Time Management

Systems Administration

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Why are we talking about this?

- So we can be professionally successful.
- So we can be happy.

Also, you're going to be assessed on this.

Managing one's time as a systems administrator is difficult for the same reason that it is interesting. Sysadmin work is

- ▶ chaotic,
- ▶ subject to interruption,
- ▶ broad in scope.

A good sysadmin is expected to

- ▶ be available and responsive
- ▶ get things done

But these two things generally conflict

Use a diary

Your diary can be a physical notebook, a calendar app, or sommething else provided you use it.

- Track **all** your tasks, for work, school, and personal things.
- It should have a calendar-like property.
- Don't use a todo app that deletes things that are done.

Use your diary

- Start your day by planning your tasks
- End your day by reviewing what you did - and did not - get done.

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Key assumption number one

Nobody really knows what sysadmins do, and for the most part they're happier not knowing. But they do need to be confident that we know what we're doing and that we're doing it well. Good time management will help give them that confidence, which in turn give you more freedom to manage your work.

Day planning tips

- If it had to be done today, do it first.
- Look for a balance between small easy tasks and big hard ones.
- Schedule in uninterruptible and interruptible times.

First hour rule

The first hour of your work day is typically your most productive. Use that time for important tasks and things that require focus. Do not use it to check your email, fetch coffee, or flirt with the new person in HR.

Mornings are special

The first hour or two of your workday are likely to be the most productive. Generally that's because nothing has gone wrong yet and nobody has come up with a reason to interrupt you. Use your mornings well.

- Avoid meetings in the first two hours of the day.
- Do not start the day by reading email. Skim your inbox for anything critical and then close it.
- Take the fist ten minutes of your day to make a plan.

USE BLOCKERS

You are going to be interrupted to handle issues. It's literally part of your job description. The purpose of blockers is to route those issues into a lane where you can deal with them effectively.
Examples of blockers:

- A ticketing system
- A team member taking a turn in the triage role.
- Policies about when you can and can't be interrupted.

Handling the interruptions

When something does come up, you need a decisive and efficient way to respond.

- ► Record it
- ► Delegate it
- ► Do it

Handling big tasks

Ideally, you start working on a task and continue until it is done. The world is not ideal, especially for sysadmins. However,

- Don't start working on a task without a plan and a schedule to see it through to completion.
- Try to schedule some time to work on the task almost every day.
- For especially big or complex tasks, take a team member out of on call rotation so that they can focus on the big task.

Build routines

If there are things you do on a regular basis, develop a routine of doing those things at the same time every day/week/whatever.

- It saves mental energy.
- Stuff gets done.

Build habits

The value of (good) habits is that they lead us to do the right thing without taking the time to think about it. What things should become habit?
If you find yourself, and especially if you find your self often asking "Should I ...?"

- The answer is yes.
- Quit wasting time asking and make it a habit.

CREATE POLICIES

Policies sound annoying a bureaucratic, but they save time and energy.
Critical policies are

- ► How do users get help?
- ► What is and is not supported?
- ► What is an emergency?