

Time Management Effectiveness Feedback Report

Sample Report
6/19/2008 6:38:50 PM

Introduction

The following information is provided to help you navigate the information this is included in your Time Management Effectiveness report.

1. Overall summary chart

The summary results chart provides a quick visual representation of your scores in seven competencies that make up the Time Management Effectiveness profile. The scores to concentrate on are those above 3.5 (strong) and below 2.75 (need further development). Please note that these competency scores are averages; individual question scores can be viewed by clicking on the individual competency link.

2. Category description pages

This report contains three sections for each of the seven competencies. The first of these three sections explains the category, lists average scores, and then provides high and low score interpretation notes. The second section provides a graphical representation of individual question scores. The third section provides broadly-based improvement actions for those individuals wanting to develop their competencies.

3. 10/10 Report

The "10/10" Report page provides the raw scores for the 10 highest scoring questions and the 10 lowest scoring questions out of the 84. It also identifies which competency each question is from.

4. Course and Reading suggestions

Development suggestions for the two lowest scoring competencies, including training courses and specific books that may provide some useful additional information, are included here.

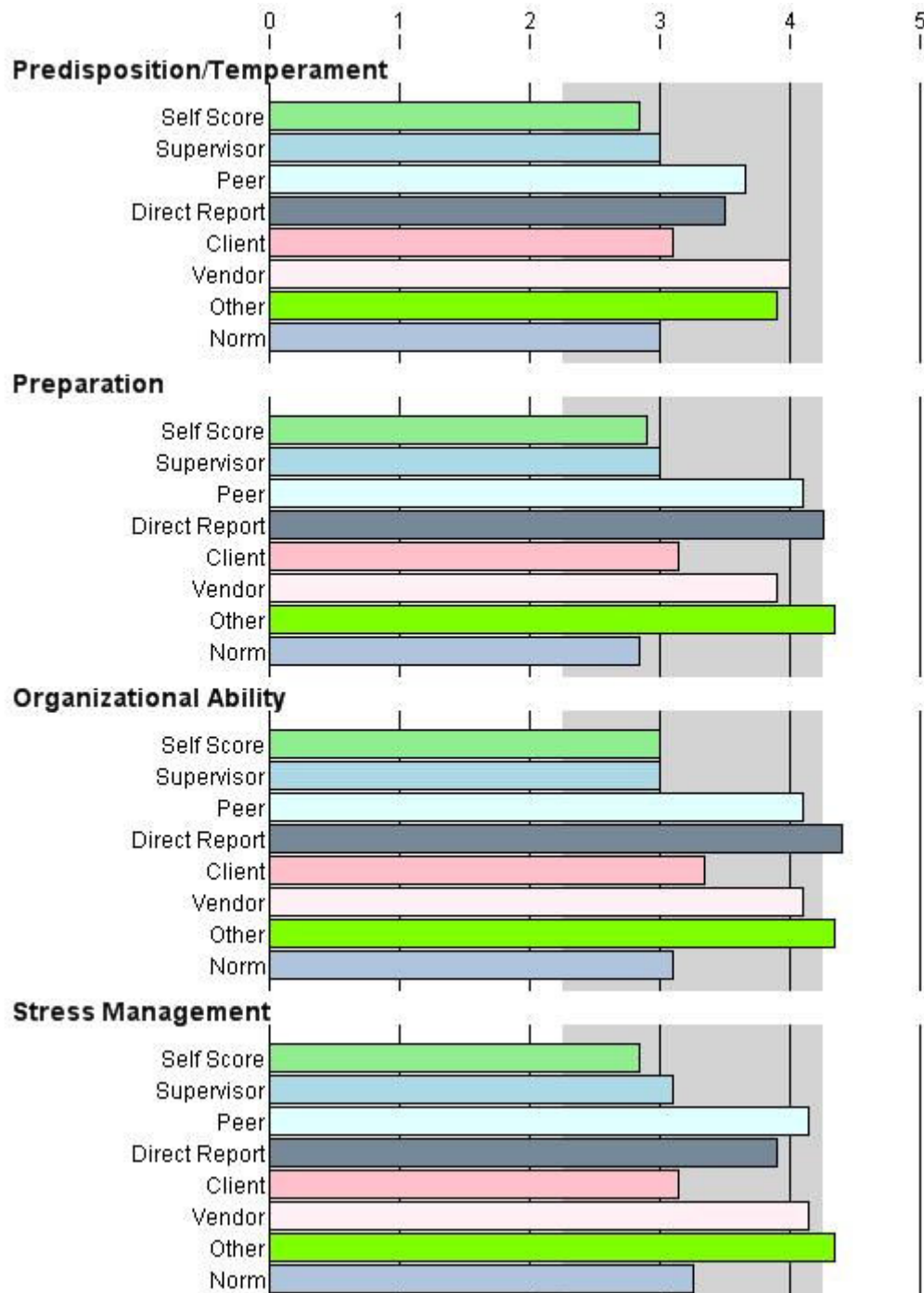
5. Development Plan

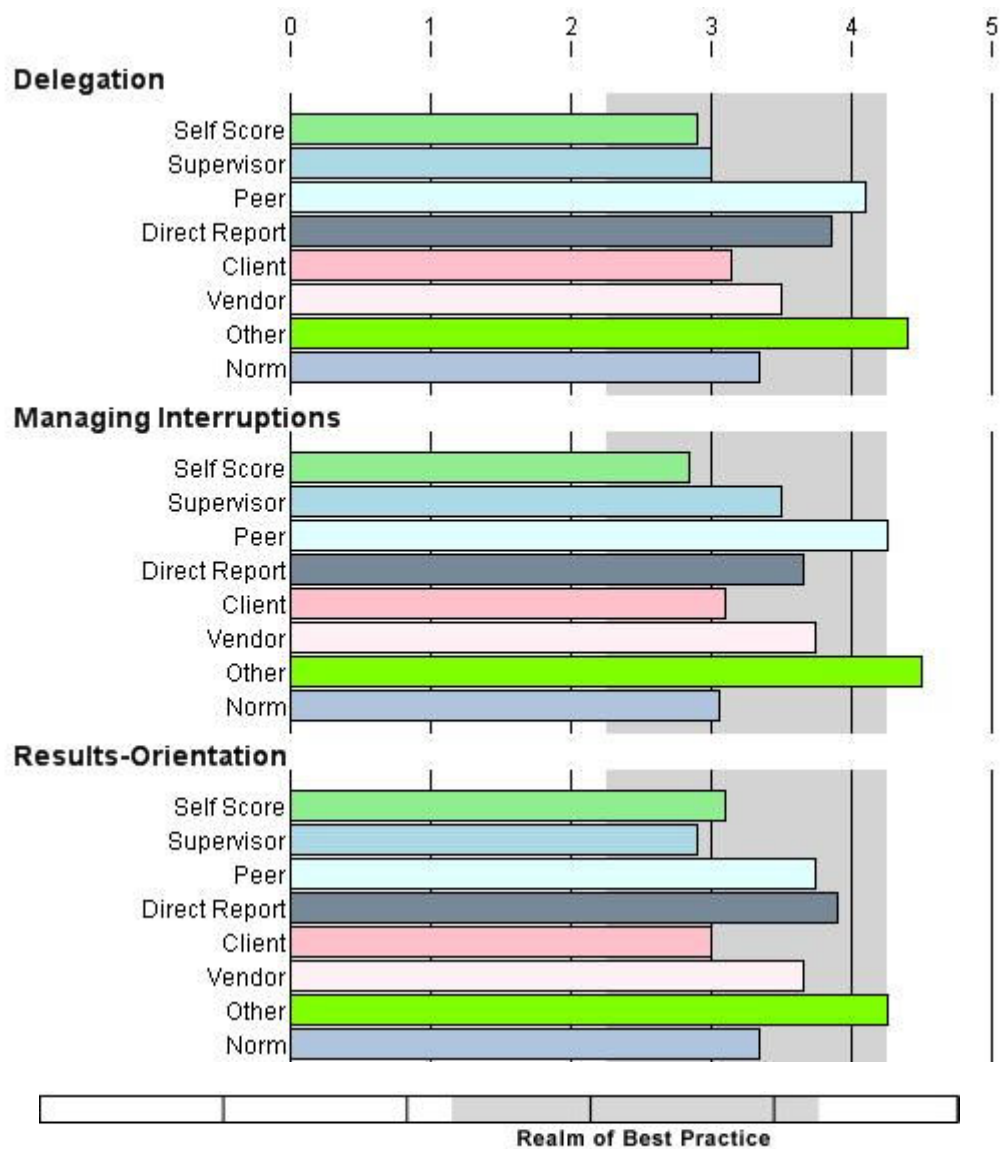
The development plan aggregates the five lowest scoring questions and puts them into a one page template. Individuals can use this template to record the actions they plan to take, as a result of their feedback, over the next twelve months. Individuals may draw upon the general guidance offered in their feedback report, or draw upon the "coaching tips" (see next section).

6. Coaching tips

The overall output report includes detailed coaching tips for the five lowest scoring questions. These coaching tips provide not only information about the particular questions, but provide some specific advice on what individuals might do to improve their skills or learn new behaviors in the future.

OVERALL SUMMARY



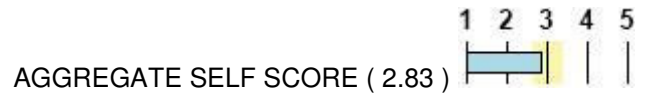


Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

Time Management Profile

STRESS MANAGEMENT

This section on Stress Management looks at your ability to keep calm and stay focused when the pressure is on or a crisis occurs. It asks the question: "When the people around you are all losing their heads, can you keep yours?"



