

PART ONE: SELF-MANAGEMENT

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CHAPTER

01

TIME MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

Time management is about managing your time with a focus on achievement: of doing and completing those things which you want to do and which need doing.

Time management is goal-driven and results oriented. Success in time management is measured by the quality of both your work and your personal life.

Tempus Fugit

Whilst it is true to say that life only makes sense in retrospect, it can be shaped by your sense of time and purpose. In keeping with business planning, *time* planning – and your approach to the use of your time (and to the extent that you can influence it, how others spend their time) – should be to avoid the trap of failing to plan, which is, in effect, planning to fail. In other words, if time is money, spend it wisely.

Basic approach to time management

You need to be certain that you:

- can define your business role and know what constitutes a successful outcome
- spend time thinking and planning for yourself and others
- have a clear understanding of your business purpose
- know the balance you wish to achieve between your business and your private commitments (and can identify the time demands on both).

The Adair ten principles of time management

- 1 Develop a personal sense of time
- 2 Identify long-term goals
- 3 Make medium-term plans
- 4 Plan the day
- 5 Make the **best** use of your **best** time
- 6 Organise office work
- 7 Manage meetings
- 8 Delegate effectively
- 9 Make use of committed time
- 10 Manage your health

At all costs you should avoid falling into one of the following stereotypes:

- a poor delegator
- a bad organiser
- an excellent procrastinator
- a poor performer at meetings
- a purposeless executive.

Developing a personal sense of time

First audit how you spend your time, then analyse how you can improve your use of time.

Time audit

Keep a record (a daily time log) of where your time currently goes – break your day into fifteen minutes chunks for recording purposes. Do this for a week or so and review after each batch of three or four days.

Time Log

Date: July 14

8	0800	Opened post Discussed club outing John Jan - Dictation	1	1300	Lunch	
9	0900	Prepared for meeting	2	1400	Called to MD's office - Spoke to Val re holiday Booking holiday by phone Working on next years budget	
10	1000	Meeting with client	3	1500	Made telephone calls	
11	1100	Dealt with messages	4	1600	Last minute letter for post. Read article in press. Talked to George re stock plan	Keyline 10915
12	1200	Went to lunch	5	1700	Call from client chasing order. Chasing above order Started meeting report	
			6	1800	Went Home	

Subject	Time Spent
Planned meetings inc preparation	1 1/2 hrs
Unplanned / Informal meetings	1 1/2 hrs
Letters / messages / trouble shooting	2 1/4 hrs
Telephone	1 hr
Personal	1/2 hr
Writing	1/2 hr
Reading	1/2 hr
Planning	1/2 hr
Lunch	1 1/4 hr

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Peter Drucker's view is that only when we can manage time can we manage anything. In managing time we first need to know how we use it now and then change what and when we do things. Your time audit will probably confirm the findings of an IBM research which showed that the four activities that take up over 50% of the average executive's time are:

- 1 Meetings
- 2 Reading and writing business materials
- 3 Telephoning
- 4 Travelling.

Your time audit can identify these and others by using symbols ascribed to activities, for example:

M	Meetings (in committee form)
Mi	Meetings (in one-to-one interview form)
F	Finance and figure work
T	Telephone
E	Email
Wr	Writing (reports)
Wd	Writing letters or dictation
T	Travelling
R&D	Research and development (including reading, internet research, training and thinking)
AOB	Any other business activity (should be specified)

Your time log can then be summarised in the following format:

Activity	Time Spent (in hours)	% of time	Comment (how to save time from now on)

Research indicates that we make assumptions about where our time goes and over-estimate time spent on telephone calls, correspondence, report writing and planning, but under-estimate time spent on email and in meetings and one-to-one discussions. Keeping a record will confirm how you really spend your time and enable you to change how you spend it.

Analyse and improve your use of time

What elements can you readily identify which you can immediately change? Experience shows that improvements lie in changing the way you handle:

- interruptions (in person or by the telephone or email)
- meetings
- travel
- incoming/outgoing mail and email.

You can improve your use of time if you ensure that:

- 1 your time is spent according to a clear idea of your priorities and main responsibilities
- 2 you isolate the unimportant and ruthlessly prune out unnecessary or unproductive activities
- 3 you combine any 'free' time (ie free from meetings or other people's demands) to create meaningful and usable time of your own
- 4 tasks are simplified where others would not be adversely affected
- 5 you are not doing tasks which could be performed by others.

The balance of this chapter looks at how to ensure you improve your time management. The approach taken is to work from the long-term back to the immediate future, analysing your goals and giving time management tips on how to achieve them. (The approach works for both business and personal time management.)

