

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF TIME

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ABSTRACT

Time is a very precious resource of a business. Unlike other resources like capital, manpower and information, it is expended continuously irrespective of how fruitfully we use it or don't use it. This article describes some basic axioms about time and outlines ways of effectively managing our time for greater productivity with joy and without stress. The ability to do so is, a skill, any effective executive must possess.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Learning how to manage time effectively is the most important task of a young executive working in industry, business or any other enterprise. Many companies are realizing, how its executives manage their time is crucial to quality and productivity. Many executives are therefore, trained to acquire the skill of time management. The executive who operates best with respect to time and meets his schedules without stress or unnecessary hassels is the one likely to add most value to enterprise and increase productivity.

Regardless of what type of work you do, your effort must be focussed on improving the use of your time both in respect of priority areas of your work as well as your personal life. Your main thought must always be "Am I using moment of time for the most important assignment?" And the answer should always be affirmative.

2.0 RELAXED Vs. STRESSED EXECUTIVES

My experience with hundreds of executives from industry reveals that many feel stressed and they always complain, "our work hardly leaves us any time for many important things". "Our families get neglected. We cannot find any time for recreation". "Our bosses keep us busy with lot of meetings leaving us with no time for our planning or meeting deadlines". Such complaints are many and varied, but surprisingly, across many different industries and professions, they are very similar.

At the same time, we see a number of people who are quite easy on the time management front, doing their important work, well in time, and still having plenty of time for their own personal recreation and growth.

A close study of the life styles, working methods, and mental attitudes of many successful and joyful execu-

tives has revealed certain basic approaches which can be learnt by many others and practised regularly till effective management of time becomes second nature. Let's see how this can be done. But first with the basics.

3.0 BASICS ABOUT TIME

You have got to remember that everyone of us has the same amount of time for daily chores, namely, 24 hours/day or 1440 minutes every day, no more, no less. No doubt our ages vary but that is not crucial to our work. It is the doing of day-to-day work in the given time that is crucial.

Secondly, it is worthwhile to remember that we spend about 33% of our time in sleep; 10 % in travelling to work and back; 15% in daily chores of eating; 25% on work and 17% on recreation. So the time for work is indeed rationed and must be used most effectively.

Thirdly, time cannot be saved; it cannot be loaned or borrowed. Time not used well, is lost for ever. Unlike money, which earns interest in a bank, time must be expended - it cannot be kept in bank and used at a later occasion. And remember, even if you don't do a thing, time is spent. Every activity does not need money but does need time. Even "no activity" uses time, because time simply passes by.

4.0 ACTIVITIES

With these axioms stated, it is now possible to see what we actually do in the given time. We can be "doing" any "...ing" viz. eating; talking; drawing; thinking; sleeping; drinking; writing; reading etc. At any moment we are

doing one of these activities irrespective of the nature of our work/job.

Most executives spend 40% of their working time talking or better "communicating". Communicating Skills must therefore be excellent in order to spend time on it effectively. More than talking "listening" to others is vital. Executives who listen more and talk less use their working time more effectively and joyfully because thereby their team work is excellent and their subordinates feel empowered. This helps them in achieving more results happily.

Effective management of time arises from the mental attitude of doing with total attention the only thing that we can be doing now i.e. doing what we are doing. And what we are doing at a given moment is determined by our objectives, goals and our long term vision of our own work.

I apply very simple rule to find out if I am using this-moment well. Let me share this with you. Ask yourself three basic questions as follows :

At this moment;

.Am I doing the right activity?

.Is this the apportioned time for it?

.Am I doing the task in the right way?

The answer to all the three questions should be "yes". Only when that is so, you are using time effectively.

The right activity will be that in alignment with your motivational impulses and the beacon provided by your vision. Whether a given moment is appropriate for it will depend upon the priorities you assign to various activities/tasks and the time you allot to these in a properly planned way. And finally, doing the task in the right way

will depend on your job knowledge and your skills. These must be continuously updated in order to "sharpen your axe" and use it effectively for achieving **results**. This will influence your time management profoundly.

5.0 PRIORITIES

Priorities for tasks we perform are determined by their importance and urgency. For example, eating is an activity which is most essential for our life. Hence it is a top priority activity. On the other hand, talking to your neighbour may be not as important as say writing a letter to a friend who is unwell. If there is a fire in the neighbourhood, calling the fire brigade is an urgent action which cannot wait. This must be done immediately. In the context of your work also, you ought to divide work related activities into the following categories with the priority ranking shown :

Tasks	Priority No.
.Highly Important, Highly Urgent HIHU	One
.Highly Important, Low Urgency HILU	Two
.Low Importance, High Urgency LIHU	Three
.Low Importance, Low Urgency LILU	Four

The first priority task must be done by yourself; the second priority tasks you should do yourself or delegate to a senior colleague; the third category tasks should be delegated or done by you if you have the time. The last one

should not be done because it adds no value to your work. Instead you only waste time doing it. Let us now see how to delegate tasks.

