Unit 2   A Stitch in Time Saves Nine

Structure

2.1 Introduction

Tick, tick, tick ... No, it's not the beginning to 60 MINUTES. It's time moving on. Time management is a skill few people master, but it is one that most people need.

Do you agree? You have so many competing demands on your time: friends, movies, studying lectures, home, relationships and on and on. How can you come to grips with all of it? Most time management experts say that one of the first things people need to do to manage their time is to determine how they spend it.

Did you catch that? Time really can't be managed. You can't slow it down or speed it up or manufacture it. It just IS. *Time Management is Managing Yourself.*

Objectives:

After learning this unit, you will be able to:

- manage time effortlessly.
- identify and focus on the activities that give you the greatest returns in a short time.
- function effectively, even under intense pressure.
- identify your personal attitudes toward time management.
- discuss key steps in planning/prioritizing your work.

2.2 Concept and Applications of Time Management

Time management is a set of skills, tools, and systems that help you use your time to accomplish what you want in an efficient way. Time is often equated with money, and just as we often find ourselves short of cash, we also find ourselves with short of time.

The various applications of Time Management cover almost all areas of our life, some examples are:

- Children use time tables in schools
- Executives use diaries and planners

While it is true that many methods of managing time are available, all underdeveloped personalities are bad time managers. Good time-managers are people who are always on time. They do things on time and are respected and promoted to the best positions in life.

Self Assessment Questions

1. Time is often equated with _____.
2. What is Time Management?

2.3 Recognizing the Importance of Time

Here are the top reasons why time management is of great importance to your personal and career success:

- **Time is Limited –** Time is a very special resource in that you cannot store it or save it for later use. Everyone gets the same amount of time each and every day. If you don't use your time wisely, you can never get it back.

- **Time is Scarce –** Most people feel like they have too much to do and not enough time. Lack of time is blamed for everything from not getting enough exercise, poor finances, unachieved goals, too much stress, bad relationships, and even an unfulfilled life. Time management helps you use the time that you have in better ways.

- **You Need Time to get What You Want Out of Life –** You need time to do almost anything worthwhile in life. Waiting for more free time is a losing game that almost never results in getting time for what you want. You need to learn how to make time for the things that are important to you. Even if you can only afford to give a small amount of time each

week to your goals, you'd be surprised at how much progress you can make.

- **You can Accomplish more with Less Effort –** When you become more productive using improved time management skills and tools, you can accomplish more with less effort. Reducing wasted time and effort gives you even more productive time throughout the day. Both of these allow you to make time for a wide range of activities that bring more balance and fulfillment to your life.

- **Too Many Choices –** In this day and age, there are so many ways you can spend your time that you need some sort of plan to make intelligent choices.

  Time management helps you make conscious choices so you can spend more of your time doing things that are important and valuable to you.

Self Assessment Questions

3. Say whether the following statements are true or false.
   i) Lack of time is not blamed for unachieved goals.
   ii) One should learn to make time to do things of importance.
   iii) One should plan one's time intelligently.
   iv) Time is unlimited.

2.3.1 Theories of Time Management

The 80:20 Rule

This is neatly summed up in the Pareto Principle, or the '80:20 Rule'. This argues that typically 80% of unfocussed effort generates only 20% of results. *The remaining 80% of results are achieved with only 20% of the effort.* While the ratio is not always 80:20, this broad pattern of a small proportion of activity generating non-scalar returns recurs so frequently as to be the norm in many areas.

By applying the time management tips and skills in this section you can optimize your effort to ensure that you concentrate as much of your time and energy as possible on the high payoff tasks. This ensures that you achieve the greatest benefit possible with the limited amount of time available to you.

ABC Analysis

A technique that has been used in business management for a long time is the categorization of large data into groups. These groups are often marked A, B, and C – hence the name. **Activities that are perceived as having highest priority are assigned an A, those with lowest priority are labeled C.** ABC analysis can incorporate more than three groups.

POSEC Method

POSEC is an acronym for Prioritize by Organizing, Streamlining, Economizing and Contributing.

The method dictates a template which emphasizes an average individual's immediate sense of emotional and monetary security. It suggests that by attending to one's personal responsibilities first, an individual is better positioned to shoulder collective responsibilities

Prioritize: Your time and define your life goals by:

- **Organizing:** Things you have to accomplish regularly to be successful (Family and Finances)
- **Streamlining:** Things you may not like to do, but must do (Work and Chores)
- **Economizing:** Things you should do or may even like to do, but they're not pressingly urgent. (Past-times and Socializing)
- **Contributing:** By paying attention to the few remaining things that make a difference. (Social obligations)

Self Assessment Questions

4. Fill in the blanks

    i) The Pareto principle is also known as ___.

    ii) The highest priority activities are labeled as ___; whereas, the lowest priority are ___.

    iii) ___ method suggests that a person could shoulder collective responsibility by attending to personal responsibility first.


