

## MANAGING YOUR TIME

YOU may have heard it before...but I'll repeat it here because it's so important: We all have the same amount of time available to us each day.

One person's success doesn't arise from having more or less time than other people. Success in your professional (and personal) life is the result of the way you use the time you have available. Those who use time effectively almost always follow a strategy or a set of strategies for the way they move through their day.

The good news is that time management is something all of us can learn to use to create the life we truly want.

### What you'll accomplish in this section:

- Learn the high price of wasting a few minutes here and there.
- Plan for efficiency to get the most from the time available to you.
- Avoid common time traps.
- Learn to budget your time and energy for enhanced productivity and effectiveness.

*Don't say you don't have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo daVinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein.*

~ H. Jackson Brown

The average person uses 13 different methods to control and manage his time.

Success doesn't come from having more time, but from using the time you have available more effectively.

## The High Price of Wasted Time

It's human nature to avoid making changes unless we feel a big push from behind or an equally strong pull from the future we'd like to create. That's certainly true when we're dealing with time management. Day after day, we spend (or waste) time in our old, familiar way...until something happens that demands a change in the way we handle the time we're given.

Maybe that something is discovering that wasted time has too high a price. Look at it from a purely monetary perspective. It doesn't matter if you're self employed or work for someone else. Just multiply your hourly rate by 5. What's the total?

That's the amount of money you're tossing away each week if you waste just one hour a day. If you want to really scare yourself, multiply the weekly total by 50 for the amount of money you toss out the window in a year just by wasting one supposedly insignificant hour a day.

Here's the cost of wasting just one hour a week for someone earning \$25 per hour:

$$\begin{aligned} \$25/\text{hour} \times 5 &= \$125 \text{ per week} \\ \$125/\text{week} \times 50 &= \$6,250 \text{ per year} \end{aligned}$$

"But I don't waste much time," you may be thinking. Well, maybe not all at once. But what about the few minutes you spend searching for files and phone numbers? And the 10 minutes you spend chatting with a colleague instead of working on the project that could make or break your career? Or the down time between projects because you haven't planned what to work on next? Those lost minutes scattered through the day can easily add up to a more than an hour every day! Plug that into the calculation and you'll see the true cost of lost time.

To see how well you use your time, keep a daily log in 15-minute increments for a week. The log doesn't have to be elaborate. You can create your own print the [Daily Log](#) on the Dream Job Coaching website.

*A man who dares to waste one hour of life has not discovered the value of life.*

~ Charles Darwin

The average executive wastes an hour a day looking for important papers, totaling more than six weeks annually. Based on a \$40,000 annual salary, the cost of this search is \$5,000. (Vicki Norris ©Restoring Order, 2002)

Waste just one hour a week and you'll throw away a lot!

$\begin{aligned} \$25/\text{hr} \times 5 &= \$125 \text{ per wk} \\ \$125/\text{wk} \times 50 &= \$6,250 \text{ per yr} \end{aligned}$

For the best results when using a time log, extend the hours to include non-work as well as working hours. At the end of the week, total the time spent in the five categories:

1. Time spent working on your goals: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Time spent on productive activities not directly related to your goals: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Quality time spent with family and friends:  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Quality personal time nurturing yourself: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Time wasted: \_\_\_\_\_

Now it's time to calculate the cost of the time you wasted this week. Use this formula:

Your hourly rate: \$\_\_\_\_\_

X Time Wasted: \_\_\_\_\_ hrs

= Money Wasted: \$\_\_\_\_\_

*What did you learn from this exercise about the way you spend the time of your life?*

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*What, if anything, do you want to start doing differently?*

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*Most time is wasted, not in hours, but in minutes. A bucket with a small hole in the bottom gets just as empty as a bucket that is deliberately emptied.*

~ Paul J. Meyer

During the last 25 years, our leisure time has declined by 37% while our work week has increased by a full day.

Put it to the test...keep a detailed time log this week and learn how much time you waste.

