

## 11 Overcoming Barriers to Effective Time Management

- a. **Telephone Interruptions:** Delegation of authority and responsibility is an ideal way of controlling telephone interruptions. Also fixing specific time slots for socializing and business will help the managers effectively reduce the telephone interruptions. Implementation of the screening procedures also lessen the burden of unwanted telephone intrusions.

### Time - Saving Tips : Interruptions

- **Close your door**
- **Distinguish between necessary visits and interruptions**
- **Use different techniques**
  - Visit others
  - Arrange appointment
  - Leave your office
  - Establish regular meeting time

- b. **Drop-in Visitors:** Taking time-log of visits and implementing a plan to arrange and screen appointments is an effective way of dealing with drop-in visitors. Managers can also have 'Open Door' and 'Quiet Hour' timings fixed so that they are not distracted when certain of their tasks demand undivided personal attention.
- c. **Meetings:** Setting a clear agenda before will provide the right direction to the meetings and elicit positive outcomes from them. Selecting an appropriate location and assessing the needs of participation, information and coordination are also important prerequisites in conducting meetings. Concise minutes summarizing decisions, assignments and deadlines followed by effective follow-up on decisions make meetings purposeful.

### Time - Saving Tips : Meetings

- Request agenda
- Arrive early
- Notify chair if you will be late
- Avoid routine, emergency, impromptu meetings
- Avoid Monday mornings, Friday afternoons

- d. **Lack of Priorities:** Putting first things first helps managers spend relatively more time on activities that are important. Managers must realize that most of the problems arise due to action without thought. Defining clearly the objectives and priorities and deadlines in the form of a Daily Planner will help managers effectively use their time.
- e. **Personal Disorganization:** Managers must recognize that personal disorganization, indecision, procrastination, insecurity, confusion of priority, and inability to meet deadlines are mostly due to lost documents. Uncluttered desk, orderly filing system and simplified procedures will help the managers make the most of time management. Through a system in place for screening junk mails, minimizing paperwork and emphasis on brevity, managers can overcome their personal disorganization.

### Time - Saving Tips : Managing E-mails

- Know your system's special features
- List serves
- Same time every day
- Use Web services - (examples)
  - IFAP.ed.gov
  - NASFAA Today New

- f. **Ineffective Delegation:** Managers must ensure that clear, unambiguous instructions are given to the subordinates. They should establish plans, schedules with details, progress reports, monitoring of deadlines, and emphasize goal-accomplishment methods and procedures. They should measure results rather than activity and track progress of an activity to take timely corrective actions.
- g. **Attempting too much:** Managers must set their objectives, priorities, and deadlines daily so that they must plan, start early and always remember Murphy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Law: "Recognize that everything takes longer than you think". They must limit their response to the urgent and important demands. They should learn to say "No" when necessary.
- h. **Unclear Communication:** Managers must assess the legitimate needs for information and check for interference, noise or activity in the flow of information. They should also assess potential impact of unclear communication, take preventive steps and minimize organizational levels. If it is difficult to minimize organizational levels, they should facilitate easy flow of information across the organization.
- i. **Inadequate, Inaccurate or Delayed Information:** Managers must determine what information is needed for planning, decisions and feedback on results. Then they should ensure its availability, reliability and timeliness.
- j. **Indecision/ Procrastination:** Managers must set deadlines on all objectives and priorities, use reminders, have the secretary check on the progress, reward themselves (no coffee until they finish). They should avoid fixing blame; ask what's been learned and how repetition can be avoided.
- k. **Confused Authority / Responsibility:** Managers must lay emphasis on accountability for results; through recognition and reward for exercise of initiative; through citation, consideration in performance and salary review, promotion, etc.
- l. **Inability to say 'No':** Managers must recognize that inability to say 'No' is a major cause of time wastage. They should understand that saying "Yes" may betray

feelings of insecurity and low self-worth and should resist this urge. They should take time log recording all “Yes” responses that could have been “No” and assess the time wasted. They should learn to say “No”, especially to inappropriate or thoughtless requests. Dr Mackenzie suggests four steps to say NO and it is presented in the BOX on the next page for quick reference.

