

Special Report



Time Management Mastery

“Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time; for that's the stuff life is made of.”

Benjamin Franklin

We all get the same amount of time in a day, in a week, in a year ... nothing more or less. But why do successful people get more out of those twenty-four hours a day than the average person? The answer is that they have figured out how to use their time more effectively.

Time is your *most valuable*, and *most undervalued*, resource. To manage time effectively, and realize its true worth, you must manage yourself in relation to time as well as managing the time you have. If you achieve this it will assist you to:

- Be more productive;
- Balance your life;
- Improve your self-esteem;
- Reduce your stress;
- Reach your goals; and
- Have flexibility to respond to surprises or new opportunities.

International expert on the effective management of time Dr. Alec Mackenzie, in the book *'The Time Trap'*, argues that the very idea of time management is a misnomer because time cannot be managed in the same way as other resources, such as information, financial, physical and human capital. While each of these can be reduced, augmented, transferred or otherwise controlled, time cannot be manipulated. Dr. Mackenzie argues that you can only *manage oneself* in relation to time - how you use or spend it, cannot be replaced or re-created.

This report will discuss various obstacles to use time effectively, tools to help identify areas of inefficiency, ways to maximise your utilization of time and the amazing Pareto principle.

TIME MANAGEMENT MISCONCEPTIONS

The signs of poor time organization can include any of the following:

- Frustration and frequent delays;
- Forever rushing;
- Low productivity, motivation and/or energy;
- Ceaseless changing between different options; and/or
- Problems in setting and achieving goals.

You, like almost everyone, including people considered successful, probably has *misconceptions about managing time, such as:*

- *Who has time for time management techniques?* Often efficient people get most of their work done in the early mornings, so they aren't under stress working against tight deadlines later in the day.
- *Its simple - just common sense is required.* While a simple concept, self-discipline is required to effectively practice time management.
- *My diary and to-do list keep me organized.* A disorganized person generally has hardly enough time to look at his diary or to-do list!
- *I am more productive under pressure.* Productivity is achieved with application and determination, not waiting until the last minute of your deadlines.
- *It removes the freedom and fun of spontaneity.* Isn't it more fun if, by better organization, you had more hours to spend with the family, play games or just plain relax, instead of working under stress, forgetting appointments or making constant excuses?
- *It's not appropriate to my creative job.* Self-discipline is as critical as routine in time management. Think how much extra you could create, with the additional time, if you were disciplined.

You may even use one or more of these excuses and still think that you are doing well. But you need to know the truth - *using your time effectively and efficiently is one of the keys to your future success.*

TIME THIEVES

“We all have time to either spend or waste and it is our decision what to do with it. But once it passes, it is gone forever.” **Bruce Lee**

Dr. Donald Wetmore (“Time Thieves”) has listed the ‘troupe’ of *Eleven Time Thieves* that steal our valuable time away, making it difficult for us to complete tasks. They are:

1. *Procrastination*: Fear of failure, flawed priorities or perfectionism can make you delay completing activities to another time. However, tasks that are put off may pile up into a crunch point later.
2. *Poor Planning*: Not valuing planning and being impatient for results can cause poor planning. A false start causes unproductive time.
3. *Crisis Management*: A lack of task prioritization can lead to crisis management. Not distinguishing between the importance of tasks, could result in unimportant things completed before critical tasks, leaving not enough time to complete essential items.
4. *Unnecessary Meetings*: Any meeting held without specific agenda with nothing productive comes out of it, clearly was unnecessary. These meetings are thieves, as things just do not get started.
5. *Interruptions*: Distractions, due to unnecessary phone calls/e-mails, drop-in visitors, etc, prevents work getting done. Find a space you’re less likely to be interrupted and tell people you can’t be disturbed.
6. *Doing It All Yourself*: Not exercising authority by delegating tasks can make you loose control as long-range planning is ignored because you are bogged down with the day-to-day operations.
7. *Poor Physical Set-up*: By not having your essential working materials within easy reach, you will waste time, wearing out the floor covering while retrieving what you need to complete your tasks.

