

How to gain one hour a day – every day

Learn
to know where your time
goes

Expect the unexpected

Create a non-interruption zone (NIZ)

Dump trivia

Do less and achieve more – delegation

Anticipate and look for opportunity time

Speed up routine tasks: How to speed up these
activities

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Clean up your communications: How to win friends and
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Learn to know where your time goes

What is more important – time or money?


Some people say that time is money, which in the business world is usually true, but unless you are absolutely flat broke the chances are that time is more important to you than money – because time is irreplaceable.

Whilst we may track our money, most of us never really analyse where we are spending our time. Indeed, experience shows that most people don't know where the day goes. You may often hear people saying, 'Is that the time already? I don't know where the afternoon has gone!' So, in order to have a better appreciation of where our time goes there is one simple rule we can use, it is called the Activity or Time Log.

An Activity Log

An Activity Log is a highly effective way of monitoring the way 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 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, 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. This can depend on your rest breaks, the times and amounts you eat, and quality of your nutrition. The Activity Log gives you some basis for experimenting with these variables.



Try to avoid being placed on hold on the telephone. It takes less time to call back.

A Time Log

A Time Log is a simple form that once a month you carry around with you or leave by the side of your desk to track your actual time usage. Every 15 minutes tick the box for the category of activity that you have been working on for most of that time. Fill in your own activities on a form depending on your job description or job profile. Whilst it takes a degree of self-discipline to keep remembering to do the Time Log, so long as you keep it in a good place, perhaps taped to the front of the diary, it is quick and easy. Once you have done a Time Log you will recognise the benefits and be much more motivated to do it, at a time that is available to you. Once you have completed your Time Log you can ask the following key questions:

- Did I do anything that wasted my time?
- Did I work on things at the right time of the day?
- Did I put important things off until later?
- Am I guilty of the Butterfly Syndrome – jumping from one thing to another perhaps, without completing tasks?
- Did I do other people's work for them?
- Did I do anything that wasted the time of other people?
- Am I doing things that are not part of my main job description or moving towards my goals and objectives?

These questions will uncover new understandings on how you use your time now, which in turn can lead you to better appropriation of your time in the future. People that complete a Time Log can easily identify a time saving of at least an hour in any typical day. This can be done by simply stopping the time spent chatting, travelling or doing unnecessary tasks or even from speeding up certain routine tasks. We can also identify how much time we take dealing with interruptions or sitting in meetings. When added together, over days or weeks, this can be quite shocking. Do not be too critical by measuring every last minute. It is only the general training that we are looking for.

If you manage a team of people having them complete a Time Log can be a useful tool in understanding the most important part of their job and some of their time management challenges.

Expect the unexpected

Expect travel delays, so when travelling listen to cassette tapes on time management, self-motivation and similar subjects, as well as any that are available in your professional field.

Murphy's Law states that if anything can possibly go wrong, it probably will. You can save an hour a day by preventing, preparing, planning and looking for opportunities for Murphy to strike.

Here are some common examples:

1. Call ahead to double check appointments/meetings the day before travelling. The day you don't check will be the day that the appointment is cancelled or you have the time wrong.
2. Have things to do for when you arrive or travel.
3. Double check any complex itineraries, plans or projects. Make sure that there is a buffer if things go wrong and need to be recovered.
4. Sensitive or critical projects should be checked and double checked.
5. Always try and build a slight buffer into any promises that you might give, particularly for customers.
6. Allow time in your diary or schedule for things that do go wrong which may require your time and attention.
7. Learn to anticipate the unexpected.
8. Try to anticipate the time of the week or month when you will have the last minute jobs.
9. Develop check lists, process and clear standards of performance for critical outputs in your job or business.
10. Make sure people work to consistent methods allowing time to check and double check what they do. One missed point could create hours of work for somebody else.

Create a non-interruption zone (NIZ)

You can get more done in one hour of quiet concentration than you can in two with interruptions. However, create this during the day, not by staying late or getting in early.