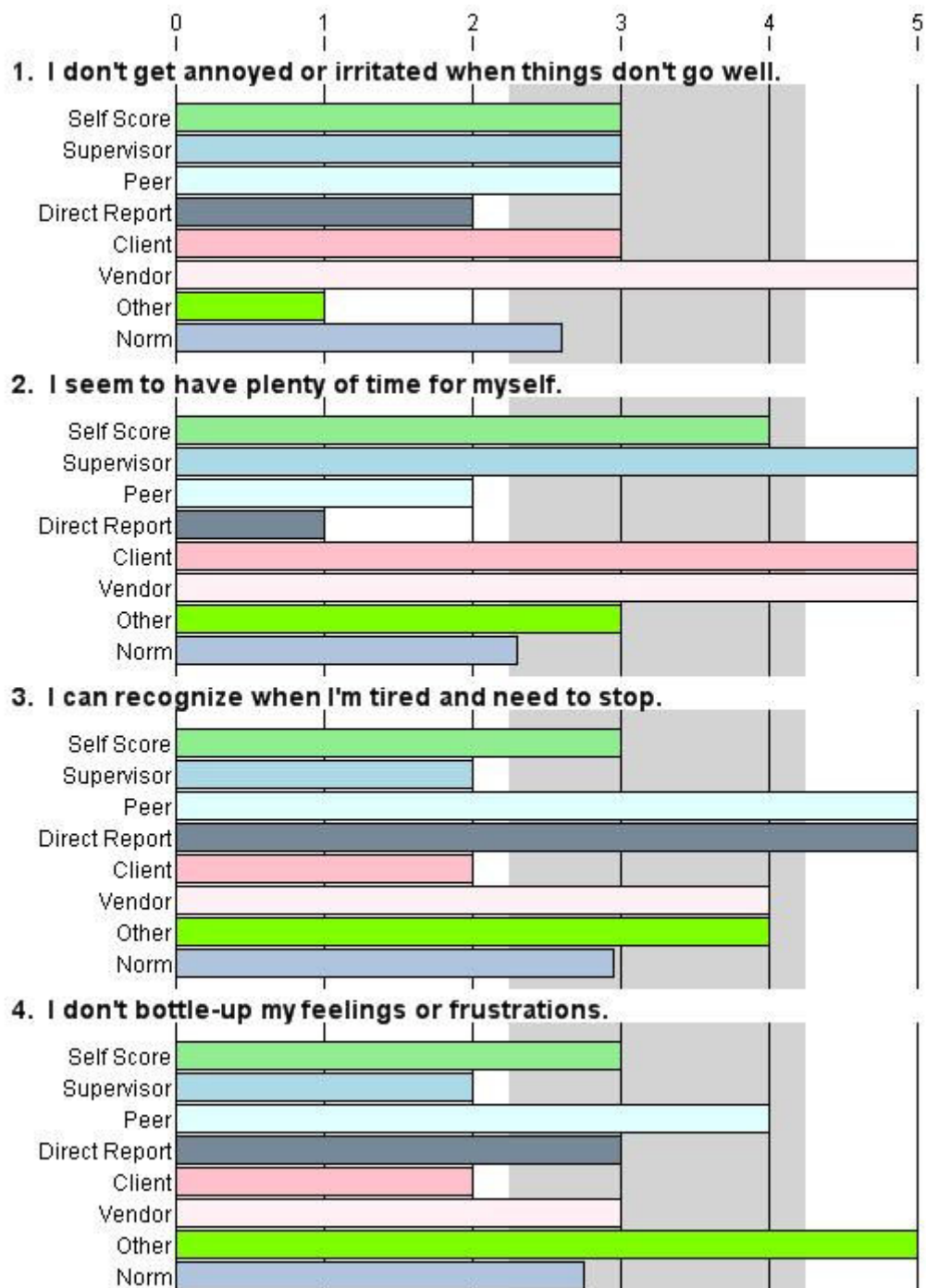
Interpretation

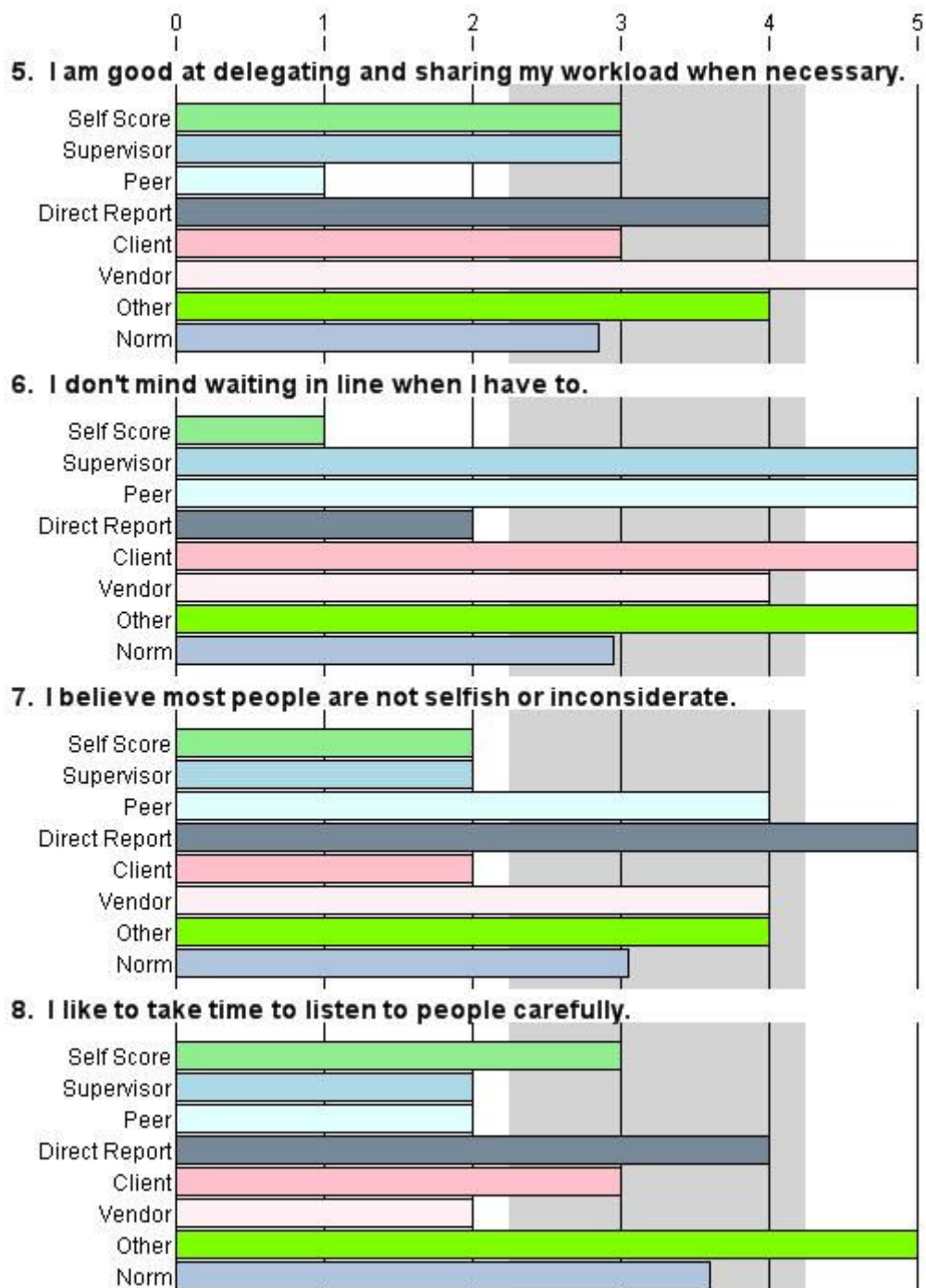
LOW (less than 2.75)

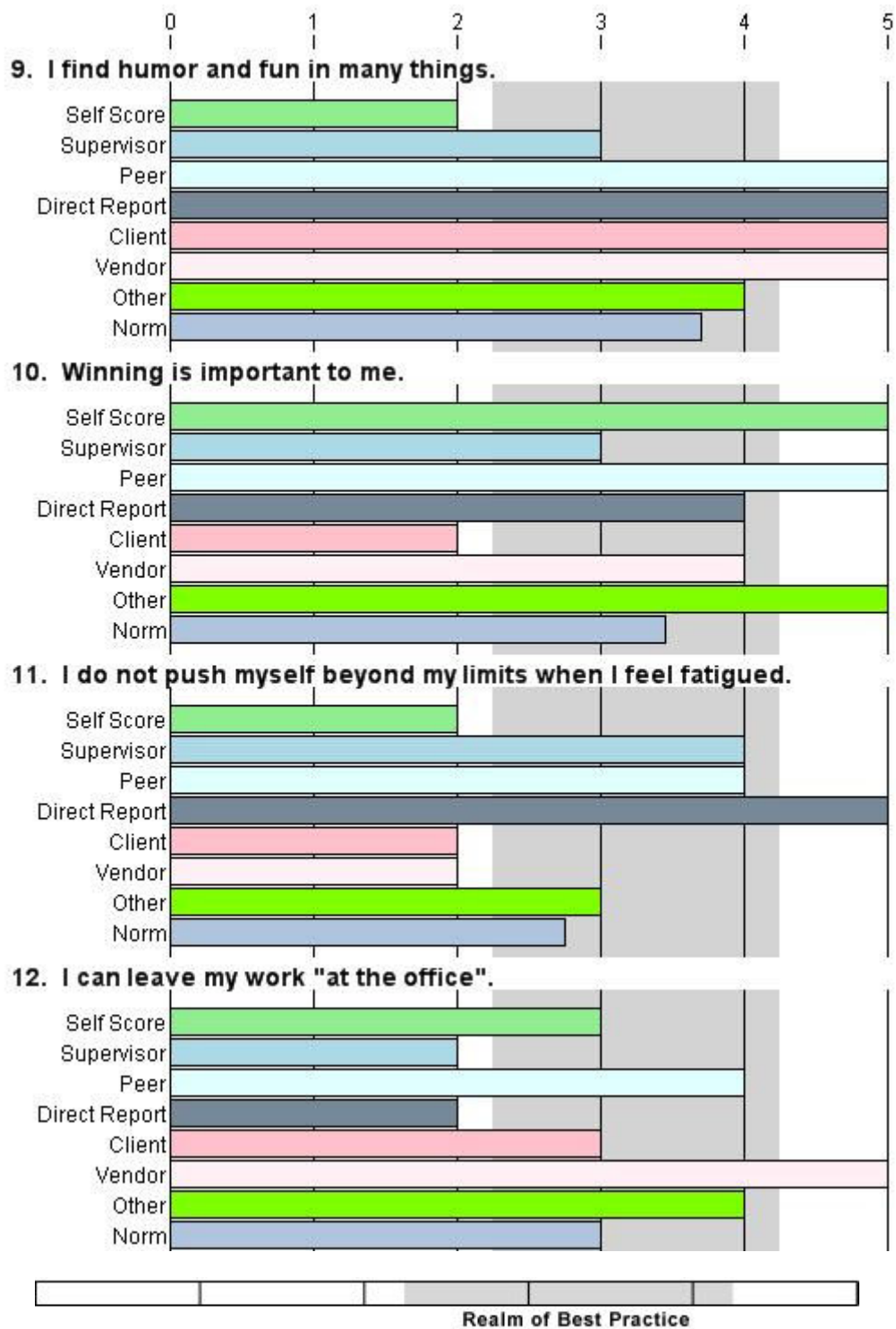
Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that pressure distracts you and tends to throw you entirely off-course, causing potential strain and worry. A low scorer in this section is likely to become flustered, disorganized, or destabilized by high levels of stress during workload crises. This can lead to cutting corners, dropping priority tasks, working at home or late at night, or even causing unnecessary stress to others.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you manage pressure in a relatively relaxed and flexible way and generally do not see it as a threat to your key priorities. A high scorer in this section is likely to understand that pressure and stress are an inevitable part of day-to-day life, and accommodate it the best way they can. However, they tend to find creative ways to make extra time available and do not let the pressure get the best of them or encroach on personal or reflective time.







Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

This section on Stress Management looks at your ability to keep calm and stay focused when the pressure is on or a crisis occurs. It asks the question: "When the people around you are all losing their heads, can you keep yours?"

Improvement actions

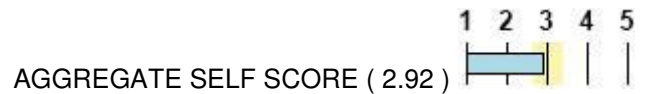
Low scorers need to accept pressure as something to be managed as flexibly as possible. Strong efforts need to be made to protect planning time, thinking time, breaktime, and relaxation time when pressure is at its greatest. Ultimately, pressure should be viewed as something to be creatively managed and reduced-not endured as a long-term "norm."

Stress management

- Do some quiet reflective thinking or contemplation on the sort of pressure or crises that arise on a regular basis (or of a similar type when it occurs).
- Develop a range of flexible coping strategies that can be deployed when this occurs.
- Include more planning, stronger prioritization, delegation, more short breaks, or a number of other coping tactics into your schedule.
- Take your time and calmly rethink your most important priorities when the pressure is on or crises occur.

MANAGING INTERRUPTIONS

This section on Managing Interruptions looks at how well you stay on track when unexpected events or people interfere with your plans. It asks the question: "How flexible are you in your work, should unexpected events or interruptions occur?"



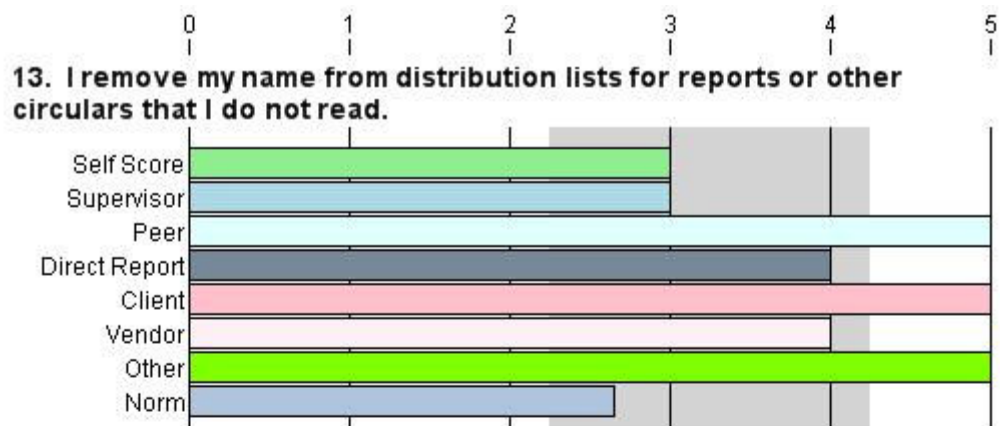
Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

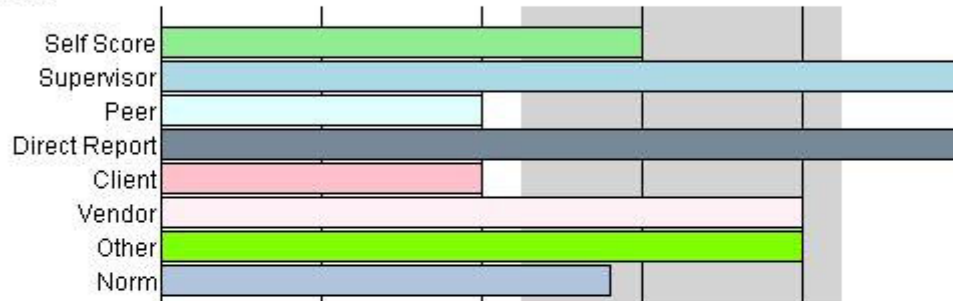
Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you probably let interruptions steer you off-course and get in the way of greater priorities. Those whose scores are high in this area unwittingly give indications that it is okay for others to interrupt them when they like. A low scorer here generally dislikes interruptions and worries about when they will come (yet again!), but also tends to invite them by allowing current interruptions to take control. Other work (and some of it much more important) gets postponed or dropped altogether.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

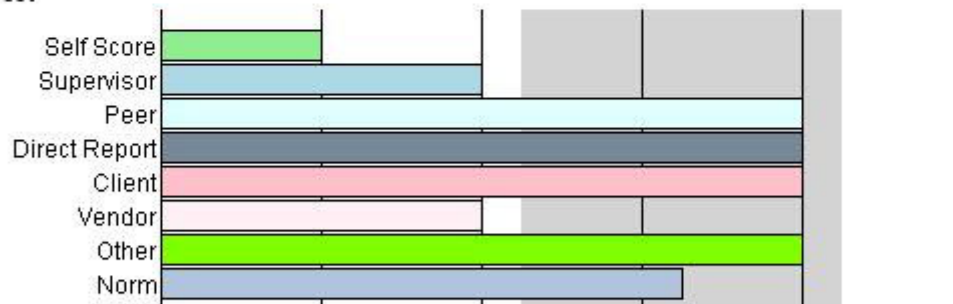
Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you take interruptions in stride, but also plan your day to accept a certain amount of unexpected variation. An individual who scores high here sends out signals that he or she should only be interrupted for important things, but also keeps these interruptions quite brief, quickly evaluating them for their importance in the broader picture.



