



# HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL LEARNING

BME 121 2016

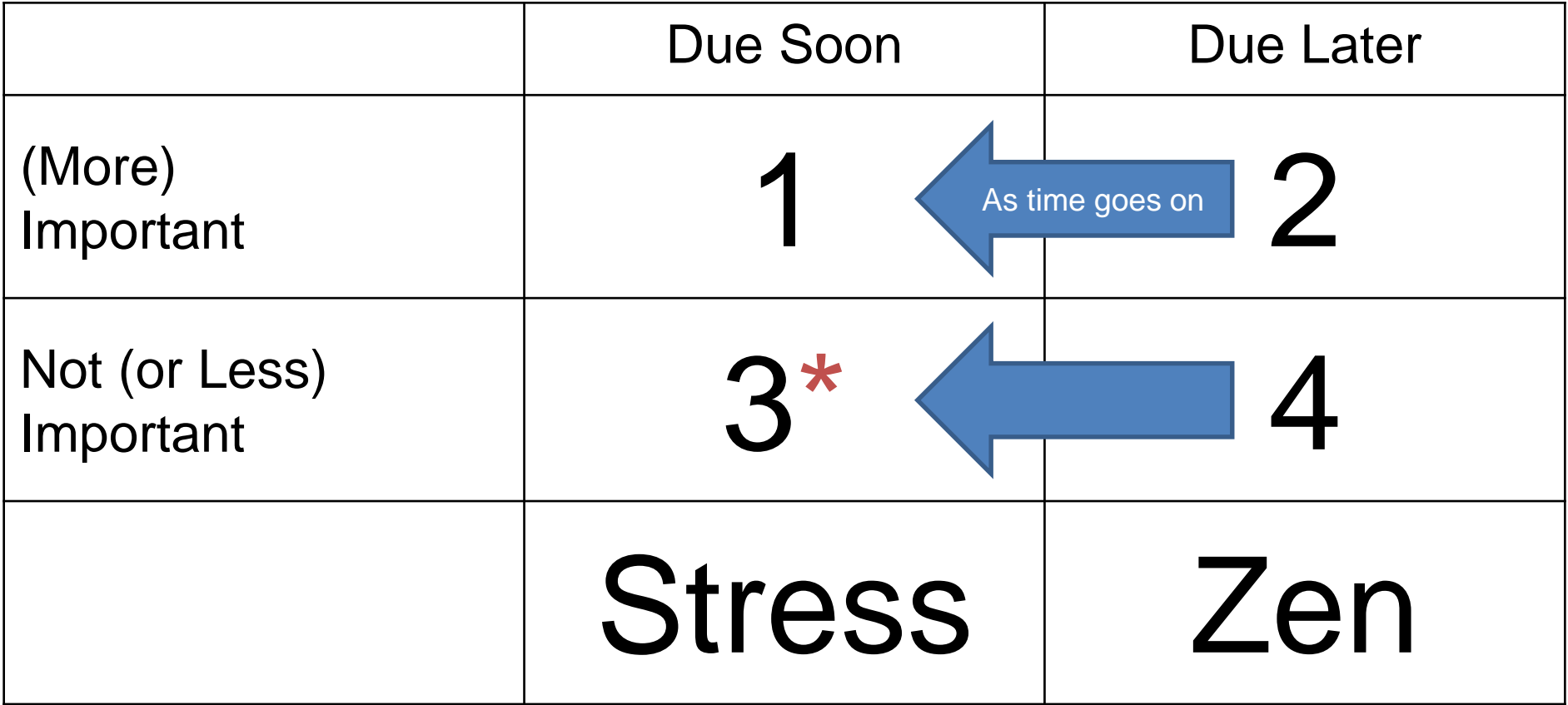
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# Time Management

- How did you manage your time in the past?
- Do you organize tasks based on due date or importance?
- How do you handle emergencies? How do you shuffle tasks?

# Stephen Covey's Four-Quadrant TODO

	Due Soon	Due Later
(More) Important	1	2
Not (or Less) Important	3*	4
	Stress	Zen



As time goes on

# How to Use the Four-Quadrant TODO

- Decide on a time scale (due today / later, this week / later, ...)
- Decide the relative importance of each task
- Assign your tasks based on importance & due time into the 4 boxes, then work on them from box 1 to 4
  - At the start of a term, all tasks should be in either box 2 or 4
  - Try to complete them before they reach box 1 or 3, where it is much more stressful
  - Statistically, humans make more mistakes when under stress and pressure, which means it takes even more time to review and fix those mistakes
- Ideally, always work to keep box 1 and 3 empty. Try to be in Zen mode all the time! You'll find university to be much more enjoyable this way, rather than dreadful and stressful.