2.4 Causes for Wastage of Time

*   Interruptions

*   Unclear goals

*   Trying to get other's cooperation

*   Procrastination

*   Lack of planning

*   Lack of priorities

*   Indecision

*   Slow reading skills

*   Physical or mental exhaustion

*   Not being able to say "no"

*   Low motivation

A few of them are explained below:

2.4.1 Interruptions

Interruptions are a normal part of work life, especially if you are a smart and talented student or manager. It's natural for your college mates or colleagues and staff to want to talk to you if you can help them with their work. That being said, interruptions can also be a tremendous drain and time waster. The key to handle interruptions effectively is to ensure that you are making the best use of your time in each case.

2.4.2 Unclear Goals
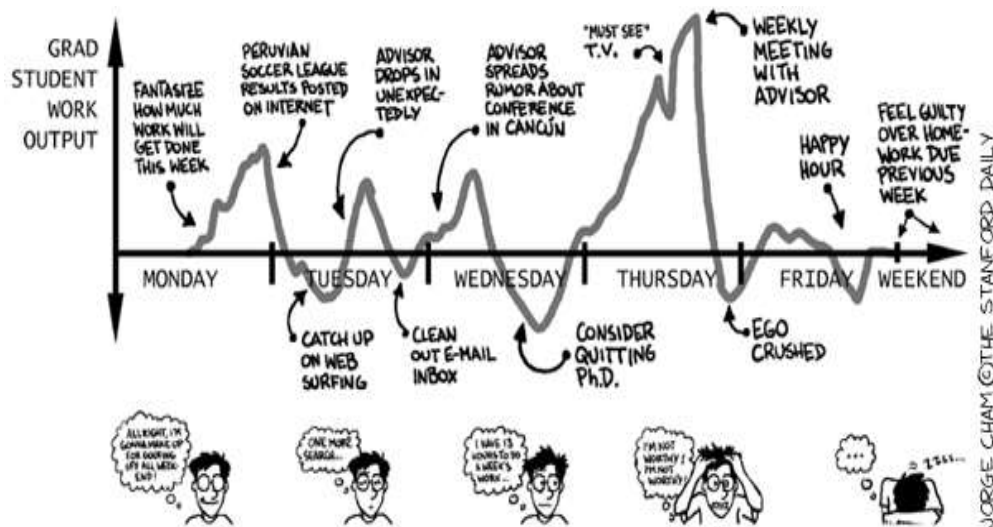
An ancient sage was teaching his disciples the art of archery. He put a wooden bird as a target and asked them to aim at the eye of the bird. The first disciple was asked to describe what he saw. He said, "I see the trees, the branches, the leaves, the sky, the bird and its eyes.

The sage asked this disciple to wait. Then he asked the second disciple the same question and he replied, "I only see the eye of the bird." The sage said, "Very good, then shoot." The arrow went straight and hit the eye of the bird.

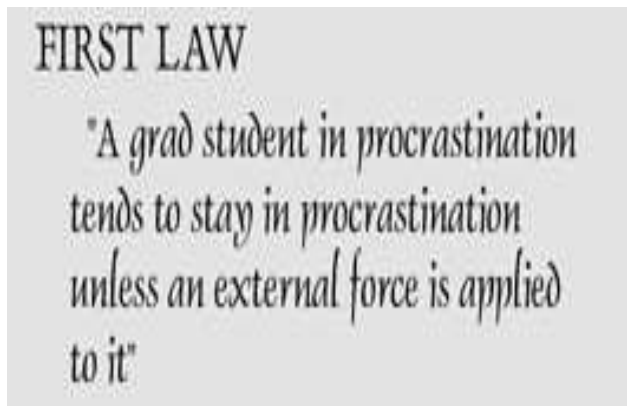**Moral: Unless we focus, we cannot achieve our goal. It is hard to focus and concentrate, but it is a skill that can be learned.**

Setting goals and managing them give returns in all areas of life. By knowing precisely what one wants to achieve, makes clear what to concentrate and improve on. But if you are not sure about the goals or the time you want to allot to achieve each goal, it becomes a hindrance. This

leads to doing unimportant tasks and neglecting of really important ones. This in turn leads to wastage of time.

2.4.3 Procrastination

Procrastination is the deferment or avoidance of an action or task to a later time. For the person procrastinating this may result in stress, a sense of guilt, the loss of productivity, the creation of crisis, and the **chagrin** of others for not fulfilling one's responsibilities or commitments. While it is normal for individuals to procrastinate to some degree, it becomes a problem when it impedes normal functioning.

