

### Time Management

Time management includes tools or techniques for planning and scheduling time, usually with the aim to increase the effectiveness and/or efficiency of personal and corporate time use.

Time management strategies are usually associated with the recommendation to set goals. These goals are written down and broken down into a project, an action plan or a simple To do list. Deadlines are set and priorities are assigned to the individual items on the to-do-list. This process results in a daily plan with a to-do-list.

A **task list** (also to-do list) is a list of tasks to be completed, such as chores or steps toward completing a project. It is an inventory tool that serves as an alternative to memory.

Task lists are used in self-management, grocery lists, business management, project management, and software development. It may involve more than one list.

When you accomplish one of the items on a task list, you check it off or cross it off. The traditional method is to write these on a piece of paper with a pen or pencil, usually on a note pad or clip-board. Numerous software equivalents are now available, and many popular e-mail clients include task list applications, as do most PDAs. There are also several web-based task list applications, many of which are free.

Task lists are often prioritized:

- ABC prioritization is a system where "A" items were the most important, "B" next most important, "C" least important.
- A particular method of applying the ABC method assigns "A" to tasks to be done within a day, "B" a week, and "C" a month.
- To prioritize a daily task list, one either records the tasks in the order of highest priority, or assigns them a number after they are listed ("1" for highest priority, "2" for second highest priority, etc.) which indicates in which order to execute the tasks. The latter method is generally faster, allowing the tasks to be recorded more quickly.

### The four generations of time management

Stephen R. Covey offers a categorization scheme for the hundreds of time management approaches that are available today.

#### First generation: reminders

Post-it notes, and memos

#### Second generation: planning and preparation

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People in the second generation use calendars and appointment books. They will note where meetings are held and identify deadlines; this is sometimes even done on a computer. As opposed to the first generation, the second generation plans and prepares, schedules future appointments, and sets goals. This in turn saves their time.

### **Third generation: planning, prioritizing, controlling**

Third generation time managers prioritize their activities on a daily basis. They tend to use detailed forms of daily planning on a computer or on a paper-based organizer. This approach implies spending some time in clarifying values and priorities.

### **Fourth generation: being efficient and proactive**

The 4th generation of time management and emphasizes the difference between urgency and importance in planning. For example: some people may go their entire lives completely missing out on important things (like spending time with their children before they have grown up) because it was never "urgent." The point is not to ignore urgent things, but to embrace important things without waiting for them to become urgent.

Urgency can be deceptive. It can make some unimportant things appear to be important. Also, making time for important things may require spending less time on unimportant things, regardless of their urgency.

## **Techniques for setting priorities**

### **ABC analysis**

A technique that has been used in business management for a long time is the categorization of large data into groups. These groups are often marked A, B, and C—hence the name. Activities that are perceived as having highest priority are assigned an A, those with lowest priority are labeled C. ABC analysis can incorporate more than three groups. ABC analysis is frequently combined with Pareto analysis.

### **Pareto analysis**

This is the idea that 80% of tasks can be completed in 20% of the disposable time. The remaining 20% of tasks will take up 80% of the time. This principle is used to sort tasks into two parts. According to this form of Pareto analysis it is recommended that tasks that fall into the first category be assigned a higher priority. The 80-20-rule can also be applied to increase productivity: it is assumed that 80% of the productivity can be achieved by doing 20% of the tasks. If productivity is the aim of time management, then these tasks should be prioritized higher.

### **Fit**

The concept of fit is simple yet profound. Essentially, fit is the congruence of the requirements of a task (location, financial investment, time, etc.) with the available

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resources at the time. Often people are constrained by externally controlled schedules, locations, etc., and "fit" allows us to maximize our productivity given those constraints. For example, if one encounters a gap of 15 minutes in their schedule, it is typically more efficient to complete a task that would require 15 minutes, than to complete a task that can be done in 5 minutes, or to start a task that would take 4 weeks. This concept also applies to time of the day: free time at 7am is probably less usefully applied to the goal of learning the drums, and more productively a time to read a book. Lastly, fit can be applied to location: free time at home would be used differently from free time at work, in town, etc.

### **POSEC METHOD**

POSEC is an acronym for Prioritize by Organizing, Streamlining, Economizing and Contributing. The method dictates a template which emphasises an average individual's immediate sense of emotional and monetary security. It suggests that by attending to one's personal responsibilities first, an individual is better positioned to shoulder collective responsibilities.

