

TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

A Traditional Approach



keystone
Consulting

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SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Paperwork

- 90% of all documents handled each day are merely shuffled.
- The average desk-worker has 36 hours worth of work on the desk and spends 3 hours a week just sorting through it.
- 80% of filed papers are never referenced again. 50% of all filed materials are duplicates or expired information.
- Experience continues to show that 30%-40% of all recorded information can be immediately deleted from electronic systems or paper system.

Looking For Stuff

- The average executive wastes six weeks per year retrieving misplaced information on desks or in files. At a salary of \$75,000 per year, this would translate to 12.3 percent of total earnings.
- Spending 10 to 15 minutes every morning mapping out your day can save up to 6 hours a week.
- North Americans as a whole waste more than nine million hours each day looking for lost and misplaced articles, amounting to a loss of nearly \$150 million per day.

Interruptions

- An average interruption during the work day consumes ten to twenty minutes in getting back on track, not counting the actual time with the interrupter.
- The typical businessperson experiences 170 interactions per day and has a backlog of 200-300 hours of uncompleted work.
- 80% of our interruptions usually come from 20% of the people with whom we work.

Taken From:

Key Organization Systems

www.keyorganization.com/statistics

OBSTACLES TO TIME MANAGEMENT

Task Jumping

- Other people's priorities
- Road blocks and waiting
- Difficult or unpleasant tasks
- Boredom

Unrealistic Time Lines

- How long should this take?
- How long DOES this take?
- Planning too much for one day

Delegation (lack of)

- In relation to your position
- "Fixing" behaviour: "it's easier if I do it myself"
- "Helping" behaviour: "they'll never get it done in time without my help"

Focus (lack of)

- Losing sight of the big picture
- Getting lost in the small details (perfectionism)
- Not driving at completion of the job

Distraction

- Other people's priorities
- Getting caught up in other things

Burn Out

- Learn to take breaks to clear your head, BUT also learn to get back into the job ASAP

Weak Boundaries

- Co-worker intrusions
- "Helping" behaviour that is detrimental to your own priorities
- Personal intrusions

Difficulty Scheduling

- What can be tossed and what can be reassigned
- What can wait and what needs to be done right now
- Lack of “filler” duties

Multi-Tasking

- There is a major potential of getting caught up in the secondary task and losing sight of the original goal
- Potential of losing sight of priority tasks

Organization (lack of)

- Looking for things constitutes more than 150 hours of time each year (that's 6¹/₄ days)
- Lack of organization increases frustration and decreases effectiveness as well as efficiency

Inability to Adapt

- Not being able to adjust to new duties, new routines, new demands

TRADITIONAL TIME MANAGEMENT

1. Plan
2. Prioritize
3. Schedule
4. Implement

Downfalls

- Can promote strictly linear thinking (reduces ability to multi-task, problem solve)
- Can become obsessive planning, stopping short of implementation
- Increases efficiency and productivity, not creativity and innovation
- May break down with an unrealistic grasp of how long things take
- Can lead to procrastination if focus and internal discipline are not maintained
- Can become stressful if priorities are constantly changing

Modifying the System

- Plan:
- Remember to look at each task as part of the whole
 - Many smaller tasks don't have to be planned as they are part of the larger task
- Prioritize:
- Leave flexibility to re-prioritize as need be, and anticipate what changes may be requested
 - Be open to changes that can occur
- Schedule:
- Build in contingency time
 - Anticipate possible and potential blocks/hold ups
- Implement:
- Look for alternative ways to accomplish goals (delegation, multi-tasking, simultaneous tasks)
 - Know who to talk to/ask for assistance in cases where back ups or blockages occur

PLANNING & OTHER THOUGHTS

The Big Picture vs. The Small Stuff

It's important to be able to keep both the big picture and the small stuff in mind at all times. One is useless without the other. Without being able to see the big picture and the details the following can happen:

1. People concentrate so heavily on the small details that the focus required to see the big picture is lost. This leads to a much longer planning time than is necessary and can hold up the entire project.
2. People are so intent on the big picture that they forget many of the smaller details. This leads to unrealistic timelines which, in effect, can delay the completion of the entire project.

Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning takes place at the beginning of a project, at the start of a longer job, at the onset of a long term event, or even on a year to year basis. People have a tendency to overcomplicate strategic planning. Simply put, it encompasses the three stages below:

1. Activities (priority, stages and cost)
2. Personnel (responsibility, accountability and measurement)
3. Financials (revenues, capital and income)

Monthly Planning

It's always a good idea to keep a monthly calendar within plain sight. This will help with time management by:

- Allowing an "overall" picture of monthly scheduling and how the pieces all fit together
- Giving a more accurate picture of all monthly deadlines
- Keeping a heightened awareness of how many major projects are due within a month
- Providing a better tool for scheduling than a daily calendar as it helps compare all tasks instead of just that day's tasks

Daily Planning

Daily planning is basically a to-do list that's been prioritized. To develop your daily planning list, you can either work from a master list or from your monthly calendar. Ask yourself:

- What is due today?
- What is the main priority?
- Is there anything on the list that I can work on simultaneously with another task?
- Is there anything on the list that I can delegate?
- Is there anything on the list that I can cross off?
- What can I prepare today to get a jump on tomorrow?

