

# Time Management

(Self Management)

## PpD

(Personal and professional Development)

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### Outline

This module looks at what Time Management is, and some strategies to improve your own time management.

This module can be completed 1:1 with the instructor but is well suited to group delivery with up to 4 participants. Participants doing this module should have completed the module "Organisation" before doing this one.

### Objectives

- To develop an understanding of what Time Management is.
- To develop personal strategies to help in managing ones self.

### Target

Any one who feels disorganised.



## 1 Manage yourself, not your time

Many of us claim our days are never wasted. "I'm very organised" we say "I know where I am going and what I'm going to do". If you truly feel that way then you are in the minority. Most people become frustrated with a day that is unproductive. We would all like to get more done in a day.

The idea of time management has been in existence for more than 100 years. Unfortunately the term "Time Management" creates a false impression of what a person is able to do. Time can't be managed, time is uncontrollable we can only manage ourselves and our use of time.

Time management is actually self management. It's interesting that the skills we need to manage others are the same skills we need to manage ourselves: the ability to plan, delegate, organise, direct and control.

## 2 Time Management

Time Management is a set of related skills that help you to use your time in the most effective and productive way possible.

By using Time Management skills you can learn to:

- Determine which of the things you do are important, and which can be dropped
- Use your time in the most effective way possible
- Increase the time in which you can work
- Control the distractions that waste your time and break your flow
- Increase your effectiveness and reduce stress

By becoming more effective in your use of working time, you can reduce stress by:

- being more in control of what you do
- being productive, and secure in your job because of this
- enjoying what you do
- giving yourself more quality time to relax and enjoy life outside work.

### ***The Central Shift in Attitude***

At the heart of the subject is a simple, but obvious, shift in focus:

*Concentrate on results, not on being busy*

Many people spend their days in a frenzy of activity, but achieve very little because they are not concentrating on the right things.

This is neatly summed up in the *Pareto Principle*, or the 80/20 rule. This states that typically 80% of unfocussed effort generates only 20% of results, and that the remaining 80% of results are achieved with only 20% of the effort. By applying time management, including planning, we aim to change this to ensure that we concentrate as much of our effort as possible on the high payoff tasks. This ensures that we achieve the greatest payoff possible with our investment of time.



### ***Why don't people manage their time?***

Despite the benefits of time management, very many people do not use it. This can be because:

- they don't know about it
- they are too lazy to plan
- they enjoy the adrenaline buzz of meeting tight deadlines
- they enjoy crisis management

The problem with crisis management and tight deadlines is that while they can be fun, often they can lead to high levels of stress, a disrupted private life, tiredness and, occasionally, to failure of projects.

### ***Identifying your time stealers***

There are common time wasters which need to be identified. In order for a time management process to work it is important to know what aspects of our personal management need to be improved. Below you will find some of the most frequent reasons for reducing effectiveness in the workplace. Tick the ones which are major obstacles to your own time management. These we refer to as your "Time Stealers".

- Interruptions - telephone
- Interruptions - personal visitors
- Inefficient Meetings
- Tasks you should have delegated
- Procrastination and indecision
- Acting with incomplete information
- Dealing with team members
- Crisis management (fire fighting)
- Unclear communication
- Inadequate technical knowledge
- Unclear objectives and priorities
- Lack of planning
- Stress and fatigue
- Inability to say "No"
- Desk management and personal disorganisation



## **Managing Time Stealers**

Fortunately there are strategies you can use to manage your time, be more in control and reduce stress, but you can analyse your time and see how you may be both the cause and the solution to your time challenges.

- 1. Shifting priorities and crisis management.** Management guru Peter Drucker says that "crisis management is actually the form of management preferred by most managers" The irony is that actions taken prior to the crisis could have prevented the fire in the first place.
- 2. The telephone.** Have you ever had one of those days when you thought your true calling was in Telemarketing. The telephone our greatest communication tool can be our biggest enemy to effectiveness if you don't know how to control it.
- 3. Lack of priorities/objectives.** This probably is the biggest/most important time waster. It affects all we do both professionally and personally. Those who accomplish the most in a day know exactly what they want to accomplish. Unfortunately too many of us think that goals and objectives are yearly things and not daily considerations.
- 3. Attempting too much.** Many people today feel that they have to accomplish everything yesterday and don't give themselves enough time to do things properly. This leads only to half finished projects and no feeling of achievement.

**Drop in visitors.** The five deadliest words that rob your time are "Have you got a minute". Everyone's the culprit - colleagues, the boss, your peers. Knowing how to deal with interruptions is one of the best skills you can learn .