8. *Poor Networking:* Not having relationships with associates and colleagues may cause you to waste time creating the opportunities that you might have already had through their network.
9. *Disorganization:* Eliminating clutter, using a day-planner, having specific places for required items, and ensuring you have all needed materials and information before beginning a task will help keep workspace chaos away.
10. *Poor Attitude:* Dwelling on problems and not the solutions can throw the day away.
11. *Negative People:* Avoiding such people will minimize the wasted hours listening to them.

You may be finding that, besides the above, the following could also be thieving your time, again not allowing you to be as effective as you could be:

- Poor communication, especially a failure to listen;
- Mistakes – either yours or by others;
- Lack of self-discipline;
- Unclear goals or shifting priorities;
- Conflicting priorities;
- Unwillingness to say 'No';
- Lack of procedure;
- Equipment failure;
- Waiting for answers;
- Socializing;
- Unreal time estimates;
- Over-involvement with details; and/or
- Junk and personal emails;

TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX

***“Conventional wisdom is not to put all of your eggs in one basket.
80/20 wisdom is to choose a basket carefully, load all your eggs into
it, and then watch it like a hawk.”***

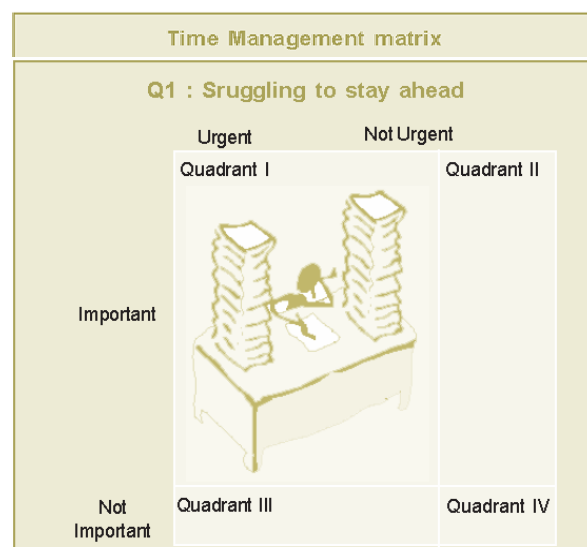
Richard Koch

The *Time Management Matrix* devised by Stephen Covey (author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*) can help you to correct your habits of inefficient time management habits.

The Quadrants of the Matrix reflect priorities in decreasing order. How you typically participate in these Quadrants is illustrated in the adjacent graphics, provided by Dr Stephen Covey.

If you closely observe these Time Management Matrix illustrations, you will notice that:

1. Activities in Quadrant I assume critical importance and *top priority*;

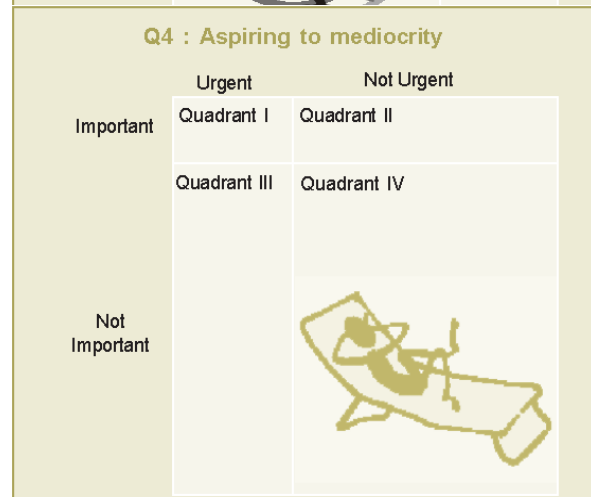
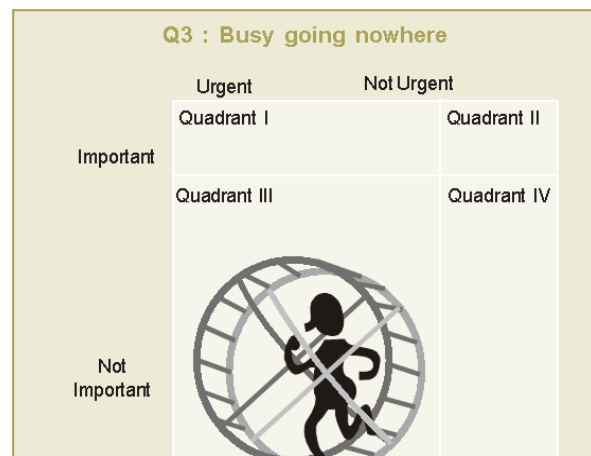
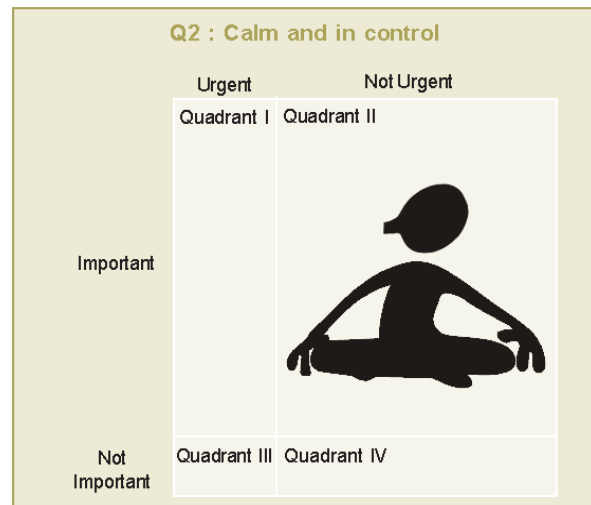


2. Spending all of your time on Quadrant I tasks may result in stress and *possible burnout*;

3. Activities in Quadrant II may be equally important, if not more important than those in Quadrant I, but they will not be more *urgent*.

4. If you focus on the Quadrant II activities, you can eventually *reduce the number* of important and urgent tasks in Quadrant I.

5. Focusing your energies on tasks in Quadrant II will mean avoiding the *unimportant activities* in Quadrant III and IV.



PARETO PRINCIPLE ... *achieve more with less*

“Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things that matter least.”

Johann Wolfgang Goethe

A widely accepted rule in time management is the *Pareto Principle*, developed by quality management guru, Dr Joseph M Juran in 1940. It was named after Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, who found that 80 percent of land in England was owned by 20 percent of people.

This Principle, found to have near-universal implication, says that, in any field, 20% of the causes account for 80% of the consequences, Dr Juran's research, for example, found that 20 percent of defects caused 80 percent of the problems.

Applied to time management, the Pareto Rule implies that *80 percent of the work takes 20 percent of the time*. Used effectively. You will find the principle very helpful in bringing clarity to complex problems, especially when deciding where to focus time and resources.

In fact, applying this principle can change your life, as it allows you to achieve 80 percent of targets in 20 percent of the time, by reminding you to focus your time, energy and resources on the 20% of the job that really matters. If necessary, the remaining 80 percent can be outsourced, delegated, streamlined or pruned, taking up only 20 percent of your time and resources.

Therefore, if you focus your energy and time on the important 20% of activities, you will not only be *‘working smart instead of working hard’*, but, more importantly, *‘working smart on the hard things’*.

Here are some signs that can help you recognize whether you're spending your time effectively:

You're concentrating on the important 20 percent of activities if:

- You engage in tasks that advance your life's purpose;
- You're doing things that make you feel good about yourself or have always wanted to do;
- You work on tasks you don't like, but are doing them because they relate to the bigger picture;
- You engage other people to do tasks you're not good at; and
- You're enjoying yourself and smiling.

