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Time Management

Resources

There are a number of books on the subject, but some of the best and most easily accessed information is now on the internet. A few authors include:

- Blanchard and Johnson (The One Minute Manager)
- Dale Carnegie
- Franklin and Covey
- The Pomodoro Technique and app

Some additional tools include:

- Time management quick articles and tools, such as
  https://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_HTE.htm
- Electronic boards for Kanbans, such as http://www.scrumblr.ca/   and https://trello.com/
- Tools for organizing thoughts, such as https://www.thoughtbox.es/

Activity Log

An activity log helps people to find where they are spending their time. It is then possible to identify the activities that are opportunities for time savings. Another version of the log adds rows of various categories of activities and asks you to put tick marks in the rows where you spent your time every 15 mins or so. The point of the activity log is to find where you are spending your time. Most people keep these logs for a few days up to one week to gather a period of time that is representative of their typical work time.

There is a general theory that 20% of our activities often produce 80% of our results. You are trying to find the 20% activities in your life that lead to your greatest results.

If you want to look at time outside of work, look for things like television, internet surfing, gaming, and pleasure reading. These are all fine activities, but they may be taking more of your time than you realize. Do not confuse relationship time with these activities. Relationships are critical in our lives, with a number of articles linking well maintained relationships to creative endeavors.

To-Do Lists

There are a number of different ways to keep to-do lists. One of the most important aspects is to prioritize the list. Franklin Covey has a great system to assist with this, though they did not do a good job of transitioning from paper to electronic version. Outlook has a task list capability.

Using personal Kanbans is another version of the concept. In this system you create columns: To Do, Doing, Done. Then you create blocks of activities on post-it notes. The key to both a traditional task list and a Kanban is to keep the activities to blocks of time that can be

accomplished in a day (many say a few hours). You can keep project activities together by using some sort of categorization (e.g., post-it colors, symbols).

Plan to spend at least 50% of your time in work that produces your greatest results.

Project Organization

Creating detailed project plans, interactions (who is doing what), and timeframes is easily accomplished with tools such as Microsoft Project and Smart Sheet. Smart Sheet is the better tool simply because it offers more capability (e.g., web-based, form creations that feed the sheet, communication with team members), but it has a user fee. Smart Sheet will soon have the capability of turning project plans into personal kanbans and vice versa.

Big Picture

Creating overall personal Goals then the plans and activities to accomplish these goals, helps build satisfaction and accomplishment around the completion of activities. Developing these goals is addressed by some of the above authors.

Electronic communication

A few ideas for electronic communication as it relates to time management:

- Do not have your emails automatically appear. Instant messaging can be used, as long as those who use it understand that it is for urgent tasks. Otherwise you might check your email a couple of times a day, thereby providing an email turnaround of anywhere from four to 24 hours. The rules guiding email response depend on your position, expectations in your field and your work environment.
- You can create Rules for your email that automatically directs emails to specific folders or sends certain responses (Outlook and Gmail).
- Do not utilize Facebook or other group instant message feature. Instead group messages into a daily notice.

13 Time Management Tips

There are plenty of general tips on time management. Here are a few that can be particularly helpful:

1. Try to handle each piece of paper only once.
2. Look at your emails (and calls, visits to your office) in the following categories
   a. Do I need to do anything with this? If no, then do I need to keep it or trash it? Don't keep unnecessary paper as it just requires filing and purging later.
   b. If it is a Yes, then what exactly is needed? Can it be quick (e.g., 15 mins or less- though some use three to five mins or less)? Then do it now and be done.
   c. If it is a yes, but requires more work, add it to the to-do list or Kanban. You might want to create an email subfolder for Upcoming To-Dos.
3. Know your deadlines.

4. Plan for interruption time. If you are at work eight hours, then you do not have the full eight hours to work on a project. You need to schedule time for discussions, emails, calls.
5. Schedule time between activities. No one can end one meeting at 1 p.m. and start another at 1 p.m. (even if they are in the same location).
6. Take 10 to 20 minutes a day to plan your day (usually at the beginning of the day or at the end of the day to prepare for the next day).
7. Before each meeting or call, determine your objective. What do you want to get from this engagement? Be clear about this objective at the outset of the conversation. Maintain focus on this objective during the discussion. Schedule future meetings if the objective expands during discussion.
8. Schedule time to do what needs to be done. For example, rather than using your calendar for meetings only, you may want to block time on your calendar for you to complete other activities (e.g., writing or reviewing reports).
9. Look for the "odd time," such as riding on the bus or shuttle, waiting for meetings to start, waiting for dinner to cook, and keep a few of your activities easily accessible so that you can use this "odd time."
10. Keep organized (from your desk to your home). There is a simple 5S system:
    a. Sort: Get rid of what you are not using.
    b. Simplify. Keep the most highly accessed items close.
    c. Standardize. Keep things in clear, easily accessible locations.
    d. Shine. Identify the few daily or weekly tasks needed to keep things clear.
    e. Sustain. This applies to electronic as well as physical environments.
11. Focus on a healthy you (e.g., sleep, exercise, diet) to get the most out of your waking hours.
12. Maintain and build relationships. There are more and more articles on the value of relationships in improving mental health, creativity, accomplishments, aging and career success. As concepts such as team science, collaboration, and team problem-solving take a greater role in our working lives, the skills developed in building and maintaining relationships become more important.
13. Start your day with your most important tasks.