



## MANAGE YOUR TIME AND YOUR LIFE

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*The things that matter most should never be at the mercy of the things that matter least.”*  
--Goethe

Many leaders say that “time management” is their biggest challenge. The truth is that we all operate on the same twenty-four hour schedule. That said, how is it that some busy people complete their daily tasks with ease and manage to leave the office with peace of mind, while others struggle to stay on top of their work by working long hours, multitasking, and extending deadlines? These strategies can provide some short-term relief, but they are not sustainable in the long run. Outlined below are a few practical and sustainable strategies to better manage your time, attention, and energy.

### TOP TEN STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING YOUR TIME AND YOUR LIFE:

#### 1. KNOW YOURSELF

When values are clear, time can be allocated appropriately. Ask yourself these questions:

- *When do you feel most effective, absorbed, and fulfilled?*
- *What do you want to accomplish in your life?*
- *What gives you joy and passion?*

Then take a look at your calendar. Are your goals and values reflected in your daily and weekly schedule? Have you allocated time for things that bring you joy? If not, it is time to make some adjustments.

#### 2. FIGURE OUT WHAT’S IMPORTANT AND DO THAT FIRST!

There is no secret to managing your time. The key is to identify priorities and use your time accordingly. Here are some strategies to help:

- Spend some time identifying your goals for the year. (Ask yourself this question: *Imagine it is twelve months from today and I am feeling completely fulfilled. What have I accomplished?*)
- Consider which of these goals will have the most significant negative effect if not completed.
- Be honest with yourself. Don’t bite off more than you can chew!
- Break down each goal into small steps.

#### 3. SCHEDULE NON-URGENT AND IMPORTANT WORK DURING YOUR PERSONAL “PEAK” TIMES OF THE DAY

Become aware your biological rhythms and notice when you are most focused, alert and able to concentrate. Knowing your energy pattern will help you schedule priority tasks for peak

performance. Schedule tasks that require the most effort and concentration when your energy is highest. Schedule tasks that require less effort when your energy is lowest.

#### **4. DEVOTE TIME DAILY TO PLANNING AND SOLITUDE**

Taking time to think, plan, and reflect is essential to achieving peace of mind and a sense of accomplishment. Here are two useful strategies for reflection and planning:

- Schedule a date with yourself at the beginning of each week. Review your annual goals and your list of smaller action steps. Choose the activities you will accomplish that week.
- Spend five to ten minutes planning each morning (before you check your e-mail). Review your list of weekly activities. Review your ongoing “to-do” list. Choose three things you would like to accomplish that day. Call it your “absolute yes” list.

#### **5. KNOW WHEN TO SAY YES AND WHEN TO SAY NO**

When you are presented with a request, ask yourself the following three questions to help decide if it should be taken on:

- *Is this mine to do – am I the right person?*
- *Is this the right time?*
- *Do I have enough information?*
- *Does this fit with my business, professional or personal goals?*

If the answer to any one of these questions is ‘no’—then don’t do it. Pass it to someone else (the right person), schedule it for another time (the right time), wait until you have the information you need, or simply say, ‘No.’ In addition, don’t take on new responsibilities without first figuring out whether you have time to complete them.

#### **6. LET GO OF YOUR NEED FOR PERFECTION.**

Aiming for excellence is admirable, but extreme refinement can get in your way. You may have heard the maxim, “Perfection is the enemy of progress.” We all have the same limited amount of time. Will dedicating yourself to making something absolutely perfect justify the extra hour or two it took to do so? *Or*, would that time have been better spent on a task of higher priority?

#### **7. DELEGATE**

If you spend too much time doing work that other people could do, you’ll have no time to make progress on your own key goals. In addition, you’ll be denying others the opportunity to grow and develop.

Delegating isn't simply having others do your work – when you delegate successfully, the right person performs the task with the support and resources they need to be successful. Click on the link below to learn the steps to effective delegation.

#### **8. DO ONE THING AT A TIME (STOP MULTI TASKING)**

Doing several things at once is a trick we play on ourselves. In reality, our productivity goes down by as much as 40% when we take on too much at one time. We don’t really multi task, we switch task, rapidly shifting from one thing to another, interrupting ourselves unproductively, and losing time in the process.

You might think you’re different, that you’ve done it successfully and saved time. Research shows that heavy multi taskers are less competent at doing several things at once than light

multi taskers. In other words, in contrast to almost everything else in your life, the more you multitask, the worse you are at it. Practice, in this case, works against you.

Research has also shown that those who do *not* multi task demonstrate more presence with others, more focused attention, reduced stress, and more patience.

## 9. MANAGE INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Your productivity will also increase when you master the ability to identify and use information quickly. E-mails, memos, trade magazines, published studies, status reports, operating statistics, financial results – are just a few of the information categories you may receive on a regular basis. If you try to read each of these in detail, it may take a day or more each week.

Here are a few strategies for managing information:

- Choose one or two times a day to check your e-mail. Don't even think about checking other times during the day!
- Schedule a computer-free day. Use that day for reading, thinking, writing and planning.
- Approach information with the following questions in mind:
  - *Is this information relevant to me or to my work?*
  - *What specific information will this document provide and how urgent is it?*
  - *Should I delete it, skim it now or file it for later reference?*

## 10. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Your mindset is fundamentally important for increasing productivity and overall well being.

Consider the following strategies to enhance your positivity.

- Treat non-work time as sacred. Reserve your time outside of work for your sanity. Regard leisure time as a health mandate.
- Nurture positive emotions by regularly expressing appreciation to others in specific terms through notes, e-mails, calls, or conversations.
- Focus your efforts on what you can influence, affect or control.
- Allocate time to those “sweet spot” activities (those that elicit feelings of contentment and fulfillment).
- Good nutrition, exercise, sufficient sleep and taking breaks throughout the day will maximize your basic energy levels as well as your ability to manage your emotions and focus your attention.
- Have some fun every day!

## HARD-WON WISDOM:

- We are human “beings” not human “doings.” Without time for renewal and reflection, our hectic schedule corrodes our relationship with work.
- Focus on getting results, not being busy.
- Don't assume that everything must be done (by you or otherwise).
- Over committing and under delivering erodes credibility and is frustrating to self and others.
- “Formula for success: Under Promise and Over Deliver.”