

# The Experts Teach: Time Management

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# **The Experts Teach**

Time Management

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The Experts Teach: Time Management

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# Preface

## Introduction to “The Experts Teach: Time Management”

In each of “The Experts Teach” series, we’ve gathered together some of the world’s best thinkers to share their ideas with you. Their ideas offer new, refreshing, and insightful ways to look at old themes, allowing you to discover new perspectives, develop your understanding, and change the way you think.

## Profile of Editor Eric Garner

Eric Garner is an experienced management trainer with a knack for bringing the best out of individuals and teams. Eric founded ManageTrainLearn in 1995 as a corporate training company in the UK specialising in the 20 skills that people need for professional and personal success today. Since 2002, as part of KSA Training Ltd, ManageTrainLearn has been a major player in the e-learning market. Eric has a simple mission: to turn ManageTrainLearn into the best company in the world for producing and delivering quality online management products.

## Profile of ManageTrainLearn

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# 1 Time Management: A New Approach From Ancient Greece by Eric Garner

Learn how to create a balance in your time and work by applying the theory of the Four Elements – earth, fire, air and water – to the way you manage your time.

Here is a model of time management, that, although highly original and innovative, is based on a theory that is several thousand years old. The theory is the theory of the Four Elements. According to the Ancient Greeks, all matter in the universe was comprised of just four elements: earth, fire, air and water. These four elements are not just real. They're also symbolic. And they represent the four key elements of time management. When you hold these four elements in balance through the tasks you perform, you bring to your life a rich, varied and harmonious pattern. Let's see exactly how.

1. **Earth Tasks.** The Earth element represents the source from which we obtain our nourishment. It is the basis on which everything else is built. It is the rock, the core, the groundwork. Earth tasks are those tasks in our life that have to be done if we are to survive. They include sleeping, eating, and bodily needs. In an organizational context, they are the routines, systems, and rituals around which work is organized. As such, Earth tasks are essential, if sometimes dull.

Spend up to a quarter of your day on Earth tasks. Do them when you want a break from thinking, creating, and relating tasks.

2. **Fire Tasks.** The element of Fire represents the creative spark in us. When this spark is lit, it can produce something uniquely special that adds to our lives and the lives of others. Fire tasks include any inspirational, dynamic, spontaneous, and productive work, such as developing new ideas, working on projects, taking risks, trying out something new, developing ourselves and innovating. While we connect with Earth tasks through our lower bodies, we connect with Fire tasks through the heart and belly. Without Fire tasks, your life is repetitive and circular. With Fire tasks, you move ahead and fulfil the potential you were born with.

Spend up to a quarter of your day on Fire tasks. Do them when you want a break from routine, thinking, and relating tasks.



3. Air Tasks. The element of Air is associated with any activity that involves thinking. As such, it is often thought of as any non-doing activity. Air is the most elusive of all the elements. Air is everywhere and nowhere, yet it is impossible to grasp and contain. Air tasks include any pure thinking activity, such as goal-setting, planning, decision-taking, problem-solving, creative thinking, analyzing, and learning. It is also the time we need to spend in our lives for renewal and recuperation. For many people who see work as constant activity, the Air element is a reminder of the need to switch off. Without Air tasks in your life, work becomes a struggle. With them, it becomes effortless.

Spend up to a quarter of your day on Air tasks. Do them when you want a break from routine, creative, and relating tasks.

4. Water Tasks. Water is a metaphor for working with others. Like water, time with others is a connecting process. Just like our relationships, water may be still or turbulent, trickling or rushing, bubbly or calm, shallow or deep, active or passive, destructive or playful. While essential for getting things done, time with others can also be one of our biggest time robbers. We can achieve nothing without others. But if we are not careful, we can achieve nothing because of others. That's why, like water, this aspect of time management is best when controlled and systemized.

Spend up to a quarter of your day on Water tasks. Do them when you want a break from routine, thinking, and creative tasks.

Balancing each day's activities is not simply a sensible way to live. It is also healthy, productive and enjoyable. To follow an intense period of planning (Air work) with a physical task (Earth work), then to follow that with time on a project (Fire work), followed by time with colleagues (Water work), is to create a rich and whole texture to the day that somehow feels right. That's why the theory of the Four Elements, as old as it is, still has so much relevance to our lives today.

#### About the author

Eric Garner runs ManageTrainLearn, the site with the biggest and most original range of management training materials on the Internet.

<http://www.managetrainlearn.com>

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## 2 Time Management – Who's Got the Monkey Now? Part One by Bob Selden

How effective are your time management skills?

Are you a manager? Would you like more available time? Yes, then read on to find out how you can improve your time management skills...

How come you've worked hard all day but haven't started the one task that was most important to you? As a manager, how come your daily work schedule often falls in a heap by mid-morning? Time management is so important to be a great manager.

Who's got the monkey?

The answer is, you have – probably several!

“Management Time: Who's got the Monkey” has been the second most popular management article ever published by the Harvard Business Review (“Management Time: Who's got the Monkey”, by William Oncken and Donald Wass, first published by Harvard Business Review, 1974) and has been reprinted several times. Thirty odd years later, the message Oncken and Wass sent us on management, still holds true today.

They suggested that there are three types of time management-imposed pressure – Boss, System, and Self.

Boss-imposed time management pressure

System-imposed time management pressure – Activities, which must be accomplished, or we'll suffer the consequences!

Self-imposed time management pressure – Those activities/requests which come from peers and colleagues. The penalties are not so severe or as swift, but we may still suffer if these things are not done.

Those activities we ourselves initiate or agree to do – particularly those things which have been upwardly delegated from people who report to us. As managers, these activities impact heavily on our discretionary time, and the penalty for not doing these is stress.