## Plan for Efficiency

Henry Ford consulted an efficiency expert to help him build cars faster and more economically. Ford's expert studied and analyzed the manufacturing process, then came up with a plan that would minimize wasted motion and maximize productivity. That plan was the assembly line. It quickly accomplished its purpose and became a standard in the industry.

You don't have to manufacture cars to take advantage of the time saving tips the assembly line process offers. Through regular planning and preparation, you can avoid wasting time and energy and maximize your productivity. You might even find extra hours in your day to complete the work that will help you accomplish your most important goals.

Time is a precious resource, so treat it accordingly. You don't have to schedule every minute of your day, but if you exert more control over your schedule, you'll find the improvements in your productivity and efficiency will be large. Your investment in planning will ultimately reward you with more time and less stress in your life.

### 1. To-Do Lists

There's a critical difference between an action plan and a to-do list. An action plan includes all the steps necessary to accomplish a specific goal. A to-do list is a collection of all the tasks you need to perform, *including* your action plan steps. That difference is crucial because we have many tasks to perform that have no direct connection to our goals, and it's all too easy to let them overwhelm our action plans.

To avoid that danger, to-do lists should always be prioritized in terms of their importance to our top goals. That means your action plan steps need to receive top billing, with other tasks fitting in around them (remember the rocks in the jar?)

Whether you create a short to-do list for each day or maintain a categorized collection of all your tasks depends on how you work most productively. If you find yourself overwhelmed by the sight of all your tasks in one place, transfer tasks to a daily list each evening or before you start your day.

*Happy people plan actions,  
they don't plan results*

~ Dennis Wholey

Spending 10 to 15 minutes every morning mapping out your day can save up to 6 hours a week.

Time is a precious resource, so treat it accordingly.

**Action:** Which works best for you, a daily to-do list or a comprehensive list of tasks? How will you record your list (lined tablet, paper planner, or computer software program)?

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## 2. Organize your life on a weekly basis.

Every Sunday evening, review your top goals. Plan to spend time each day during the week concentrating on projects with the highest priority level, and you'll be pleasantly surprised with the results. Integrate aspects of your long-term goals into your daily to-do list to quickly accomplish your most important projects.

**Action:** Choose a quiet place and plot out your activities in a daily planner for the week ahead.

## 3. Plan your work

Set aside 10 to 15 planning minutes at the beginning or end of each day to create a to-do list for your upcoming activities. The key is awareness of your important tasks as you begin each day. This advance planning can save you up to an hour each day because you'll work far more efficiently.

**Action:** What time of day is best for you to set aside for planning: morning or evening? Commit to a time period now.

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*He who every morning  
plans the transactions of  
the day and follows out that  
plan, carries a thread that  
will guide him through the  
labyrinth of the most  
busy life.*

~ Victor Hugo

Review your top goals at the beginning of every week and plan your activities around them.

## 4. Prioritize your most important activities

As you create your to-do list, number your tasks in order of priority. If you need help identifying the most important items on the list, ask yourself two questions:

- (1) If I could complete just one activity/task today, what would it be?
- (2) Is this activity the best use of my time, knowledge, creativity, and experience?

Once you've determined which task is the top priority, focus on it until it is finished. Then recheck your priorities and focus your efforts on the next most important activity. By diligently following this process, you'll have a greater sense of accomplishment at the end of the day. Consider scheduling appointments with yourself to work on the projects that are most important to you.

**Action:** *List the top three tasks you want to accomplish today.*

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Use your most productive hours for your most important tasks

Are you an early riser or a night owl? Ask yourself when you are most productive and schedule your day accordingly. Choose a daily goal and decide what time of day you have the most energy or creativity to get the job done. Commit time to that goal.

**Action:** *What is my most productive time of day?*

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**Action:** *What one daily goal will I accomplish during that time?*

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20% of the average workday is spent on "crucial" and "important" things, while 80% of the average workday is spent on things that have "little value" or "no value."

The first hour of your workday sets the pattern for the entire day. Make sure that it is productive.