You're working in the unproductive 80% if the following are true:

- You spend time on tasks that you are not usually good at doing;
- You're frequently working on tasks labelled "urgent";
- You have no investment in other people's tasks that you work on;
- Activities take a lot longer than expected; and
- You are complaining all the time.

Therefore, you need to identify and focus on those 20 percent of tasks in you day that really matter. If something isn't going to get done, make sure it's not part of that 20 percent. The significance of this is demonstrated in the following short story:

“Once upon a time, a time management expert was speaking to a group of managers. Standing in front of this group of high-powered over-achievers he said, “Okay, time for a quiz” and he placed a one-gallon, wide-mouth jar on the table in front of him.

He also produced a dozen fist-sized stones and carefully put them, one at a time, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, “Is this jar full?”

Everyone shouted, “Yes.”

The expert then pulled out a bag of small pebbles, and poured those in the spaces between the stones. He asked again, "Is the jar full?"

Some of the group replied - "Almost"

The speaker replied, "Really?" He then pulled out a bucket of gravel. He dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing gravel pieces to work themselves into the spaces between the stones. He again asked the group, "Is the jar full?"

"Probably not," one of his audience answered.

"Good!" he replied. He reached under the table and produced a bucket of sand. He began dumping the sand into the jar and it filled the spaces left between the stones and the gravel. Again he asked, "Is the jar full?"

"No!" the group shouted.

"Good"! Grabbing a pitcher of water he began pouring it until the jar was filled to the brim. Looking at his spectators he asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "No matter how full your schedule is, if you really try, you can always fit more things into it!"

"No," the expert replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is, "If you don't put the big stones in first, you'll never get them in at all. What are the 'big stones' in your life - time with family, your dreams, your faith, your education, a worthy cause, teaching others?"

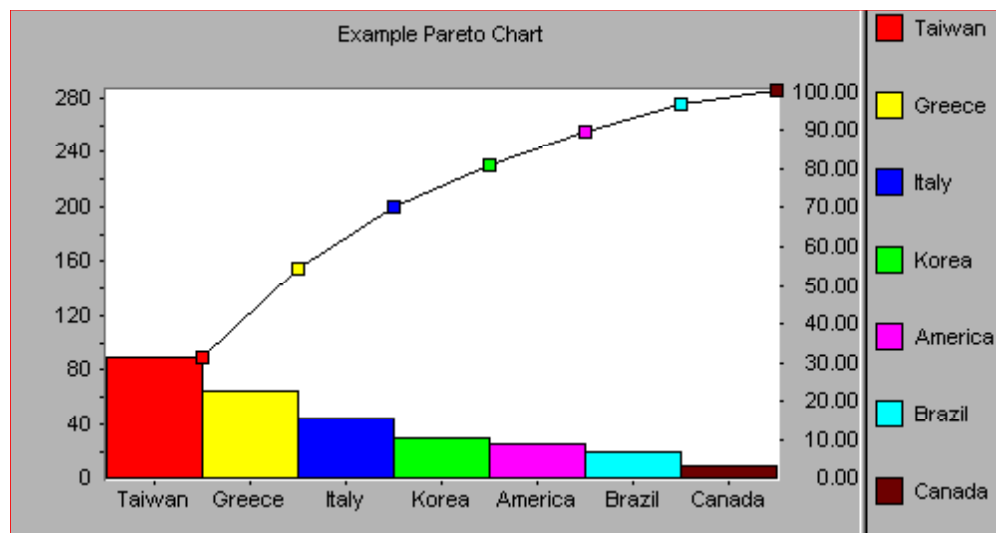
"Remember you need to put the BIG STONES in first or you'll never get them in at all. So when you are reflecting on this story, ask yourself this question, 'What are the 'big stones' in my work and life?' Then, put those in your jar first."

