Time Management Techniques

Course Objectives

- **This course is to provide practical techniques for personal time management skills to help you become highly effective, by showing you how to identify and focus on the activities that give you the greatest returns, help you work smarter, not harder and beat work overload and stress.**

What's Covered

- **Introduction to Time Management Techniques**
- **How Good is Your Time Management?**
- **Activity Logs**
- **To Do Lists**
- **Leverage**
- **The Art of Filing**
- **Prioritization**
- **Urgent/Important Matrix**
- **Effective Scheduling**
- **Managing Interruptions**
- **Minimizing Distractions**
- **Overcoming Procrastination**

Introduction to Time Management Techniques

- **Time Management Skills: essential skills for effective people**
  - ➔ *Work smarter. Improve time utilization*
- **Concentrate on results, not on being busy**
- **The 80:20 Rule (Pareto Principle)**
  - The remaining 80% of results are achieved with only 20% of the effort
  - While the ratio is not always 80:20, this broad pattern of a small proportion of activity generating non-scalar returns recurs so frequently as to be the norm in many areas
- **Time Management Tools**
  - By the end of this section, you should have a much clearer understanding of how to use time to its greatest effect

How Good is Your Time Management? (1)

- **This Time Management Quiz is to help you identify the aspects of time management that you need most help with. The results will point you to the specific tools you need to use to gain control of your time, and start working efficiently**

Quiz - How Good
Your Time Managem

How Good is Your Time Management? (2)

- **Areas of time management explored in the quiz:**
  - **Goal Setting (Questions 6, 10, 14, 15)**
  - **Prioritization (Questions 1, 4, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15)**
  - **Managing Interruptions (Questions 5, 9, 11, 12)**
  - **Procrastination (Questions 2, 10, 12)**
  - **Scheduling (Questions 3, 7, 12)**

Activity Logs (1)

- **Activity Logs: Finding Out How You Really Spend Your Time**

- **Keeping an Activity Log for several days helps you to understand how you spend your time, and when you perform at your best**

Time	Activity description	Duration	Value (High, Medium or Low)

Activity Logs (2)

- **Learning from Your Log:**
  - **Eliminate jobs that your employer shouldn't be paying you to do (tasks someone else doing, possibly at lower pay rate, or personal activities)**
  - **Schedule your most challenging tasks for the times of day when your energy is highest**
  - **Try to minimize the number of times a day you switch between types of task**
  - **Reduce the amount of time spent on legitimate personal activities such as making coffee (take turns in your team to do this – it saves time and strengthens team spirit)**

To Do Lists (1)

- **To Do Lists: Remembering To Do All Essential Jobs, In The Right Order**

- **You remember to carry out all necessary tasks**

- **You tackle the most important jobs first, and do not waste time on trivial tasks**

- **You do not get stressed by a large number of unimportant jobs**

- **Preparing a To-Do List:**
  - **Write down all tasks that you need to complete, and if they are large, break them down into their component elements (about 1-2 hours to complete)**
  - **Run through these jobs allocating priorities from A (very important, or very urgent) to F (unimportant, or not at all urgent). Then rewrite the list in priority order**
  - **Have a precise plan that you can use to eliminate the problems you face. You will be able to tackle these in order of importance or urgency. This allows you to separate important jobs from the many time-consuming trivial ones**

Task	Priority (A-F) (A=Very Important, F=Unimportant)

Using Your To-Do Lists:

- **Different people use To-Do Lists in different ways in different situations**

- **In an operational role, or if tasks are large or dependent on too many other people, it may be better to keep one list and remove gradually at it**

- **You may carry unimportant jobs from one To-Do List to the next. If you are running up against a deadline for them, raise their priority on your list**

- **If you have not used To-Do Lists before, try them now: using them is one of the most important things you can do to become really productive and efficient**

Leverage (1)

- **Leverage: Achieving much more with the same effort**

- *"Give me a lever long enough and a place to stand, and I can move the Earth."– Archimedes*

- **Levers of Success - need to learn how to use the leverage of:**
  - **Time (yours and that of other people)**
  - **Resources**
  - **Knowledge and education**
  - **Technology**

Leverage (2)

- **To leverage YOUR OWN time:**
    - **Practice effective time management**
    - **Prioritize activities that give the greatest return for the time invested**
    - **Use goal setting to think about what matters to you in the long term and motivate yourself**
- **To leverage other people's time:**
    - **Delegate work to other people**
    - **Train and empower others through team building**
    - **Bring in experts and consultants to cover skill gaps**
    - **Outsource non-core tasks to people with the experience to do them more efficiently**

The Art of Filing (1)