- 6. Ineffective delegation.** Good delegation is considered a key skill in both managers and leaders. The best managers have an ability to delegate work to staff and ensure it is done correctly. This is probably the best way of building a teams moral and reducing your workload at the same time. The general rule is this; if one of your staff can do it 80% as well as you can, then delegate it.
- 7. The cluttered desk.** When you have finished reading this look at your desk. If you can see less than 80% of it then you are probably suffering from 'desk stress'. The most effective people work from clear desks.
- 8. Procrastination.** The biggest thief of time; not decision making but decision avoidance. By reducing the amount of procrastinating you do you can substantially increase the amount of active time available to you.
- 9. The inability to say "no!".** The general rule is; if people can dump their work or problems on to your shoulders they will. Some of the most stressed people around lack the skill to 'just say no' for fear of upsetting people.
- 10. Meetings.** Studies have shown that the average manager spends about 17 hours a week in meetings and about 6 hours in the planning time and untold hours in the follow up. It is widely acknowledged that about as much of a third of the time spent in meetings is wasted due to poor meeting management and lack of planning.



### 3 Time Management Strategies

There are many ways we can manage our time. We have listed some strategies you can use to manage your time.

#### **Always define your objectives as clearly as possible.**

Do you find you are not doing what you want because your goals have not been set. One of the factors which mark out successful people is their ability to work out what they want to achieve and have written goals which they can review them constantly. Your long term goals should impact on your daily activities and be included on your "to do" list. Without a goal or objective people tend to just drift personally and professionally

#### **Analyse your use of time.**

Are you spending enough time on the projects which although may not be urgent now are the things you need to do to develop yourself or your career. If you are constantly asking yourself "What is the most important use of my time, right now?" it will help you to focus on 'important tasks' and stop reacting to tasks which seem urgent (or pleasant to do) but carry no importance towards your goals.

#### **Have a plan.**

How can you achieve your goals without a plan. Most people know what they want but have no plan to achieve it except by sheer hard work. Your yearly plan should be reviewed daily and reset as your achievements are met. Successful people make lists constantly. It enables them to stay on top of priorities and enable them to remain flexible to changing priorities. This should be done for both personal and business goals.

#### **Action plan analysis.**

Problems will always occur, the value of a good plan is to identify them early and seek out solutions. Good time management enables you to measure the progress towards your goals because "What you can measure, you can control". Always try to be proactive.

Time management (or self management) is not a hard subject to understand, but unless you are committed to build time management techniques into your daily routine you'll only achieve partial (or no) results and then make comments such as "I tried time management once and it doesn't work for me". The lesson to learn is that the more time we spend planning our time and activities the more time we will have for those activities. By setting goals and eliminating time wasters and doing this everyday you may find you will have extra time in the week to spend on those people and activities most important to you.



## 4 Helpful Hints

Take what you can from the following hints, just remember Time Management is all about Self Management.

### *Plan*

Think about your weekly, daily, and longer term goals on a regular basis. Identify specific areas that you want to accomplish today that will help you achieve your long term goals. **Develop a "To Do" list.** Prioritise the things you have to do on a scale of importance with the "A's" being the most important "B's", "C's", etc. being the tasks of lesser importance. Then, **work on the "A's" first.**

### *Concentrate*

It is difficult to do too many things at once. Make a choice about what needs your immediate attention. Complete one item at a time. The amount of time spent is not what counts, but how effectively the time has been spent.

### *Relax*

All work and no play leads to unhappiness, inefficiency, boredom, stress, an unbalanced life, and feelings of low self-esteem.

### *Avoid Confusion and Unnecessary Clutter*

In most cases, FEELING organised goes hand-in-hand with BEING organised.

### *Do Not Be Afraid to Say "No"*

You do have the right to say NO without feeling guilty. Tasks that you are not committed to or which do not benefit your objectives will waste your valuable time and the time of others.

### *Do Not Be Afraid to Delegate*

No person is an island. Learning how to delegate can increase your productivity. It will allow more time for those things requiring your personal attention. Remember: delegate challenging and rewarding tasks as well as those that are of low priority. Maximising and utilising someone else's strengths will add satisfaction and positive momentum to your environment.

### *Overcome Procrastination*

It is said that if you do something for a month, it becomes a habit. Overcoming procrastination requires you to form new habits. Start the day by doing your most unpleasant task. This will free the remainder of the day so you can perform more pleasant tasks. Attack your most difficult goals regularly. Little by little the end result will become reality. One step forward is better than no step at all.

### *Develop a List of Goals*

Continue reviewing and evaluating your priorities, your short-term and long-term goals.

### *Spend Quiet Time Planning*

Try to do this at the beginning or end of each day to prepare yourself for your daily "To Do's." Fix your mind on what you want and DO IT!



## 5 Summary (<http://www.mindtools.com/tmsumm.html>)

This module has had a quick look at what Time Management is and how to manage your time well. Good time management is one of the core differences between effective and ineffective people.

At the heart of good time management is the shift of focus of *concentrating on results, not on being busy*.

A couple of key things are important before any Time Management plan can be put in place. In particular you should consider the following:

- Using an activity log to evaluate your use of time, and your energy levels at different times of the day.
- Know how much your time is worth, and hence which tasks should be avoided, dropped or delegated.
- Determine and agree what is important for success in your job, and what constitutes exceptional performance
- Setting the goals and plans that will lead you to that success

Use your time most effectively by:

- Doing important work in quality time,
- Eating properly and resting effectively so that you spend more time performing well,
- Running and attending meetings effectively,
- Using time spent waiting,
- Using travelling time effectively,
- Improving reading skills,

Help get through all your work by:

- Delegating Effectively,
- and Getting up early!

