

Time Management Strategies that Work – for YOU

“The feeling of being hurried is not usually the result of living a full life and having no time. It is, rather, a form of a vague feeling that we are wasting our life.” Eric Hoffer

Do you feel pressured to do more in less time with fewer resources? In our world of accelerating change, relentless demands and escalating expectations, managing your time effectively pays huge dividends by providing you with a sense of:

- personal mastery
- control
- accomplishment
- work-life balance

Time management is highly personal. The more self-aware you are, the better able you will be to customize time-management strategies that work for you. Your unique behavioural style predisposes you to certain actions that waste time. Understanding your style allows you to develop coping strategies that work.

Warning: Taking the first step to managing your time requires discipline. But if you're going to add one more thing to your 'to do' list, make it something that will SAVE time in the long run. This investment will pay you back many times over in freed-up time.



Time is at once the most valuable and most perishable of all our possessions.

– John Randolph

Allocate time to save time

Step 1: Find out where your time goes.

Log yourself in 15 minute increments over a two-week period. This will allow you to see recurring patterns. An easy way to do this is to set a timer to interrupt you every 15 minutes. Jot down what you're doing when the timer goes off. At the end of the day, summarize the activities and time associated with them.

Desk management and personal disorganization.

If you can see less than 80% of your desk, then you're probably suffering from "desk stress".

The most effective people work from clear desks.

Self-management involves using time to create maximum personal effectiveness and efficiency.

"Being successful doesn't make you manage your time well. Managing your time well makes you successful."

– Randy Pausch

At the end of the two weeks, answer these questions:

- How much of your activity was planned? How much was unplanned?
- How accurate was your planning – did you complete tasks in the time allowed?
- What are you doing that doesn't really need to be done?
- What are you doing that could be done by somebody else?
- What are you doing that could be done more efficiently?
- How often did interruptions divert you from your tasks?
- At what time of day did you accomplish the most?

Step 2: Tackle personal inefficiency.

Wasted time happens because of things like poor planning, lack of assertiveness, putting off problems and resistance to delegating. Each person has his or her own tendencies that contribute to wasting time.

How does your behavioural style contribute to your Time Mis-management?

Compliant (High C) styles: You are not as likely to waste time due to lack of planning or organizing priorities, but be aware of how your perfectionism limits your efficiency and how your high standards and lack of trust in others prevent you from delegating tasks that could be done by others.

Steady (High S) styles: You like to complete tasks and have a plan for getting work done. You often work long and hard to complete your work. Though you like structure and routine, you will benefit from others showing you shortcuts that don't affect quality. Because of your accommodating nature, you may have difficulty saying 'no' to the demands of others, even if you don't have enough time.

Influencers (High I) styles: You enjoy spontaneity and may find plans too confining! You may find interruptions rob much of your time because you enjoy socializing. Your optimism may result in 'overpromising' and underestimating the time required to complete a task.

Dominant (High D) styles: You often prefer "crisis management" because you are well-suited to respond to challenges. However, often the crisis can be prevented with some planning beforehand. Because of your sense of urgency and impatience, you may waste time because of under-delegating.

Step 3: Be clear about your objectives and priorities.

Many people think of setting goals and objectives as something we do annually or every few months. But not being clear about what you want to accomplish each day can result in too much time spent on the minor things and not on the things that are important to our work/lives.

- Map out your activities one week in advance and review each morning.
- Build slack time into your schedule so that you don't always overrun.
- Include time to adjust to unexpected changes.
- Have a strategy to fall back on – what can you drop? Can you get extra help?

The five deadliest words that rob your time are "Have you got a minute?"

Don't equate being busy with being efficient.

Step 4: *Don't allow minor interruptions to disrupt your flow.*

When you are interrupted by a phone call, personal visitors, or email noise to alert you to new mail (turn it off!), here are some proven techniques:

- Respond to the interruption by saying "I'm in the middle of something now" or "I only have 5 minutes" (you can always extend this if you need to).
- When a visitor drops in, stand up, stroll to the door, look at your watch or the clock on the wall, shake the person's hand and thank him or her for coming.
- Work somewhere other than your office.
- Develop your assertiveness skills to respect your own priorities as much as you respect other people's priorities.

Step 5: *Eliminate unnecessary meetings.*

Before calling or attending a meeting, ask yourself: Is it worth it? Calculate the cost of having each person in attendance (consider their salary or hourly rate, the opportunity cost, cost of the facilities and equipment, etc). This information can often shock us into making the meeting a productive use of time.

- If someone else is running the meeting, be sure you understand why it is necessary that you attend.
- If you're running the meeting, circulate pertinent information before for the meeting and make sure each person knows why it is necessary for them to attend.



Helpful Resources:

- Morgenstern, Julie. *Time Management from the Inside Out: The Foolproof System for Taking Control of Your Schedule and Your Life.* Henry Holt & Company, 2000. This book emphasizes fitting a time management system to your own personal style and individual needs. Full of practical ideas that make sense, it's worth your time to read!

**Would you like to recommend a book or resource?
Please send a review and why you like it and we'll post your recommendation!**