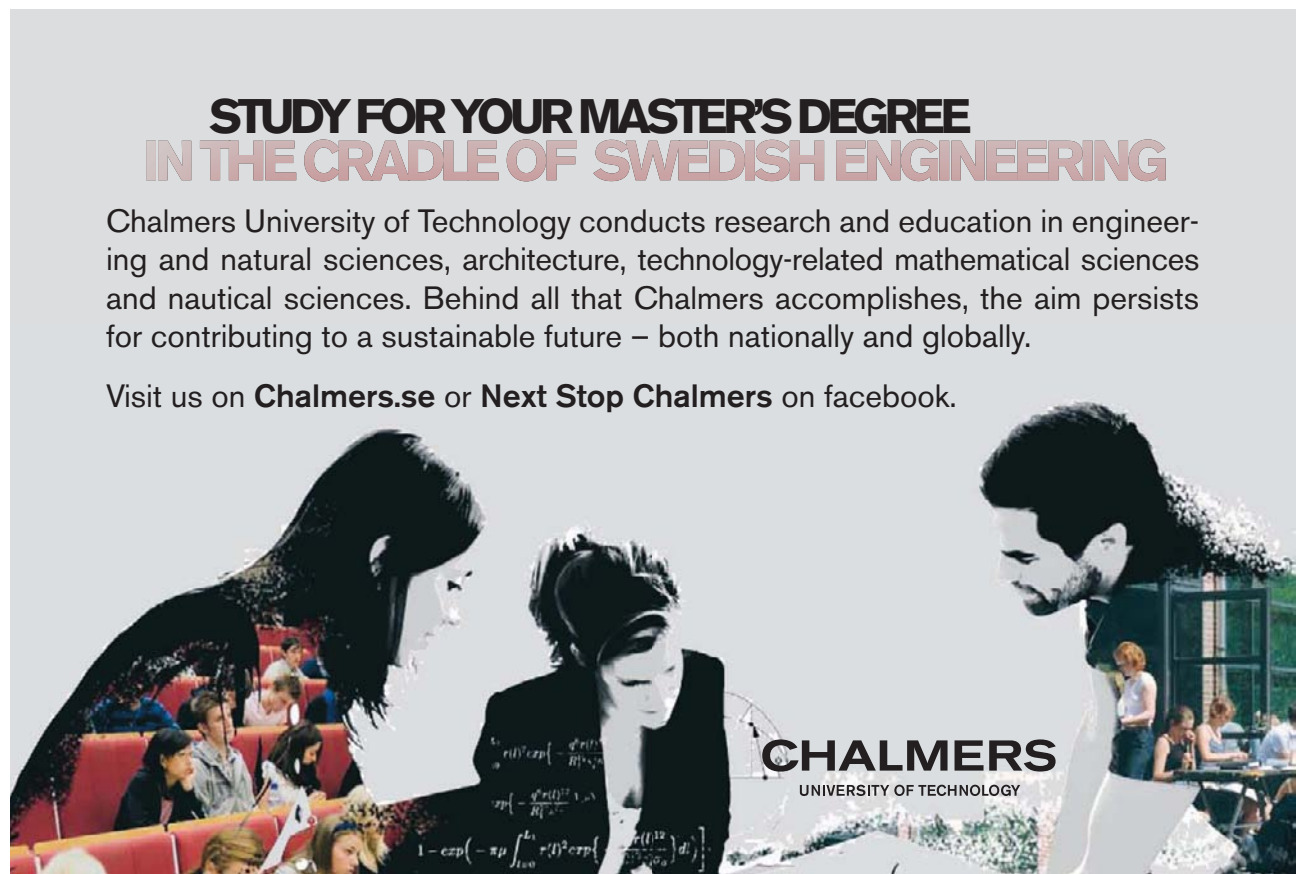
Oncken and Wass used the monkey analogy to make their point. As the manager, when someone in our team talks about a “problem” they want to “run past us”, the monkey (in other words, the problem) is very clearly on their back. But when we respond with something like “Well, I haven’t got time right now, but leave it with me”, the monkey immediately leaps from their shoulders to ours. We have just been on the receiving end of an excellent piece of upward delegation!

If this happens to you every day (or at least more often than it should), you’ll soon be carrying a cagefull of monkeys on your back. Not only have you reduced your discretionary time, you also must feed and care for the monkeys you’ve acquired. For example, your people are probably pretty good at keeping track of their delegated task, when they say things like “Hey boss, how’s that issue going that I told you about the other day?”

The secret is to reduce the pressure of self-imposed activities to give us more discretionary time. You can then use this time to become more productive with your boss and the system and in the process, a better manager.

How do you avoid catching monkeys and give yourself more discretionary time?

The first step is to recognise that the monkeys are jumping onto your back!



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Use the following checklist to see whether as a manager you are a collector of monkeys. Answer each with “Always”, “Often” or “Rarely”.

How often do I say...

“Leave it with me”

“Can I think about that?”

“I’ll get back to you on that”

“I’ve seen something like that a thousand times. I’ll look after it for you”

“I’ll get Bob to look after that”

“Send me an e-mail on that will you?”

“Don’t you worry about it”

If you found yourself answering “Always” or “Often” for most of these, then it’s probably too late. The monkey has just jumped! There’s a very good chance that you are taking on the problems of your people, rather than helping them solve the problems themselves and in the process, further developing their own skills and knowledge. In thirty years of running and designing management training programs, managers tell me that the one thing they would like to do better or more of, is delegate!

Want to try again? Use the same “Always”, “Often” or “Never” on the following questions.

How often do I say...

“Let me know if you have trouble”

“You know you don’t have to do it that way”

“That’s interesting. I’ve never seen anything quite like that before”

“I remember when that happened to...”

“I think my last boss had something like that happen to him/her”

If you found yourself answering “Always” or “Often”, then the result is not as bad as the first list. However, beware! The monkey is about to jump! While the responses sound very supportive and helpful (which they are), starting out like this invariably ends up with you, the manager, taking on the problem to solve.

How did you score on both lists of questions? Do you use similar phrases to some of the ones in the checklists? If you found yourself ticking a number of “always” or “often” columns, or you use similar phrases regularly, then chances are you need to be careful about taking on too many monkeys.

To improve your time management skills, think about what:

you should and can do,  
then, what others could do for you.