Identifying long-term goals

First of all, it is necessary to define your organisation's purpose and the purpose of your job, ie to what end is your time being expended.

Then, long-term goals can be set in terms of the results that the organisation wishes to achieve (and your role as part of those goals being achieved).

Defining the purpose of your organisation requires an answer to the basic question: why does this organisation exist? You should be able to write this business purpose down:

Defining the purpose of your own job requires an answer to the question: why does my job exist? Again, you should be able to write this purpose down:

Identifying long-term goals, the strategy of your business and your part in it, will result from pondering these questions:

Where	are we now? do we want to be in 3 or 5 year's time?
What	strengths and weaknesses do we have?
How	can we improve? can we get to where we want to be?

These same questions can be applied to your personal life.

The answers to these questions will help you identify long-term goals. The longer the timeframe the more fuzzy the goals become, so you should then reduce your field of vision to focus on tangible, attainable, definable and measurable goals, but not lose sight of the far ground.

You should reach a point where you can be clear about long-term aims/directions and medium, or short-term goals/objectives which will be met and which will be part of a plan to continue on the road of achieving your longer-term aspirations.

Making medium-term plans

Your key areas of responsibility (and how your performance will be measured) should be listed and for each you must set objectives with time budgeted for each.

	Key area of responsibility	Objectives for each area of responsibility	Time budgeted to achieve each objective	Review of objective achievements
1	a	a	a	a
	b	b	b	b
	c	c	c	c
2	a	a	a	a
	b	b	b	b
	c	c	c	c

3	a			
	b			
	c			


4	a			
	b			
	c			

5	a			
	b			
	c			

The review of objective achievement (the measure of your performance) should be at the intervals you have budgeted for each (eg 3, 6 or 12 months).

Smarter objectives

As a test of your objective-setting skills, remember they need to be **Smarter**, to the power of two, ie **Smarter²** :

S pecific		S trategic
M easurable		M eaningful
A greed		A ttainable
R ealistic		R ewarding
T ime-bounded		T eambuilding
E valuated		E mpowering
R eviewed		R ewarding

Part of all this is to set out clear ways in which time management can be improved in the short to medium-term. A 'Time Norm' form can help here.

Task/activity/procedure	Time taken now	Target time

When measuring and assessing improvements you cannot lose sight of the cost and quality dimension. Time improvements should not compromise standards set for those elements. Real improvement comes from keeping all three at whatever is decided are the acceptable levels.

Being successful in making medium-term plans requires you to:

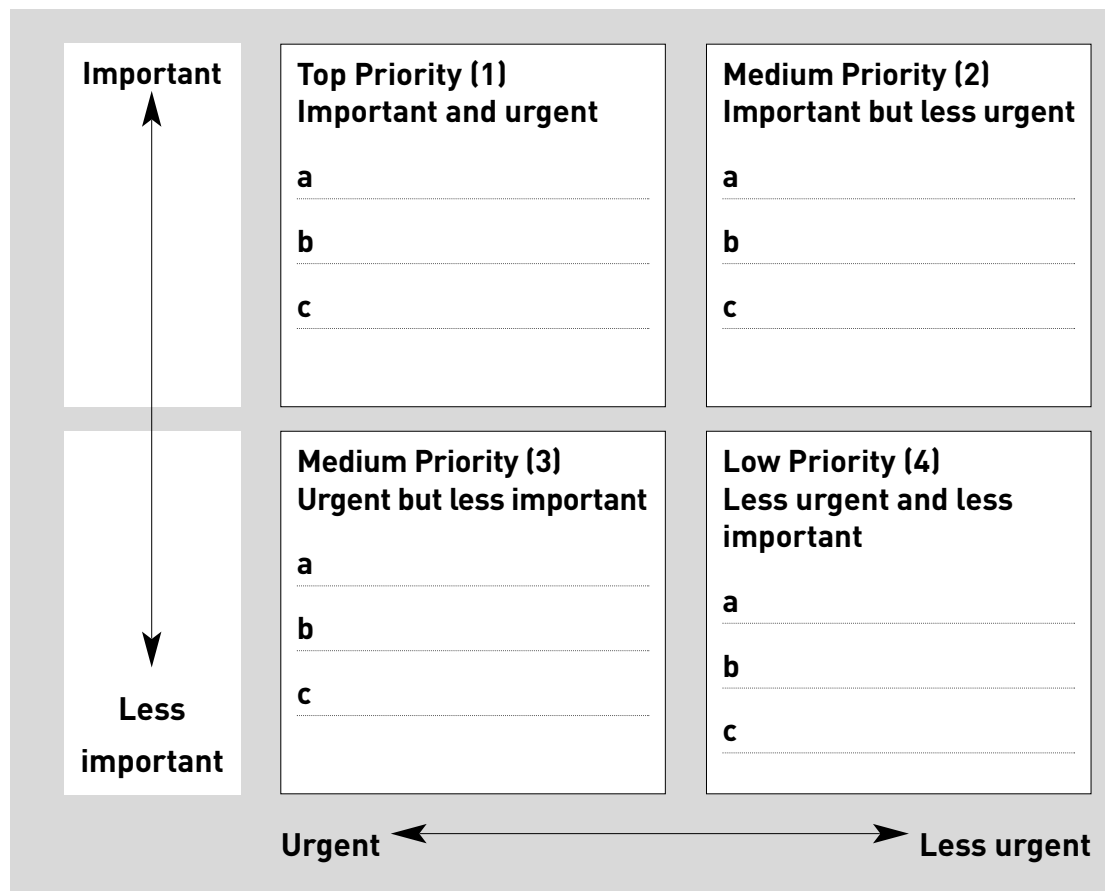
- know the context (the longer-term) in which you operate and how the medium and longer-term goals are linked
- be able to plan and implement activity
- set clear objectives and review progress toward them on a regular basis
- be flexible and adaptable to change in order to stay on course to meet objectives (unless you have changed those, too!)