Dump trivia


If you want to make sure you have some clear space or time to do the most important tasks, then set up a daily time to have a NIZ. This is essential. A NIZ or non-interruption zone is usually a period of time, say an hour, when your staff and customers know that it is not a good time to disturb you. This leaves you to focus clearly, without interruption on the most important, high quality tasks.

The way you create a NIZ is simple: inform staff and train them that you prefer not to be interrupted at a certain time. Pick the same time each day or give a clear communication signal every day for about a week or two. After a while people will realise that that time is a standard NIZ and you will no longer have to mention it.

Don't be deceived by the simplicity of this idea. People who have tried this would testify that one hour of uninterrupted time is probably worth one or two of normal time. You can get so much more done and usually the quality of the work is so much greater.

One of the things that you need to tackle is the need to stop doing unimportant tasks – what we call trivia tasks. These are things that no longer need to be done and do not contribute anything to your effectiveness, results or product ability.

We may tackle them first because they are short and simple, but if there is no real importance or urgencies to them, then we should not be doing them at all. You may find that you can ease your conscience by delegating some of the daily trivial tasks that consume your day. You may also find that you can do wonders by speeding up your work load and how you tackle it. Simply opening the mail or doing other things such as filing with a stopwatch ticking can actually concentrate you to work faster and quicker to get thing done. One suggestion is not to do them at all:



Less is more;
do less and
achieve more!

- Can you survive without them?
- Will they impact on your effectiveness?
- Will anyone notice the difference if you do them or not?

If the answer to each of these is 'no', then let go of these tasks.

Do less and achieve more – delegation

LEARN TO DELEGATE URGENT BUT NOT RELEVANTLY IMPORTANT TASKS.

Another habit that we need to break is the tendency to try and do everything ourselves. Many people who are promoted tend to take tasks with them from their previous job.

For example, a sales person promoted to team leader may try to hold on to some of their accounts. They may also try to keep doing the things that they have always done, such as their own expense forms, letters and so on. If something is not particularly important, and the other people around you can be trained to do it, then the time saving can be considerable.

As some things might be urgent, it is important to be able to delegate and have it done quickly by people who are competent and who have the time to do it. For instance, can you train people to respond and return calls from customers or particular types of colleagues? Can filing and paperwork be handled as it happens rather than stored up? Even if you work in a small business or non-commercial environment there are still many tasks that you can delegate – sometimes to an external organisation, maybe to a typing bureau, a photocopying or graphic design company. All this means letting go of the trivial and less important things and focusing on what you need for your team tasks, goals and performance criteria.

Most of the top business executives recognise the limitations of what they can do themselves. They know that to accomplish great goals, you have to build and depend on those who work under you. As they grow and become successful, largely through

delegation, the manager accomplishes the larger goals for the company.

Success is a joint partnership venture in delegation.

Poor excuses for not delegating

'I can do this work better than anyone else.'

'If I delegate to others, what will I do?'

'This job is so important that I am the only one who can do it.'

There are probably a lot of reasons not to delegate, but few good ones. Almost by definition, if we are to succeed and grow and if our people are to succeed and grow, we must continually delegate effectively!

Many people have tried delegation once and concluded it was more trouble than it was worth. Delegation is a skill that has to be learned and then practised. Mistakes will be made and it will be slow at first, but in the long run is the only important factor. When you delegate effectively, your people grow, morale improves, efficiency improves, more of the desired results get achieved. The benefits of delegation far outweigh the difficulties.

Who is to blame?

For effective delegation to take place, the delegate must have a full understanding of the results to be achieved. It is even better if the 'doer' can work out the details of how to do a task, in their own way. After all, if the end results are what you expect and limits and boundaries are not exceeded, why shouldn't the person do it their way?

They should! It gets people involved in the delegated work. They need to feel the job is more theirs than yours... otherwise, they are just robots carrying out your instructions.

If you don't have the necessary people to delegate to – outsource or use temporary staff. If delegating is the best, or perhaps the only way of getting something done on time, it might be worth paying for.