What you “should do” is all about setting your priorities and sticking with them. What are the two or three things that you must achieve today, “come what may”. Do not be swayed from these!

What you “can do” has nothing to do with your ability, rather it is about the amount of time you have available and how you use that time – in other words, effective time management. As the manager, you are the “expert” – your people know that there are lots of things that you can do. Do not be trapped into doing things just because you know how – delegation is key to effective time management. While it may take a little bit of your time to teach or coach someone else, in the long run doing so will assist your time management greatly.

What “others can do for you” is about your willingness and ability to delegate. Remember, developing your people to take responsibility will provide you with more discretionary time to devote to other activities.

#### About the author

Bob Selden is the author of the best-selling “What To Do When You Become The Boss” – a self-help book for new managers – see details at <http://www.whenyoubecometheboss.com/>. He's also coached at one of the world's premier business schools, the Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland and regularly advises managers around the globe on their current challenges.  
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<http://nationallearning.com.au/time-management-whos-got-the-monkey-now-part-one/>

# 3 Learning to Delegate – The Key to Time Management. Who's Got the Monkey Now? Part Two by Bob Selden

Learning to Delegate – the key to time management.

How to make delegation work for you.

In my earlier article “Who's got the monkey now? How to find out how well you manage your time”, I suggested that you may be caring for a cageful of monkeys (other people's problems) unless your time management skills are developed – in particular your ability to delegate.

For managers, there are two key aspects to successful delegation:

Having people to whom one can delegate, and  
Selecting the most appropriate tasks to delegate

If you are not a manager, or do not have anyone to delegate to, then I suggest the excellent article by Beth Schneider, “How to Delegate When There is No-one to Delegate to”.

The key to delegation is to develop within your people, the “initiative to take action” so that they learn to develop their skills and knowledge to their full potential.

Managers who are successful are always good at delegating. Less successful managers, when asked why they don't delegate more, often reply:

“If only my staff were more experienced” or,  
“I don't have enough faith in my staff to do the job properly” or,  
“Delegation. Sounds great in theory, but I need to have fully trained staff and I don't have the time to train them”.

If some of these comments sound familiar to you, then the following steps will show you how to:

Identify the current “level of initiative” of each of your team members.  
Use the “level of initiative” ranking with your team to further develop their skills and knowledge.



Is the person I'm delegating to the best person for the job?

When delegating, it is important to fit the task to the person and to ensure the reason for delegating is appropriate.

Firstly, let's look at the person. Is it possible to delegate to all your team members?

For delegation purposes, team members may be classified as those who:

Wait until he or she is told what to do.

Do what is necessary, but refer to their manager or supervisor all problems or slightly unusual issues for a decision.

Refer all problems or unusual occurrences for a decision, but when doing so recommend appropriate action.

Take action on problems as they occur and then immediately report on the action taken.

Take action on all issues and problems on his her own initiative and then report periodically on progress.

Less successful managers keep their team members at the second level, i.e.

“Do what is necessary, but refer to their supervisor all problems or slightly unusual issues for a decision”

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by not encouraging them to make recommendations on problems or issues the encounter. As a consequence, their people rarely develop the knowledge or skills they need to become fully competent.

Successful managers quickly move all their people through to at least level three i.e.

“Refer all problems or unusual occurrences for a decision, but when doing so recommend appropriate action.”

When people are at level three, they are always looking for solutions rather than just stating the problem. Not only do they look for solutions, but when they do bring a problem to you, they bring their recommended solution. Wouldn't your life as a manager be so much easier if all your people did this?

Successful managers then move individual staff from level three through levels four and five depending on the particular team member's skill and how quickly they can gain the necessary experience.

Many successful managers take this one step further by involving their team members in the process of “developing initiative”. For instance, they explain the five-step “level of initiative” process to them and then ask:

What level do you believe you are at now on each of your major job responsibilities?  
How can you move to the next level?

Using this approach, managers can then be very clear about which aspects of a person's job the team member can take initiative on, and how much initiative they may take. It is also a great opportunity to talk about training and development strategies to help move people to the next level on particular job responsibilities. In this way, you know exactly who within your team, you can delegate certain tasks to and most importantly, how they will respond.

I have developed a Delegation Matrix of the five Levels of Initiative which I have been using with practising managers for many years. If you would like a free copy, please contact me via [learn@nationallearning.com.au](mailto:learn@nationallearning.com.au)

Let's now look at the second aspect of delegation – tasks that may be delegated.

Tasks suitable for delegation include:

Minor and repetitive decisions.  
Tasks you are expert in and that others should learn.  
Tasks for which you are least qualified, but that others could learn.

Tasks you dislike, provided someone else likes them (delegation should not be an excuse to dump unpleasant tasks).

Tasks that add variety and interest to another person's role.

Tasks that will increase the number of people who can perform critical assignments.

Which tasks could you delegate?

Remember these remain part of your job and while you can delegate responsibility for them, you remain accountable for each.

One of the questions I am often asked by managers is:

“How do I keep track of what's been delegated?”

If you use the Levels of Initiative protocol by discussing and agreeing each person's permitted level of initiative, you will note that levels 3,4& 5 all have built in reporting mechanisms. Make sure you agree how these will operate with your people.

Following the guidelines outlined here, will allow you to release some of your monkeys back to where they can be cared for and fed by others – your team!

About the author

Bob Selden is the author of the best-selling “What To Do When You Become The Boss” – a self-help book for new managers – see details at <http://www.whenyoubecometheboss.com/>. He's also coached at one of the world's premier business schools, the Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland and regularly advises managers around the globe on their current challenges.