## 6. Reserve the first hour for the most important tasks

The first hour of your workday sets the pattern for the entire day. Make sure that it is productive. Ask yourself, "What do I need to get done today in order to feel complete?" Your response will reveal the most important tasks for that day. By completing those first, you will be focusing more on what is important and less on how fast you are working.

If you spend 20% of every day focusing on the most important tasks, you will accomplish 80% of your results. (You may recognize this as the Pareto Principle or 80-20 rule.)

**Action:** *What tasks will I complete in my first hour today?*

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## 7. Treat each day as unique

As you schedule each day, group similar tasks together. For example, by organizing all your errands on one day and your planning tasks on another, you can increase your efficiency in both areas.

**Action:** *What are the activities that take up the major part of my day?*

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**Action:** *How can I group similar tasks into a specific day or period?*

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*The first hour of the morning is the rudder of the day.*

~ Henry Ward Beecher

Group similar tasks together to boost efficiency.

Schedule one or two time periods during the day to work only on non-urgent activities.

Activity type/group	Time/day schedule

## 8. Carve out time for non-urgent activities

Schedule time during the day to work only on non-urgent activities. Examples include phone calls, handling mail, and paying bills. Depending on your schedule and business activities, you might want to schedule two periods each day for these activities.

**Action:** *What 30-minute period(s) will I choose for non-urgent activities?* (Note: Choose times when you will not be preoccupied with a deadline or project.)

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## 9. Manage your voice mail and e-mail twice daily

Allow for two discrete sessions per day to check and respond to voice mail and e-mail messages. During that time, do this activity and nothing else. Sort your phone calls into high and low priority. During the rest of the day, limit your use of the phone and e-mail in order to focus on the project/task at hand.

**Action:** *What two times will I choose for voice mail and e-mail that work best for me?* (Perhaps first thing in the morning and after lunch or just before lunch and shortly before the end of the workday.)

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

Respond to voicemail and e-mail messages twice a day.

Handle activities and information as they occur rather than putting them aside for later.

## 10. Use an "as you go" task system

As you go through your day, activities and information will cross your path. Handle them as they occur. Resist the urge to put them aside or add them to your to-do list to complete at a later time. Your goal is to "handle it once." When you review the growing list of tasks you've completed during the day, your sense of accomplishment will soar.

**Action:** *What three activities/items do I regularly put aside or delay instead of handling them as they occur?*

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Take breaks

When your energy level drops or you find yourself becoming too reactive to people or situations, take a rejuvenation break. That may involve physically moving away from your work area, getting some fresh air, listening to music, or talking with a friend. Find something that helps you recharge.

**Action:** *What five activities rejuvenate me?*

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) \_\_\_\_\_

## 12. Review each day and plan the next day

At the end of each day, review your to-do list and examine what you accomplished, what you could have done more efficiently, and what still needs to be done. Enjoy the sense of accomplishment that results from checking off items in your daily planner. Notice which tasks may require more time than

*So celebrate what you've accomplished, but raise the bar a little higher each time you succeed.*

~ Mia Hamm

At the end of each day, review your to-do list and examine what you accomplished, what you could have done more efficiently, and what still needs to be done.

originally anticipated and adjust accordingly. Either at the end of that day or the next morning, update your to-do list so that your plan will be clear as you start the day.

**Action:** *What did I accomplish today?*

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**Action:** *What are the most important tasks for tomorrow?*

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*There is no such thing in anyone's life as an unimportant day.*

~ Alexander Woolcott

Either at the end of that day or the next morning, update your to-do list so that your plan will be clear as you start the day.

## Avoid Time Traps

Time traps are the pitfalls we can fall into if we're not paying attention. They seem to lay in wait for us as we innocently go about our day. They will rob you of time, energy, and focus if you let them. The only way to avoid time traps is to be aware that they exist and stay alert, ready to block or divert them.

