

# **Time Management: The Art of Enhancing Productivity & Efficiency**

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## **Abstract**

*Time is a unique commodity that is given equally to everyone regardless of age or station. Time always moves at a predetermined and constant rate, but no one ever seems to have enough time. This article explores that since we can't create more time, we must conserve the time allotted to us. Time management attitudes and practices are often casual and relax almost an after thought. If time is money, then it should be treated as precious, nonrenewable resource.*

## **Introduction**

All businesses carefully record their financial assets. However, these financial statements never mention one of the company's most vital and irreplaceable assets-time. If time is money, then it should be treated as precious, nonrenewable resource. Time should receive the same intense monitoring that occurs with other assets. The subject of time management provides the reader with fascinating insights into human traits and habits. Time management is generally perceived as being synonymous with neatness, organization and a very structured daily routine. These factors are all elements of greater efficiency.

However, time management is more complex than that. It is a frame of mind. It is an attitude of personal commitment and, more importantly, a dramatic reordering of priorities and work habit. Unless time is managed, nothing else can be managed. Most time management ideas are common sense but not common practice. Improved time

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management does increase productivity and overall performance. It can also improve morale, as employees become more effective and more satisfied with the use of their time. Time management focuses on accountability. Many executives believe that their tasks are so varied that time management principles are useless to them.

The assumption is that time management practices are more suited to repetitive production like tasks. Certainly the tasks required of the executive are heterogeneous in content, but the management process is actually quite repetitive. In today's competitive environment, managers who misuse their time are at a distinct disadvantage. As the executive progresses up the corporate ladder, a transformation must occur: that is, from the process of doing to that of managing. Many find this a difficult challenge. The executive's additional responsibilities require a shift from the utilization of things to the utilization of people and things.

Each promotion requires a greater degree of managing if the executive is to use his increasingly larger pool of human resources effectively. Most executives generally understand this process, and the resulting benefits. However, many resist full delegations as a result; they fail to utilize their own time effectively. The major objective of time management for the executive is to create more discretionary time, the only part of the day that the executive can control and really call his own.

Discretionary time is necessary for conceptualizing, planning and creative problem solving. Time management does not provide solutions to management problems. It does however, provide the discretionary time in which the manager can find those solution, plan for the future, and assess overall progress. Research on the topic of time management has resulted in the conclusion that there exist five major areas, which are imperative to improving the management of time.

- i). The realization that the way we spend our time is largely habitual in nature.
- ii). That setting personal goal is crucial to proper time management.
- iii). Priorities must be categorized and evaluated.
- iv). Proper communications are essential to good use of time.
- v). Procrastination-- is probably the largest obstacle to time management.

### **The Habitual Use of Time**

Most people do not really consciously think about how they are spending their time. The way you spend your time determines how you live your life. Learning to control your time means changing some of your time habits. But you can't change habits until you first know what those habits are. First of all develop a record of how you spend your time for a week or two, or more if necessary. Record whatever you do as you do it so as not to forget anything. At the end of each week, summarize what you did and check percentages of time spend on each activity. Next, check how much of this time was actually spent on goal-oriented, prioritized activity and how much activity was aimless, repetitive, of low priority. Analyzing how you spend your time will leave you with more discretionary time, which is the only time you really control.

### **Goal Setting**

After making an analysis of how we are presently spending our time, it should be evident as to how our lives are balanced in relationship to the various aspects, which comprise our lives. These aspects include career, family, social and personal development, and spiritual goals. Plan your time by setting goals, goals about what you want to do, divided into

long-term and short-term objectives. Determine the time you plan to devote to each of the goals you set. This involves a game plan for your day as well as lifetime goals. Once your goals are established, you need to set priorities.

Rate your goals as to how important they are. After you use a priority system on your goals and objectives, you concentrate on doing those most important to you. There is a famous rule that if all items are arranged in order of value, 80% of the value would come from only 20% of the items, while the remaining 20% of the value would come from the 80% of the items. To become more effective and satisfied with the use of your time, learn to concentrate on the 20% activities with the high value.

### **Priorities**

Priorities should be set on a daily basis. Write down all the things you plan to do tomorrow and then rate them by importance: A, B, or C.