# How to Use the Four-Quadrant TODO

- For big tasks, such as projects, break it down into multiple sub-tasks with reasonable early deadlines, the earlier the better
  - Since these due dates are flexible, you can choose to push back the deadline if needed
  - Ex: initial meeting / problem breakdown, lock down methodology, design solution, build prototypes, test prototypes, analysis meeting / draw conclusions, write report, prepare presentation.
- For Team projects, it is possible to trade sub-tasks between members (shifts items from your box to their box, but not in terms of due time or importance)
  - Make it a fair trade in time cost, as well as importance!

# How to Use the Four-Quadrant TODO

- \* If there isn't enough time to accomplish everything due soon (box 1 & 3), decide carefully which tasks are more important and just don't do the less important tasks (usually box 3); make time for more important things
  - Accept the calculated losses (of marks or opportunities), but your more important tasks will get the time it needs
- Hopefully this doesn't happen often, as ideally the important task would of been finished while it was still in Box 2



# Observations

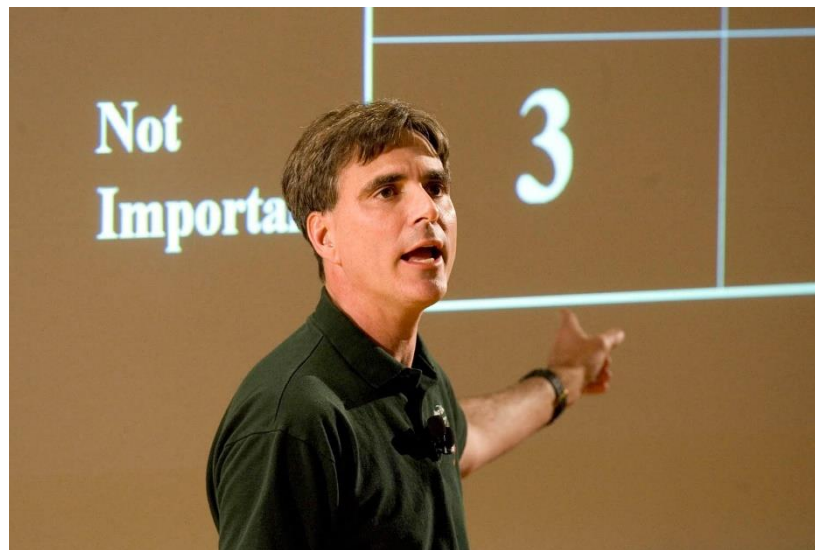
- A task is always important to *someone*: if no one thinks it's important at all, no one will ever do it, and therefore it is never going to be a task
- A task given without a due date will never be done
  - In practice: "ASAP" is highly subjective and interpretable (I know it's important, but can I schedule this as box 2?)
- If in doubt:
  - A task will take at least twice as long as you've planned (only past experience can help make correct predictions)
    - Account for Murphy's Law / catch mistakes early
  - A task is often more important than stated
    - Differences in perceived importance is often a source of conflict and contention between team members, or between managers and employees
  - Set an earlier personal deadline, leave some room to review and polish

# Observations

- People in Zen mode always know what's ahead in terms of dues, but also has control over their time in the present and the near future.
  - Random surprize weekend party? Lets go!
- People in Stress mode are always controlled by the dues, they have no control over time and no real free time.
  - Random surprize weekend party? Can't go, got a mountain of homework to do 😞



## Prof. Randy Pausch (1960-2008) – Carnegie Mellon University



Time Management Lecture:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTugjssqOT0>

Slides: <http://www.cs.virginia.edu/~robins/Randy/RandyPauschTimeManagement2007.pdf>

How to achieve your Childhood Dreams:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji5\\_MqicxSo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji5_MqicxSo)

## 4Quad TODO for Team Projects

	Due Soon	Due Later
More Important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Unscheduled rework</li><li>- Last-min changes</li><li>- Dealing with late inputs from stakeholders or team</li><li>- Forcing decisions &amp; closure</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Tasks that fulfill long term strategy and vision</li><li>- Thoughtful, creative work</li><li>- High quality output</li><li>- Productive collaborations</li><li>- Training and development</li><li>- Recreation &amp; family time</li></ul>
Less Important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Low-value but required reports &amp; presentations</li><li>- Non-project emergencies</li><li>- Miscellaneous interruptions</li><li>- Administration (paperwork)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Over-analysis</li><li>- Idle speculation</li><li>- Self-indulgent perfectionism</li><li>- Time fillers (to destress)</li></ul>