Priority Matrix

The priority Matrix is a way to quickly determine the priority of a task. When completing the matrix, the user determines the level of importance and the level of urgency for each task. This view of tasks allows individuals to know exactly which tasks must be attended to and what tasks can wait.

<p>High Importance & High Urgency</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Low Importance & High Urgency</p> <p>2</p>
<p>High Importance & Low Urgency</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Low Importance & Low Urgency</p> <p>4</p>

GETTING THE JOB DONE

Organization and its Benefits

One of the best ways to bring time management to its knees is by being unorganized. Without an organized approach, people spend far too much time looking for things, looking for people, gathering tools for the job, and generally wasting valuable time. Becoming more organized provides you with extra time to work on the actual task at hand, reduces stress levels, and in the end, gives you more time to do the things that you want to do.

Procrastination

Procrastination can be caused by a variety of things:

- Not fully understanding the task
- Not fully understanding what's expected of you
- Avoiding unpleasant tasks
- Prioritized list is non-existent or out of order
- Perfectionism
- Lack of organization
- Passive aggressive behavior
- Fear of failure

Procrastination is a learned behaviour and an individual must make a concerted effort to make a shift in that behaviour. Sometimes, the few tricks outlined below are enough to get the ball rolling.

- Learn to ask for further direction if the task, or what is expected of you is unclear.
- Prioritize your tasks. Of the high priority/high urgency tasks, get the most unpleasant ones done and out of the way first.
- Do your best to maintain an organized behaviour. You may require the assistance of someone who is highly organized to get your system in place. Follow it religiously once it is in place.
- Understand that there is no such thing as perfect.
- Keep your commitments.
- Use your most productive time of day to your best advantage.

Multi-tasking

This is a term that has either really positive or really negative connotations, depending on your employment position and personality. People who play with words have come up with alternatives including “Synchronized Task Completion”, “Multi-Tiered Task Accomplishment”, and “Synchronous Tasking”. At its core, multi-tasking means doing more than one thing at once.

The biggest problem with multi-tasking is the potential of getting caught up in the secondary task and losing sight of the goal as well as losing sight of priority tasks.

Benefits

- Ability to perform and complete several tasks more quickly.
- More time for other things.
- Feelings of accomplishment.
- Can reduce stress if used in the right place at the right time.

Downfalls

- Decreases per-task concentration.
- Can lead to task-jumping and therefore to accomplishing less than if you completed one task at a time.
- Can increase stress if used in the wrong place at the wrong time.

When to multi-task

- When the task requires little concentration
- When the task is routine
- When one or more of the tasks can be automated
- When task timelines permit
- When a machine can continue a task while you complete other things

When not to multi-task

- When the task requires intense focus and concentration
- When the task includes a high degree of detailed information
- When you're tired
- When completing the task is your main priority
- When time is extremely short

Manage Interruptions

Determining what are acceptable and unacceptable interruptions is crucial. Each situation will be different but in any situation, speak up and make your position clear in a friendly but assertive manner.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Time management tools, whether electronic or paper, only work if you put the effort into using them consistently. Realizing your own personality traits, you must utilize and incorporate what works best for you, and use it all the time. Remember that tools don't work without your input.

Pitfalls

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Duplication | • Using many different systems and entering information over and over again wastes time |
| Portability | • Using a desktop scheduling program if you are on the road all the time does you no good |
| Reliance | • Total reliance on any type of time management tool can have disastrous results if the tool is lost, damaged, or forgotten |
| Learning Curve | • Learning to use a new system can take up precious time that can be better spent on accomplishing tasks |
| Non-Use | • Any tool is pointless if you don't use it consistently |
| Obsolescence | • With some electronic time management tools, technology changes rapidly enough that obsolescence can be a concern |
| Peripherals | • Spare batteries, battery chargers, and linking cables are often forgotten and can render some electronic tools useless |

EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE, CONSISTENT

Proper time management can help you become more efficient, effective and consistent. This in turn, means that you have:

- Less stress and less frustration
- More time for other things
- A strong routine to follow
- A better grasp of how long things take and therefore the ability to schedule time more effectively
- A greater understanding of reoccurring events and with this, a greater ability to anticipate roadblocks and plan around them