



## Time Management 101

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**Time Management.** An interesting concept, and a topic that Solutions EAP is asked to present fairly often in a workshop format. It occurs to me that what employers are really interested in, is productivity. To actually manage time is an oxymoron, as time really can't be managed in the way we would like to think it could. We're just not that omnipotent. Helping people manage themselves so that they become more efficient at completing their work in a timely fashion seems to be a much more doable concept.

Time management has always amused me because I happen to excel at procrastination, and yet have memorized, and present time management techniques. However, one needs to implement these wonderful tools and techniques in order to "manage the time". Time continues to pass all around the world without regard or reference as to what we individually are doing at any given moment. Often people claim to just need "more time to get all this done". Actually there is more time; just keeps on ticking away.



I find "time management" to be somewhat like dieting. Not all things work for everyone, and the only way they work is if we are willing to be diligent at managing ourselves and accept the responsibility that it takes real effort to actually implement changes in our lives. If you are not pre-destined to be the multi-tasker of the century, the tips outlined in the next few weeks should help. Accepting that sometimes you may fail even with the best effort also allows you to not give up, but to try again, and maybe re-examine what other changes need to be made to successfully feel the sense of accomplishment. With that being said.... now here's where we actually explore the possibility of getting more done in less time.



The next couple of weeks I will outline the use of LISTS, how to make them and use them. The great "Blackberry", palm pilots and general planners designed to save us time as we micro manage ourselves to the second. Delegating some of the "To do's" on the list. The need for advance preparation to achieve these tasks. And finally, honestly examining if you are being realistic in your goals, trying to overachieve, or just making excuses on why nothing gets done!

*"Time may change me, but I can't trace time..." David Bowie*

*"Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that's the stuff life is made of"*  
*Benjamin Franklin*

Have you ever heard of the "FranklinCovey" personal planning systems? Well, they originated from the outstanding organizational skills that Ben implemented in his daily life. Needless to

say, he seems to have accomplished more in his lifetime than I expect I might in mine. However, this is not a discouraging fact, simply one to add inspiration to the motivation for getting things done.

In order to be a successful “manager of time”, we need to begin with ourselves and develop realistic expectations of what we plan to accomplish. As is the case for most personal accomplishments, our attitudes are extremely important in achieving our goals. Our expectations need to be clear and honest, removing the tendency to blame extraneous circumstances for our shortcomings.

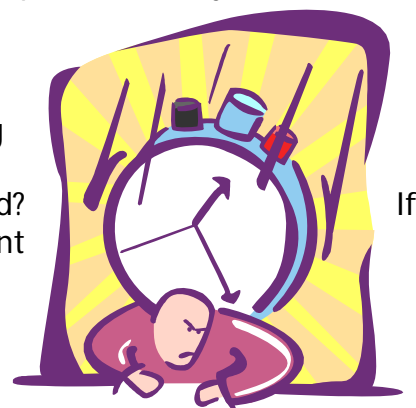
### STEP ONE: ESTABLISH THE GOAL

There are two things to consider here. Your goal should remain constant, but the objectives and activities to achieve the goal can be flexible. Consider the whole picture. Renovating the house is a bit too broad. Keep it simple, like “finish marketing strategy for pincushions by 8/15/06”.

### STEP TWO: PLANNING - PRIORITIZE THE STEPS

*“Planning is everything. Plans are nothing” von Moltke*

One technique is to categorize the activities into 3 groups of varying importance. The planning part should include subgroups of WHO, WHAT, WHEN AND WHERE. For example, Can anything be delegated? so to whom and when. Do I have all the necessary tools or equipment to get the task done? Have I accounted for conflicts with schedules, time frames etc? Next, assign the amount of time given to each item and stick to it.



Although these steps can be time consuming up front, the amount of time saved by not having to “wing it” makes up for the outcome and the reduced stress! Remember, your attitude has everything to do with how you perceive time. *“In explaining his theory of relativity, Albert Einstein is quoted as saying that although sitting next to a pretty girl for an hour feels like a minute, placing one’s hand on a hot stove for a minute feels like an hour.”*(en.wikipedia.org)

**Procrastination:** “A hardening of the oughteries”, or, “Why put off today what you can put off again tomorrow?” Well, actually the definition is “the deferment or avoidance of an action or task which requires completion by focusing on some other action or task”. (Wikipedia)

There are 1440 minutes in each day. Many of us are not exactly productive for many of them in the way we think we “should”, or “ought” to be. This is where we tend to become overwhelmed, or “stressed out”. As I mentioned earlier in this series, how we manage time depends almost entirely on how we manage ourselves. Many people are known for their ability to waste time, while others seem to be able to accomplish a phenomenal amount in the same time frame.