- **The Art of Filing: Managing Your Documents... and Your Time**

- **Effective File Management:**

  - **Avoid saving unnecessary documents**

  - **Consistent method for naming files and folders**

  - **Store related documents together, whatever types**

  - **Separate ongoing work from completed work**

  - **Avoid overfilling folders**

  - **Install Google Desktop on your PC, if you can (http://desktop.google.com)**

  - **Make sure your filing system is backed up**

The Art of Filing (2)

- **Prioritizing Your Files for Action:**
  - **Organize files by dates**
  - **Use version numbers to distinguish between documents being reworked or changed**
  - **Use "Tickler" files (a.k.a "43 folders" method)**
    - Create 12 folders (one for each month of the year) and an additional 31 subfolders (for each day of the month)
    - Fill each folder with the documents to work with on that day. At the beginning of each day, open the folder for that day. Take all the items out of the folder and move them into a "today" folder or onto your desktop
    - If you can't complete some work items by the end of the day, transfer them to the folder for the next convenient day

Prioritization

- **Prioritization: Making best use of your time and resources**

- **Simple Prioritization:**

  - **You can prioritize based on time constraints, on the potential profitability or benefit of the task you're facing, or on the pressure you're under to complete a job**

- **Prioritization Tools:**

  - **Paired Comparison Analysis, Grid Analysis, The Action Priority Matrix, The Urgent/Important Matrix, The Ansoff Matrix and the Boston Matrices, Pareto Analysis, Nominal Group Technique**

Urgent/Important Matrix (1)

- **The Urgent/Important Matrix: Using time effectively, not just efficiently**

- **Important activities have an outcome that leads to the achievement of your goals**

- **Urgent activities demand immediate attention, and are often associated with the achievement of someone else's goals**

- **Urgent activities are often the ones we concentrate on. They demand attention because the consequences of not dealing with them are immediate**
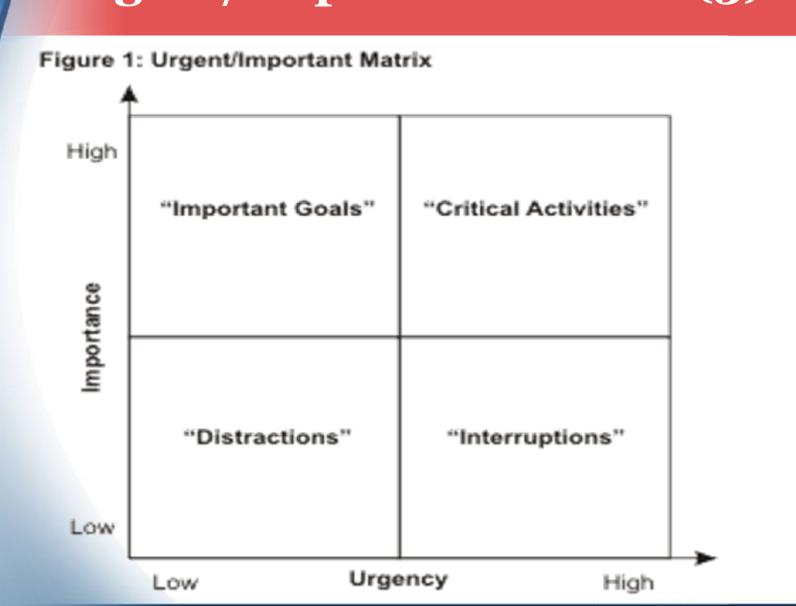
- **Use the matrix to prioritize your activities:**
  - **List all the activities and projects you have to do. Try to include everything that takes up your time at work, however unimportant**
  - **Assign importance to each of the activities – a scale of 1 to 5. Not to worry about urgency at this stage**
  - **Evaluate the urgency of each activity. As you do this, you can plot the listed items on the matrix according to the assigned importance and urgency**
  - **Now study the matrix using the strategies described below to schedule your priorities**

Figure 1: Urgent/Important Matrix

- ## Strategies for Quadrants of the Matrix: (1)
  - ### Urgent and Important:
    - 2 distinct types of urgent and important activities: Ones that you could not foresee, and others that you have left to the last minute
    - You can avoid the latter by planning ahead and avoiding procrastination
    - Issues and crises, on the other hand, cannot always be foreseen or avoided. Here, the best approach is to leave some time in your schedule to handle unexpected issues and unplanned important activities
    - If this happens, identify which of you urgent-important activities could have been foreseen and think about how you could schedule similar activities ahead of time, so they do not become urgent

Urgent/Important Matrix (5)