14. I close my door or find a quiet place when I want to think or plan.

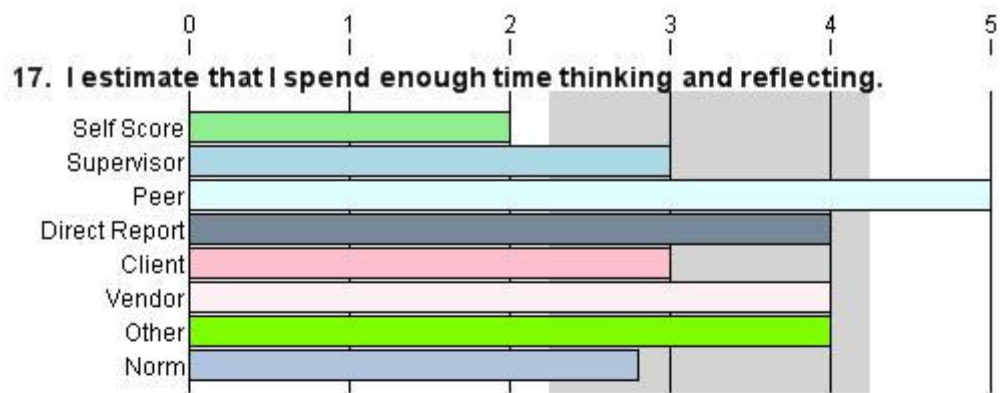


15. I maintain a good filing system for my correspondence/e-mail, etc.

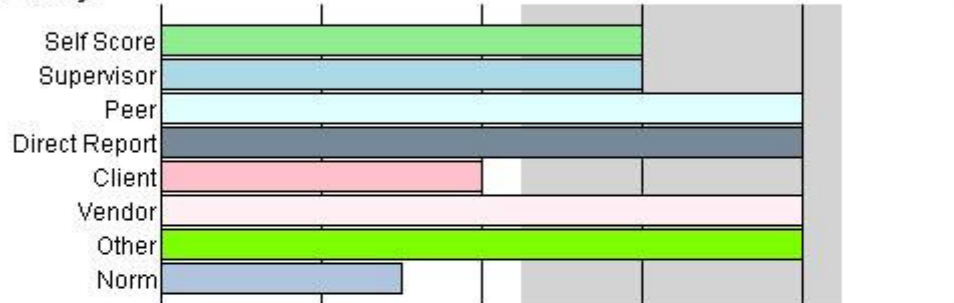


16. I won't start a task or project until I know that I can complete it properly.

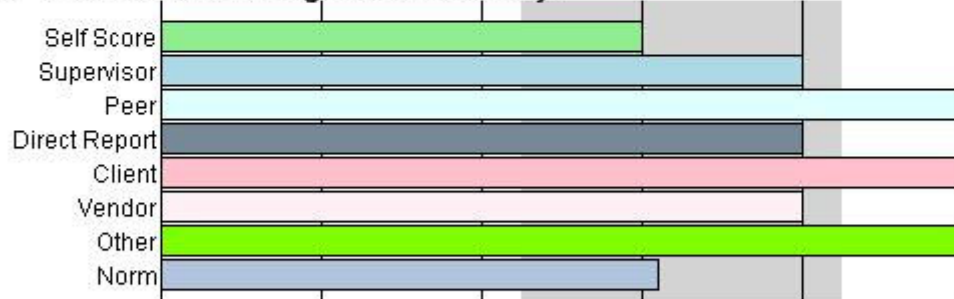




18. I decide early on how many phone calls I can deal with personally in a day.

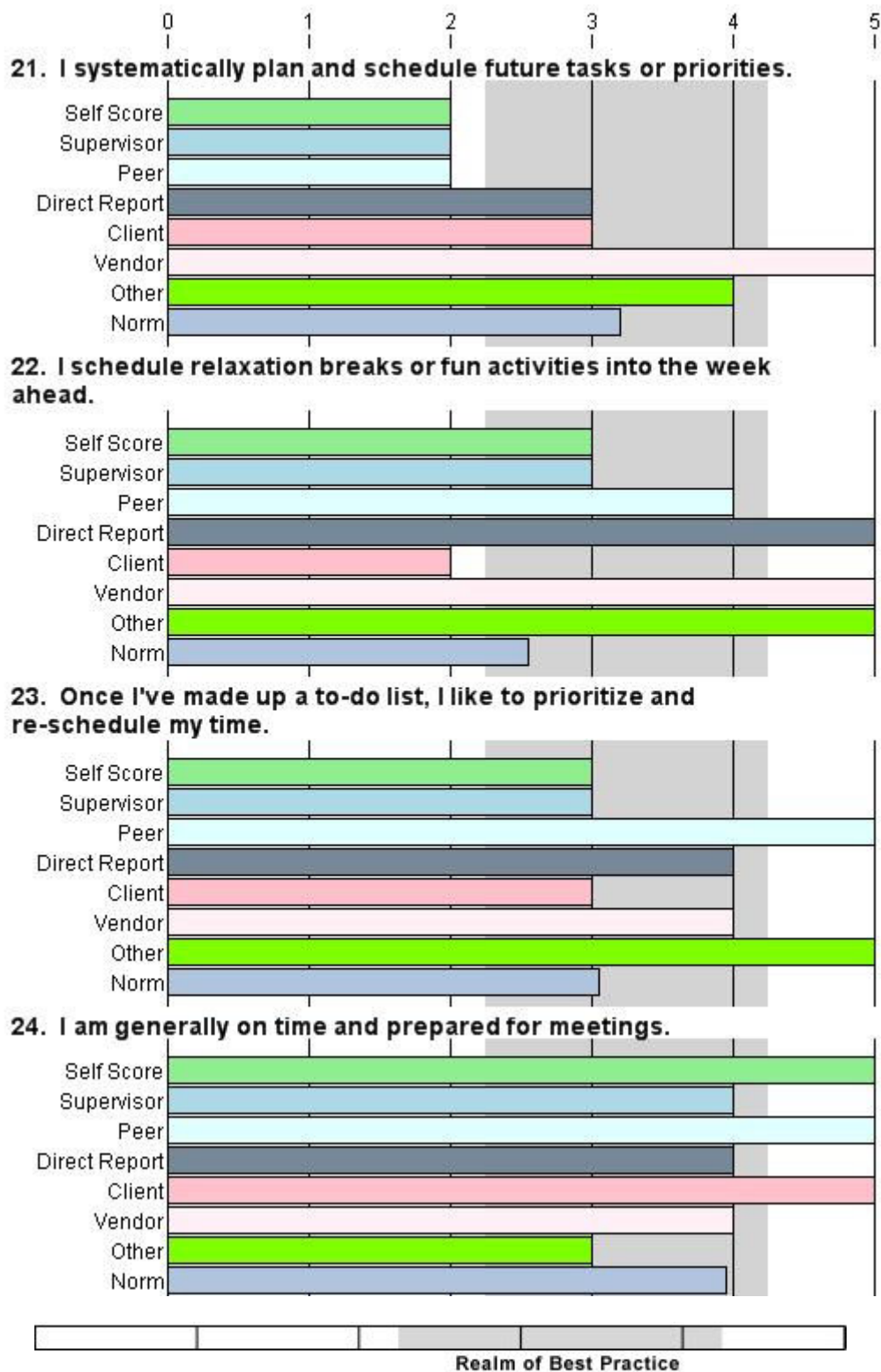


19. I make a list of things to do each day.



20. I like to program in some "quiet time" to think about the day, week, or months ahead.





Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

This section on Managing Interruptions looks at how well you stay on track when unexpected events or people interfere with your plans. It asks the question: "How flexible are you in your work, should unexpected events or interruptions occur?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers in this area need to spell out just when interruptions are generally not acceptable (close the door of a room, transfer calls to voice mail, etc.). In addition, low scorers need to recognize that not every interruption requires their full attention and immediate action. Instead, such interruptions should be speedily assessed and allocated appropriate time on the prioritized to-do list.

Managing interruptions

- List the main interruptions that you are likely to encounter (phone calls, mail, drop-in visitors, etc.).
- Design some time into your day or your week to allow for some interruptions (but be clear about how you will manage them when they occur).
- Assess how much time you will allow before you need to prioritize your workload and get back on track, when interruptions occur.
- Be firm in managing casual interruptions from people by clearly telling them that you have important priorities that you must do first.

RESULTS ORIENTATION

This section on Results-Orientation looks at how well you maintain your focus on the results or goals that are most important. It asks the question: "How well do you distinguish between what is important and what is merely urgent?"



Interpretation

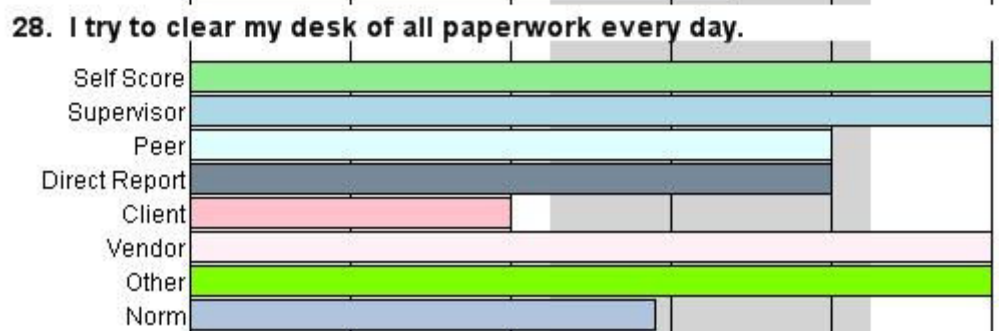
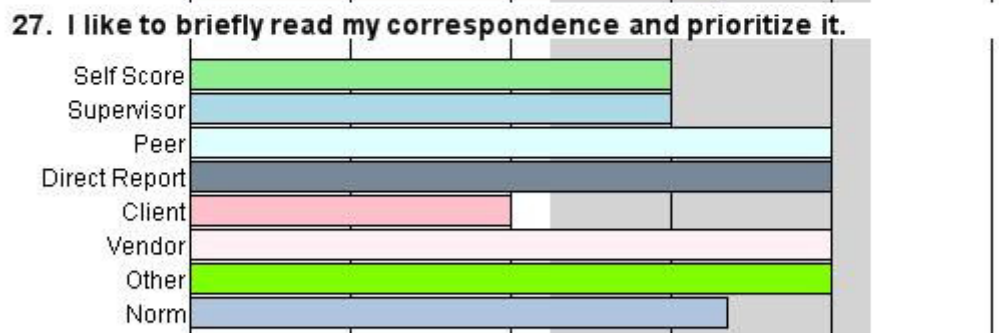
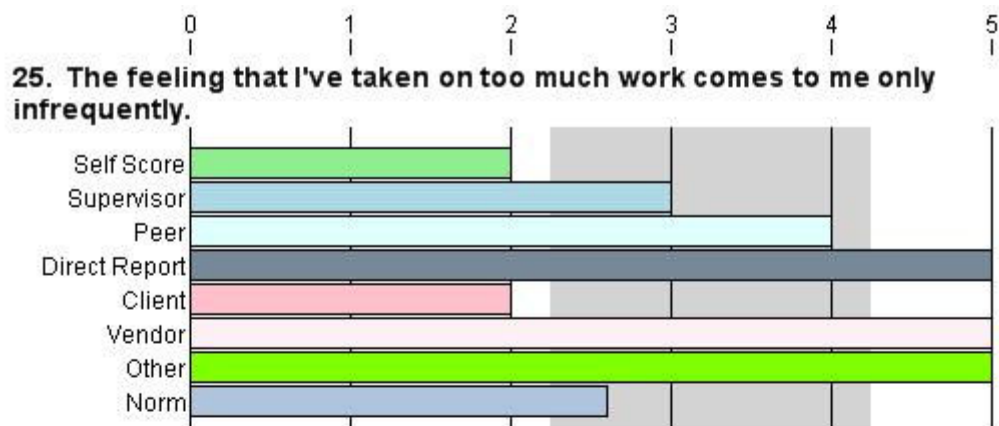
LOW (less than 2.75)

Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you do not spend enough time thinking about which tasks or activities can move you closer to your goals. Low results-orientation can also mean incorrectly seeing all activity as being synonymous with productive work or output.

An individual who scores low in this area often thinks they are juggling a lot of balls in the air, but in reality might not be accomplishing as much as they think. Completing tasks or expending effort without direction ultimately means that important tasks or personal goals are not completed quickly enough.

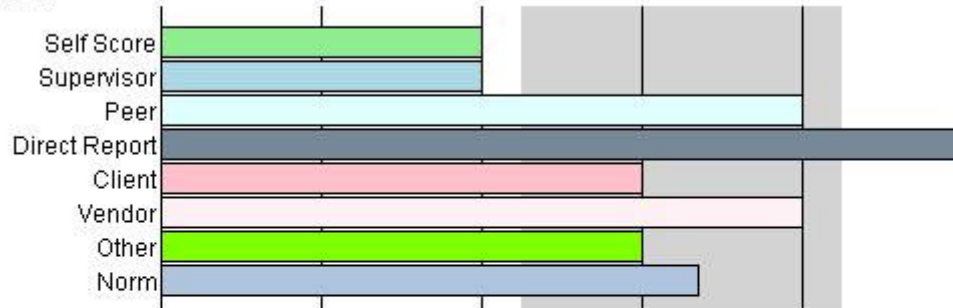
HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you usually retain a strong awareness of what is important and of a high priority. You ask others to be very clear about what they want to achieve and value most, and decide if these needs should take precedence over your own goals. A high scorer will usually understand that the tasks or projects that they spend the majority of their time doing should be tied to results that are important to themselves personally or to their organization.

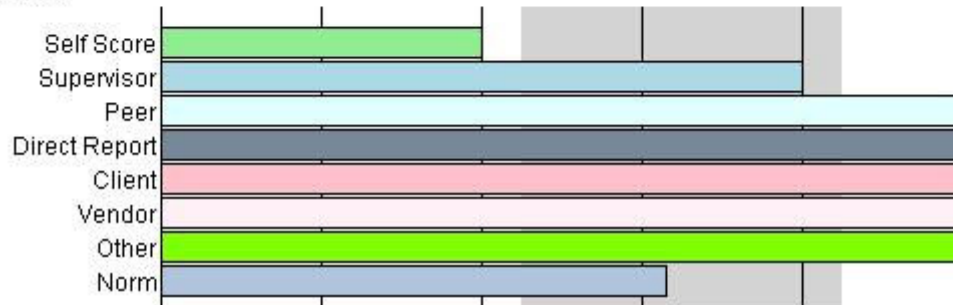


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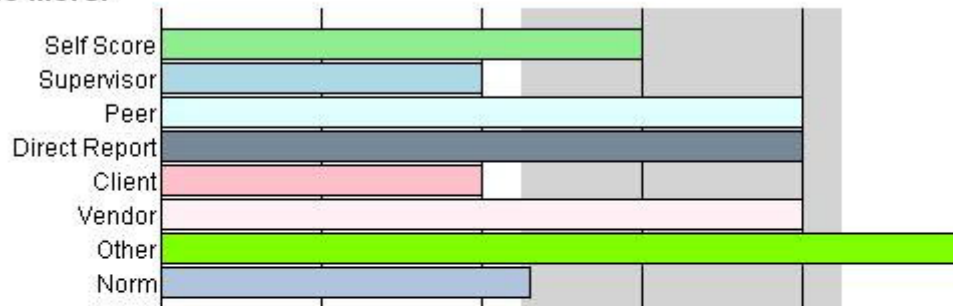
29. I tend to start and finish my scheduled activities or events on time.