Being a procrastinator doesn’t necessarily equate to being lazy. Some people have cycles of slower productivity, and then are revved up by the impending deadline. They end up getting everything done, but perhaps the toll it takes operating in that mode is what is annoying or limiting for them. We each have to decide what role procrastination plays in our lives, and then make a plan to respond accordingly if we actually do desire to change our habit. Most of us need to acknowledge this fact, and then we can change our habits that limit our own productivity.

There are many reasons why we procrastinate. These differ for everyone. Some of the most common forms of procrastinating are:

**PSYCHOLOGICAL:** These include:

- Unpleasant aspects of the task
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Perfectionism
- Confusion and poor organizational skills
- Fear
- Anger and Hostility
- Not understanding your priorities
- Monotony and boredom fatigue
- Not taking responsibility for your actions, relying on others
- Insufficient information and resources
- Anxiety and depression

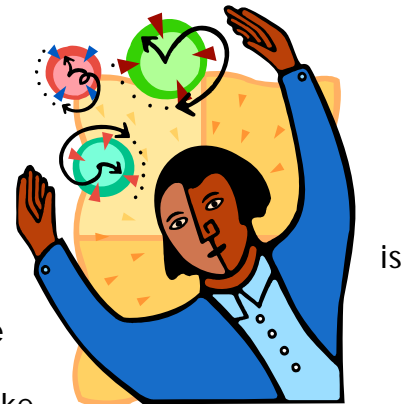
**PHYSIOLOGICAL:**

This mostly includes research done on the role of the frontal cortex of the brain. Damage and low activation are factors here. (Strub, R.L.1989 Archives of Neurology)

*"Most of the stress people feel doesn't come from having too much to do, it comes from not having finished what they started." David Allen*

*"Procrastination is the thief of time" Edward Young (1683-1765)*

Time management as I have mentioned, is really about self-management. People who are naturally gifted with this talent, are not reading articles on how to become effective at it, they are doing it! Last week I presented a synopsis about procrastination. It most imperative that individuals first understand why they are not successful in their time management quest, and then eliminate those behaviors and habits that are preventing them from reaching their goals. All the Blackberry planners and lists won't help if we don't make the effort to first admit that we need to actually do some changing ourselves. Hopefully, if you are motivated to change, you read the list and honestly evaluated where and how you "waste" time. Overcoming procrastination delivers a sense of empowerment and personal freedom. Some of us like to say that we procrastinate because we work best under pressure. Actually, we are working under pressure because we have no choice. TIME IS UP!!!! Progress may be the result, but only because we have lost the freedom to choose how and when we will work on the situation at hand. Remembering back two weeks, essential factors of time management include the three P's. PLANNING, PRIORITIZING, & PREPERATION. Procrastination has the effect of reinforcing our negative attitude toward the task. This is negativity that will hinder your best efforts. This week, when you find yourself feeling frazzled or "stressed out" and overwhelmed, think about the self-talk going on in your head. Then, stop it, and begin telling yourself the benefits of not belaboring the mess your in. Only you have the power to change your thoughts.



*"Even if you're on the right track- you'll get run over if you just sit there" Arthur Godfrey*

*“The more a person is able to direct his life consciously, the more he can use time for constructive benefits.” (Rollo May)*

If you will recall, self-management is the key factor in “time management”. Until an individual is committed to obtaining results by practicing new skills and habits toward incurring these changes, the lists, nifty planners and gadgets merely become part of the old time management style of “procrastination into action”.

While reviewing the following “Time Management “ techniques, remember that your positive attitude and an honest and realistic approach will help to fulfill your goals.

### The 3 P’s of Time Management: Plan, Prioritize and Prepare.



1. PLAN AHEAD: Getting started is closer to getting finished. Stop procrastinating and become pro-active in the plan. Make it happen, don't wait for it to happen.
2. Identify your goals. The results you hope to achieve are broken down into categories of objectives which are the basic steps needed to achieve the goal. Objectives indicate what you have to do. The action steps indicate when and how to do it.
3. A helpful tip: Sometimes, when you are getting bogged down, the action step may be treated like an objective, with a separate plan to achieve it.
4. PRIORITIZE: Make a to do list, and then make sub-groups of tasks. These action steps are the detailed process for achieving the objectives.
5. Be realistic about scheduling. Limit commitments.
6. PREPARE: Take a good look at what things need to be done in order. Do you have the necessary equipment or supplies? Are rooms available for your needs? Troubleshoot now, so you don't waste time later.
7. Say "NO" sometimes.
8. Delegate work or tasks whenever possible.
9. Reward yourself for staying on track.

Concentrate on the results of your efforts, not on keeping busy. Refine the strategies that work for you, but don't say you can't do it!

*“Do or do not do. There is no try”. (Master Yoda)*

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