### **Dr. Mackenzie’s Four Steps to Saying “No.”**

#### **1. Listen**

This lets the requesting person know you’re giving full attention to the request and lets *you* fully understand what is being asked.

#### **2. Say “No” politely but firmly right away**

Don’t build false hopes with wishy-washy answers.

#### **3. Give your reasons, if appropriate**

Your reasons may include your priorities, your schedule, etc. This reinforces your credibility.

#### **4. Offer alternatives, if possible**

Demonstrate your good faith by suggesting other ways to meet the person’s need.

**There are many ways to say “No” after listening to a request that you simply cannot handle.**

#### **Dr. Mackenzie offers a few:**

- “I’m sorry, my other commitments just won’t permit me to take on another project right now.”
- “You know, on New Year’s Day I promised my family I wouldn’t take on anything else this year. I’ve been neglecting them too much.”
- “Thanks for the compliment, but I’m afraid I’ll have to decline. maybe next year.”
- If a request catches you off-guard, don’t say anything until you count to ten first.

- m. Leaving tasks unfinished:** Managers must take time log and assess the impact of leaving tasks unfinished. They should set deadlines on all important tasks to provide incentive to complete them. They should get organized to permit effective control of tasks. They should recognize that sound organization saves time in retrieving information, processing decisions, and maintaining control over projects.
- n. Lack of Self-Discipline:** When a manager switches priorities of his team, he makes self-discipline difficult to practice. S/he should take time log to record frequency, assess cost, discuss with colleagues to seek ways of reducing problem.

**Time-Wasters: Causes & Solutions**

Time Waster	Possible Causes	Solutions
<b>Lack of planning</b>	Failure to see the benefit of planning	Recognize that planning may take time but it saves time and effort in the long run.
<b>Lack of planning</b>	Action-oriented (perhaps <i>not</i> action-oriented otherwise the above point is similar to this)	Emphasize results, not activity.
<b>Lack of planning</b>	Success without	Recognize that success is often in spite of, not because of, methods.
<b>Lack of priorities</b>	Lack of goals and objectives	Write down goals and objectives. Discuss priorities with co-workers and family members.
<b>Over-commitment</b>	Broad interests (Impractical) Confusion in priorities	Learn to say no. Re-assesses your goals and priorities
<b>Over-commitment</b>	Failure to set priorities/Over Ambitious	Develop a personal philosophy regarding time. Relate priorities to a schedule of events
<b>Management by crisis</b>	Lack of planning	Apply the same solutions as for lack of planning.
<b>Management by crisis</b>	Unrealistic time estimates	Allow more time. Allow for interruptions.
<b>Management by crisis</b>	Problem oriented	Be opportunity oriented
<b>Management by crisis</b>	Reluctance of others to break bad news	Encourage fast transmission of information via grapevines as essential for timely corrective action
<b>Telephone</b>	Lack of self-discipline	Screen and group calls. Be brief.
<b>Telephone</b>	Desire to be informed and involved	Stay uninvolved with all but essentials. Manage by exception.
<b>Meetings</b>	Fear of responsibility for decisions.	Make decisions without meetings.
<b>Meetings</b>	Indecision	Make decisions even when some facts are missing.