We all have our own set of time traps, the ones that trip us up frequently. Here are some that catch my clients:

- Spending a disproportionately high amount of time in the offices where the most congenial people are, as opposed to where the most important issues are.
- Wasting too much time getting daily updates on routine activities as opposed to waiting for a more meaningful weekly summary.
- Jumping too eagerly into routine, straightforward work and putting off the more complex and difficult tasks.
- Not starting the more important work first thing in the morning.
- Not bothering to make up a schedule for each day.
- Scheduling each day so tightly that it is impossible to stay on track and the schedule quickly becomes meaningless.

**Action:** *What time traps will you avoid this week?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*Time is that quality of nature which keeps events from happening all at once. Lately it doesn't seem to be working.*

~ Anonymous

Time traps will rob you of time, energy, and focus if you let them.

## Procrastination

Because it's such a common and costly time trap, procrastination requires special attention. Born from doubt and fear, procrastination leads you to question your worthiness and ability to achieve. It blocks you from doing the very things that will offer the greatest rewards and can be the most significant obstacle to your success, if you let it.

The following success formula halts procrastination and encourages you to take action, which can generate immediate results in your life.

$$\text{Motivation} + \text{Energy} + \text{Action} = \text{Results}$$

### Motivation

What inspires, motivates. So every morning ask yourself, "What will inspire me today?" For an inspirational boost, consider subscribing to an email list that offers a daily motivational quote such as [Motivational Quotes.com](http://MotivationalQuotes.com) <http://www.famous-motivational-quotes.com/>. You can also talk with an upbeat friend who never seems to be short on inspiration.

Once you feel inspired, it becomes easier to tap into the motivation to move forward. Look to your values and goals and remind yourself of the reasons they matter to you.

### Energy

Motivation by itself creates energy, but you can accelerate the process by adding fuel to the mix. Take a short walk (outside is best, but a stroll down the hall will work) and focus your attention on your goals and the motivation you have to achieve them.

### Action

Once you feel inspired and motivated to do something, act on it. Don't worry too much about whether you are doing the right thing. If it turns out to be a mistake, that's okay. Learn from it and move on to the next inspiration.

### Learn from success

One of the reasons we procrastinate is fear of failure. But that didn't stop Walt Disney. He was fired by a newspaper editor for lack of ideas and went bankrupt several times before he built

*A wise person does at once, what a fool does at last. Both do the same thing; only at different times.*

~ Baltasar Gracian

Motivation plus energy plus action is the antidote for procrastination.

Disneyland. It didn't stop Henry Ford either. He failed and went broke five times before he finally succeeded.

Were Disney and Ford finally able to succeed because they had a special talent? Not necessarily. The difference between success and failure isn't talent, but persistence, determination, and action. Find the motivation, fuel your energy, then take action on your dreams and goals.

**Action:** *What inspires you?*

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**Action:** *What motivates you?*

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**Action:** *How can you fuel your energy today?*

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**Action:** *What three actions will you take this week to move toward success?*

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2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*Nothing in the world will take away persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than an unsuccessful man with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.*

~Calvin Coolidge

The difference between success and failure isn't talent, but persistence, determination, and action.

## BALANCE BUILDER #2: Budget your time and energy

Most of us accept the limitations of our bank accounts. When we only have a certain amount of money each week, we're careful about how and where we spend it. If we aren't, we'll wind up bankrupt. But we're not as cautious about our time. Many of us find ourselves spread too thin, stressed out, and exhausted at the end of the week. Somehow, we forget that no commodity in the world is more limited than that most precious resource...time.

Regardless of our financial situation, each of us has but 168 waking hours each week. We can't buy more! How will you spend your time? Will you give it away to activities and people you don't enjoy? Or will you invest it wisely by developing passionate relationships and a prosperous career? Can you share time generously with people who appreciate you? Do you choose to invest some of your time to maintain your body, home, and possessions?

