

# **PROJECT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE**

## **MONTGOMERY CHAPTER**

### ***TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS***

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## MEETINGS QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Read the three scored headings and use them to evaluate each statement. Choose one score (4, 2, or 0) that corresponds to your opinion of how the statement applies to your meetings. Write the score in the appropriate blank.

	SCORE:	4 True (Usually)	2 Some- times	0 Not True (Seldom)
1. The purposes of our meetings are not defined.		_____	_____	_____
2. We do not decide what we want to achieve by the end of a meeting.		_____	_____	_____
3. People do not prepare sufficiently for our meetings.		_____	_____	_____
4. We seldom review our progress during meetings.		_____	_____	_____
5. We do not allocate meeting time well.		_____	_____	_____
6. Ideas and views often are lost or forgotten.		_____	_____	_____
7. We do not decide which agenda items have priority.		_____	_____	_____
8. We allocate equal amounts of time to trivia and important issues.		_____	_____	_____
9. We often are diverted from the matter at hand.		_____	_____	_____
10. People lose concentration and attention.		_____	_____	_____
11. Sometimes there are several meetings when there should be one.		_____	_____	_____
12. We do not review and confirm what has been agreed upon and how those decisions will be activated.		_____	_____	_____

## HOW TO COUNTERACT PROCRASTINATION

"Procrastination is the thief of time. It is the act (passive or active) of putting off to a later date what appears needful to be done now or very soon. Putting off jobs until next week may not be procrastination if these jobs could legitimately wait until then. Procrastination is the essential element of putting off what should be done today."

If you are a procrastinator (most of us are to one degree or another) consider the following steps to help you reduce or even eliminate procrastination.

1. Identify the tasks in your business that you are leaving undone, doing inadequately, or putting off.
2. Ask yourself the following questions:
  - a. Why don't I want to do this job?
  - b. Do I think I can't succeed with this job?
  - c. Does this task have an unpleasant association?
  - d. What are the results of putting off or not doing this job?
  - e. Is this job important to accomplishing my personal or career goals?
  - f. Is this task important to accomplishing my boss's or my organization's goals?
  - g. Can I break this job up into smaller tasks and accomplish the same purpose?
  - h. Since I don't enjoy this task, can I delegate it?
3. This process of analysis should accomplish one of three results:
  - a. You will discover that the job can be delegated.
  - b. You will discover that the job can be safely postponed or left undone.
  - c. You will become sufficiently involved with the problem that you will be motivated to go ahead and accomplish it.

Source: Jim Davidson, Effective Time Management (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1978), pp. 75-78.

## **EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT THE KEY TO GETTING THINGS DONE**

The following information on effective time management should serve as a ready reminder to assist in reinforcing what you learned in our seminar. It represents a summary of contemporary thought in the literature; it was compiled by the Management and Marketing Department at Auburn University at Montgomery.

### **TIME MANAGEMENT**

Time is a unique resource. It is the one resource that everyone possesses, yet it is a resource which no individual can increase. Everyone is allocated just so much time in which to accomplish what must be accomplished. For most, there never seems to be enough time. Benjamin Franklin once observed that "to live life is to love time, since this is the stuff life is made of." How one uses time is a function primarily of two factors: The organizations to which an individual belongs and the manner in which he manages his time.

The two major organizations to which individuals belong are the work organization and the family unit. It is with respect to the employment situation that this discussion of time management is directed. By properly managing time within the work situation, the individual has more time to devote to activities of his choosing, which would include the family. The balance of time spent on work, family, exercise, hobbies, and so forth, is partially a function of time management ability. The following suggestions relate to improving time management skills in order to improve your discretionary time balance.

1. Do not allow the telephone to control your work life. Get a good secretary, let her handle most calls. Do not permit the telephone to intrude.
2. Control visitors to your office. Ask unexpected visitors to come back later if you are busy.
3. Attend as few meetings as possible. Make sure meetings are short, started and stopped on time, have an agenda with time allotted to subjects according to relative importance, include only those who are really needed, tell participants what is required of each in advance.
4. Plan each day. Have objectives and priorities assigned, as well as completion deadlines, especially for the work that must be accomplished "the first thing in the morning."
5. Do the important and/or unpleasant tasks first when energy levels are highest. Do the easiest tasks last.

## CHECKLIST OF TECHNIQUES TO SAVE TIME, SHARPEN CONCENTRATION, GET MORE ACCOMPLISHED

- \_\_\_\_\_ Face your desk away from hallway or windows.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Don't clutter your desk with possible distracters.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep the in-box out of sight.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Separate work area from discussion area.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reduce distractions (turn the radio off).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create an external filter (close the door).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mask noise (turn the air-conditioner/fan up).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Resist noise and persevere ("I don't mind if it is noisy, I'll concentrate anyway.")
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule a large enough block of time to build up momentum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reserve particular days for major concentration projects.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take advantage of your "early bird" or "night owl" tendencies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Several short pauses are usually better than one long break.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Develop routine times to rest or rest after certain amounts of work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Work on a different type of work for a while -- change is rest.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you are working alone, socialize for a few minutes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Don't let fantasy become more fun than finishing a task.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Finish what you start.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Set a definite time later to attend to things that come up as distracters.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make a note of distracting ideas for later consideration.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep track of how much you get done each hour.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sell yourself on the benefits of concentrating on each task as it comes along.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Promise yourself that you can stop if you endure for an additional "x" minutes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ignore the desire to stop; go right on working.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Expect a second and third wind to come along if you stick with it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Develop the habit of doing an extra 10%.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When you are absolutely certain you cannot concentrate any more, go for five minutes more, then stop.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you discover that you fail to return after a rest break, then don't take rest breaks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Develop the habit of reacting "yes" to new ideas, and then find some way to make them feasible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Set aside a special time to think about a particular problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Expect good ideas to come to you any time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep paper and pencil handy to capture ideas whenever they come.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Immerse yourself in the problem and its possible solutions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Let your subconscious work on the problem overnight.

