

TIME MANAGEMENT FOR LEADERS

Have you ever asked yourself how some people are able to work so many different activities into their schedules while others barely seem able to have the time to attend classes? Are they smarter? Doubtful. More organized? Probably. Better at managing their time? Likely.

It is important to note that time management is self management. Only you know your peak work hours, your attention span, your eating and sleeping needs, your limitations, and other personal aspects which must be planned for. Planning doesn't rule out spontaneity, but gives you time to be spontaneous.

GETTING STARTED

The three steps to effective time management are:

1. **Organize**
2. **Prioritize**
3. **Schedule**

ORGANIZE

Some people plan at the beginning of a day - others at the end. Ideally, you should make a list of everything that you want or need to do for that day. If you are not already making a list, try it. If you were and quit, start again. Do not plan out every minute and don't even think about which task is most important, just write them all down. Some people find it more helpful to list their "things to do" in 5 to 7 day groupings. In this way they can plan for longer projects and get a better sense of their week. Whichever method you choose, keep in mind that everyone has good and bad days. Don't chide yourself if you don't accomplish everything, just add the uncompleted tasks to your next list and get them done. Also, ask yourself the question, "What would happen if I never did this?" If the answer is "Nothing," maybe it shouldn't be on your list in the first place.

PRIORITIZE

After you have recorded these "things to do", go back over the list and rewrite them in priority order. Place things you need/want to do at the top of the list and less important tasks at the bottom. Keep in mind due dates, commitments you have made, and whether or not these tasks involve other people. Priorities can be broken down into three categories: "A" - Don't go do anything else until it is done, "B" - Do if possible, and "C" - Can wait until next week. How you choose to prioritize is a very personal matter. What is important is that you are responsible with your priorities and you stick to them.

SCHEDULE

Finally, take this list and begin to work these "things to do" into your schedule. Don't plan every minute of your day. Remember to leave room for breaks, socializing and those unexpected things that pop up. There's no use making a schedule that is impossible to follow. If a prioritized task or job seems too big to accomplish then break it down into smaller parts.

10 Basic tips for tasks management and creation of to-do lists:

1. **Find the right method of keeping your to-do lists:** some people like putting tasks down by hand on tear-off papers, daily planners or A4 lists while others use Excel spreadsheets, Outlook bars or special software tools that can create tasks, track their performance, play sound notifications and perform other useful functions.
2. **Prioritize tasks:** put your tasks in order of importance/urgency and give higher priority to the tasks that get you closer to your goals.
3. **Be realistic:** check if you can really accomplish the task you are getting into. Be also sure that the task is actual for the planned period of time.
4. **Be specific:** each item on your list should be an understandable, short and measurable task.
5. **Break down complex tasks** into smaller manageable pieces and focus on one at a time.
6. **Group and categorize similar tasks:** for example create several to-do lists by categories - purchases, meetings, events, etc.
7. **Delegate your work:** if there are other people available who can help you with your work, ask them to help you.
8. **Be flexible and not too much detailed:** remember that the tasks may sometimes be interrupted or delayed, so allow some variations or reserves for them.
9. **Leave spaces for unexpected activities:** you may not know exactly what you'll need to do, but if you plan the time to do it, then other important things will not get pushed out of the way when the demand arises.
10. **Make to-do lists a daily record:** at the end of the work day, take the time to review the day's accomplishments, cross them off of your list and plan your work for the next day.