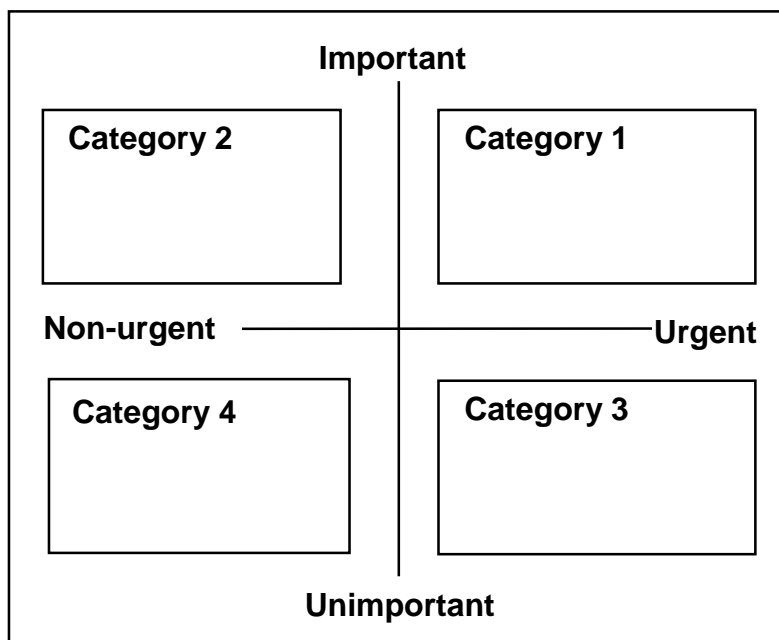


The Time Quadrant Matrix

Not every task we are asked to undertake will have the same level of urgency or importance as the others. It is possible to represent this graphically as the chart below shows.



Quadrant I

Represents things that are both "urgent" and "important." Here's where we handle an irate client, meet a deadline, repair a broken-down machine, undergo heart surgery, or help a crying child who has been hurt. We need to spend time in Quadrant I. This is where we manage, where we produce, where we bring our experience and judgment to bear in responding to many needs and challenges. If we ignore it, we become buried alive. But we also need to realise that many important activities become urgent through procrastination, or because we don't do enough prevention and planning.

Quadrant II

Includes activities that are "important, but not urgent." This is the quadrant of quality. Here's where we do our long-range planning, anticipate and prevent problems, empower others, broaden our minds and increase our skills through reading and continuous professional development, envision how we're going to help a struggling son or daughter, prepare for important meetings and presentations, or invest in relationships through deep, honest listening. Increasing time spent in this quadrant increases our ability to do. Ignoring this quadrant feeds and enlarges Quadrant I, creating stress, burnout, and deeper crises for the person consumed by it. On the other hand, investing in this quadrant shrinks Quadrant I. Planning,

preparation, and prevention keep many things from becoming urgent. Quadrant II does not act on us; we must act on it. This is the quadrant of personal leadership.

Quadrant III

This is almost the phantom of Quadrant I. It includes things that are "urgent, but not important." This is the quadrant of deception. The noise of urgency creates the illusion of importance. But the actual activities, if they're important at all, are only important to someone else. Many phone calls, meetings, and drop-in visitors fall into this category. We spend a lot of time in Quadrant III meeting other people's priorities and expectations, thinking we're really in Quadrant I.

Quadrant IV

This is reserved for those activities that are "not urgent and not important." This is the quadrant of waste. Of course, we really shouldn't be there at all. But we get so battle-scarred from being tossed around in Quadrants I and III that we often "escape" to Quadrant IV for survival. What kinds of things are in Quadrant IV? Not necessarily recreational things, because recreation in the true sense of re-creation is a valuable Quadrant II activity. But reading addictive light novels, habitually watching "mindless" television shows, or gossiping around the water fountain at the office would qualify as Quadrant IV time wasters. Quadrant IV is not survival; it's deterioration. It may have an initial cotton candy feel, but we quickly find there's nothing there.

Stephen Covey "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People"

Review your last few days and the activities with which you have been involved.

"Are you being ruled by the urgent or are you able to give the truly important issues sufficient time"?