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## 4 Please Don't Interrupt by Steve Pavlina

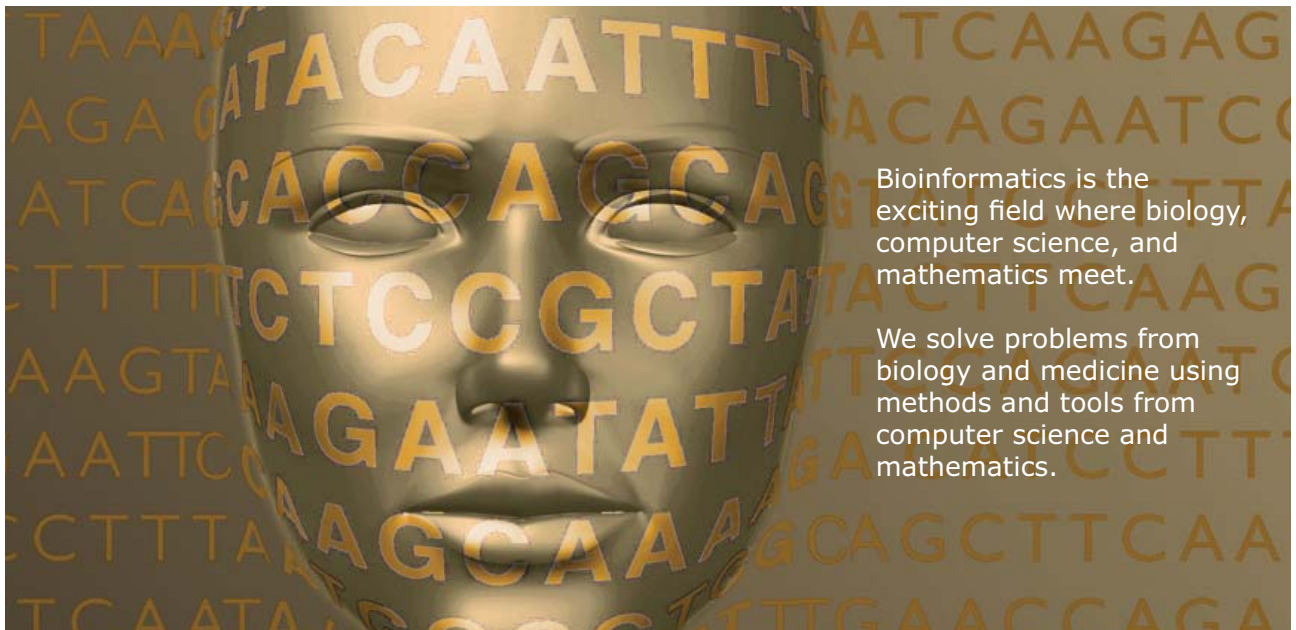
Did you know that a task that's interrupted takes 50% longer and has 50% more mistakes than an uninterrupted one?

It takes a while for our brains to get into a focused state where we're able to concentrate fully on a task without feeling distracted. Once we're in that state, we can enjoy a very productive flow, as long as we don't get interrupted.

A focused mind is still sensitive to disruption from external input. Interruptions – i.e. switching to a different, largely unrelated set of thought patterns – erase and scramble much of your previously loaded and nicely optimized brain state. And frequent interruptions can prevent you from ever fully entering that state of flow.



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When you interrupt someone, on average it takes them 23 minutes to get back to the original task, plus up to 30 minutes to return to the flow state so they can be fully productive again. Almost half of the time you interrupt someone, you'll actually knock them off task completely, such that they won't return to the original task right away when the interruption ends. You may think you're only putting them on pause for a minute or two, but the actual break from the task that results from your interruption may be significantly longer.

About 80% of the time when a task is interrupted, the person will return to it that same day, but roughly 1 out of every 5 times you interrupt someone, you'll actually cause them to stop all work on that task for the entire day.

Have you ever been briefly interrupted by someone, only to extend that interruption by concluding that since you've already paused working, you might as well go to the bathroom now, check email, have lunch, etc? How many times has a quick question turned into a lengthy conversation? These are common experiences, especially among knowledge workers. A seemingly minor interruption can derail your focus so much that it takes hours to get back to the original task, if you even get back to it that day.

Frequent task switching has also been measured to significantly increase stress levels vs. single handling. So interrupting others not only hurts their productivity, but it may also damage their health.

Interruptions are expensive too. One estimate puts the cost of workplace interruptions at \$588 billion per year in lost productivity for the U.S. economy. This is probably a gross underestimate though since it's only based on wasted hours multiplied by average wages. It doesn't consider the rippling consequences of these interruptions, including missed opportunities, lost sales, layoffs, businesses going under, reduced investments, costly mistakes, more sick days due to increased stress, etc. Interruptions mean that some books are never finished, some businesses are never launched, and some ideas are doomed to die on the vine.

The next time you think about interrupting someone who's productively working on a task that's important to them, consider that your seemingly innocent question or comment may create serious consequences for them, including adding more work to their plate, increasing their stress, causing mistakes, creating delays, and potentially killing the task completely. Even a brief interruption of a complex task can create the cognitive equivalent of an hour of extra work.

Highly productive people know the importance of working in uninterrupted blocks of time with good focus and concentration. Consequently, they take steps to guard against interruption, such as by wearing headphones to discourage trivial conversation (even if no audio is playing), by closing their office doors, by cautioning others not to interrupt them unless absolutely necessary, by letting people know when it's okay vs. not okay to chat with them, by working in different locations, by turning off phones and notification services, or by working different hours.

Many programmers, for instance, love to work late at night. One reason is that they're less likely to be interrupted while everyone else is sleeping, so their nighttime work can be more productive. Online activity (email, social media, etc.) also tends to drop off significantly late at night.

Being social is fine. But if someone is actively working, let them keep working. You can talk to them when they're done.

If you have issues with other people interrupting you more than you'd like, ask them to use the following rule of thumb (or any other guideline that satisfies you):

When I'm busy working, please don't interrupt me unless what you have to share is so urgent and important that it's worth erasing all the work I've done in the past hour.

#### About the author

Steve Pavlina (born April 14, 1971)[2] is an American self-help author, motivational speaker and entrepreneur. He is the author of the web site [stevepavlina.com](http://stevepavlina.com) and the book *Personal Development for Smart People*. Pavlina's blog covers topics such as personal development and success; consciousness and courage; productivity, motivation and goal setting; career, wealth and business; and spirituality. (Wikipedia)

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On December 15, 2010, Steve Pavlina released all the content he had created till that date (excluding his book *Personal Development For Smart People*) and all content he would create in the future (unless explicitly specified) in the public domain.

