Using Covey’s Urgent v Important Matrix

Template

Here is a list of typical tasks that a Microsoft intern may have on their weekly to-do list. It’s Monday morning and you need to plan your week. You want to use Covey’s Urgent/Importance Matrix to categorize each of these tasks. From your reading, you know that Quadrant 2 is where you should be investing the majority of your time and Quadrant 1 needs to be managed carefully or it will consume all your time and contribute to stress. You know those tasks in Q3 should be given lower priority and those in Q4 are the lowest priority.

Categorize the following tasks into each quadrant of the matrix.

1. Email received from manager asking for a project update at your next team meeting on Tuesday.
2. Email asking you to confirm your attendance at social function next weekend.
3. Phone call from a customer that you haven’t heard from for months.
4. Notification on your phone from LinkedIn requesting a new connection.
5. Colleague with a personal problem has just appeared at your desk asking for your help.
6. Attend the Intern lunch with other fellow interns today.
7. Formulate objectives for the internship ready for your next meeting with your manager on Wednesday.
8. Check social media notifications.
9. Prepare for weekly connection meeting with intern hiring manager on Friday.
10. Plan your professional development activities for the next month.
11. Deal with an urgent query about the project you are working on.
12. Microsoft Teams has stopped working.
13. Prepare for your weekly intern meeting today with the university recruitment team.
14. Develop presentation to welcome new interns next week.
15. Conduct research needed for the project team in 5 days.
16. Prepare for tomorrow’s departmental team meeting.
17. Connect with intern buddy for catchup.
18. Meet with fellow interns on stretch project (philanthropy project).
19. Organize weekly coffee chat with senior leaders.
20. Read weekly company email digest

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Urgent | Not Urgent |
| Important ortant | Q1 Important & Urgent  **Q1** Email received from manager asking for a project update at your next team meeting on Tuesday.  Q6 Attend the intern lunch with other fellow interns today.  7 Formulate objectives for the internship ready for your next meeting with your manager on Wednesday  11 Deal with an urgent query about the project you are working on.  12 Microsoft Teams has stopped working.  13 Prepare for your weekly intern meeting today with the university recruitment team. 16 Prepare for tomorrow’s departmental meeting. | Q2 Important but Not Urgent  3 Phone call from a customer that you haven’t heard from for months.  4 Notification on your phone from LinkedIn requesting a new connection.  10 Plan your professional development activities for the next month.  9 Prepare for weekly connection meeting with intern hiring manager on Friday.  14 Develop presentation to welcome new interns next week.  15 Conduct research needed for the project team in 5 days.  17 Connect with intern buddy for catchup.  18 Meet with fellow interns on stretch project (philanthropy project).  19 Organize weekly coffee chat with senior leaders.  20 Read weekly company email digest. |
| Not important | Q3 Urgent but Not Important  2 Email asking you to confirm your attendance at social function next weekend.  5 Colleague with a personal problem has just appeared at your desk asking for your help. | Q4 Not Important & Not Urgent  7 Check social media notifications. |

Q1 Important & Urgent

• This is the ‘reactive’ quadrant.

• The tasks in here require immediate attention, plus contribute to our objectives and goals.

• You need to manage the amount of time you spend in this quadrant, as this is a stressful place to be.

• You won’t be able to remove all tasks from here, but you can limit them if you plan ahead and allocate sufficient time in advance. This is why weekly planning as a minimum is critical.

Q2 Important but Not Urgent

• This is the quadrant that Covey states we should spend the most time.

• Here, we are being proactive, goal-focused and productive.

• The tasks don’t have pressing deadlines, but still help you to achieve your objectives and goals.

• Tasks here are usually focused on strengthening relationships, pro-actively completing tasks, planning for the future and developing your skills and knowledge

Q3 Urgent but not important

• These tasks are typically interruptions so they have become urgent, but they may not important to you.

• They usually aren’t contributing to your objectives.

• Be very careful of working in this quadrant too much. Typically, tasks in this quadrant are urgent/important for others and in the spirit of wanting to help others, we can spend too much time here. You need to practice being supportive and a good team player whilst also managing your workload effectively. Open and assertive conversations with others who are requesting these type of tasks can be beneficial here.

Q4 Not important & not urgent

• The tasks in here don’t usually help you achieve your objective.

• This is often where we find ourselves procrastinating, as it is tasks we can do with very little thought or energy – think of how lost and distracted you can find yourself when browsing social media (even if you started it with a set purpose).

• The goal is to spend less than 5% of waking hours in this quadrant.