- **Strategies for Quadrants of the Matrix: (2)**
  - **Urgent and Not Important:**
    - Activities that stop you achieving your goals, and prevent you from completing your work. Ask yourself whether these tasks can be rescheduled, or whether someone else could do them
    - A common source of such interruptions is from other people in your office. Sometimes it's appropriate to say "No" to people, or encourage them to solve the problem themselves. Alternatively, try allocating time when you are available so that people only interrupt you at certain times

- **Strategies for Quadrants of the Matrix: (3)**
  - **Not Urgent, but Important:**
    - These are the activities that help you achieve your personal and professional goals, and complete important work
    - Make sure that you have plenty of time to do these things properly, so that they do not become urgent
    - And remember to leave enough time in your schedule to deal with unforeseen problems
    - This will maximize your chances of keeping on schedule, and help you avoid the stress of work becoming more urgent that necessary

Strategies for Quadrants of the Matrix: (4)

- ### Not Urgent and Not Important:
  - These activities are just a distraction, and should be avoided if possible
  - Some can simply be ignored. Others are activities that other people may want you to do, but they do not contribute to your own desired outcomes. Again, say "No" politely and firmly if you can
  - If people see you are clear about your objectives and boundaries, they will often not ask you to do "not important" activities in the future

Effective Scheduling (1)

- **Effective Scheduling: Planning to Make the Best Use of Your Time**

- **Scheduling is the process by which you plan your use of time**

- **By scheduling effectively, you can both reduce stress and maximize your effectiveness**

Effective Scheduling (2)

- **5-step process of scheduling:**
    - **Identify the time you have available**
    - **Block in the essential tasks you must carry out to succeed in your job**
    - **Schedule in high priority urgent tasks**
    - **Block in appropriate contingency time to handle unpredictable interruptions**
    - **In the time that remains, schedule the activities that address your priorities and personal goals**

Managing Interruptions (1)

- **Managing Interruptions: Maintain focus. Keep control of your time**
- **Keep An Interrupters Log**

Person	Date and Time	Description of Interruption	Valid?	Urgent?

- **Analyze and Conquer Interruptions:**
  - **Look at whether the interruption is valid or not**
  - **Look at how urgent the interruptions were, and whether they could have been pre-empted. You can pre-empt many interruptions by holding routine meetings with people**
  - **Some interruptions are both urgent and valid. You need to be interrupted, and you need to deal with the situation**
  - **From the Log, you'll see how much time is taken up by these urgent, valid interruptions. Block this time into your schedule as "contingency time "**

- **Put Your Phone to Work for You (*Not Against You*):**
  - A little bit of planning can go a long way in working to control telephone interruptions, which many people experience all day long
  - If you are on a deadline or your focus needs to be intense (and not interrupted), use your voice mail to screen calls, or have an assistant deal with messages for you
  - This way, you can deal with calls by priority, and at times that suit you. In fact, this telephone time can be planned into your schedule, and so become a normal part of your working day

Managing Interruptions (4)

- **Catch Your Breath:**

  - **When interrupted, it's easy to get caught up in the "rush" of the person who is interrupting, for they undoubtedly feel their request is urgent. In reality, however, most interruptions are not genuinely crisis-driven, and it can serve everyone best to take a little time before taking action**

  - **Take a few minutes to consider the situation. Catch your breath and clear your head. A small delay, even one of just a few minutes, goes a long way in assessing the situation accurately and reacting appropriately**

- **Learn to Say "No":**
  - It's often acceptable to say "no" to requests or tasks if you are busy when someone else can handle it, if it is not an important task, or if it can be done later
  - When this is the case, saying "no" in a courteous and sincere way, followed by a short explanation is the best course of action to take: "I am working against a very tight deadline on an important project right now so, I am sorry, but I can not jump in and help"

- **"Available" and "Unavailable" Time:**
  - **Simple yet effective: Let people know when you are available. and when you are not. Make sure that people know that during your "unavailable time", they should only interrupt you if they have to**
  - **You and your co-workers can also agree on a signal that everyone in the office can use when unavailable, like turning the nameplate on the door around, or simply closing the door. This alleviates interruptions and can avoid hurt feelings**

- **"Invitation Only" Time:**
  - **Schedule regular check-in times for the individuals you talk to most often. Ask these people to keep a running list of things that they need to discuss, so you can cover all the points at one time. And, force yourself to do the same**
  - **An open-door policy is good, but you should limit the number of people you invite to your work area. For instance, if you're scheduling a meeting, offer to meet your co-worker in his or her office or a conference room**

- **Uncontrollable Interruptions:**
  - **There are interruptions that, no matter how hard you try, you simply cannot control**
  - **Most people are happy to schedule a more convenient time, but when this does not work, quickly set the parameters by saying something like, "I only have five minutes to talk about this right now," and stick to it**
  - **Do not ask the interrupter to sit down and do not engage in small talk. Encourage the interrupter to get right to the point and if a solution cannot be reached before the allotted time runs out, set a time for getting back to them and, again, stick to it**