Time Waster	Possible Causes	Solutions
<b>Meetings</b>	Over-communication	Discourage unnecessary meetings. Convene only those needed.
<b>Meetings</b>	Poor leadership	Use agendas. Stick to the subject. Prepare concise minutes as soon as possible.
<b>Meetings</b>	Indecision	Lack of confidence in the facts. Improve fact finding and validating procedures.
<b>Meetings</b>	Insistence on all the facts; <i>paralysis by analysis</i>	Accept risks as inevitable. Decide without all facts.
<b>Meetings</b>	Fear of consequences of a mistake	Delegate the right to be wrong. Use mistakes as a learning process.
<b>Meetings</b>	Lack of a rational decision-making process.	Get facts, set goals, investigate alternatives and negative consequences, make the decision, then implement it.
<b>Lack of delegation</b>	Fear of subordinates' inadequacy.	Train. Allow mistakes. Replace if necessary.
<b>Lack of delegation</b>	Fear of subordinates' competence	Delegate fully. Give credit. Challenge the potential and reward merit.
<b>Lack of delegation</b>	Work overload on subordinates	Balance the workload. Reorder priorities.
<b>Haste</b>	Impatience with detail	Take time to get it right. Save the time of doing it over.
<b>Haste</b>	Responding to the urgent	Distinguish between the urgent and the important.
<b>Haste</b>	Lack of planning ahead	Take time to plan. It repays itself many times over.
<b>Haste</b>	Attempting too much in too little time.	Attempt less, delegate much more.
<b>Paperwork &amp; reading</b>	Knowledge explosion	Read selectively. Learn speed reading.
<b>Paperwork &amp; reading</b>	"Computeritis"	Manage computer data by exception.
<b>Paperwork &amp; reading</b>	Failure to screen	Delegate reading to subordinates. Ask for summaries.

Time Waster	Possible Causes	Solutions
<b>Routine &amp; trivia</b>	Lack of priorities	Set and concentrate on priority goals. Delegate non-essentials.
<b>Routine &amp; trivia</b>	Over-surveillance of subordinates	Delegate; then give subordinates their right to do it their way. Look to results, not details or methods.
<b>Routine &amp; trivia</b>	Refusal to delegate; feeling of greater security dealing with operating detail	Recognize that without delegation, it is impossible to grow. Forget perfectionism.
<b>Visitors</b>	Enjoyment in socializing	Do it elsewhere. Meet visitors outside work setting. Suggest lunch, if necessary or hold stand up conferences.
<b>Visitors</b>	Inability to say "no."	Screen. Say no. Be unavailable. Modify the open door policy.

Now that you know about these time-wasters, answer the following questions?

1. What time-wasters prevent you from getting your work done on a typical day?
2. What are the activities lately that you found were ritualistic and relatively ineffective?
3. What are the tasks this week that you found could have been delegated?
4. What tasks did you do this week that could have been simplified?
5. What single activity or habit that wastes your time most?



## Conclusion

Now that we have come towards the end of the book we have realized that how our time gets wasted because we never thought of managing time in an effective manner. It is said that time and tide waits for none so our attempts would be to make the best use of time and prevent others from wasting our time too. This chapter winds up all our observations on time management in this book. It summarizes as to what causes us to waste our time and suggests solutions to save time as much as possible. It also offers tips to make the best use of time. As with all the precious resources, time is a scarce resource. The wisdom lies in making the most of it. Horace Mann says:

“Lost, yesterday,  
Somewhere between sunrise and sunset,  
Two golden hours,  
Each set with sixty diamond minutes.  
No reward is offered,  
For they are gone forever”

**Which of the following Time Enhancers have you tried lately?**

- Listen to radio and TV news shows to keep up on the latest news; this should enable you to skim through newspapers and magazines.
- Limit recreational TV watching to one hour a day.
- Limit all casual, idle, or gossip chatter to five minutes.
- Open and sort through mail as soon as it arrives at your desk or home; handle each piece only once.
- Using the “automatic dialing and redial” telephone to speed up making and returning phone recalls.
- Use a timer to help you limit phone calls to less than five minutes.
- Hold as few meetings as possible; use an agenda and stick to it; limit the time to no more than one hour for each meeting.
- Pay each bill on the day it arrives in the mail, keeping the entries in your check-book accurate and up to date.
- Use daydreaming as a form of stress release or relaxation, and limit it to a total of fifteen minutes per day.
- Get professional help for personal problems if you find thinking about them occupies a lot of your free time.
- Use a tape recorder with ear phones to listen to motivational tapes, relaxation tapes, or soft relaxing music when in traffic or on a commuter bus, train, plane, etc.
- Use a daily schedule book or “date minder” to create a log of scheduled activities to help you review your success at managing your time.
- Bring books and mail to read or a tape recorder to listen to when you have appointments where you know you will be waiting for a length of time.
- Eliminate naps and extend your nightly sleep time or increase your daily exercise schedule to increase your energy level.