1. PRIORITIZE-Your time and define your life goals by.
2. ORGANIZING-Things you have to accomplish regularly to be successful. (Family and Finances)
3. STREAMLINING-Things you may not like to do, but must do. (Work and Chores)
4. ECONOMIZING-Things you should do or may even like to do, but they're not pressingly urgent. (Past-times and Socializing)
5. CONTRIBUTING-By paying attention to the few remaining things that make a difference. (Social Obligations)

### **Eisenhower-Method**

This method was used by US President Dwight D. Eisenhower. All tasks are evaluated using the criteria important/unimportant and urgent/not urgent and put in according quadrants. Tasks in unimportant/not urgent are dropped, tasks in important/urgent are done immediately and personally, tasks in unimportant/urgent are delegated and tasks in important/not urgent get an end date and are done personally.

### **Procrastination**

The word *Procrastinate* comes from the Latin word *procrastinatus*: pro- (forward) and *crastinus* (of tomorrow).

Procrastination is a type of avoidance behaviour which is characterised by deferment of actions or tasks to a later time. It is often cited by psychologists as a mechanism for coping with the anxiety associated with starting or completing any task or decision. For the person procrastinating this may result in stress, a sense of guilt, the loss of productivity, the creation of crisis, and the chagrin of others for not fulfilling one's

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responsibilities or commitments. While it is normal for individuals to procrastinate to some degree, it becomes a problem when it impedes normal functioning. Chronic procrastination may be a sign of an underlying psychological or physiological disorder.

### Class Activity

Look at the list of action items and use one of the time management methods to prioritise them.

- Go to the dentist for a check-up
- Pay this months phone bill
- Get a new mobile phone top-up card
- Buy food for tomorrows breakfast
- Start the assignment that is due next Friday
- Read chapter 2 of your text book before next lesson
- Check email
- Finish and print assignment that is due in two days
- Check cinema times for tomorrow night (for a date with a 'friend')
- Phone home
- Get a haircut
- Buy a new battery for your alarm clock
- Check your bank balance
- Go to the supermarket
- Decide which bar/club you will go to on Friday night
- Complete a scholarship application form for 40,000 Baht

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#### *Judgers/Perceivers:*

Time management is primarily a judger/perceiver issue. The authors contend that when it comes to time management, it's a judgers' world. Js have their homework done on time, their projects done on schedule. In a time-conscious society, people who are slave to their clocks get ahead. People who are constantly late are said to "have problems with authority." Unfortunately, society's J preoccupation with time sometimes leads to poor results. The authors cite a hard-core Js slogan as: "We don't have time to get it right. We only have time to do it over."

In groups, judgers need perceivers to help them avoid being overly rigid and compulsive. Ps help Js stay open to creative solutions. Js, in turn, help Ps complete a project in a realistic time frame.

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### *Introverts/Extraverts:*

Introverts are usually perceived as being better time managers because thinking about a problem or issue takes less time than talking about it. Extraverts, through their need for constant engagement, use up their own time as well as that of others.

To work effectively, Is need to realize that at some point, they have to talk: to let the rest of the group in on their thoughts. Conversely, Es need to stop talking at some point and start listening. Is and Es need to periodically schedule breaks in discussions and work to give I's time to reflect and recharge.

### *Sensors/Intuitives:*

Sensors perceive a minute as sixty seconds; Intuitives perceive time as what you make of it. This often leads to misunderstandings and hard feelings. When working together, S's and In's must learn to accommodate each other. Sensors must be flexible in realizing "an hour meeting" might sometimes mean 90 minutes. Intuitives, on the other hand, must realize that they sometimes must stick to a time-exact schedule.

### *Thinkers/Feelers:*

Thinkers schedule their time based on the day's priorities, regardless of the nature of the tasks. Feelers set up their schedules according to the people with whom they will interact throughout the day. Feelers will usually avoid conflict, putting off unpleasant meetings, such as an employee reprimand. It is important to remember that both preferences are valid. If you alienate half of your staff in the name of getting things done, your day might be classified as less than successful. On the other hand, you need to do more in a day than making everyone happy; you need to get work done.

### *Additional Time Management Tips:*

- Everyone procrastinates around their non-preferences. If a group member keeps putting off a certain kind of job, he or she might need some support.
- Everyone has a natural preference toward controlling time or adapting to it. Usually, people who tend to try to control time need to be a little more adaptive; and adapters need to try to be a bit more controlling.
- People won't change. Adapters will never become controllers; perceivers will never become judges. However, people do have the ability to make adjustments to try and better accommodate other personality types.