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## 5 Time Management and Your Big Rocks by Martin Haworth

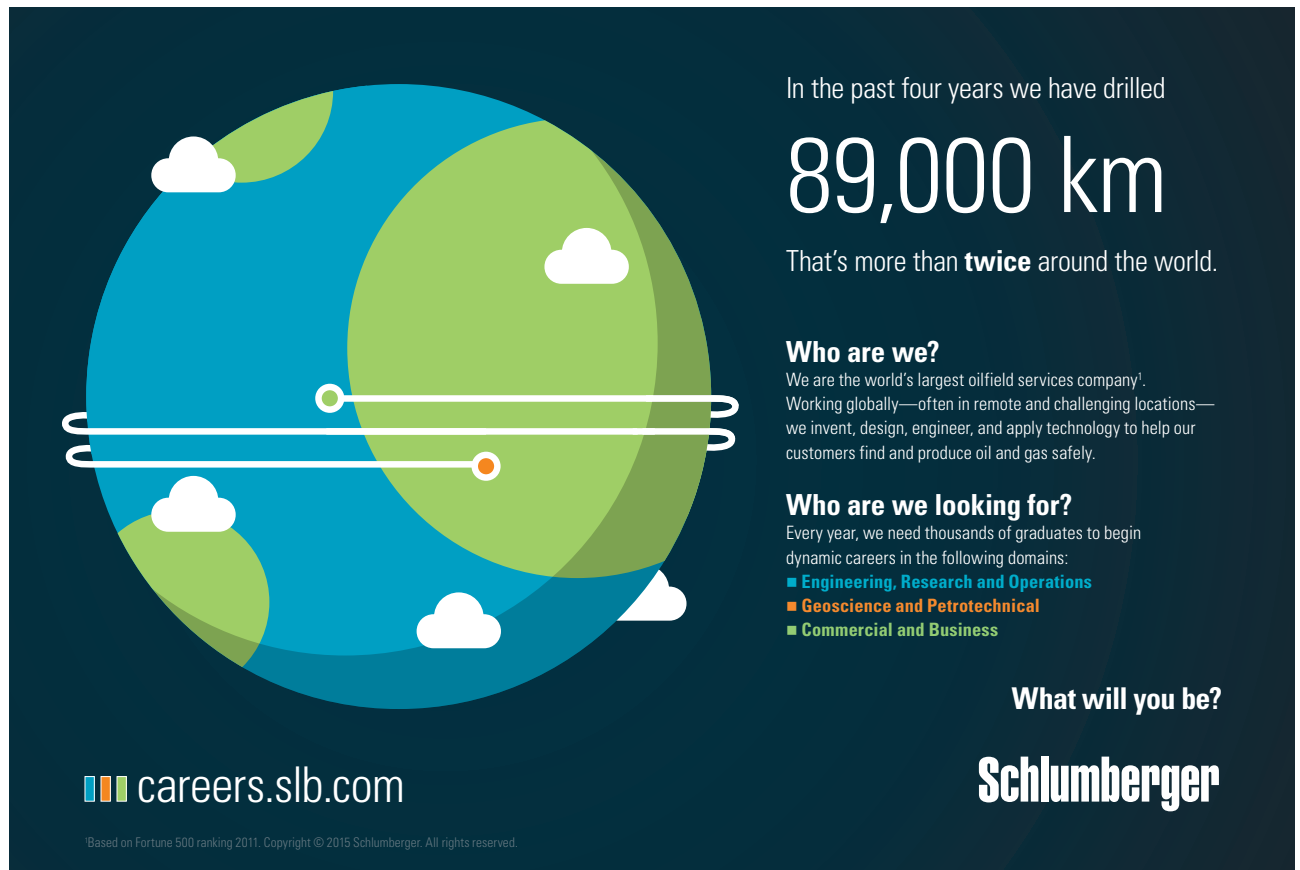
In Steven Covey's excellent book, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" (which, incidentally, is exactly why I am here today and not stuck in my old corporate job – another day, perhaps), he tells a well-worn story about the use of time.

In the story, some professor guy (I think) stands at the front of a class, with a big jar. In the jar, first of all he puts some big rocks, and asks the class, "Is it full now?"

Mostly they say, "Yes".

Then he gets some smaller rocks and these fit in quite nicely too, just between the big rocks. Again, he asks the same question, "Is it full now?"

The group, a little more suspicious say, "Yes", because it seems to be.




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He then gets out a bag of sand and surprise, surprise, those tiny grains of sand squeeze down beside the smaller rocks, filling up the tinier spaces. “Full?” he asks.

“Sure”, say the increasingly dubious bunch of students in the audience.

Finally, trump card is the water, smaller than sand, of course and finally, as we aren’t getting too sub-molecular about it, the jar is full.

Impressive huh?

The professor then asks,

“What’s the moral of the story?”

Of course the class, thinking they’ve spotted the trick here, say,

“You can always squeeze a bit more in”

A standard and pretty smart reply. The professor, however, is a step a head (all that professorism does it, of course!).

“The moral of the story is that you need to get your big rocks in first, or all that other ‘stuff’ gets in, way too soon and takes up all the space.”

Cool story?

The point of course, relates to managing your time.

What are your ‘big rock’ things?

Well, for sure it isn’t all the little jobs you do. All the fire-fighting (or it may be in the short-term, but that is another day).

The trick is to create spaces, ring-fenced, as they say, to do the good stuff.

In business, this is a list something like this:-

- Planning for the future
- Time with your people – good, focused one-on-one time preferably
- Coaching your people in their work
- Developing others around you
- Delegating constructively
- Creating Succession Plans
- Building relationships
- Developing new business opportunities
- Fixing problems once and for all
- Making time for a life outside the business

Covey and his big rocks eh?

He calls them Quadrant Two activities. If you don't spend time putting these first into your schedule, truth is, you will never fit them in and things will never evolve and grow.