- Eliminate snacking between meals; eat three balanced meals a day
- Give up smoking (cigarettes, cigars or pipes).
- Give up the need for a “quick one” at your local bar, tavern, or lounge.
- Exchange alcoholic consumption time for exercise or some other time enhancer.
- Go shopping with a list, stick to the list, and leave when you have completed your list.
- Avoid browsing shopping unless it is a planned social, couple, or family shopping activity.
- Find alternative leisure activities that require no betting of legal tender.

Study your answer and take steps necessary to eliminate your time wasters.

### Time Tips

1. Count all your time as time to be used and make every attempt to get satisfaction out of every moment.
2. Find something to enjoy in whatever you do.
3. Try to be an optimist and seek out the good in your life.
4. Find ways to build on your successes.
5. Stop regretting your failures and start learning from your mistakes.
6. Remind yourself, "There is always enough time for the important things." If it is important, you should be able to make time to do it.
7. Continually look at ways of freeing up your time.
8. Examine your old habits and search for ways to change or eliminate them.
9. Try to use waiting time-review notes or do practice problems.
10. Keep paper or a calendar with you to jot down the things you have to do or notes to yourself.
11. Examine and revise your lifetime goals on a monthly basis and be sure to include progress towards those goals on a daily basis.
12. Put up reminders in your home or office about your goals.
13. Always keep those long term goals in mind.
14. Plan your day each morning or the night before and set priorities for yourself.
15. Maintain and develop a list of specific things to be done each day, set your priorities and then get the most important ones done as soon in the early part of the day as you can. Evaluate your progress at the end of the day briefly.
16. Look ahead in your month and try and anticipate what is going to happen so you can better schedule your time.

17. Try rewarding yourself when you get things done as you had planned, especially the important ones.
18. Do first things first.
19. Have confidence in yourself and in your judgement of priorities and stick to them no matter what.
20. When you catch yourself procrastinating-ask yourself, "What am I avoiding?"
21. Start with the most difficult parts of projects, then either the worst is done or you may find you don't have to do all the other small tasks.
22. Catch yourself when you are involved in unproductive projects and stop as soon as you can.
23. Find time to concentrate on high priority items or activities.
24. Concentrate on one thing at a time.
25. Put your efforts in areas that provide long term benefits.
26. Push yourself and be persistent, especially when you know you are doing well.
27. Think on paper when possible-it makes it easier to review and revise.
28. Be sure and set deadlines for yourself whenever possible.
29. Delegate responsibilities whenever possible.
30. Ask for advice when needed.

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Adapted from A. Lakein. *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life*

## Appendix

### Time Management Facts and Figures

80% of “crisis management” events are preventable.

One hour of planning will save 10 hours of doing.

Good time managers do not allocate their time to those who “demand” it, but rather to those who “deserve” it.

The most powerful word in our time management vocabulary is “no.”

Delegation is an unlimited method to multiply time for achieving results.

The hardest part about delegation is simply letting go “If you want a job done right, you have to do it yourself.”

**Dr. Donald E. Wetmore -Productivity Institute**

### Time Management Facts and Figures

- Nine out of 10 people daydream in meetings.
- 60% of meeting attendees take notes to appear as if they are listening.
- When someone is asking for our time for a meeting, 80% of the time there is an alternate date and time that will be acceptable.

**Dr. Donald E. Wetmore -Productivity Institute**