Delegating to others is difficult for most of us and hard for the other person at first. That is why it is so important to follow-up and when they have done a successful job (even if it was not as good as we could have done), we must be quick to praise and thank the person.

It is true of many people that given greater challenges, they will accomplish more. A person who knows that they are growing, learning new things, acquiring new skills and earning more money, is a happy person. This is one of the major keys to developing and keeping good people. Delegation plays a key role in this positive attitude. You are the coach and cheerleader. You coach them to be successful, then cheer when they succeed. This is the attitude of the manager who is a successful delegator. It is up to you to build people and make them successful. Delegation is a central principle in achieving these goals for the people you supervise.

Anticipate and look for opportunity time

There will be times in the day when you have time on your hands. This can be very frustrating if you do not have enough time to spend in the office. You may be in a traffic jam, in an airport, waiting for an appointment or meeting and you are sitting there waiting, watching the clock. This is *opportunity time*. Spare time which you didn't necessarily know was going to happen, although we could probably anticipate having. It is important to have things with you to work on, such as:

- *The reading file.* Open your post or mail into your briefcase. The important but non-urgent memos, letters, magazines and so on can then be reviewed later when you have this opportunity time.
- *Planning and goal setting.* Have a notebook and pen to hand. You can sit down quietly, perhaps without interruption, because of where you are and make notes clearly about some plans, goals and objectives. Every time you rewrite a goal you re-affirm to yourself your direction and its importance.

- Carry with you letters that you would like to read.
- Carry a tape recorder or dictating machine.
- Keep a mobile phone or have a charge card call facility available. If you have a few minutes simply grab your Action Plan and To-do list or work your way through a number of telephone calls.

Speed up routine tasks

Much of what you do may be fairly routine, such as travelling, filing, standard meetings, editing, making and receiving telephone calls, working on the computer and so on. By just being more organised, many people have found they can save three 30/40 minute periods per day.

How to speed up these activities

1. Use a timer. Set it for say ten minutes and try and complete the task before the alarm goes off.
2. Put a clock in front of you and keep looking at it as you work as quickly as possible.
3. Make calls and do standard tasks where possible standing up. This may help you concentrate and be quicker and shorter in execution.
4. Promise yourself a reward when you finish your activities, such as a cup of coffee.
5. Fit the activities in and buffer them up against key meetings, lunch breaks and so on so that they have an end point that they cannot go beyond. This may help you to concentrate them into a fixed piece of time.
6. Work with a sense of energy and urgency. Launch into the task and don't stop until you have completed it.
7. Do one thing at a time and don't stop until it's finished.

Stop doing other people's work

If you are looking to save an hour a day you might find that 60 minutes can be found in tasks you do that other people should be doing for themselves. Whilst it is nice to help people and we should be as accommodating as possible, we have to strike a balance between protecting our own time, goals and ambitions and helping others achieve theirs. It does not mean saying 'no' all the time. It just means looking very objectively at the tasks that people are asking for help with. Is it something they should be doing or could be doing?

If this is the case, do one or two things:

1. Politely say '**no**' explaining that you cannot deal with that as you thought it should be them doing it and not you.
2. Redirect them to somebody else who you think is more appropriate to help them.
3. Explain to them how to do it, giving them the confidence to go away and try it. (The reason they may be asking you is because they do not feel competent or confident themselves to complete the activity well enough.)
4. Say you will do the task but then don't complete it, this is particularly useful if you feel it impossible to say '**no**'. Whilst it may be embarrassing and uncomfortable when they come back and find the task or activity not completed, the chances are they will not ask you again, as you have let them down once. When they do come back make sure you explain why and apologise!

Concentration of power

WORK FROM AN ACTION PLAN AND DO ONE THING AT A TIME

An Action Plan is a brief list of tasks that you have to carry out to achieve an objective. It differs from a To-do list in that it focuses on the *achievement* of a goal, rather than focusing on goals to be achieved in a period of time. Wherever you want to achieve

something, drawing up an Action Plan allows you to concentrate on the stages of that achievement, and monitor your progress towards that achievement.

