removed without detriment to you or the job or;
- Talk to your boss about reducing your workload.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 6. Delegate

Delegation is an essential management skill and, unless you are seriously understaffed, poor delegation is almost always the culprit if you have a permanent backlog of work. It is one of the keys to effective time management and, if you haven't yet mastered it, you need to learn to.

The thing about delegation is that it isn't just a way of offloading extra work. It performs a twin function: it not only frees up your time to work on the most important tasks, but it also gives your team members the opportunity to develop new skills. In this way, your entire team becomes more effective.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

When you delegate, you have to delegate responsibility for the task. It's not simply a matter of telling someone else exactly what to do and how to do it. You need to tell them what to achieve, and then let them do it their own way. You'll have to specify the results you want in terms of:

- Time;
- Cost;
- Quality; and
- Any other constraints you need to set.

Then you need to get out of their way and let them get on with it. They will learn more and get more satisfaction from doing it this way.

However, that is not to say that you should abdicate from the task altogether. You need to be available for the person to come to you with any problems or worries about the task you have delegated to them. The ultimate responsibility is still yours, and for major or long-term tasks you will have to give a thorough briefing, answer any questions, and hold monitoring sessions to make sure the task is on track.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

There are a number of key stages in delegating any task.

1. Identify the task and set an overall objective – your team member will need this to be clear about what they are supposed to achieve.
2. Decide who you want to delegate the task to – this will depend on the availability of team members, but also on their skills, their level of responsibility, and their interest in the tasks. Try to stretch people without setting tasks that seem unattainable to them.
3. Set parameters – the budget, deadline, limits of their authority, available resources, and so on.
4. Check that they understand what you're asking of them – give people a chance to talk through the task and ask questions.
5. Back them up – even with limited time, you'll still need to be available to point them towards information they might need, clear the way for them with other departments, and so on.
6. Monitor – for long-term tasks hold regular session for the person to ask questions and for you to check that they're on track. Even for smaller task, informal feedback is important to make sure they're not struggling, or unwittingly heading in the wrong direction.
7. Evaluate – after the task has been finished, talk to the person about how they did. For a brief, simple task, a few informal words will do. For a major task, a proper feedback session is called for.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 7. Learn to Say "NO"

For some people, saying "no" is easy. Others, however, find it so difficult to refuse someone that they end up agreeing to take on work that they simple don't have time for.

You have to stop agreeing to do work you don't have time for. There are plenty of ways to say "no" without causing offense, and most people don't mind being refused.

If you find saying "no" difficult, try adding a positive note to your refusal. For example: "I don't have time right now, but I can do it after next week's conference."

Phrasing your refusals in this way will make it easier for you to say "no".



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 8. Avoid Interruptions

Interruptions are a major impediment to good time management. Apart from the time they occupy, they break your flow. You waste time stopping what you're doing and starting again after the interruption has passed. There are various techniques for preventing interruptions, but you must enforce them if you want them to work.

The following techniques will all work, but only if you stick to the rules as firmly as you want everyone else to.

- Shut the door. If you're in an open plan office, have your assistant protect you from visitors, or use a "Do not disturb" sign.
- When people do visit you, don't encourage them to sit down.
- If you can see the interruption coming, try to visit people in their office before they visit you in yours.
- Don't answer the phone.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 8. Avoid Interruptions (cont)

- If your calls are taken by someone else, have them give out times when you can be reached directly by phone.
- Ask friends and family not to call you at work—and give them short shrift when they do.
- Don't give out your mobile phone number to freely, or you'll never get a moment's peace.
- Don't interrupt yourself. Learn to stick to the task you're doing, and not to keep stopping.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 9. Monitor your progress

You wrote down your goals in your diary or planner—so how are you doing? If you don't look, you won't know. Check regularly to see how you're measuring up against your targets. If you're behind schedule, find out early enough to make time to catch up. If you're easily on target, see if you can set more challenging goals next time, and schedule in more time next month for those essential, objective-centered whole-day sessions.

Another area to monitor is how much time certain activities occupy. Now you're organizing your diary properly, you'll have scheduled in time for things like putting together next year's budget, or preparing material for a report. The first time you do this, you're quite likely to find that you allocated too little or too much time. Make a note in your diary or planner of how much time you actually spend on the task. Next time you do something similar, you'll have a guide to work to.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 10. Keep work and home separate

Remember that the object of time management is not to get more done in the same long hours, but to keep your hours sensible and still get more done. If you have a partner, a family or any desire for a social life, use time management skills to get more out of your home life too.

In particular, set sensible working hours and don't exceed them. Obviously there will be rare occasions when a conference runs into the evening, or a project entails working late for a night or two up against a deadline. But keep these rare. Set a target for the number of nights you will allow yourself to work beyond, say, 6pm – and aim to meet the lowest target you can.



# Ten Steps to Making Time Management Work

## 10. Keep work and home separate (cont)

And if you take work home with you, it doesn't count as leaving work early. If you can't get your job done without taking work home regularly, you haven't mastered the art of time management. It is only when you can work sensible hours, keep work out of your home life, and still meet your targets and impress senior management, that you can truly consider yourself an accomplished time manager.



# Key Learning Points

1. Clear your desk
2. Set goals
3. Plan your diary
4. Keep a daily "to do" list
5. Prioritize
6. Delegate
7. Learn to say "no"
8. Avoid Interruptions
9. Monitor your progress
10. Keep work and home separate



# Survey

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