You will have noticed that 20 percent of the things – ‘the big stones’ (which also takes 20 percent of the resources, time and effort) – filled 80 percent of the jar, and were vital to maximizing the utilization of the jar’s capacity?

MAKING TIME ... the effective use of time

Learning to recognize and then focus on the 20 percent is the key to making the most effective use of your time. So, *how do you recognise your 20 percent?* Here are a couple of tips to develop 80/20 thinking:

1. **Consider the people around you.** Twenty percent of your clients, staff and colleagues typically give around 80 percent of your support and satisfaction. Look after them. Similarly, you can usually name family members and friends who would be there for you under any circumstances. Try not to put them on the back burner.
2. **Examine your work.** Ask yourself, "What do I really want to do with my time and my life? What 20 percent of my work do I focus on?" An important aid to help you identify and organize your valuable 20 percent, is a *Pareto Chart*. There are several guidelines, software, and web pages to help you prepare and interpret them. Here is a sample Pareto Chart:



In most cases, two or three categories will tower above the others. These few categories, that will generally account for the bulk of the problems, will be the points on which you should focus.

Having identified what is eating up your time and what you need to prioritise, let us move towards 'how' to do it. The following are some *essentials of effective time organisation*:

- **Set Specific Goals:** Having written goals, with specific timeframes and results, gives you a sense of direction and will make you aware of the efforts required to achieve what's important in your life.
- **Defining Priorities:** Give a priority to each goal if you have several. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by too many goals, while directing your attention to the most important ones. The 80/20 rule, and Covey's Quadrants discussed above are key prioritizing tools.
- **Create a To-Do List:** Maintain, and habitually update, a To-Do List, including urgent and non-urgent action items, for all your goals.
- **Allocate Time and respect Deadlines:** Include a time frame for each action item and a realistic completion date. Tools like a PDA, desk calendar, diary, etc can help to schedule tasks. Importantly, any task can take the amount of time allotted to it – notice how you can blitz through paperwork, make decisions and delegate tasks on the last day before a vacation!
- **Say "NO" to Requests:** Don't waste time on low priority items and ignore higher priority items just because you cannot say "NO." It takes practice to say "NO", but it will save you time in the long run.
- **Use Time wisely:** Set aside specific times during the day to check messages by modifying your computer settings so e-mail and instant messages don't just pop up. Let your voice mail, or answering machine, pick up your cell phone or telephone calls and return non-urgent calls at a more convenient time. Open mail only when you have the time to read it and action it – reply to it, delegate it, file it or discard it. Don't touch the same piece of paper twice.
- **Get Organized:** Organize your desk, notebooks, computer files and e-mail folders so you don't waste time searching for lost things. As Benjamin Franklin said: *"A place for everything, everything in its place."*

- ***Personal Monitoring and Follow Up:*** Regularly check yourself as to how efficiently you are following the above principles, and plug the loopholes. There's always room for improvement!

Make a commitment now to pay closer attention to how you spend your time. If you avoid procrastination, maintain your focus and practice good organizational skills, you'll earn respect and recognition in your career. Success comes to those who work hard and know how to organize their time well to their best advantage.

Get to work! Figure out where you can focus your efforts and get more for your precious time and energy.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Master Your Time

If you would like more comprehensive information on time management then this ebook is a must. It is based on years of research in the field and comes highly recommended. [Master Your Time](#)

Super Tactics Of Time Management Experts

A “Productivity Wizard” shares his secret Time Management and Goal Setting tools to help you better manage your time. [Super Tactics](#)

Achieve Planner Software

If you are interested in a powerful and effective time management and goal setting software system that is great for both business and personal use then this software is perfect. [Achieve Planner Software](#)

Sequence Diagram Editor

This automatically takes care of tedious layout and formatting tasks allowing you to create sequence diagrams much faster than with drawing programs such as Visio® or even expensive UML tools. [Sequence Diagram Editor](#)

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