Clean up your communications

1. Think first, talk second

When dealing with an issue involving another person, first become aware of your thoughts, feelings and any intuitive insights you might have around the issue. What do you want to convey to him or her? What **do** you want?

2. Timing

Out of fairness and respect, choose a mutually convenient time and place to discuss one issue only. Agree on which issue will be discussed, and on the length of your session.

3. Relaxed environment

Beforehand, prepare and calm yourself. Do your favourite relaxation technique, or simply take 3-4 very deep breaths and let them out with a sigh. Perhaps do some stretches or some kind of movement to relax your body.

4. Relax your body language

- Maintain relaxed eye contact. Remember to blink and breathe! Check in often to see whether you're relaxed or tense. Tensing, then letting go of your neck and shoulder muscles helps.
- Make large circles with your shoulders forward and back. Raise and alternately knit your eyebrows then let go to relieve scalp and forehead tightness.
- Open and close your mouth to help jaw tension. Use whatever works for you! Maybe you need to change where or how you're sitting. To make whatever adjustments might be necessary, take time out and agree on when to start again.

5. Get in touch with what you are thinking and feeling

This is done by first filtering out external ‘noise’, especially interruptions, telephone calls, television, etc. Next, before your meeting sit quietly and think in detail about an issue or person. During a conversation, dampen down your internal thoughts and focus only on that moment, become aware of any instinctive sensations that you experience as one or other of you are talking.

6. Become clear of your intentions. What do you WANT?

Most mis-communication involves a lack of clarity, deliberate or otherwise – about what you or a colleague are aiming to achieve. Stating this clearly and early can greatly help communication and rapport. Even if the different outcomes are stated, this can then speed-up finding solutions.

7. Voice tone

- With a pleasant tone of voice (no whining!), use ‘I’ statements. This takes it out of the blaming, judging arena. Ask yourself a few questions: ‘Do I want to fight?’ ‘Am I insisting on being right, no matter what?’ Or, ‘Would I rather create an atmosphere of mutual trust, safety and understanding?’ Am I coming from a place of love or fear?’
- If you are feeling angry or over-reactive, let the other person know and reschedule your time together. Then breathe deeply, take a walk, or whatever it takes to get you calmed down and rational.

8. Restating

Then, ask the other person to repeat back what you have just said. They may have incorrectly heard and/or misinterpreted your communication. This crucial step will give you more clarity and understanding around the issue.

9. Active listening

Now, it’s the other person’s turn. Listen openly, attentively and compassionately. Take a few deep breaths. Then, paraphrase what they said.

10. Brainstorming

Brainstorm for solutions. Open up to creative ideas that may not occur to you normally. Be willing to compromise. Agree on at least one step you can take to immediately resolve or at least relieve the tensions around the issue.

Do not be discouraged if the resolution is incomplete at this time. Reschedule to come back to the issue again, if necessary. Commit to take as long as it takes to be resolved or at least relieved. At the end of your 'session' you will feel empowered knowing you have taken vital steps toward having what you want.

How to win friends and influence people

How to Win Friends and Influence People is a book by Dale Carnegie. Good time management, influence and motivation go hand in hand. The chapters in the book are listed below. For more insights, read (or re-read the book).

1. Don't criticise, condemn or complain
2. Give honest, sincere appreciation
3. Arouse in the other person an eager want
4. Become genuinely interested in other people
5. Smile
6. Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound
7. Be a good listener
8. Talk in terms of the other person's interest
9. Make the other person feel important and do it sincerely
10. The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it
11. Show respect for the other person's opinion and never say, 'you're wrong'
12. If you are wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically
13. Begin in a friendly way
14. Get the other person saying 'yes, yes' immediately

15. Let the other person do a great deal of the talking
16. Let the other person feel that the idea is his or hers
17. Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view
18. Be sympathetic with the other person's ideas and desires
19. Appeal to the nobler motives
20. Dramatise your ideas
21. Throw down a challenge