6.0 DELEGATION

Your capacity to attend to many tasks is limited whereas your responsibility is much too large. In such a situation every executive must enhance his capacity by delegating work/tasks to his colleagues/team-mates/subordinates.

Together, you achieve much more than would be possible otherwise. Delegation helps you to develop and empower subordinates; this is your special responsibility. Delegate tasks as well as commensurate authority for achieving results. Give autonomy to your subordinates in deciding how they will accomplish tasks. Many Executives cannot delegate because they perceive empowered subordinates as a threat to their own position. This attitude leads to mismanagement of their time, ineffectiveness in work, and cumulative stress which leads to poor health and even poorer work. Managers who seem to have all the time for everything are the ones who have learnt the art of delegating and empowering their subordinates.

7.0 PROCRASTINATION

It is common human tendency to postpone doing the important tasks. This is called procrastination. Here are a few tips to overcome this tendency.

- Begin your important work now, you'll enjoy doing it.

- Don't try to eat an elephant. Do your task in small chunks, 15 minutes

at a time.

- Keep away distractions like T.V., magazines and news-papers.

- Overcome fear of the task. Do it you'll find is easy.

- Make a public commitment..."I'll finish this task by tomorrow". Then you'll stick to it.

- Reward yourself when the task is finished.

- Finish one task at a time. Then move on to the other.

These tips will help you considerably in moving ahead. With other aids to good Time Management you will be able to develop good habits resulting in effective investment of time.

8.0 THINGS-TO-DO

It is of great help if you make a daily "TO-DO TODAY" list of tasks both personal and job-related on small ivory card, with title like this on top:

TO-DO TODAY Date _____

Priority	Task
1.	
2.	
3.	

On one side you have the personal list and on the other organizational tasks. Don't list more than six to eight important tasks. You cannot do more. Feel satisfied, if at the end of the day you have done even 20% of the most critical activities, because according to the PARETO PRINCIPLE you would end up with having achieved 80% key results desired. On the other hand even if you do 80% of the trivial activities, you'll end up achieving only 20% of the desired outputs. This must be always kept in mind. Remember, that every

day there will be slots of time kept for sleep, recreation and meal times. Never try to push other activities into these slots. That will prove counter-productive and cause avoidable stress.

9.0 CONCENTRATION

Whatever you do, do it with utmost concentration. This arises from deep commitment resulting from a harmonious integration of love, compassion and concern in our hearts. While talking to people listen more and talk less. The words we use must be useful and be congruent with our thoughts and actions. When you are fully integrated there is total harmony between time and activity. There is total concentration on the task of the moment accompanied by a deep sense of joy experienced within you. As time ticks away, you can then perceptibly feel, you have accomplished more than you had expected, that too without any stress or anxiety.

Concentration is sometimes lost because we get into the mental traps of the past, present and future. On reflection, one sees that past is only memory, future too is equally intangible and even non-existent. Yet, the mind is occupied with and confused by thoughts either of the past or of the future. This activity takes a great toll of time. In the process we miss the joyful opportunity of doing with total attention what is our task right at this moment.

"This moment" is the instant time between what is past and what is yet to come. Use this instant time (Δt) effectively. This is the secret of good time management.

10.0 SUMMARY

To sum up let us make a list of things-to-do for Good Management of Time (GMT).

1. Handle each piece of paper only once.
2. Make a daily "TO-DO TODAY" list for personal and official tasks.
3. List the priorities of highly important tasks.
4. Do the first priority tasks first.
5. Ask yourself the 3-questions RA, RT, RW.
Right Activity? (RA)
Right Time? (RT)
Right Way? (RW)
and say "yes" to all three.
6. Do it now.
7. Be yourself. Be modest. Don't try to accomplish more than you can. Delegate tasks.
8. Keep attention focussed on the task in hand at this moment.

9. Invest your time well. Time invested in productive actions is time "saved".

10. Time spent thoughtlessly is time wasted.

11. Respect other people's time and avoid time wasters.

Possessing the skill of effective time management is a great blessing. It gives rise to love, joy and fulfilment as you perform your routine or important tasks. It is worthwhile to experience this for yourself and feel the difference between wasted life full of stress and life productively managed and joyfully lived. You too can learn the skill of Good Management of Time. Start doing it now. There is no other way.

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— Editor