About the author:

Copyright 2006 Martin Haworth is a Business and Management Coach. He works worldwide, mainly by phone, with small business owners, managers and corporate leaders. He has hundreds of hints, tips and ideas at his website, [www.coaching-businesses-to-success.com](http://www.coaching-businesses-to-success.com).

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## 6 Managing Multiple Priorities: How to Juggle Projects, Customers and Admin – and Still Have a Life by Jeff Mowatt

It may be a popular advertising slogan – our customers are our number one priority. As a manager however, buying into that strategy will actually reduce your effectiveness and damage your business. I learned this the hard way...

Over 15 years ago, when I started my customer service speaking and training business, I was my only employee. I was doing everything: delivering speeches and seminars, strategic planning, handling suppliers, and of course taking out the trash. When writing my lengthy 'to-do' lists, I'd always rank customers as being my number one priority. Unfortunately, it took me five years to discover that I'd been making a huge mistake. Up until then, I hadn't realized that the most important priority should not be the customer. As a manager, your number one priority should be working on high payoff business building projects.



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## Determining your top priorities

With private sector companies, your biggest priority as a manager is to maximize long-term revenues while minimizing long-term costs. Period. Managers cannot ensure the long-term viability of their organization by working on administritivia and responding to customer crises all day. That's just treating symptoms rather than correcting underlying problems. It certainly didn't work for me in the first five years of running my company. It wasn't until I'd made a slight realignment to my working day that my productivity dramatically improved. I could work fewer hours and get more done. I had fewer crises and a lot less stress. And my business boomed. Best of all, I found that it was amazingly simple. If you haven't guessed it yet, I really like this! Here it is.

## The magic hour and a half

Spend the first one and a half hours of your day working on strategic projects! That's it. Simple isn't it? Working on strategic projects for the first hour and a half of your day gives you the remaining seven or eight hours to deal with customer issues, fight fires, deal with interruptions, work on all the administrative stuff, and even get to your e-mail. I'm not talking about a big time commitment. It's only an hour and a half. But the payoff you'll get from that short time investment is substantial.

This is where the 80/20 rule commonly referred to as the Pareto Principle really kicks in. In the twenty per cent of your day that you work on strategic projects, you end up getting more done than in the remaining eighty per cent.

The bonus is that these projects are completed faster and with less stress than by the alternative approach. The alternative is working on a strategic project when you can get around to it. The problem is that since these projects rarely have a deadline we simply never get around to them-until they become a crisis, that is. That's when we start wasting resources. So, even with a mere hour-and-a-half commitment to strategic projects, our productivity is enhanced several-fold! The key is to start with the strategic projects at the beginning of your day.

## The fresh start

That's why I suggest to those managers who need to find some quiet time that rather than staying past 6:00 at night, you'd be much better off coming in at 6:00 in the morning (or working at your home office at 6:00 a.m.). For most people with families and partners, your loved ones may not miss you much at 6:00 a.m. They do miss you (hopefully) if you're not there at 6:00 p.m.

To those individuals who lament that they're not really a morning person, I have three words of advice. Get over it! The truth is that the human body is wonderfully adaptive. After twenty-one days of rising early and tackling the strategic stuff, you will find that you start automatically waking up with more energy and focus. I've never considered myself to be a morning person, yet after just a few days of getting to my desk at 6:00, I've found that it's eventually become second nature.

The key is to ignore your e-mail, phone messages, straightening your desk, and all the other urgent stuff until after that first hour and a half of project work. If you have an intranet calendar where other people can schedule meetings for you, make sure to get there first and block off that first hour and a half of each working day.

Oh, what a feeling!

Once you develop the habit of working on strategic projects first, you will immediately notice the wonderful way it feels. You'll gain a sense of genuine accomplishment. You'll feel more in control. You'll find that you give yourself permission to go home at a reasonable hour, guilt-free. You'll identify yourself less as a clerk or even as a manager. Instead you'll begin to get a better sense of yourself as a leader. And when you work on the right projects – your customers will view your company as being the industry Service Icon. That's market differentiation you can take to the bank.

#### About the author

Customer service strategist and professional speaker, Jeff Mowatt is an authority on The Art of Client Service...Influence with Ease®. For Jeff's other tips, self-study resources, and training services on establishing rapport, click <http://www.jeffmowatt.com/individual/greetingcustomers.html>

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## 7 Never Enough Time by Paul Lemberg

What if there is an alternative to to-do lists, one which focuses you on what's important, and let's you dump the rest.

A provocation for the coming year, decade, century or millennium.

It's a cliché of executive life: you don't have time to do everything. Whether you use little slips of paper, a planner, scheduling software or a Palm Pilot, all attempts at time management fail. Rather than throwing in the towel, I suggest that you need a new frame of reference. Change your focus from time management to priority management.

Create a list of priorities

Your strategic plan should highlight your business priorities. If you don't have one, take a look at my articles on the subject. . Answer the question, "What is most important to accomplish in this time frame?" Make those priorities explicit, write them out. Keep a list prominently posted by your desk.



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## About priorities

The word priority is derived from prior, meaning before, and related to the Latin primus, meaning first. And while some things are more important than others, your list of priorities should contain all the items of first importance – Only the items critical to developing your business, and nothing else.

## Rethinking your to-do list

If you are like most people, your to-do list is a long hodgepodge of everything you have thought to do now and in the future, ordered simply by when you thought it. Perhaps you write little letters or numbers next to each “task” and cross out what’s done. Your list grows and grows – you re-write it only when it becomes unreadable. Throw it away!

## The List of Seven

Start fresh every day. Today’s list, written today for today, should contain no more than seven items. Based on your priorities, list today’s most important item first, and so on. Each item on the list must advance a critical issue in your business. If it doesn’t, why are you doing it? Remove it from your list. If you still think it’s important, but not that important, delegate it to someone else.