Control the distractions that interfere with effective work by:

- Getting rid of unwanted jobs, (do or delegate never ignore)
- Blocking unwanted visitors
- Letting people know when you do not want to be disturbed, and
- Handling phone calls effectively

By effective use of the basic skills we have discussed, you can ensure that:

- you are successful in your job, as you know exactly what is expected of you, and concentrate explicitly on those things
- you can become more in control of what you do
- you are productive and therefore secure in your job
- you can plan and move into job areas that you enjoy
- and that you can avoid staying late at work, giving yourself more quality time to relax and enjoy life outside work.



## Instructors Notes and Handouts

This module is about making people aware of their own use of time. It is best dealt with by getting people to discuss their own thoughts on their own use of time. It is important to concentrate on the time stealers and make people aware of the need to control these. They will never be eliminated but if the person is aware of them they will control them more easily.

There are no activities for this module other than the activity log outlined below. It is a matter of talking through with people what time management is and the strategies that can be implemented to help.

The activity log described below is something you can consider using depending on the group or individual. It is a very good way of making people aware of what they actually do. This is a very crude approach to what is often referred to as time in motion studies. They are a pain to do but if they persevere with them for a week the person doing them will get a lot out of it.

The most effective and fastest returning strategy is to apply the prioritised To Do list as outlined on the next page. Regardless of how good or bad people think their time management is get them to try the prioritised to do list approach for a couple of weeks.

Many will probably make a list of things they have to do but this is different. This approach is more formal and makes the individual think about the tasks and their importance while the list is being created. Merely having a list requires no thought simply recognition that something has to be completed.

### **The Activity Log (<http://www.mindtools.com/tmactlog.html>)**

An activity log is a highly effective way of monitoring the way in which you spend your time. If you work purely from memory it is easy to believe that you spent all your day working, and consider that your use of time is good. If you keep an Activity Log for a few days you may be surprised to see precisely how much of your day is wasted.

Without modifying your behaviour, note down the things you do as you do them, from the moment you come into the office. Every time you change activities, whether opening mail, working, making coffee, dealing with colleagues, gossiping, going to collect paper from a printer, etc., note down the time of the change.

As well as noting activities, it is worth noting how you feel, whether alert, flat, tired, energetic, etc. This should be done periodically throughout the day.

Once you have logged your time for several days, analyse the log. You may be alarmed to see the length of time you spend opening mail, talking to colleagues, dealing with disruptions, or doing low value jobs!

You may also see that you are energetic in some parts of the day, and flat in other parts. A lot of this can depend on the rest breaks you take, the times and amounts you eat, and quality of your nutrition. The activity log gives you some basis for experimenting with these variables.



## **Prioritised To Do Lists**

### **What are To Do Lists?**

'To Do Lists' are lists of tasks to be carried out to achieve goals. These goals might be specific targets, or may simply be the efficient administration of your day. By ordering these tasks in order of importance, you have prioritised your To Do List.

Whilst To Do Lists are very simple, they are also extremely powerful, both as a method of organising yourself and as a method of reducing stress. Often problems may seem intimidatingly large or you may have a seemingly huge number of demands on your time. This may leave you with a feeling of loss of control, or of being overburdened with work, or of facing hopelessly huge obstacles.

### **Getting Back Control**

The solution is often simple: write down the tasks that face you, and if they are large, break them down into their component elements. If these still seem large, break them down again. Do this until everything that you have to do is listed. Once you have done this, run through these jobs allocating priorities from A (very important) to F (unimportant). It is important to rank them in order of importance to, and for, your job not on what you like and dislike. If too many tasks have a high priority, run through the list again and demote the less important high priority items. Once you have done this, rewrite the list in priority order. You will then have a precise, sharp plan that you can use to eliminate the problems you face in the order that they need to be eliminated. This allows you to separate important jobs from the many time-consuming trivial ones, and gives you control of the problems facing you, reducing stress hugely.

Even if the things you want to achieve do not seem overwhelming, To Do Lists are extremely useful ways of organising yourself efficiently, and of motivating yourself to achieve what needs to be achieved efficiently.

### **Preparing To Do Lists**

It is a good idea to prepare To Do Lists whenever suits you: some people recommend doing them at the end of each day for the next day, others at the beginning of a day, others whenever you feel that things are getting out of control - the important thing is that you use them in the way that suits you.

Wearing yesterday's dirty old shirt or fingering through yesterday's stale lunch is not too appealing. So, just as you start the day with clean clothes and a new lunch, start with a new, prioritised "to-do" list. Emotionally, it will give you a lift to start each day with the new plan, but, more importantly, it will give you a chance to reprioritise items left over from the day before. For example, yesterday's item #9 may become today's item #1. If you are working off yesterday's "to-do" list, that important item may not receive attention. Daily planning will sharpen daily focus as priorities shift with each day.

These simple ideas will help you to significantly improve your performance each and every day and will help to reduce that free-falling feeling. You will find you are getting more done in less time and you will feel more productive and less stressed each day. (And that is a good thing!)