FIRST LAW

"A grad student in procrastination tends to stay in procrastination unless an external force is applied to it"

Some students struggle with procrastination due to a lack of time management or study skills, stress, or feeling overwhelmed with their work.

2.5 Methods for Managing Time Efficiently

- Being Assertive
- "To Do" Lists
- Weekly Planners
- Time Diary
- SMART Goals

2.5.1 Being Assertive

Assertiveness can help delegate, increase work effectiveness and productivity, achieve greater control of their daily activities and overcome work stressors.

Benefits of assertiveness resulting in time management:

- Increased productivity through more effective communication
- Reduced interruptions at work
- Gained more time for creative and development opportunities
- Managed time more effectively and enjoyed greater self-esteem
- Improved decision making and reduction in procrastination enjoyed a more balanced lifestyle
- Increased work effectiveness and productivity
- Felt more in control of their daily activities

2.5.2 "To Do" Lists

Most successful people use "TO DO" lists. They range from the top CEOs of multi-national companies to entrepreneurs of small businesses.

You can also use these lists to keep you focused on what really needs to be done, and keep you away from un-important tasks that have no value. The result - more time to do what you want!
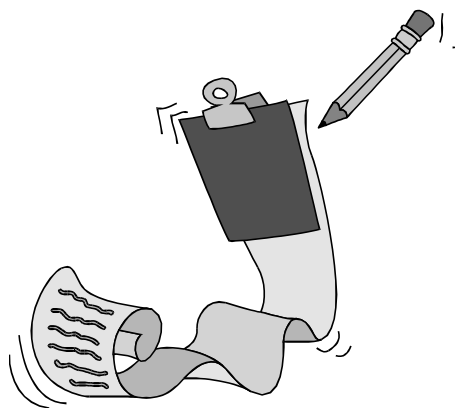
- **Make It A Daily Record**

  Every day you should make a "TO DO" list. You will find it invaluable in helping you decide where your priorities lie.

- **The Nuts and Bolts of Your "TO DO" List**

Write down all your outstanding tasks on a sheet of paper, then carefully go through deciding if an item is to be graded as:

A. Urgent.

B. Important but not urgent.

C. Not urgent nor important.

Within categories A and B it will be necessary for you to prioritize. So the most urgent task becomes A1, then the next becomes A2 etc. Similarly with the set of tasks you have decided are B. This is not necessary with the C tasks, of course. Some people prefer to colour code the items instead. So, with such a system, the A tasks may be coloured red, the B tasks blue etc. You may choose whatever colours have meaning for you. It really is an individual choice.

- **Using the "TO DO" List**

Each morning you must update your "TO DO" list. Bring forward the A, B, and C items not completed the day before on to another sheet of paper. Add new items to the lists after considering carefully where each new item should go. Then review the list and start on the top priorities, crossing off each one as it is finished throughout the day. Some managers prefer to have separate sheets for each type i.e. one sheet for the "A" list, another sheet for the "B" list etc. That way you know you are working on the most urgent tasks from the listing itself because the A list should always be on top. So what do you do with the C items? If you have staff, then delegate - if not, decide if you are going to complete them or not.

Dispose off all items you decide are not worth doing. Instead of re-writing your list each morning an alternative method is to spend the last 15 minutes of your day on your list, so that you can start immediately the next day.

2.5.3 Weekly Planners

How does it help?

The planner is built around Stephen Covey's methods and books *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and *First Things First*. It helps you focus on four steps for focusing your time on what you value the most and what you want to accomplish in life.

They are:
- Identify values
- Set Goals
- Plan Weekly
- Plan Daily

Learning from Your Log

Once you have logged your time for a few days, analyze your daily activity log. You may be alarmed to see the amount of time you spend doing low value jobs!

Plan your week instead of your day. Each Sunday, look at your roles and goals from your mission statement, and assign activities throughout your week which fulfil these roles and goals. Double and triple them up.

Below is a sample of a Weekly Planner Chart:

Hours	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00 am							
6:30							
7:00							
7:30							
8:00							
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							
10:00							
10:30							
11:00							
11:30							
NOON							
12:30							
1:00							
1:30							
2:00							
2:30							
3:00							
3:30							
4:00							
4:30							
5:00							
5:30							

Summary of Activities

At the end of the week, summarize your activities on the chart below. Once you evaluate where your time goes, print a copy of the Planned Weekly Schedule and fill it in with your course schedule, study time and other activities. Try to follow your schedule to improve your time use.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total	Percent*
Activity		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total	Percent*
School Related	Class & Lab									
	Study									
	Clubs & Organizations									
	Total									
Work										
Personal	Social & Recreational									
	TV & Stereo									
	Total									
Health-related	Eating, Bathing, Exercise, etc.									
	Sleep									
	Total									
Travel										
Out-of-school Commitments										
Other										
Total Hours		24	24	24	24	24	24	24	168	100

*To determine percentage, divide the number of hours in an activity by 168. For example; 56 hours of sleep divided by 168 = 33.3%

2.5.4 Time Diary

Still can't figure out where the time goes? Keep a diary for about two weeks:

- Include personal time
- List time that was needed to do each task
- Prioritize what should have been done; compare it to the actual work accomplished
- Analyze what can be cut/compressed
- Note time wasters

2.5.5 SMART Goals

Why are goals important?

