

Time Management Essentials

To do list

- I A daily to do list of what must be achieved today if you are not to lose track of your goals and important tasks.
- I Not a tail of woe list.
- I Make up your list at the same time each week and day. E.g. Monday a.m you plan in the tasks you must complete this week and set aside sufficient time in your diary / schedule.
- I Daily to do lists should be made up at the same time either last thing or first thing.
- I Of course need some flexibility to account for unexpected demands
- I Use some means of setting priorities so that you get around to the key tasks first.

Priorities

- I Whatever works for you
- I Should balance the urgent with the important and not focus solely on the urgent.
- I A, B ,C – must should and could
- I C drawer - get them out of site as they are often fun or interesting to do. Every so often get them out of the draw and throw them away.
- I Priorities are likely to change. What was a C may move up to an A and vice versa. Need to keep your list frequently appraised
- I Remember Pareto – assign the greater part of your time to the most important aspects of your job

Paper Work

- I Achieve and stick to a clear desk policy. Get the distracting items out of your eyeline and away from temptation. This includes in trays etc. Will allow you to focus. Look at many really effective senior managers and see how clear their desks are. It is not because they have little to do.....!
- I Have a reading file if there are things to read. Choose a good time to read – travel, waiting for meetings etc.
- I Handle paper only once! So hard to do but it is possible. File it, pass it on, action it, approve it, add your hand written comments as a reply, bin it. Worst thing you can do is pick it up, read it and then put it down again. You will pick it and do the same on average five times until you have done something with it!
- I Mail – sort into categories and not just types (Internal memos, Flyers, CV's etc) If there is an over riding A amongst them get on with it. If there are C mail items put them away.
- I Set up a meaningful file system for you / your team. They may even stop coming to you if they can find it for themselves.
- I In tray and other items away from the desk and out of you temptation!
- I Get off mailing lists unless vital.
- I Read in your own time to encourage rapidity!
- I Try speed reading techniques.

The same goes for '**e mail**'!!! Can find the immediacy of e mail can start to take over your life. Only check it twice a day. Action items as A B C and work on accordingly.

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Work in the reverse order of liking.

- I All too often the important tasks are hard to start / hard to complete in comparison to the tasty C tasks that clamour your attention.
- I Some people say that to start the day with a few successes sets them up for the rest of the day. Lets face it, this is a highly efficient means of procrastination; you are avoiding the big job by doing little ones. Don't put it off start the day with the big task and see how motivated you feel then!!

Time Fillers

- I There will be gaps in your day when it is not possible to start an A task. For these occasions a stock of C tasks to act as time fillers is useful. Boss is coming to see you in ten minutes. You are going to lunch with colleagues in five minutes etc etc.
- I Not an excuse to do trivial but tasty small tasks but one way of filling the gaps in the day. Think of a jar and selection of pebbles. If you put the big pebbles in first it is always possible to add a little more sand around them. Putting all the sand in first does NOT have the same result.

Plan your time

- I Always, always plan your time. How you do it is not important. Diary, Filofax, Palm organiser, computer etc. Memory is perhaps the last resort. The actual tool is unimportant you and your perseverance will make it work.
- I Plan daily, weekly and monthly so that your goals are not overlooked and you are not over worked.
- I With a plan it is possible to see where potential conflicts are likely to come e.g. completion of the annual budget at the same time as planned shut down.
- I Leave some slack it isn't a military campaign!
- I Block in time with yourself and stick to it as if it were an appointment with someone else.
- I Set routine times for mail etc so that it becomes a habit.
- I Work when and where best to suit yourself.
- I Set "quiet times". May have to negotiate with others to really succeed. Can even work in "pig pens"

Delegate

- I Look at the tasks you have. Which of these must you (and no one else) do? Ask yourself why you do not delegate – often the reasons are centred around our liking of the job.
- I Any job that you do and which **could** have been delegated takes you away from a task that you should really have been doing.

Eliminate Time Stealers – Interruptions

- I Don't sit facing the door, as people will catch your eye as they go past.
- I Close your door when busy or signify that you are deep in thought / work etc. Post it note at eye level on the door saying when you will be free.

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- I Explain that now is not a good time for a social chat and suggest that they come back at finishing time – they don't!
- I When a visitor comes in stand up and go to greet them. It is easier to use your body language to manage them out of the door. If it is important of course let them sit down.
- I Don't have a visitors chair or keep things on it to discourage visitors from taking up residence.
- I Go to the photo copier
- I Explain you are very busy and arrange to continue in their office later. This way you can decide when to leave.

Same goes for the phone.

- I Let people know when you prefer non-urgent calls
- I Trade calls with someone else when you need quality thinking time
- I Call them back if it looks as if the conversation will take longer than you have available.
- I Say you have only two minutes before your next appointment.
- I Stand up, you will be more assertive and take less time over the phone call.

Invest time to make time

- I There are no quick routes to success. You must make the time to be able to apply these and other techniques. It is akin to oiling the wheels on your bike. It in itself takes time but will result in you being able to go faster in the end.
- I 10 minutes to day might earn you 30 minutes tomorrow. Be diligent and stick at it! If you can save yourself 30 minutes a day it is the same as having an extra 3 weeks a year. Only you can make the difference.

What is the best use of my time right now?

- I Ask yourself this regularly. Have you strayed onto a C task and away from you're a job?
- I Don't be caught in the activity trap – the feeling that you have to be doing something. Planning and thinking may well be the best use of your time.

Do it now

- I The reasons for procrastination are many: not sure where to start, how to start, previous bad experiences, etc etc.
- I Use techniques for getting under way or getting moving again when stuck.
- I Just because you have put it off doesn't mean that it will go away. Unfortunately, they just have habit of going from important to critical if you leave them. It is a real cause of stress and one that on many occasions we can avoid.
- I As soon as you see or suspect yourself of procrastination, get a grip.
- I Keep your goals list in sight; is your delaying really helping you achieve your goals?