30. I try to do something with every piece of paper that crosses my desk.

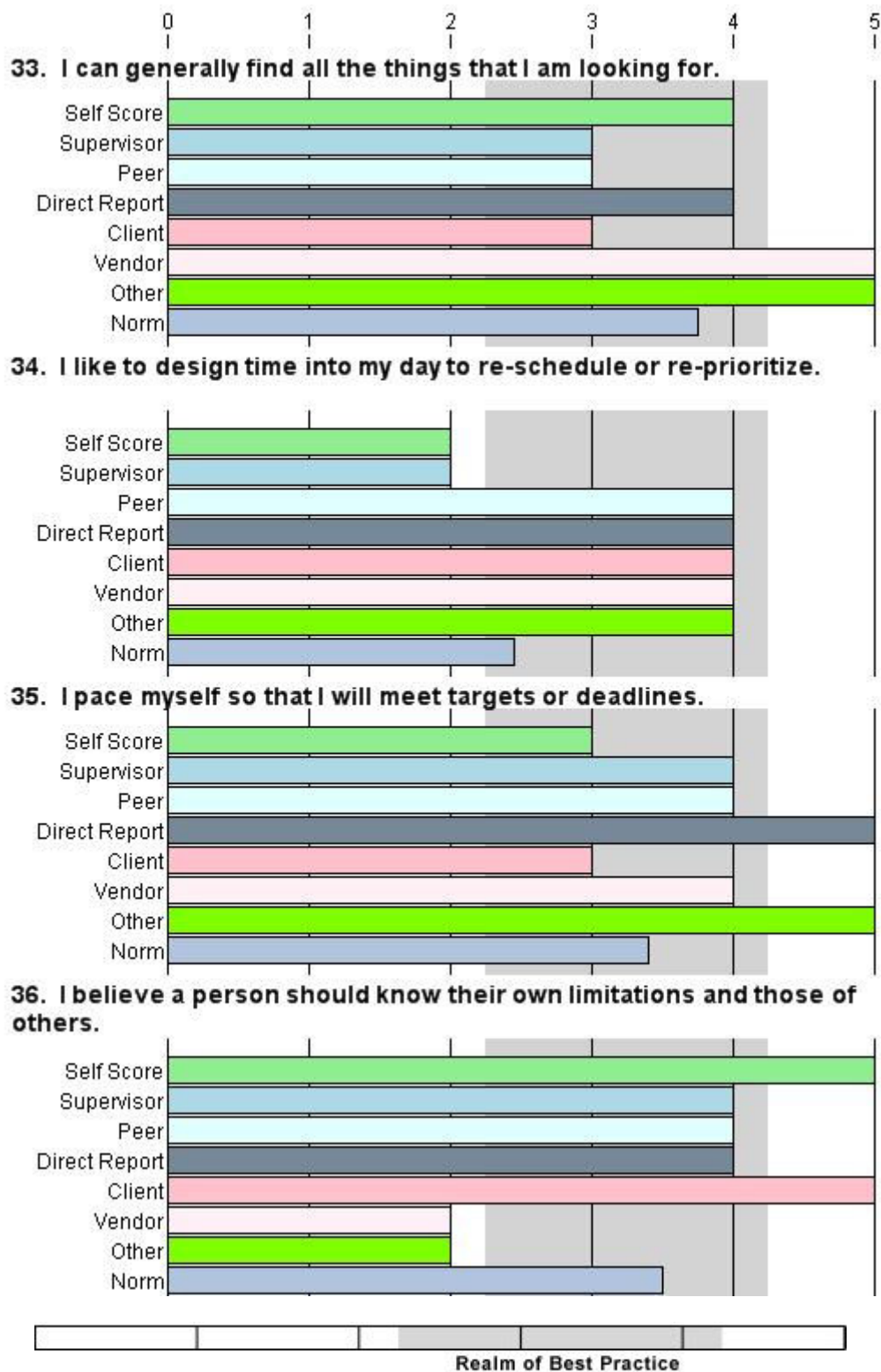


31. I limit my work time to a certain number of hours each day, and no more.



32. People who know me would describe me as an organized person.





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This section on Results-Orientation looks at how well you maintain your focus on the results or goals that are most important. It asks the question: "How well do you distinguish between what is important and what is merely urgent?"

Improvement actions

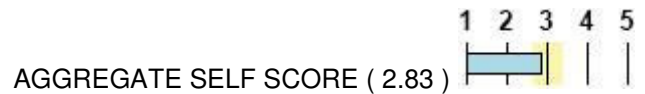
Low scorers need to keep an up-to-date list of what is important or what results they would like to achieve, and by when. Having done this, they should plan their work and organize their time so that anything that is trivial or of low value is dispatched quickly. A major part of the day should be devoted to moving closer to their goals.

Results orientation

- Write down your major work related goals and your personal goals for the week or month ahead, and how much time appears to be needed to work on each.
- Write down the steps and tasks that will help you to move toward these goals or targets.
- Make sure that your expected results are built into your planning, scheduling, and organizational process.
- Seek out all the regular wasted time and effort in your weekly schedule and develop a comprehensive plan to eliminate it.

PREDISPOSITION/TEMPERAMENT

This section on Predisposition/Temperament looks at your basic character predisposition and temperament and internal levels of "drive." It asks the question: "How much do you feel the pressure of time-how hard do you drive yourself?"



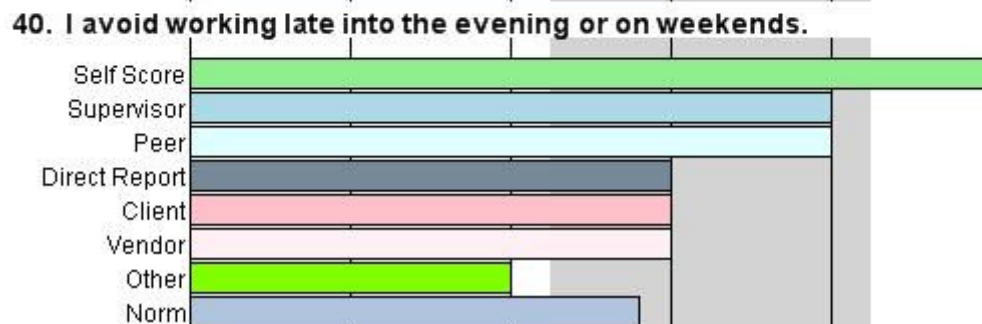
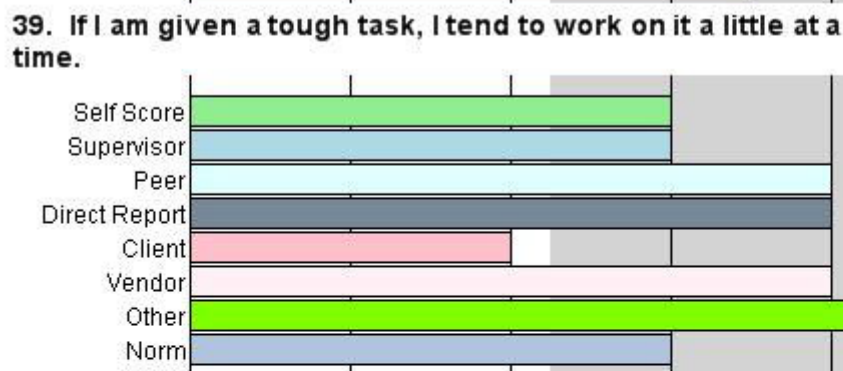
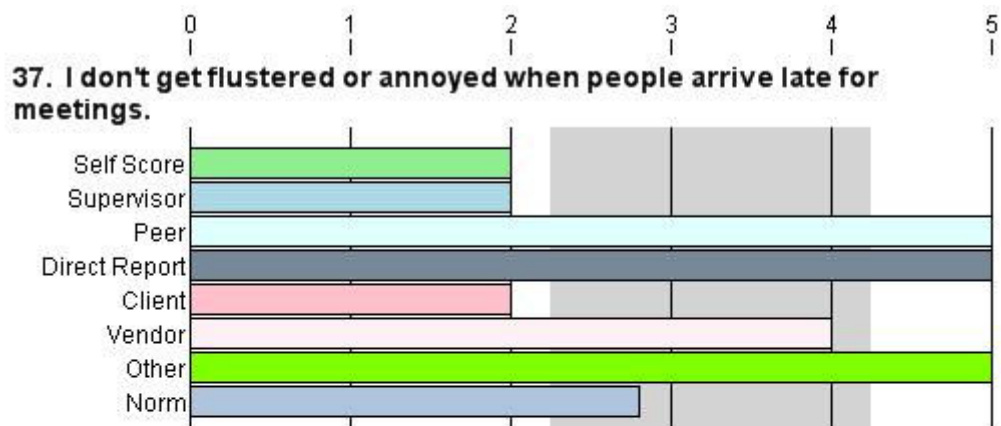
Interpretation

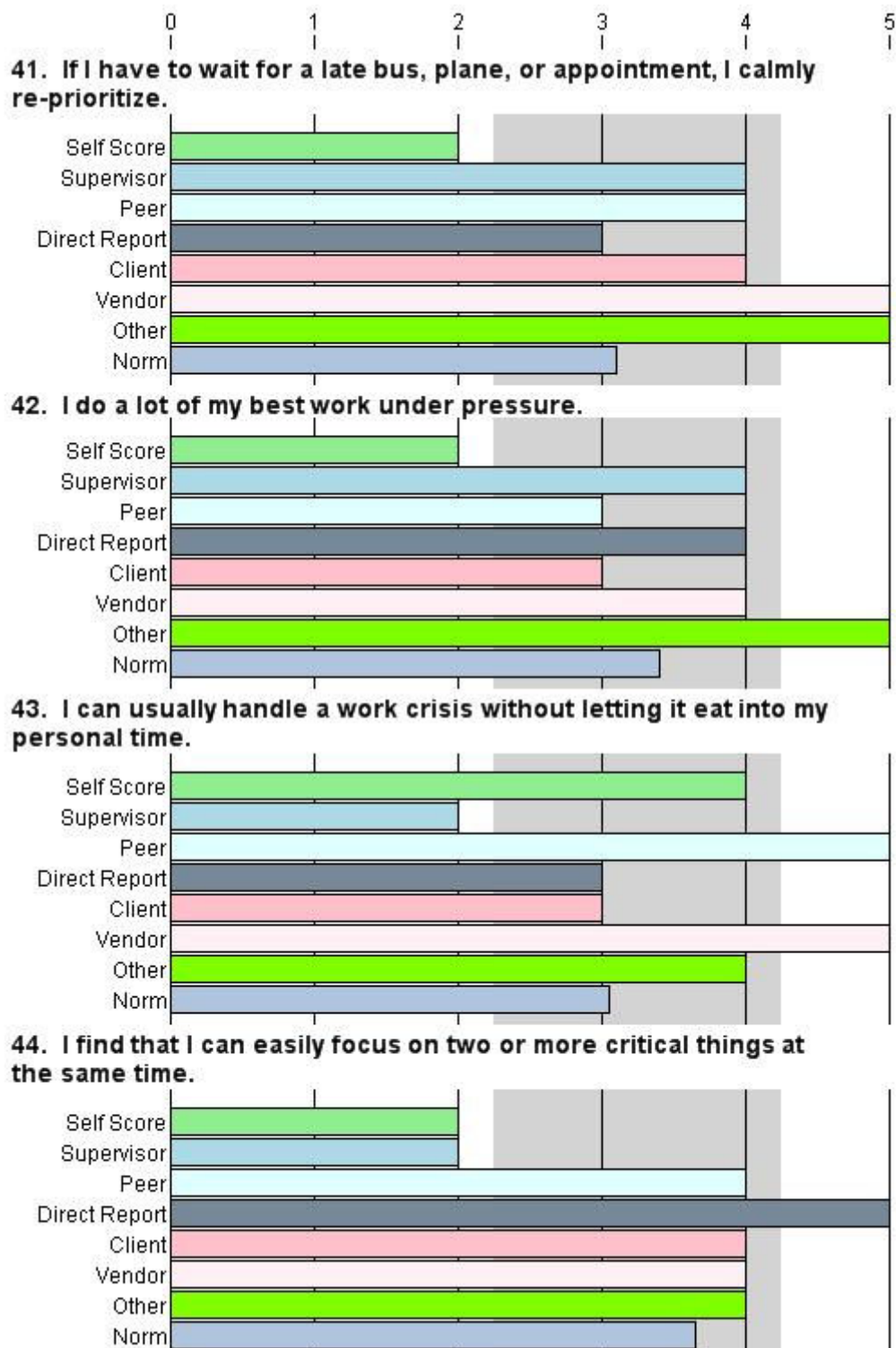
LOW (less than 2.75)

