

Time Management

Information for the Leadership Advisory Board



We know that we only have so many hours available in a day and so many weeks in a year and so many years in a lifespan. What happens when you don't make the best of your time? Most likely, you wake up and wonder what if I would have spent more time...with my family or relaxing. If you don't make the most out of every second of every day, chances are time will pass you by quicker than you could have imagined and you've accomplished less than you had planned.

Essentially life is about how you spend your time and where you place your priorities. The key to time management is not to work harder or longer than everyone else. The key is to work smarter, set goals, and prioritize. Individually, you need to determine what's important in your life by visioning, writing goals, and taking action towards achieving those goals.

There are three approaches to time management. The first approach is increasing the amount of available time. This involves you stretching the hours you work each day, as much as possible. When taken to extremes, this approach can result in fatigue, lack of efficiency, and sometimes even depression. The second approach of time management is doing more work in the time you have available, packing even more work into your day. This method likely results in high stress and burnout. The third approach calls for prioritizing your work and doing only the work that is important in the time you have available. This method is action oriented and is clearly the most effective method for managing time.

Stephen Covey designed a time management matrix to help people manage themselves through prioritizing tasks. He emphasized that you have to decide what is important to do and you have to decide which things are urgent and which can wait.

The matrix consists of four quadrants. In Quadrant I the tasks are urgent and important. They include crises, pressing problems, and deadline driven projects. These activities should take first priority. They need to be dealt with immediately and they are important. In the long term, time spent here should be minimized with the use of prevention and preparation from Quadrant II.

In Quadrant II the tasks are not urgent but important and they include prevention, preparation, relationship building, recognizing new opportunities, planning, values clarification, and true recreation. The activities in this quadrant need to be your focus. You should begin to prioritize the activities that fall into this category. If you are not currently spending much time here, start slowly and build upon it.

Quadrant III tasks are urgent and not important and include interruptions, many pressing matters, some phone calls, some mail, some email, some reports, some meetings, and many popular activities. Activities in this quadrant are often the result of someone else's sense of urgency and if you allow your priorities to fall here, you will feel rushed to get things done, followed by a lack of satisfaction. These tasks are distractions!

In Quadrant IV the tasks are not urgent and not important. They include trivia, busywork, some phone calls, junk mail, time wasters, and escape activities. Activities in this quadrant are simply a waste of time! You should strive to minimize the amount of time you spend on activities falling into this category.

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We all know of people who seem like they get more life out of the time they have. Well, they are wise time managers who have mastered the skills of prioritizing tasks, setting goals, delegation and scheduling personal time. Through practice, these skills can become a part of your daily life.