## TIME WASTERS

A poll of top managers revealed the following list of time wasters. The order of listing indicates the frequency with which they are mentioned.

Telephone

Procrastination and postponed decisions

Lack of priorities

Lack of delegation (too much routine work)

Lack of information (and poor information)

Poor communication and feedback

Unnecessary and unproductive meetings

Visitors and other interruptions

Lack of planning (including time planning)

Junk mail (write "refused" -- sender must pay first class return postage)

Junk email - spam

Can't say no to inside and outside (civic) demands

Lack of competent personnel and clerical staff

Socializing, talking too much (lack of self-discipline)

Unclear objectives

Peer demands on time

Training new personnel and staff

Red tape (procedures, reports, etc.)

Lack of procedure for routine matters

Span of control

Pet projects

Lack of concentration

Beautiful secretaries and disorganized secretaries

Poor filing system

## WAYS YOU CAN SAVE TIME

Here are time-saving suggestions based on a checklist Alan Lakein has prepared for his own use:

1. Try to find a new technique everyday that will help you gain time.
2. Plan your schedule the first thing in the morning, and set priorities for the day. Make a list and tick off the important items first.
3. Have a light lunch so you don't get sleepy in the afternoon.
4. Save up trivial matters for a three-hour session once a month.
5. Consult your list of lifetime goals once a month, and revise them if necessary. Identify activities that you can do each day that will further your goals.
6. Carry blank 3 by 5 index cards to jot down notes and ideas.
7. Delegate everything you possibly can to others. Use specialists to help with special problems.
8. Generate as little paper work as possible. Throw away nonessential papers as soon as you've read them.
9. Try not to work on weekends.
10. Give yourself time off as a special reward when you've accomplished important tasks.
11. Concentrate your efforts on only one thing at a time.
12. Start with the most profitable parts of big projects.
13. Focus on projects that you are convinced will provide you with the greatest long-term benefits.
14. Try to handle each piece of paper only once. Answer most letters right on the letter itself.
15. Skim books quickly, looking for ideas.
16. Examine old habits for possible streamlining.

17. Put "waiting time" to good use: Relax, read or do something else you wouldn't otherwise have done.
18. Don't waste time regretting failure, or feeling guilty about what you don't get done.
19. Remind yourself: "There is always enough time for the important things."



## WHAT ABOUT YOUR TIME?

Dr. Merrill E. Douglass of the graduate School of Business Administration at Emory told members of the Buckhead Kiwanis Club how they could save time.

Among his suggestions were:

Learn to say no.

Put first things first.

There is always enough time for really important things.

Make decisions without meetings.

Don't record it. Don't ask for it. Throw it away.

Get off the mailing and circulation list. Cancel unnecessary subscriptions. Cut the flow in your "in" basket.

Try to handle each piece of paper only once. Don't set it aside without taking some action.

Learn speed reading.

Keep your desk cleared for action.

Write less. Use the telephone more.

Eliminate unnecessary words, sentences, paragraphs. There is nothing wrong with a one-paragraph letter.

Think before you write or dictate. Use short and simple words.

Don't overdo your revisions in letters for perfection when the added benefits may be small or nonexistent.

Answer letters/emails via email, if possible.

Answer letters by making handwritten responses in the margin of the letter you received and mail it back to the sender. Saves filing a carbon copy too.

Distinguish between the urgent and the merely important.

Planning the day's activities should be completed by the time you reach the office or plant. Otherwise you run the risk of being caught up in the events of the day before you have time to think about it.

Cut off nonproductive activities as quickly as possible. Try holding meetings with everybody standing.

Try to anticipate crises.

Identify your prime time, the time you do your best work.

Every manager's job should include some time in the day for just thinking.

Make decisions even when some facts are missing.

An executive is a time waster in dealing with the past -- rehashing former decisions, explaining bad ones, salvaging poor investments that ought to be written off.

Don't waste your time regretting your failures.

Recognize that some of your time will be spent on activities outside your control. Don't fret about it.

Learn not to waste other people's time.

Don't waste your time feeling guilty about what you don't get done.

Work smarter, not harder.

Delegate to others. Avoid the tendency to do-it-yourself.

Train subordinates so they can handle more responsibility.

Take time to get it right so you won't have to do it over again.

**DAILY PLANNING SHEET**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Letters to Write:**

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**Phone Calls to Make:**

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**People to See:**

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**Appointments:**

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**Things to be Done:**

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**Things to be Planned:**

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**Items to be Obtained**

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Write Priority in this column