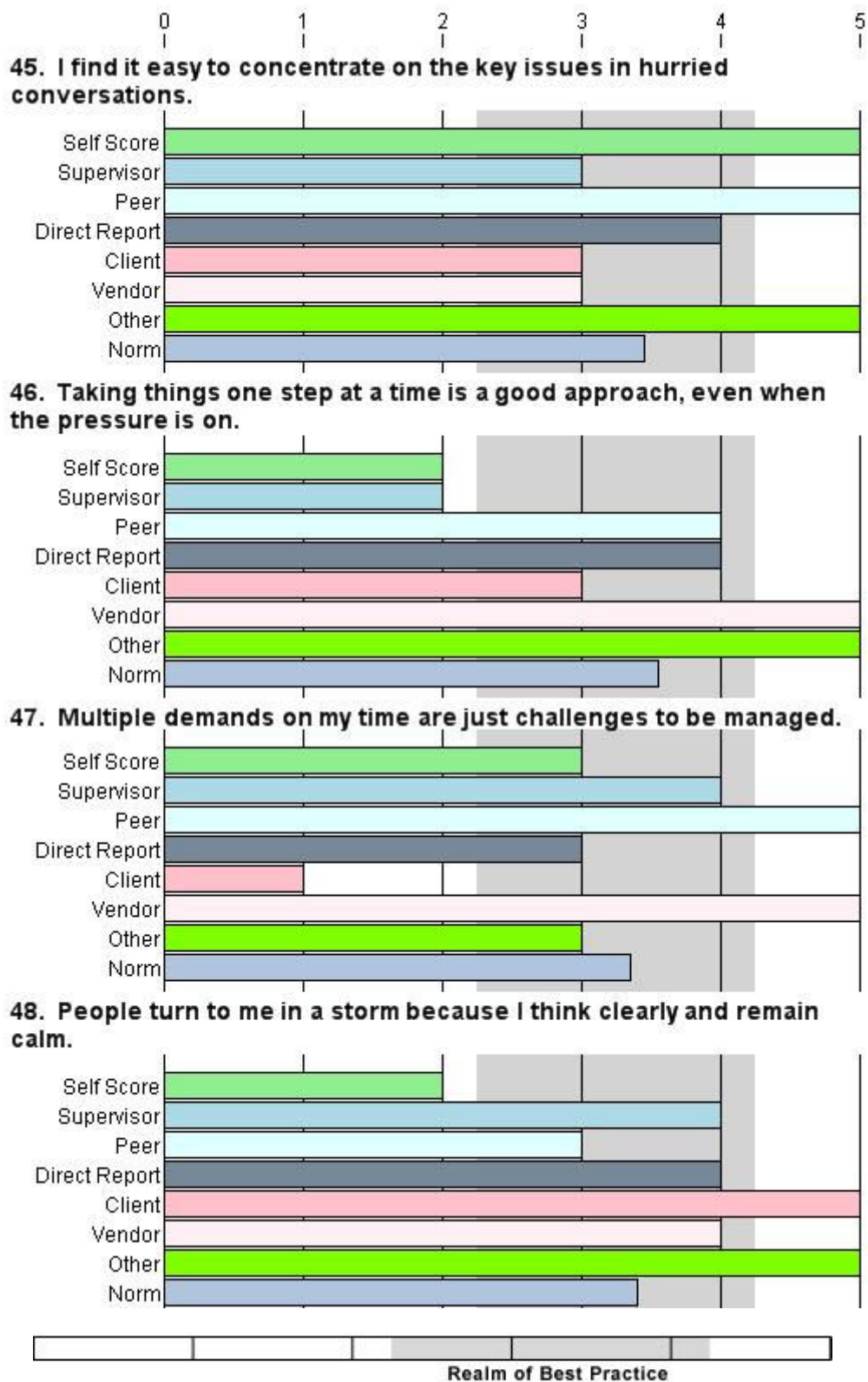
Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest "Type A" behavior. This means that you are likely to see life in general as competitive, and feel constantly pressured by time. You tend to be tough on yourself and others. The Type "A" personality gets things done and is usually action-oriented. However, this behavior type takes a lot on, pushing themselves and others quite hard. Some Type A's will cram a lot into their day and thus impress those around them with their capacity to manage time with great pace and energy. However, the Type A often becomes overly obsessive about cramming in as much as possible, and sometimes fails to set aside enough time for contemplation or even time to relax or quietly reflect on where they are going.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest a so-called "Type B" behavior. This means that you are likely to be calm and relatively laid-back, and can relax, wind down, and easily avoid competitive pressures and unnecessary deadlines. The Type "B" tends to have fewer balls in the air. He or she works at a steadier pace than the Type A, and generally is quite good at controlling their pace and energy. A Type B is less likely to be a slave to the clock-sometimes even deliberately missing a deadline in order to maintain a healthy balance between work and a satisfying personal life (knowing others might think they are being less productive).







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This section on Predisposition/Temperament looks at your basic character predisposition and temperament and internal levels of "drive." It asks the question: "How much do you feel the pressure of time-how hard do you drive yourself?"

Improvement actions

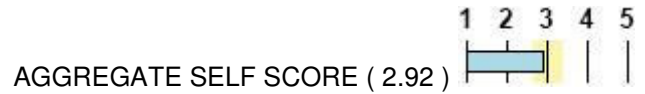
The Type "A" person can learn how to devote more time to their personal life and relationships. They should avoid setting so many deadlines and targets and begin focusing on improvements wherever there are "1" or "2" ratings. This approach of concentrating on low scores first should be used for every competency.

Predisposition/temperament

- Design in more personal time to relax, reflect, think, and pursue gentle recreation, as often as you can.
- Stop working when you know that you are tired and clearly achieving less than your best.
- Try not to fill up your day with as much activity, targets, and priorities.
- Plan this different and slower approach into your day at first, until it becomes more natural for you.
- Clearly separate your work from your leisure time, and keep the two apart as much as possible.

PREPARATION SKILLS

This section on Preparation Skills examines how well you prepare yourself for important tasks or personal priorities facing you on a daily or weekly basis. It asks the question: "To what extent is planning ahead an integral part of your time?"



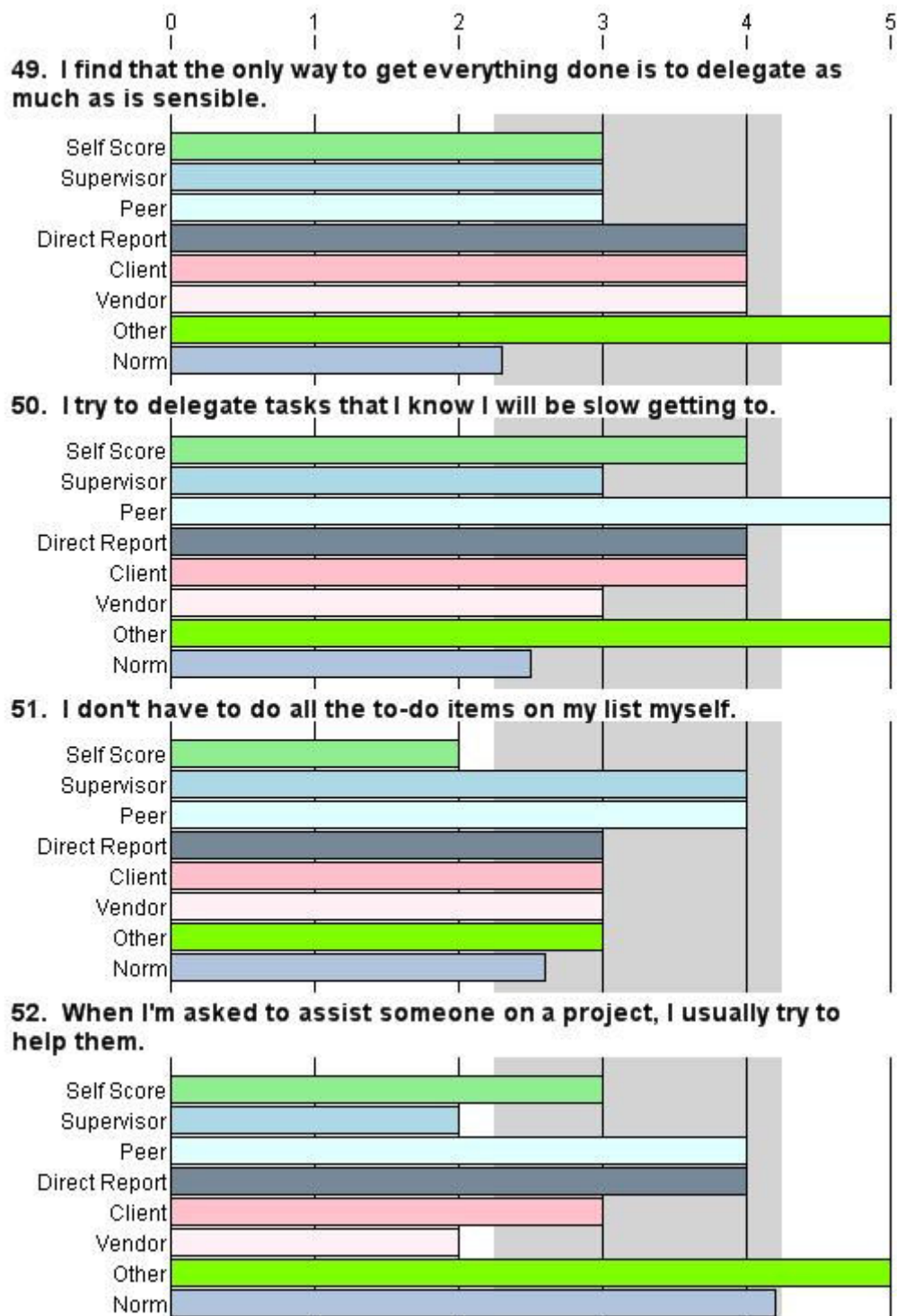
Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you neglect planning or setting priorities and perhaps too often let events or interruptions dictate what your day will be like. The low scorer is likely to feel squeezed by time to the extent that they can do little or no planning ahead. This individual constantly feels that their time is not their own.

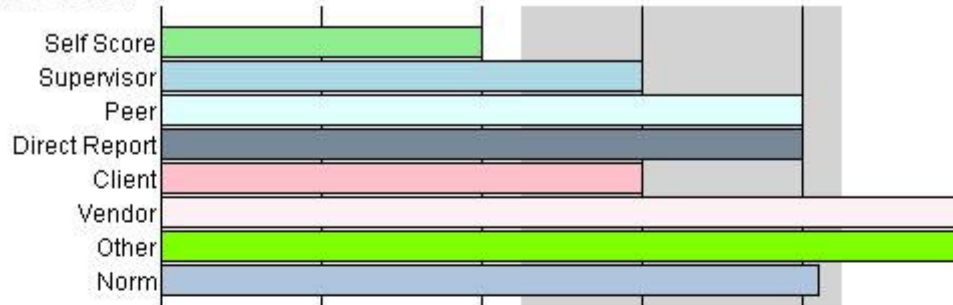
HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") are likely to mean that you are a well prepared individual or one who usually plans ahead to ensure that your known workload is tackled in a way that is sensible for you. An individual who scores high in this area finds time in every week to quietly plan or schedule ahead. This planning might be done over an extended period of time, just once or twice a week, or in short bursts, as needed.

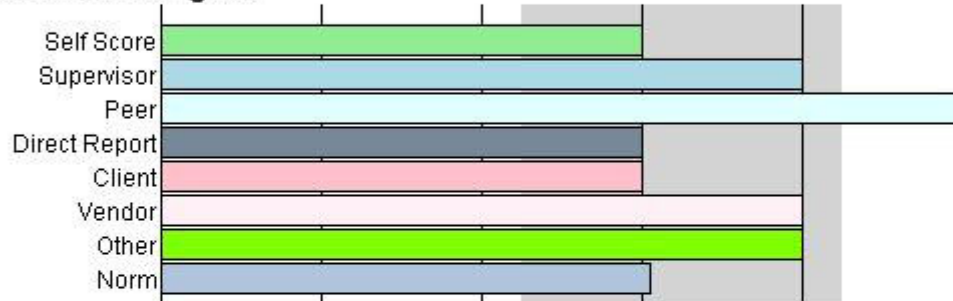


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53. I am happy to take on delegated tasks that I have the skills and time to do.



54. I believe that you don't need people to work for you directly to be able to delegate.

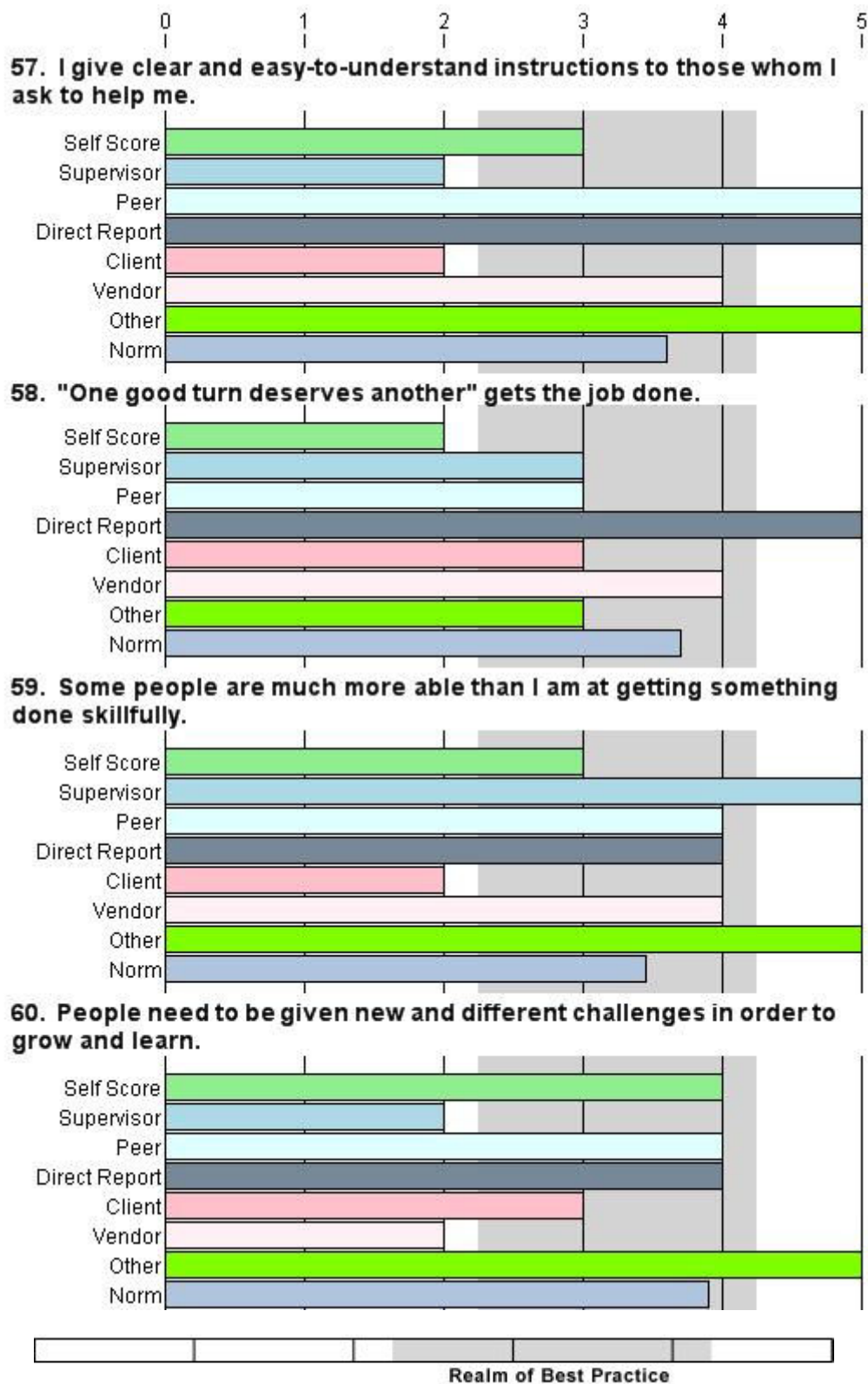


55. I quickly assess when a target or deadline will be missed.



56. I enjoy coaching other people when the opportunity arises.





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This section on Preparation Skills examines how well you prepare yourself for important tasks or personal priorities facing you on a daily or weekly basis. It asks the question: "To what extent is planning ahead an integral part of your time?"