## Planning and Reality

Each day brings scheduled and ad-hoc meetings, walk-ins, sit-downs, and emergencies. Plus, you have daily rituals – answering email, your half-hour reading, or reviewing sales figures. Each meeting and each ritual should be evaluated against your highest priorities. If it doesn’t address your priorities, don’t do it. Don’t participate. Give it up. Delegate it away. The time remaining after meetings and rituals is available for your to-do list. Don’t squander it!

## Using the list

Put your energies into doing the first task on your list until it’s complete. Only then, move on to the second item. You may not complete today’s list today – you may not even complete item one – but if you’ve spent the day advancing your highest priority, you’ve been productive.

Tomorrow, make a fresh list on a fresh sheet of paper or its computer equivalent. Don’t automatically carry anything over. This will give you a sense of completion and force you to freshly evaluate what’s important. If you have multiple “highest priority” tracks to follow, break up the available time into fixed time slots, and advance several priorities at once.



## Evaluation and balance

At the end of each week, match your accomplishments against your list of strategic priorities. Check to see that you are making progress with all your objectives – that all your priorities are moving forward. Don't let key areas in your business languish. Evaluate your progress against the list provided in New Year's Planning.

There may still not be enough time for everythingArticle Search, but the things that are critical to your business will get done. Everything else can wait.

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## About the author

Paul Lemberg is the president of Quantum Growth Coaching, the world's only fully systemized business coaching program guaranteed to help entrepreneurs rapidly create More Profits and More Life(tm). To get your copy of our free special report with detailed steps on how to grow your business at least 40% faster, even when you aren't sure what to do next, let Paul help you find your business development strategy.

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## 8 One Simple Question by Steve Goodier

I once read that an ordinance in one of America's major cities forbids "walking about aimlessly, with no apparent purpose, lingering, hanging around, lagging behind, idly spending time, delaying, sauntering and moving slowly about."

I can't tell you how disturbed I felt. Some of my best days are spent like that.

But then, I don't want my whole life to be basically described as having "no apparent purpose...lagging behind...idly spending time...delaying" and generally moving about aimlessly. On the other hand, neither do I want to take myself too seriously. An occasional day spent doing next to nothing sounds perfectly fine.

My problem is that I am usually busy. I schedule tightly and work long hours. I plan my time and make lists.

But it would be a mistake to believe that, just because I am doing many things, I am necessarily doing the right things. Or, perhaps, the BEST things. At least if I'm busy, I want to stay busy at things that matter.

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News commentator Dan Rather asked himself a vital question several times a day. Largely because of this one question, he became one of America's leading journalists. Rather wrote the question on three slips of paper. He kept one in his billfold, one in his pocket, and one on his desk. The all-important question he constantly asked himself was "Is what you are doing now helping the broadcast?"

If the answer was yes, then he continued with his work, project or idea. If the answer was no, then he stopped what he was doing and put his efforts into something else. He discovered early on that if he did not focus his time, he would end up in a job where he was under-utilized and dissatisfied.

What if you were to ask yourself a focusing question several times a day? Your question might relate to work, or perhaps to another area of your life that is important to you – family, relationships, personal development, spirituality....

You might ask yourself if what you're doing now is helping you succeed. Or if what you're doing now is helping you to be a better parent or a better person. You decide. The point is this: one simple question can focus and transform your life.

Try writing the question you choose on small slips of paper or on the back of a business card. Carry it with you. Post it on your desk. You might even affix it to a conspicuous spot inside your car.

Then read it several times a day. That one question will help you choose activities that contribute toward your best self. And if you are busy, at least you will be busy doing the right things – things that matter.

Then, if you decide to spend an occasional day walking about aimlessly, with no apparent purpose, lingering, hanging around, lagging behind, idly spending time, delaying, sauntering and moving slowly about, why not? The down time will probably do you good.

#### About the author

Steve Goodier holds a B.A. in anthropology and sociology (New Mexico State University) and an M.Div. degree from Emory University. He is an ordained United Methodist minister, district superintendent in the Rocky Mountain Conference UMC, and the author of numerous books about personal development, motivation, inspiration, and making needed life changes.

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#### Original resource:

<http://stevegoodier.blogspot.co.uk/2010/05/one-simple-question.html>

## 9 Spring Cleaning by Betsy Brown

2 seemingly unconnected events occurred here this week; one bad, one good.

First, the bad news. I lost a whole lot of excellent training material when my memory stick failed. A couple of weeks' work saved on the stick and now just refusing to show up on any of my computers.

Of course, as anyone with an ounce of computer sense will tell you, I should have backed up. It's the sensible thing to do and the obvious. But, lulled into a false sense of "it'll never happen to me", I didn't and now I'm paying the price in re-work and lost time.

Now on to the good news. Here in the UK, it looks like Spring has finally sprung. We've had the most glorious blue skies for the past week. The beach has been golden, the sea shimmering, and the air warm.

So, of course, you're dying to know: what connects the two?

Well, quite simply: maintenance.

Let me explain.

On our Time Management courses at ManageTrainLearn, we like to introduce our trainees to the Four Elements approach to managing time. Briefly, this approach divides up time tasks into four, each associated symbolically with one of the four elements of life. So, fire is activity and busyness; water is working with others; air is non-doing activity, such as thinking, planning, and preparation; and earth is routine, repair, and, yes, you've got it, maintenance.

That means taking time regularly to do some work on your goals and projects (fire), some work with others (water), some non-active work on thinking and recuperation (air), and some work on tidying up, going back to one's roots, cleaning out, and organising (earth).

Clearly, I hadn't been giving enough attention to my earth tasks and Mother Nature was waiting to give me a lesson.

For last week, as the sun came out day after day, I attended to...guess what? Yep, maintenance tasks around the house and garden. Me, who had forgotten the simple maintenance task of backing up my work, was getting stuck into Spring cleaning!

That's when it dawned on me that just as we need the four elements in our own lives, Nature performs them naturally. Winter for plans; Spring for maintenance; Summer for activity; and Autumn for time with others.

I hope this is a lesson I've learned: to give as much attention to the maintenance of my life's routines as I should to bringing work assignments in on time or spending time with colleagues or just sitting and dreaming.