Planning the day

The golden rule is to plan an outline for each day a week ahead, but plan for the day in detail the day/evening before it, or at the beginning of it.

In setting your programme for the day you need to establish **priorities** related to **urgency** and **importance**. If you then spend time according to how you have set your priorities, you will have addressed the important jobs – that is the art of time management.

The Adair urgency/importance matrix



In the matrix you can identify tasks to:

- 1 do now
- 2 plan for (to use quality time)
- 3 do quickly (not requiring quality time)
- 4 do later or perhaps delegate.

This approach has also been called the Four-D system:

Drop it, Delay it, Delegate it or Do it.

You should shape your plan for the day by listing the various components, prioritising them and planning the time accordingly.

Your plan of action for the day should follow these rules:

- Make your plan at the end of the previous day or at the start of each day (whichever best suits you) enabling you to assess any unfinished work, together with upcoming priorities
- List the main elements (in relation to yesterday's, today's and the week's plans)
- Prioritise those main elements and identify tasks according to the matrix 1, 2, 3 and 4 above
- Group items together (eg telephone calls, correspondence)
- Decide when you will do the top priority tasks and block time out to do them
- Decide on remaining tasks (and share your plan with assistants/staff as relevant).

At a very basic level your list should also include your own system for identifying what **must** be done today, **should** be done today and what **might** be done today.

During the course of the day, regularly ask yourself whether you have changed priorities deliberately or whether you need to get back on course and tackle what remain as being prioritised activities.

Think of any daily list as a kind of shopping list – how are you going to feel going home without an item being ticked off as done?

However, do not be fixed and inflexible, provided you have managed your time and time has not mismanaged you.

Tips on daily planning

Tips on day-to-day planning and your programme centre on whether you are achieving at least your main priority activities.

If you are not, then consider:

- Are you unrealistic in trying to do too much?
- Were you unprepared (ie not ready) at the time you set to do the task?
- Was the task ill-defined?
- Did you find decision-making difficult (generally or for the task in question)?
- Were you lacking certain information?
- Is the neglect caused by too much time pressure?
- Did you 'give up' because of difficulty or boredom?

You should test whether your time budget made sense to start with, but if it did, then experience shows that the most common problem is interruptions. The most successful solution to interruptions is to learn to say 'No', remembering at the same time to be ruthless with time, but gracious with people.

Making the best use of your best time

You have certain times of the day when you perform consistently better than at other times. The Pareto Principle (which states that **significant** items of a given group form a relatively small part of the **total**) applies and 20% of your time produces 80% of your best quality output.

In making the best use of your best time, ie when you think straighter and are more alert, you need to know which part of your typical day it is that you can best perform certain types of task. Decide and plan activities accordingly.

You should be able to answer these questions. Are you:

- a morning, afternoon or evening person?
- aware that short-term memory is better in the morning?
- using the morning for words and figure work, when most people perform such work better than at other times?
- aware that we reach peak alertness at noon, or that we are manually more dextrous in the afternoon?