Improvement actions

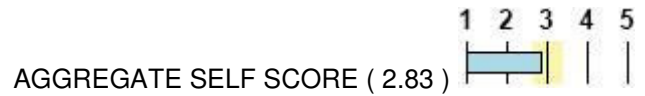
The low scorer needs to actively set aside time to plan and prepare. This will not be easy at first, and might not come naturally or happen on a regular basis, despite good intentions. Planning or priority-setting should ideally be done at the beginning or end of each day, even if it is only for a few minutes. If this proves difficult, ask a friend or partner to remind you. If possible, use a planning system, a predesigned priority-setting list, or an organizer to give you some structure and keep you from losing scraps of paper or forgetting things.

Preparation skills

- Force yourself to spend at least a few minutes each day with a pen and paper, and reflect upon what is important to achieve in the day or the week ahead.
- Make a list and prioritize it into MUST DO, SHOULD DO, and NICE TO DO IF THERE IS TIME categories.
- Stick to your daily plan as much as you can, once it has been thought through.
- Ensure that breaks, quiet time, and catch-up gaps are planned into each day.

ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY

This section on Organizational Ability looks at how well you maintain a healthy equilibrium in your life. It asks the question: "How effectively do you control your time in order to achieve a good balance?"



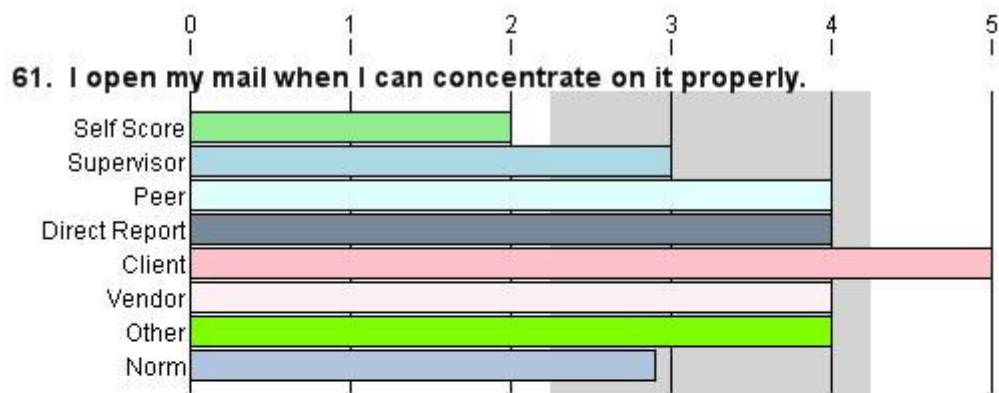
Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

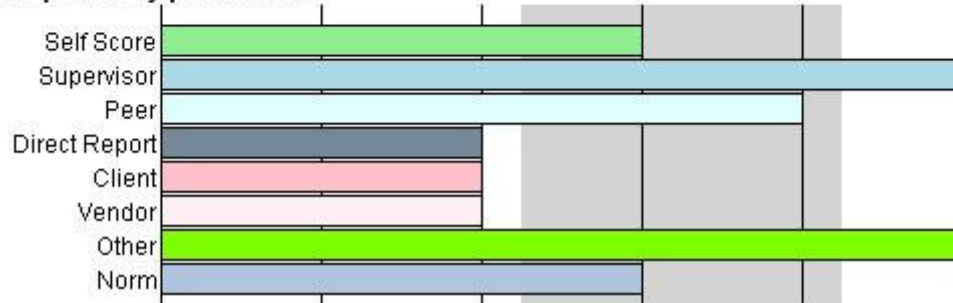
Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you spend "little or no time" in systematically organizing your workload. You tend to tackle only the next tasks that face you, with limited forethought. A low score suggests that you believe there are more tasks than there is time in the day to do them. As a result, you usually take on whatever comes next or whatever seems to be most urgent, failing to organize yourself or others to be most effective and productive.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

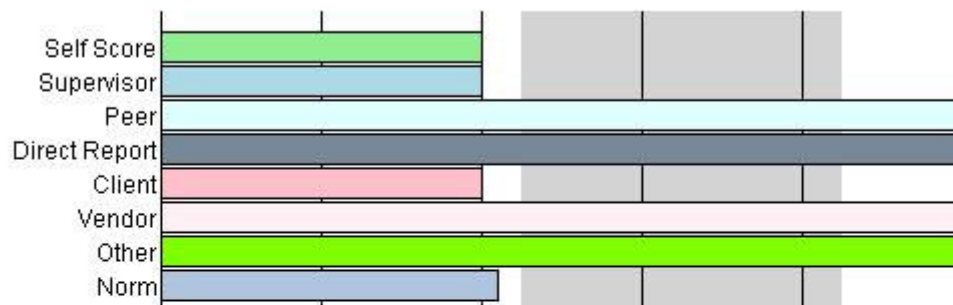
Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you are able to organize yourself and others so that significant changes in your workload are quickly accommodated and re-prioritized. An individual whose scores are high believes that personal organization is a critical tool in their time-management tool bag. They understand the need to think about the ongoing fluctuations in workload and changes in deadlines, and will reorganize themselves and others in order to achieve the best result.



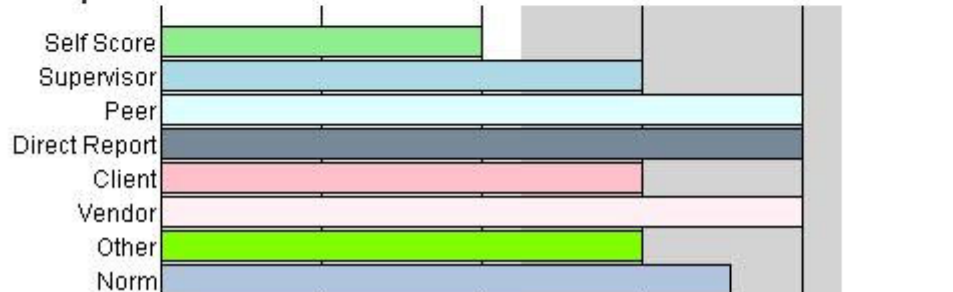
62. I don't need to look at my watch or a clock to ensure that I complete my priorities.

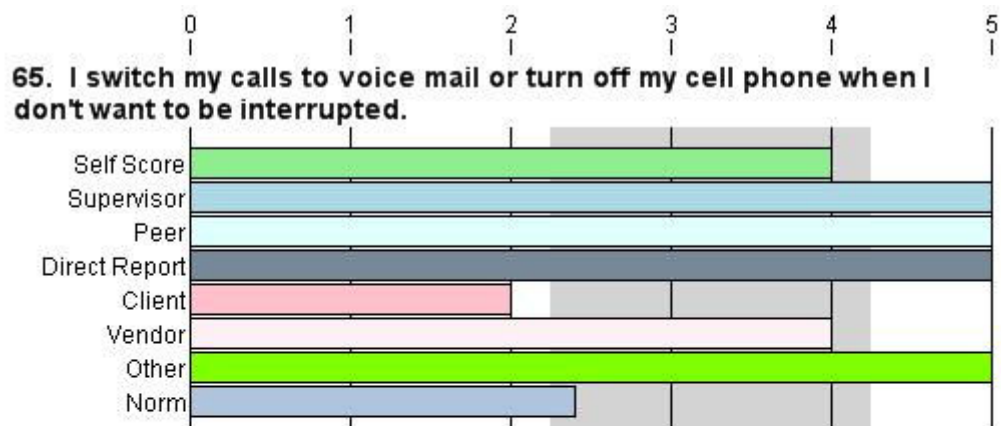


63. I like to reserve a certain amount of time for "drop-in" visitors.

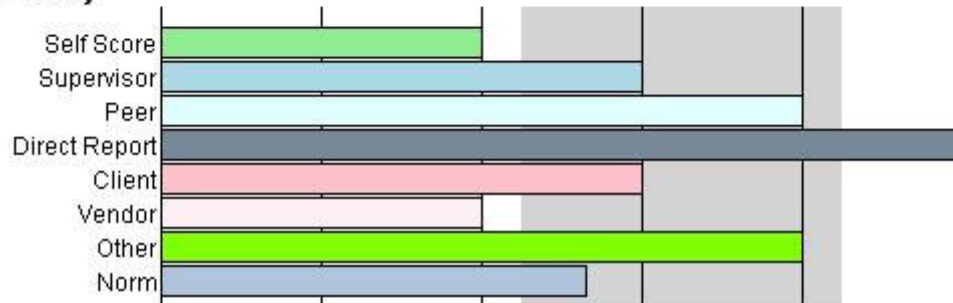


64. I feel that I accomplish most of my priorities, even when I am interrupted a lot.

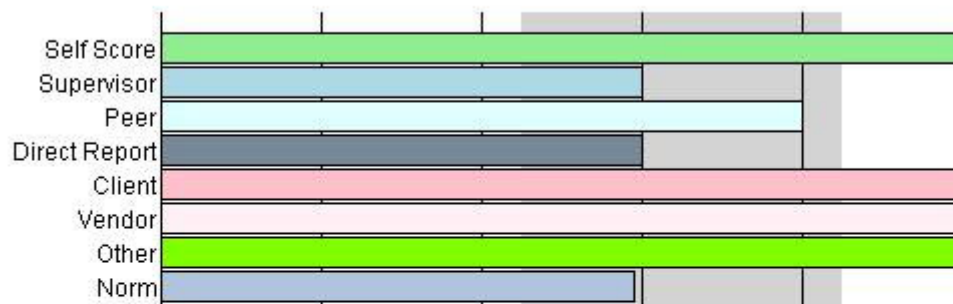




66. I am comfortable asking informal visitors to come back later if I'm busy.



67. I am not easily distracted by lots of activity or noise around me.

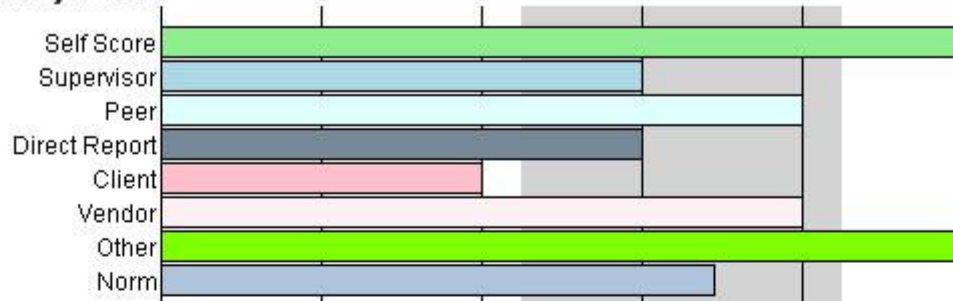


68. You should always expect the unexpected and not be phased by it.

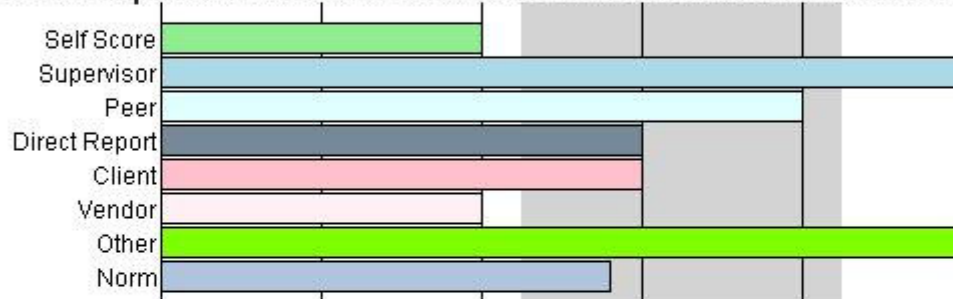


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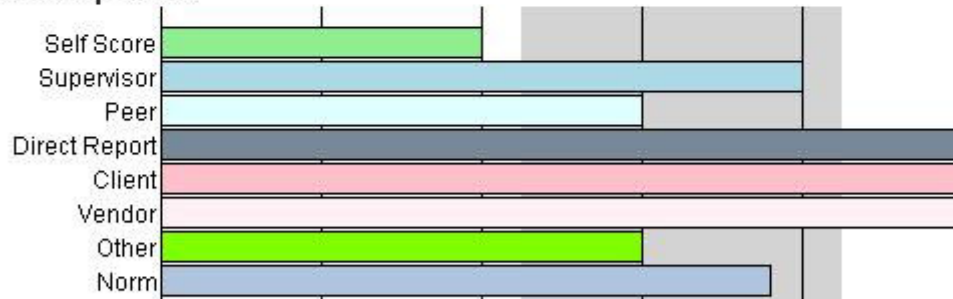
69. I maintain good humor when there are a lot of unexpected demands on my time.