Even though planning does consume time on the front end, it overcompensates both by bringing in better results and by saving time in actual performance of activities. So take time to plan. By scheduling your time effectively through prioritizing, you learn to avoid over-committing yourself. Learning when and how to say "no" becomes important for your over-commitment dilutes your effectiveness. By analyzing time use, by setting goals and priorities, you become organized; you overcome a major obstacle to the efficient running of an office, business or home.

By being better organized in the office or at home you have clearer insight as to what is the more important job that needs actions first. Countless numbers of hours are wasted every day by the disorganization visible in most offices. You should be able to see the top of your desk at all times. To be really effective at your desk, clear off all

the accumulated material. Don't do this by putting it all in one drawer. This only postpones the problem. Set up a priority system of what goes into the desk drawers. The files should also be organized so that they can provide fast retrieval of information instead of becoming obstacle courses. Files should be arranged into active, inactive and discard categories. Only the active files should be stored near your desk. The next step in organizing is the paperwork. There are only three kinds of paper:

- a. Things requiring action.
- b. Things to be read and passed on or filed.
- c. Things which can be thrown out.

Separate your paperwork into these categories and then analyze each. Organizing a desk and the method of handling paperwork is an example of basic priorities in any type of operation. The process of setting priorities insures that such basic necessities for running an office or business are not ignored or discounted.

### **Communication**

Once habits have been analyzed, goals identified and priorities decided, this doesn't mean that an organization or business will then automatically use its working hours in the most efficient way possible. There is still the matter of communicating these goals and objectives to subordinates in such a way that what is planned is actually carried out. In fact, communication becomes management's tool for unifying an organization's activities whereby corporate goals are achieved. It is crucial to determine how effectively this tool is operating before relying on it. Research has shown that 74% of the sampled managers said that the single greatest barrier to corporate excellence was communication breakdown. It is said

that communication is to the organization what blood is to the body-without which both will die.

Effective communication will achieve clarity, understanding, commitment and creativity. For clarity and understanding to take place, the vertical channels of communication must be open. Subordinates have the right to know what their superiors expect of them. They must be given relevant information, promptly, concisely and directly. Not only must there be downward communication, there must also be upward communication, from subordinate to superiors. A climate of open communication improves the chances for high productivity and job satisfaction, which leads to achievement of individual and organized goals.

### **Procrastination**

All the planning possible can be done. An analysis of how time is presently being spent and a program instituted to correct the deficiencies can be implemented. But all of this is to no avail if it is not put into action. This failure to act is called procrastination. We waste most time wasted, not by others! So as you try to get control over your time, you must begin to get the distasteful tasks out of the way early. Procrastination is a major stumbling block for almost everyone seeking to improve his use of time. There are three causes which to procrastination:

a) Unpleasantness

- We tend to put things off because they are unpleasant to do.
- We don't get any satisfaction in doing this particular activity.

- Those tasks, which you find most unpleasant and keep putting off, should be scheduled first.

That way you can quickly get them out of the way, leaving you free to concentrate on the rest of the day's work. The feeling of satisfaction received from completing an unpleasant task will serve as reinforcement for completing the other scheduled assignments.

b) Difficult projects

The second cause, difficulty, calls for an approach of breaking down the difficult task into smaller units and focusing on one part at a time. This can be accomplished by either breaking down units by content or by time to be spent on each sub-unit. This method will result in making a very complex task into a series of simpler ones. This will give us a better perspective on where to start.

c) Indecision

Everyone wants to make the right decision so as to avoid unsatisfactory results. The best thing to do is gather all the information available, make the decision, and then move on from there. Above all, don't keep fretting and fussing or rehashing the problem. If something goes wrong with your decision, you can deal with it when the problem arises.

d) Conclusions

In conclusion, we can say that the first matter to consider for avoiding procrastination is to clarify your objectives, make sure that what we think we want to do is what we really want to do. The second recommendation is to develop the habit of planning each day. The well-organized life leaves time for everything, for planning, doing and follows through. Time is not use up in

regretting or in trying to live like retroactively, or in explaining why something needed has not been done. Learn to use good time management practices to improve your use of time. The real point of managing your time effectively is to carve out as satisfying and rich a life as you possibly can.

- You can control your time and your life.
- You will accomplish more and have more satisfaction from what you are doing.
- As your feelings of achievement, satisfaction and fulfillment increase so does the quality of your life.
- It is beyond any doubt that time is our life. You waste your time, you waste your life, you control your time, and you are in control of your life.



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