Goals give a sense of direction. People confuse goals with dreams and wishes. Dreams and wishes are nothing more than desires. However, desires become strong when they are supported by,

- Direction
- Dedication
- Determination
- Discipline
- Deadlines

That is what differentiates a desire from a goal. Goals are dreams with a deadline and an action plan. Goals can be worthy. It is passion, not wishing that turns dreams into reality.

If you ask most people what is their one major objective in life, they would probably give you a vague answer, such as , " I want to be successful, be happy, make a good living," and that is it. They are all wishes and none of them are clear goals. Goals should be SMART.

- **S – Specific:** For example, "I want to lose weight." This is wishful thinking. It becomes a goal when I pin myself down to "I will lose 10lbs in 90 days."
- **M –** M**easurable:** If we cannot measure it, we cannot accomplish. Measurement is a way of monitoring our progress.
- **A** – **Achievable:** Achievable means that it should be out of reach enough to be out of sight, otherwise it becomes disheartening.
- **R – Realistic:** A person who wants to lose 50lbs in 30days is being unrealistic.
- **T – Time Bound:** There should be a starting date and a finishing date.

2.5.6 Time Management Principles

As a student, there are some basic Principles of Time Management that you can apply.

- **Identify "Best Time" for Studying:** Everyone has high and low periods of attention and concentration. Are you a "morning person" or a "night person". Use your power times to study; use the down times for chores and errands.

- **Study Difficult Subjects First:** When you are fresh, you can process information more quickly and save time as a result.

- **Use Distributed Learning and Practice:** Study in shorter time blocks with short breaks between. This keeps you from getting fatigued and "wasting time." This type of studying is efficient because while you are taking a break, the brain is still processing the information.

- **Make Sure the Surroundings are Conducive to Studying:** This will allow you to reduce distractions which can "waste time."

- **Make Room for Entertainment and Relaxation:** You need to have a social life, yet, you need to have a balance in your life.

- **Make Sure you Have Time to Sleep and Eat Properly:** Sleep is often an activity (or lack of activity) that students use as their time management "bank." When they need a few extra hours for studying or socializing, they withdraw a few hours of sleep. Doing this makes the time they spend studying less effective because they will need a couple hours of clock time to get an hour of productive time. This is not a good way to manage yourself in relation to time.

- **Try to Combine Activities**

2.6 Summary

I would like to summarize this whole unit by a short story on "How to manage time effectively?"

There was a little girl named Annie. She was hard working, intelligent and was always ready to learn something new. Ms Miller, her music teacher at school, encouraged her to learn playing the piano. Annie was a fast learner and quickly followed the music lessons at school. Ms Miller advised Annie to practice the lessons again at home. Soon Annie's exams approached and she slowly lost her focus on the piano. Ms Miller was concerned and spoke to Annie about the same. Annie said,"Ms Miller, I really want to play the piano, but I am very short on time. There is homework to finish, and the exams are about to start as well. I am unable to find an hour to practice the piano everyday". Looking at Annie's worried face, Ms Miller replied,"Annie, I understand your problem. You have a lot to achieve in one day, and finding an hour at a stretch, to practice piano everyday will indeed be difficult. But if you practice for 10 minutes in morning before leaving for school, 10 minutes after coming back, then 15 minutes after finishing the homework, another 10 minutes before starting your dinner and final 15 minutes before going off to sleep, you will definitely make it". Annie wasn't sure, but she tried following what her teacher said. To her own surprise, she was playing piano even during her exams and yet doing everything else in time. So when Annie thanked her, Ms Miller replied,"If you will look for time in plenty, it will just slip like sand from your hand, but if you can find small intervals in between, you will never run short of it." Annie now plays several instruments as she learnt to find time in between her busy time table.

2.7 Terminal Questions

1. "Time Management is very important for personal success." Elucidate.

2. Write a short note on the POSEC theory of Time Management.

3. Why are goals important? Why should they be SMART?

2.8 Answers

A. Self Assessment Questions

1. money

2. Time management is a set of skills, tools, and systems that help you use your time to accomplish what you want in an efficient way.

3. i) False   ii) True   iii) True   iv) False

4. i) 80:20 rule   ii) A ; C   iii) POSEC

B. Terminal Questions

1. Refer 2.3

2. Refer 2.3.1

3. Refer 2.5.5