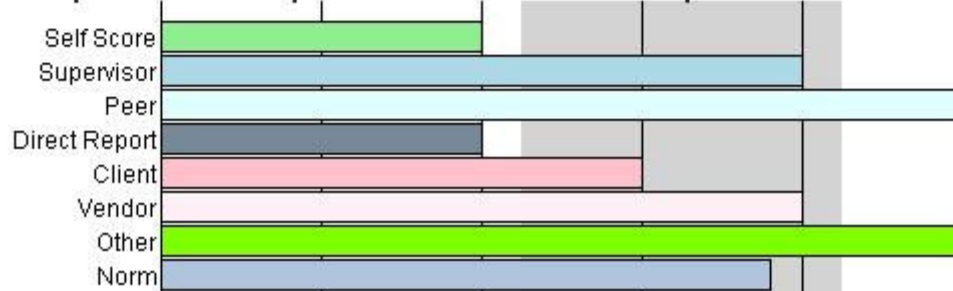
70. Interruptions are often a welcome break from over-concentration.



71. People who know me would generally describe me as a pretty flexible person.



72. I operate on an "open door" basis as much as possible.



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Improvement actions

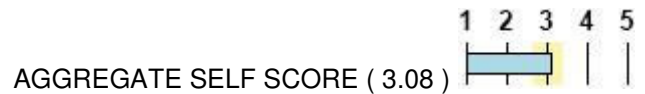
Low scorers need to recognize that people, resources, targets, deadlines, and available time will have to be organized in order to achieve the right results; you cannot float through each day like a piece of seaweed drifting on the sea of changing priorities. Low scorers must take charge of their personal priorities and learn that there is always an optimal sequence for tackling a series of future tasks or projects.

Organizational ability

- Make sure that all your planned and unplanned activities of the day and week are always scheduled and re-scheduled as necessary.
- Set up a system to make sure that you can find things you need regularly, and think carefully about targets and deadlines for tasks or projects.
- Try not to make commitments until you have looked at your overall workload and worked out what is possible and how much re-organization will be necessary.
- Realistically recognize your own limitations, and those of others around you upon whom you may depend to meet your targets and deadlines.

DELEGATION SKILLS

This section on Delegation looks at how well you assess what you are capable of achieving and then seek ways to obtain assistance from others when necessary. It asks the question: "How effectively do you spread out your tasks or workload in order to stay personally in control or on top of things?"



Interpretation

LOW (less than 2.75)

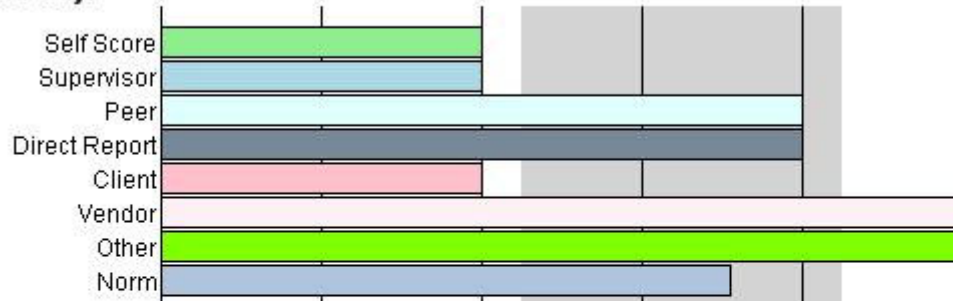
Scales predominantly in the ones and twos ("occasionally" and "almost never") suggest that you probably take on too much work, and think that asking others for help is a sign of weakness or failure (or that people around you are less capable or less skilled than you are). An individual who scores low in this area tends to take on most tasks themselves and has an "If a job is worth doing well, it's better to do it yourself" attitude most of the time. You might have to work harder to catch up or work longer hours than necessary because you don't spread your workload out more creatively.

HIGH (greater than 3.5)

Scales predominantly in the fours and fives ("almost always" and "very frequently") suggest that you recognize your own skill limitations and time constraints and look to find ways to get others to help you as much as possible. A high scorer in this area carefully evaluates their own limitations against their workload and looks for ways to match people, resources, and tasks (even when they do not have people working for them directly).

0 1 2 3 4 5

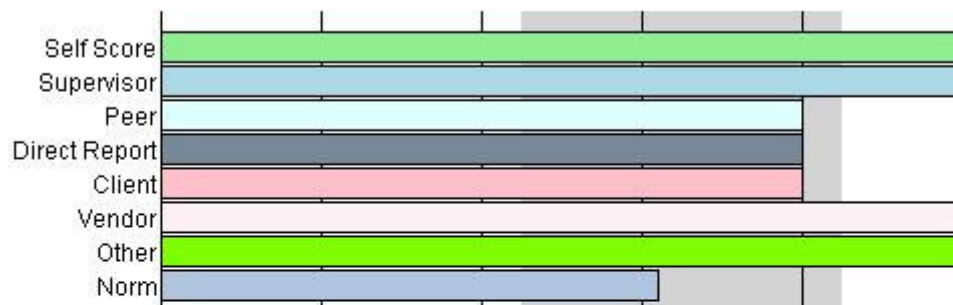
73. I can typically get things done or achieve results at any time of the day.



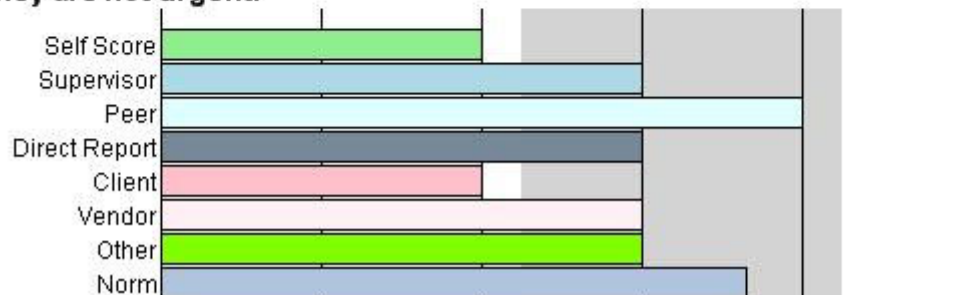
74. The meetings I arrange generally achieve their purpose.

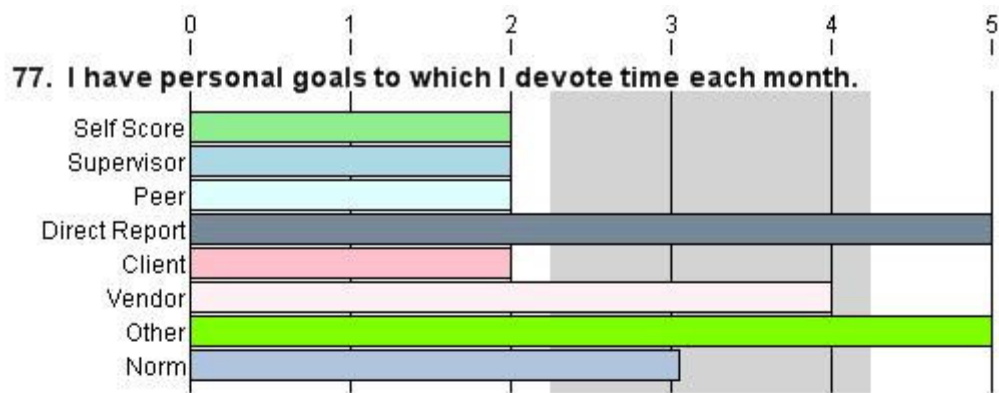


75. I am good at skimming any newspaper or magazine article for ideas.

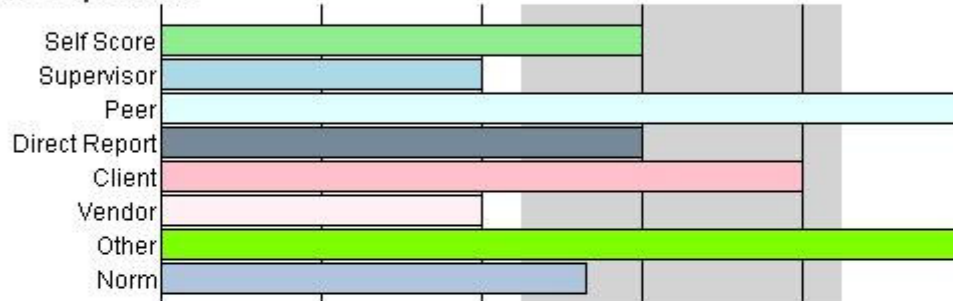


76. I easily recognize the priority of important tasks, even when they are not urgent.

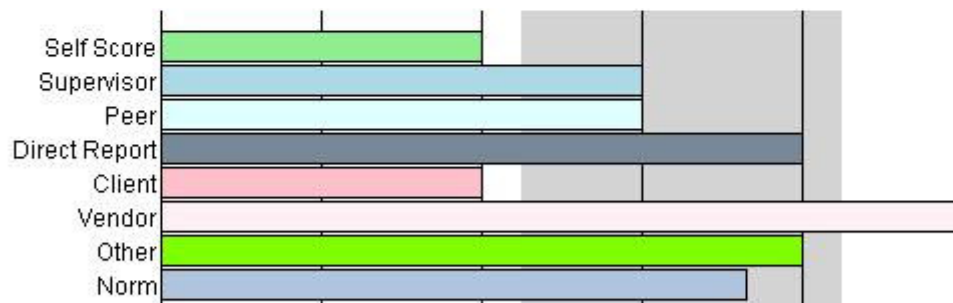




78. An urgent matter doesn't command my full attention unless it is also important.

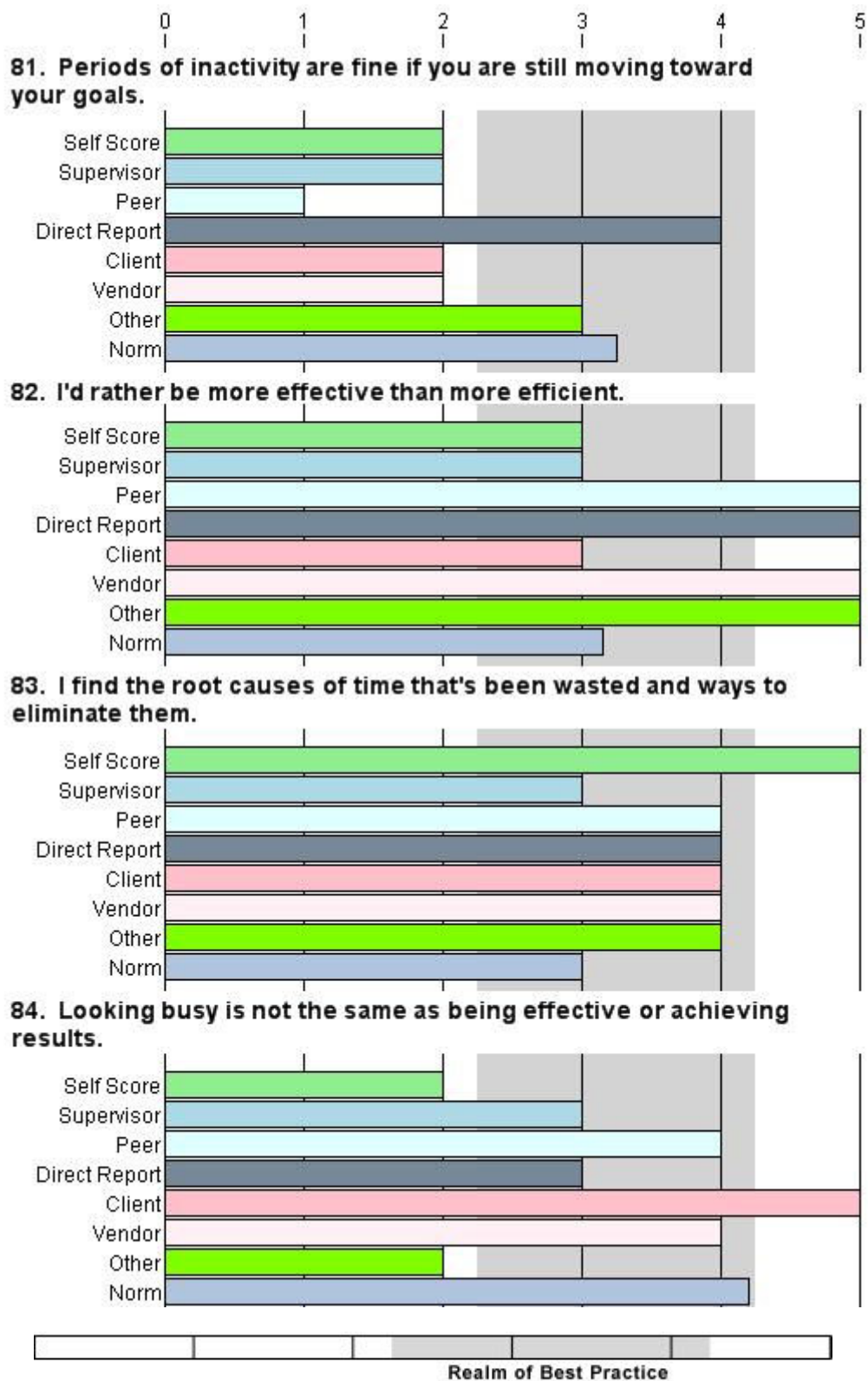


79. It is critical to focus on the eventual outcomes of one's efforts.



80. I am effective in dealing with trivial matters quickly.





Norm bars shown on this chart are the progressive average scores of all individuals rating themselves on this questionnaire.