Minimizing Distractions (1)

- **Minimizing Distractions: Managing Your Work Environment**

- **We all face distractions on a daily basis. Distractions not only lower our productivity, they also increase our stress**

- **You probably already know what distracts you the most – phone calls, emails, instant messages, Internet browsing, interrupting co-workers, and so on**

- **Email:**

  - **Schedule "email" times**

  - **Check and respond to email at "low productivity" times to and save your peak hours for doing creative, high-value work**

  - **Turn emails into actions**

  - **Keep your email program closed**

- **Disorganization:**
  - **A disorganized desk or office can be very distracting**
  - **When your work space or work life is disorganized, it can be difficult to think and plan clearly**

- **Instant Messaging (IM):**
  - **Instant messaging can be useful, but many times it's also a way for co-workers to interrupt you without having to get up and walk into your office**
  - **If you use instant messaging (it's very powerful if used in a disciplined way), get into the habit of using it for small, quick queries. It's often better to use email or the phone for more complex ones**
  - **Consider setting specific times during the day for being "online."**

Minimizing Distractions (5)

- **Phone Calls:**
    - **Minimize phone call distractions by turning off your phone during your peak work hours**
    - **Let your team know that you won't take non-essential calls between specific times**
    - **Alternatively, get people into the habit of using IM to check with co-workers that they are OK to take a call. If co-workers are deep in concentration, they can ask to "talk in 10 minutes" without losing the thread of their work**

- **The Internet:**
  - **Read the news before the start of the day**
  - **Close your Internet browser**
  - **Use special software to eliminate online distractions**
  - **Take short Internet breaks**

- **Other People:**
  - **Close your door**
  - **Use headphones**
  - **Talk to the disrupter**

- **Work Environment:**
  - **Work in another location**
  - **Use "white noise"**
  - **Prioritize your To-Do List**
  - **Track your day**
  - **Delegate**

- **Tiredness:**
    - **Get enough sleep**
    - **Stay hydrated – drink water regularly during the day**
    - **Go for a walk**
    - **Watch your diet**

- **Overcoming Procrastination: Manage your time. Get it all done**

- **What is Procrastination?**
  - You procrastinate when you put off things that you should be focusing on right now, usually in favor of doing something that is more enjoyable or that you're more comfortable doing

  - Procrastination occurs when there's "*a temporal gap between intended behavior and enacted behavior.*" That is, procrastination is occurring when there's a significant time period between when people intend to do a job, and when they actually do it

- **How to Overcome Procrastination:**
  - **Step 1: Recognize That You're Procrastinating**
    - **Filling your day with low priority tasks from To Do List**
    - **Reading e-mails several times without starting work on them or deciding what you're going to do with them**
    - **Sitting down to start a high-priority task, and almost immediately going off to make a cup of coffee**
    - **Leaving an item on your To Do list for a long time, even though you know it's important**
    - **Regularly saying "Yes" to unimportant tasks that others ask you to do, and filling your time with these instead of getting on with the important tasks already on your list**
    - **Waiting for the "right mood" or the "right time" to tackle the important task at hand**

- **How to Overcome Procrastination:**
  - **Step 2: Work Out WHY You're Procrastinating**
    - **Find a particular job unpleasant, and try to avoid it**
    - **Disorganized. Not have things prioritized to-do lists and schedules which emphasize how important the piece work is, and identify precisely when it's due**
    - **Feel overwhelmed by the task. You may doubt that you have the skills or resources you think you need, so you seek comfort in doing tasks you know you're capable of completing**
    - **Perfectionists. "I don't have the right skills or resources to do this perfectly now, so I won't do it at all."**
    - **Underdeveloped decision-making skills**

- ## How to Overcome Procrastination:

  - ### Step 3: Adopt Anti-Procrastination Strategies

    - Make up your own rewards for a certain task completed

    - Ask someone else to check up on you

    - Identify unpleasant consequences of NOT doing the task

    - Work out the cost of your time to your employer

    - Get organized by To-Do list, Urgent/Important Matrix, Scheduling

    - When you find the task overwhelming, break it into a set of smaller, more manageable tasks. Just start with some quick, small tasks if you can

    - For unpleasant task, just give it a try. You may find it's not as bad as you thought! Hold the unpleasant consequences of not doing the work in your mind

Q & A

Document Revision History

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20 Jan 2010	1.0	First version	Kinh Ho
30 Mar 2011	1.1	Added revision section, changed file name with course ID. Update template at cover page.	Kinh Ho