### **Monday:**

Accomplish what's most important

If you had only one hour at your disposal this week, how would you use it? If you're smart, you would choose your highest priority. So what will you do with the 168 hours you have available? Will you work 14 hours a day and arrive home exhausted and grumpy? Or will you say, "My life is just as important as my job! I'm leaving at 5pm so I can be with my family or walk the dog. Maybe I'll go for a hike or play my guitar for awhile." Use your 168 hours to accomplish what is most important.

**Action:** *What are your most important priorities?*

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*Time is a fixed income and, as with any income, the real problem facing most of us is how to live successfully within our daily allotment.*

~ Margaret B. Johnstone

Regardless of our financial situation, each of us has but 168 waking hours each week. Use your 168 hours to accomplish what is most important.

## **Tuesday:**

Take a visual tour

Take a visual tour of your house. Then your car. And, finally, your office. Look for the things that need to be taken care of that you just haven't gotten around to. See in your mind the messy kitchen, the broken tape deck in your car, the unfinished report on your desk, the overflowing in-basket, the overflowing laundry basket... Surely you can imagine others.

You know it will take an investment of time and energy to complete those jobs, so you keep putting them off. But all those uncompleted tasks drain your energy whether you're consciously aware of it or not. They're always there, in the back of your mind, weighing you down.

If you commit to completing all the half-done tasks and fixing all the broken items in your home, car, and office, you will reclaim the energy that has been stuck in those areas. You will enjoy a sense of freedom and relief that will make your efforts worthwhile.

**Action:** *What half-done tasks could you accomplish today?*

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## **Wednesday:**

Clear out your space

In addition to time, other factors such as emotions, clutter, and stress affect how much movement we can make toward our dreams. If you want a greater sense of control over your time and energy, clean out your closets. Or cancel the lunch date with that so-called friend you can't stand. Clean up your physical and emotional space, and you'll feel a rush of energy that will carry you forward and enable you to focus on what is most important in your life.

*Three Rules of Work: Out of clutter find simplicity; From discord find harmony; In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.*

~ Albert Einstein

Clean up your physical and emotional space, and you'll feel a rush of energy that will carry you forward and enable you to focus on what is most important in your life.

**Action:** *What can you clear out of your physical and emotional space this week?*

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## **Thursday:**

Time for mundane tasks

Those of us on the achievement path often create ambitious weekly goals and to-do lists. Think about your 168 waking hours. Have you allocated every single hour to your projects with work, family, community, and recreation? Aren't you forgetting something? Your carpet hasn't been vacuumed in a month!

A balanced week includes time for the mundane tasks such as laundry, paying bills, and taking out the trash. Make sure you also create space in your schedule to cultivate your garden, meditate, and exercise. Strike a balance between moving toward your goals and maintaining your home, body, and spirit.

**Action:** *What mundane tasks do you need to do regularly?*  
Add them to your schedule now.

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## **Friday:**

Recognize your limitations

Be realistic about the demands on your time, energy, and emotions. Adjust your expectations when a crisis strikes and be gentle on yourself.

If your child is sick or the biggest deadline of your career is coming up, recognize that a new project may not get off the ground this week. Don't put yourself down. Recognize the limitations of your situation and give yourself credit for handling the illness, the deadline, the flat tire, or any other surprise that disrupts your plans.

*Another flaw in the human character is that everybody wants to build and nobody wants to do maintenance.*

~ Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

Strike a balance between moving toward your goals and maintaining your home, body, and spirit.

Be realistic about the demands on your time, energy, and emotions.

**Action:** *What unexpected demands cropped up in the last month. Have you given yourself credit for getting through them?*

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*There is not enough time to do all the nothing we want to do.*

~ Bill Watterson

Have you given yourself credit for getting through all the unexpected demands that cropped up in the last month?

## Action Items

- Review the material in this section, focusing on your answers to the questions in the exercises.
- Keep a daily log for a week and determine your personal cost for the time you waste.
- Try each of the recommended ways of planning for efficiency to learn which work best for you.
- Integrate at least three of the methods for increased efficiency today and every day this week.
- Become aware of your personal time traps and avoid them whenever possible.
- Complete Balance Builder #2 to budget your time and energy more effectively.