This section on Delegation looks at how well you assess what you are capable of achieving and then seek ways to obtain assistance from others when necessary. It asks the question: "How effectively do you spread out your tasks or workload in order to stay personally in control or on top of things?"

Improvement actions

Low scorers in this area need to invest more time and energy in sharing their skills with others and in accepting the fact that some people can tackle a number of tasks as well, if not better, than they can. Start with delegating only small tasks or trading work you enjoy (or are good at) with work that colleagues might do better. The more you use this cooperative approach, the more natural delegation will be.

Delegation skills

- Think about your colleagues around you and their skills and abilities relative to your own.
- Reflect upon the balance of workload that prevails in a given day or week (including the peaks and troughs).
- Look at your own skills and abilities and develop a list of tasks and activities that could become the basis of discussion for delegating to others, and for you to potentially take on some of their tasks.
- Consider what tasks or projects could help individuals to grow or learn new skills.

THE 10/10 REPORT

Top 10 Strengths

Results-Orientation

75. I am good at skimming any newspaper or magazine article for ideas. 4.57

Organizational Ability

30. I try to do something with every piece of paper that crosses my desk. 4.43

Preparation

19. I make a list of things to do each day. 4.29

24. I am generally on time and prepared for meetings. 4.29

Organizational Ability

28. I try to clear my desk of all paperwork every day. 4.29

Managing Interruptions

65. I switch my calls to voice mail or turn off my cell phone when I don't want to be interrupted. 4.29

67. I am not easily distracted by lots of activity or noise around me. 4.29

Predisposition/Temperament

9. I find humor and fun in many things. 4.14

Preparation

13. I remove my name from distribution lists for reports or other circulars that I do not read. 4.14

Results-Orientation

82. I'd rather be more effective than more efficient. 4.14

Top 10 Development Needs

81. Periods of inactivity are fine if you are still moving toward your goals. 2.29

Predisposition/Temperament

1. I don't get annoyed or irritated when things don't go well. 2.86

Results-Orientation

76. I easily recognize the priority of important tasks, even when they are not urgent. 2.86

Predisposition/Temperament

8. I like to take time to listen to people carefully. 3.00

Preparation

15. I maintain a good filing system for my correspondence/e-mail, etc. 3.00

21. I systematically plan and schedule future tasks or priorities. 3.00

Predisposition/Temperament

4. I don't bottle-up my feelings or frustrations. 3.14

11. I do not push myself beyond my limits when I feel fatigued. 3.14

Delegation

51. I don't have to do all the to-do items on my list myself. 3.14

Results-Orientation

77. I have personal goals to which I devote time each month. 3.14

COURSE AND READING SUGGESTIONS

The following are general reading and course suggestions that may help you to better understand the two categories in which your scores were the lowest and to assist you in writing your development plan.

Predisposition/Temperament

Predisposition\Temperament looks at your basic character predisposition and temperament and internal levels of "drive". It asks the question: "How much do you feel the pressure of time - how hard do you drive yourself?"

Course Suggestion

- Relaxation Methods
- Time Management
- Developing Patience

Other Suggestion

- If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects, and other possible support they may be able to offer to improve your skills.

Reading Suggestion

- How to Speak, How to Listen. Mortimer Jerome Adler: April, 1997.
- Effective Listening Skills (Business Skills Express). Abby Robinson Kratz(Preface), et al.: 1995.
- Emotional Intelligence. Daniel P. Goleman: 1997.
- Working With Emotional Intelligence. Daniel P. Goleman: 2000.

Results-Oriented

Results-Oriented looks at how well you maintain your focus on the results or goals that are most important. It asks the question: "How well do you distinguish between what is important and what is merely urgent?"

Course Suggestion

- Goal and Objective Setting
- Strategic Planning skills
- Performance Management and Measurement
- Value Added Management

Other Suggestion

- Ask other people what they see to be of greatest value or the most important goals for the team or the organization.

- If you feel comfortable doing so, talk to your direct supervisor/manager or a training and development specialist about personal training, coaching, and specific projects, and other possible support they may be able to offer to improve your skills.

Reading Suggestion

- Investing Time for Maximum Return. Alec and Melody Mackenzie: Amer Media, 1995.
- Leverage Your Time, Balance Your Life. John Ingram and MD Walker: Lifework, 1997.
- Power Scheduling, The New Approach to Time Management. Dave De Sousa: Kendall-Hunt, 1994.
- 10 Natural Laws of Successful Time and Life Management. Hyrum Smith: Warner, 1995.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Use the space below to write out your personal development plan for the next 12 months based on your results. Draw upon the general improvement actions in relevant areas of the report, and ideas that are suggested in the attached coaching tips.

81. Periods of inactivity are fine if you are still moving toward your goals. Score: 2.29

Action to Take:

1. I don't get annoyed or irritated when things don't go well. Score: 2.86

Action to Take:

76. I easily recognize the priority of important tasks, even when they are not urgent. Score: 2.86

Action to Take:

8. I like to take time to listen to people carefully. Score: 3.00

Action to Take:

15. I maintain a good filing system for my correspondence/e-mail, etc. Score: 3.00

Action to Take:

Results-Orientation

Periods of inactivity are fine, as long as you are still moving toward your goals.

It's a cliché among doctors that some patients treat their own cars better than they treat their bodies. We all know people who push themselves beyond all limits, without a second thought about the consequences to our health or our personal life. Sometimes we do this because we feel guilty about slowing down. This is not a smart strategy or a desirable mental state. Inactivity is okay as long as we are still moving toward our goals. Not convinced? Consider these ideas:

1. Top speed is not the only speed! It makes sense sometimes to slow down, not only because we wear out at top speed, but because we are probably missing the point of what it's all about. Take a walk through an area you normally drive through: You will almost certainly notice things that you didn't notice before. So it is with work: in periods when you are not flat out, you might discover new ways of working and get a new perspective that is enlightening and profitable.
2. You are still working when you are regrouping, doing housekeeping, or involved in drills, practices, exercises, and rehearsals. These might not be the real thing, but the real thing doesn't happen or doesn't happen as well as it should unless the other things get done. From that point of view, dry-runs and first drafts are just another form of the real thing, so don't underestimate them.
3. What do we actually mean by "inactivity"? Do we mean the simple absence of movement? That definition also covers thinking, because we are not usually moving or active when we think. But unless we do the right thinking, then all the activity in the world will be seriously misguided, and perhaps even directly counterproductive. As long as you are still moving toward your goal, the inactivity of thinking is okay—in fact, it's highly desirable.
4. Don't forget, other people and other things can help you move toward your goal (after you have given them a gentle "steer" in the right direction at the outset). This simply means that we do not always have to be the one doing all of the pushing all of the time. If the momentum is positive without you, take a back seat and reflect for a while.

Predisposition/Temperament

Don't let yourself get annoyed or irritated when things don't go well.

Float, don't freak out when things go wrong. After all, some things are inevitable. People make mistakes and sometimes even rise to the level of their incompetence. Raise your threshold of tolerance for ambiguity and chaos, and learn how to control the controllable and live with the uncontrollable. For the sake of your sanity, if nothing else!

You might not like the sound of this approach, so consider this common-sense advice:

1. You can't always get what you want. This is a hard truth to accept in the best of times; if you punish yourself with absurdly high standards of perfection, however, you will fail on at least a few occasions. High standards are important for quality control and motivation, but if your expectations for yourself and others are too high, you set yourself up for failure. Avoid setting all-or-nothing standards and explore alternative, more-flexible strategies.
2. Be philosophic about not getting everything that you want. Perhaps it was meant to be! Look at these disappointments as second chances to refine and regroup, and try to isolate the factors that turned out to be the weakest link. Sometimes an early problem is a blessing, saving you from making far-more-dangerous mistakes later on.
3. Failure can be very instructive. Anything less than perfection is a learning opportunity. Think of alternatives, and wait for circumstances to change. They will, sooner or later.
4. Nobody likes a poor loser, but *everyone* likes a gracious loser who can admit that they were wrong. Accept defeat gracefully and you will be in a better position to win the next one. You might also find that others will feel a little obligated to you because you were gracious. You will be able to cash in on that obligation on the next go-round.
5. Don't get mad, get smart. Allowing yourself to be emotionally wrecked can do your health a lot of damage. Impatient people often end up being patients! Learn the strategy of patience: don't trip over your short concentration span, and don't get carried away by the heat of the moment. Most people won't remember the cause or even the details of the argument several days, weeks, or months afterward. If a proposal or request was turned down, put it aside for the time being, or continue to quietly work on it. Brutally re-evaluate to see if anything will stand up sometime later on. If so, quietly re-introduce your idea at a later stage in a modified form so that it looks like a new idea—not something that already looks shot full of holes. See if you can get authorization to do it on a trial basis.

Results-Orientation

Learn to easily recognize the priority of important tasks, even when they are not urgent.

The problem with a lot of urgent matters is that they are not all that important, and the problem with a lot of important matters is that they are not all that urgent. This problem with priorities causes no end of headaches.

How do you solve the problem? Simple. Try these techniques:

1. Work out a system that helps you decide which things are important, and which are not. Try this scale:

Priority Urgent and important.

#1:

Priority Important but not urgent.

#2:

Priority Urgent but not important.

#3:

Priority Not important and not urgent.

#4:

Select one of these ratings for each item on your daily to-do list and write it down.

2. The real problem lies not with your number-one priorities—they will get done anyway. No, the problems arise with number-two priorities (important but not urgent), because they often get squeezed out by number-three priorities (urgent but not important). Number-two priorities can wait a bit, but not too long; it is very easy to put off doing these tasks. Sooner or later a crisis develops because they weren't attended to.

3. One solution to this dilemma is to choose a number-two priority and strongly resolve to work on it. If necessary, break it up into parts, and tackle each one or part of one at a time. When you have completed each component of the whole thing, reward yourself. You'll be more likely to develop a new and very healthy habit: attending to your number-two priority tasks. You know—the ones that got you into trouble because you let them slide.

4. Make sure that you are not spending any significant time on a number-four task. If you are, critically ask yourself why and immediately stop doing it because it is eating into your more-important thinking and planning time. Your number-one, number-two, and number-three priorities will thank you!

Predisposition/Temperament

Take the time to carefully listen to people.

People afflicted with “hurry sickness” are often bad listeners. This behavior is not only rude, but unwise: They miss out on a lot of useful information and, as a result, make decisions that are less-effective than they need to be. Listening is not a waste of time—it’s *an investment* in time. You might need more convincing, so consider these points:

1. Listening sometimes takes a lot out of us. When a colleague bends our ear about a problem he or she is having, for example, our mind is racing two steps ahead to come up with a solution. We struggle with an overwhelming temptation to jump in and tell them the solution. This seems like a good idea from our point of view (it saves time, and an elegant solution has been produced). However, the other person might consider the interruption unwelcome and counterproductive: not only were they not allowed to tell things as they see it, but they were interrupted and made to look less-competent, and were given a “pat” solution that they do not feel a part of. Will they follow your advice, technically brilliant though it might be? Maybe, maybe not.

If we allow the other person to talk while we listen, gently suggesting and prompting along the way, the other person will usually discover their own solution. It might even be a good solution, but the important thing is that they believe it is theirs. They will be more motivated to carry it out.

2. Just because you listen to someone does not mean that you agree with them. It is possible to listen and disagree at the same time, and then point this out only after they have had a chance to speak their piece. Being polite is not being weak, so resist the temptation to jump in to contradict the speaker. You want the speaker to have time to figure out that their argument is nonsense. You don’t want them to feel victimized and thus less-open to critical analysis of their views.

3. Try to pay attention to what is being said, rather than devote all of your mental energy to devising a rebuttal or clever put-down. You can do both to a certain extent, but it will require hard concentration.

4. Try not to concentrate just on the facts of a situation. Pay attention to body language, verbal inflections, and the feelings that exist between the lines of the facts.

5. Give the speaker your complete attention: Put down pen and pencil and paperwork. Orient your body toward them, and give them full eye contact. Resist the urge to make gestures of impatience, such as finger-drumming or toe-tapping.

Preparation

Maintain an effective filing system for correspondence, e-mail, and so on.

We are all fighting an information war, but only some of us are winning it. If we do not devise ways to tame the torrent of paper and pixels that are aimed at us, we will go under (if not today, then tomorrow; if not tomorrow, then some unnamed day of doom). Better to try and get it under control.

The first step is to set new priorities. Most of us think that organizing files is a trivial activity hardly worth bothering with, or something that will solve itself. But don't fool yourself—filing is a major problem. Here are some solutions:

1. Consider setting aside a large chunk of time to simply purge your filing system. That “chunk,” however, might well be a day or more, and you might have to involve other people. A British department store has a “tear up and throw away” day where a large proportion of the office staff comes in wearing old clothes and thinking cruel thoughts. They then proceed to tear up and throw away what is not needed. A whole day? Well, why not? If a whole day is less than half a percent of the working year, that might save you at least half a percent of your work day: about two minutes. If you think a filing system that actually works can save you more than two minutes a day, it's not such a ridiculous idea after all!
2. Filing cabinets have been described as “vertical tombs.” Someone once figured out that about 90 percent of material put in filing cabinets is never looked at again. If you don't want to spend an entire day or more on doing a purge of the system, work on it salami-style—one chunk at a time (one drawer of your filing cabinet a week, for example).
3. Keep it? Or chuck it out? Again, here's the rule: If you don't keep it, can you get it elsewhere? If you can't get it elsewhere, then it's probably best to keep it.
4. Don't let your filing system operate in a vacuum: Put it in your planner so that you know when to take action on various documents or accounts. If your filing cabinet is the “space” dimension, then your schedule or planner is the “time” dimension: Make sure that they intersect.
5. Take time to check out the capabilities of the computer software you are working with. Can it track correspondence, alert you to upcoming deadlines, organize correspondence into grouped files, track cross-references to other files, or coordinate your work with that of your colleagues? Most people only use a small percentage of what their software packages are capable of: try to get adequate training on yours. There's nothing worse than finding out two years from now that there was actually no need for you to be as frantically busy as a one-armed paperhanger.