Planning breaks into your day (for coffee, lunch, walking around the office/factory to meet people) will help you to work in concentrated bursts. Creativity as well as in-depth work can be improved by managing your best times to do, or think about, the appropriate task. Be selfish about when and how you spend time on planned activities. Do not be afraid to work at unusual times if you find that it suits you, does not inconvenience others and is more productive.

Organising office work

The two key consumers of time are interruptions and paperwork. To learn how to be the victor rather than victim of these two thieves of time, you should follow these guidelines:

Dealing with interruptions

- Meet people in their office whenever you can (you control your leaving time)
- Stand rather than sit for casual visitors (this controls length of stay)
- Keep a focus on time (mention the time you have available, refer to your next meeting and have a visible and watched clock)
- Stick to the point and avoid butterfly flying from main topic to unrelated ones
- Be firm in a pleasant way.

Dealing with paperwork/email

- Do you see only what you should?
- Do you remove extraneous items?
- Do you handle items only once? (This one idea is known to save up to one hour per day or 220 hours a year!)
- Do you prioritise items (into action, information, reading, or for the wastebin/trash)?
- Do you limit the amount of paperwork and emails that you generate for others?
- Can you pick out salient points quickly and know when to skip read or read in-depth?

Other elements to improve your time management in the office

- 1 Arrange your office or office space for ease of work, comfort and efficiency. Few people give this any thought at all.
- 2 Clear desk policy – concentration is helped by doing one thing at a time so your desk should only have on it, the specific job that you are tackling at the time.
- 3 Write effectively, keeping it short and simple by thinking of the main point first and ordering your thoughts for logical expression.
- 4 Telephone – keep a log to see how time efficient you are now! Then get used to **planning** for each call you make (the salient points you want to make); **grouping** incoming and outgoing calls (usually for the end of the day when people are less verbose); and use a timer (eg an egg timer – to keep all calls to a maximum of four minutes). Do not be afraid to put a block on incoming calls to reduce interruptions.
- 5 Email – don't send them unless they are absolutely necessary; indicate clearly where action is required or where they are for information only; handle items at a time to suit you; keep in-box for current items only; handle spam so that it does not swamp you; and do not use if a telephone call would be better.
- 6 If you have an assistant, use him or her to deal with or to redirect (helpfully) any mail or callers (whether in person or on the telephone), where he/she or someone else could better deal with them. Strive for excellence not perfection, through your assistant.

Managing meetings

A Time Lord's approach to meetings is to confront three main issues:

- Is the meeting strictly necessary at all?
- How much time (particularly mine) is it worth?
- Will it run to time?

You must always have a clear idea of how much a meeting costs (in people's time, including your own) and whether it is worth it in results. For example, typical costs might be:

Salary p.a.	Per hour cost	Per day cost
£100,000	£60	£420
£50,000	£30	£210
£25,000	£15	£105
£12,500	£7.50	£52.50

(These figures are only based on salary levels and exclude overheads, to say nothing of the opportunity costs of attending meetings rather than spending time on other productive tasks.)

What then are the hallmarks of the successful manager of meetings?

- Meetings are planned ahead (who should attend and with the agenda and any useful papers being circulated in advance)
- Times for each item and of the meeting itself are set in advance (and adhered to)
- Minutes are concise and action-oriented (with responsibilities allocated)
- There is clarity of outcomes(s) (shared by all)

- Meetings are reviewed constantly for effectiveness
- The focus is on the positive
- You are a successful umpire and referee.

Before holding any meeting, ask yourself these five questions:

- 1 *Why* are we meeting?
- 2 *What* would be the result of not having the meeting, or *what* should result from having it?
- 3 *Who* should attend?
- 4 *How* long should it be and *how* should it be structured?
- 5 *When* is the best time to hold it?

You cannot ban all meetings, so you must manage them to get the best results. To do this you need to identify the type of meeting:

The Adair

five types of meeting

- 1 Briefing meetings**
to impart and share information, to clarify points and incorporate ideas from others
- 2 Advisory meetings**
to gather views and advice and to outline or share any ideas
- 3 'Council' meetings**
to make and share responsibility for decisions, resolving differences on the way
- 4 Committee meetings**
to 'vote' decisions and reach compromises/ accommodations of different views on matters of common concern
- 5 Negotiating meetings**
to reach decisions by bargaining with other party(ies) who are acting in their own best interest

You should decide what each type of meeting you are to be involved with actually is and plan to run each type as time efficiently as possible depending on their purpose.

Being aware of the cost of meetings will focus the mind and planning will focus your actions. Minutes to record actions agreed and responsibilities should be in a form to give ease of follow-up and subsequent checking.