After all, as someone reminded me when I told them this story, the word "maintenance" is derived from the Latin word "manus", meaning "hand" or "tool".

And so is the word "management".

#### About the author

Betsy Brown is a contributing author for ManageTrainLearn, the site that will change the way you learn forever. Download free samples of the biggest range of management and personal development materials anywhere and experience learning like you always dreamed possible; <http://www.managetrainlearn.com>

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# 10 Completing Projects by Steve Pavlina

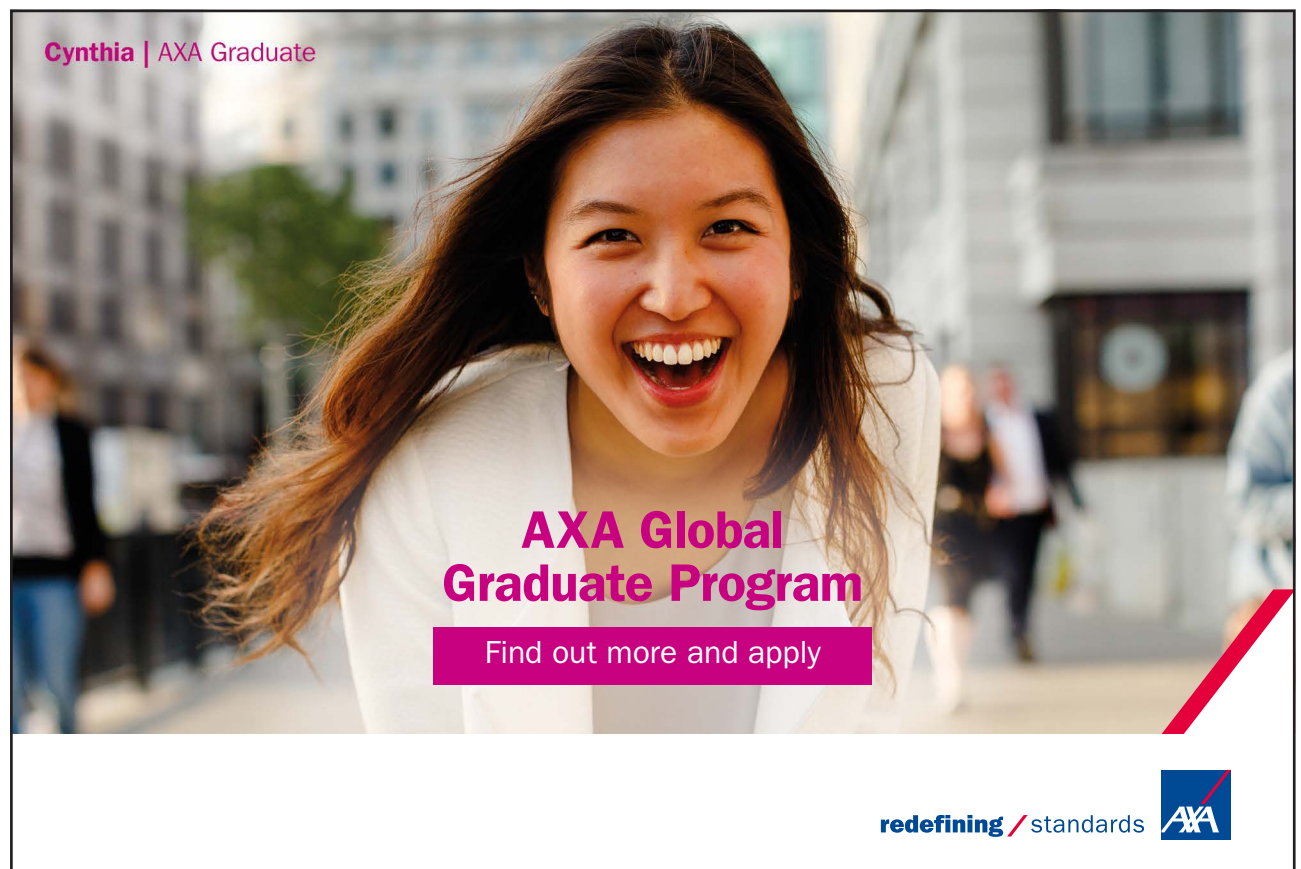
Even when you take the time to set clear goals, visualize success, and break big goals down into projects and action steps, it can be difficult to get yourself to take action consistently until your goal is 100% complete. Crossing the starting line is much easier than crossing the finish line.

Your overall results in life largely depend on your ability to follow through until you achieve completion. Many projects produce essentially zero results if they're 90% complete. The key results only appear when you reach 100% completion.

For example, if I write 90% of an article and don't publish it, it produces no value other than being a private journaling exercise. The value cannot be delivered until the article is 100% complete and published.

## Incompletes

Incompletes can produce feelings like dissatisfaction, discomfort, stress, worry, shame, and regret. We worry that we may have wasted too much time and energy on such projects with little to show for our efforts.



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One way to avoid racking up too many incompletes is to give more careful thought to which particular projects you're willing to accept in the first place. Having too many active projects at the same time makes it hard to complete them. It's like trying to juggle too many balls at once. You end up dropping every ball.

One reason we take on too many projects is the desire for variety. Working on the same project day after day can get boring. Another reason is that projects tend to be easier and more motivating in the beginning. Starting a new project is often fun. It's much more difficult to work through the middling grind of a project and see it through to completion.

### Learning Your Lessons

In order to move forward into a better place of achievement, we first need to absorb the lessons from our incompletes. If you're carrying around some psychological baggage from past incompletes, then take a moment to forgive yourself for those mistakes. You screwed up. It's okay. You're human.

At the same time, it's wise to allow a little of that sting from past incompletes to hang around. That feeling of regret is there for a reason. It serves as an ongoing warning that we don't want to get into similar situations again. The feeling of regret has a positive message, encouraging you to avoid starting too many projects if you won't complete them.

Instead of trying to drug this seemingly negative feeling with excess food or drink, turn towards it. Give it your full attention for a moment, and listen to what it has to say.

Ask yourself, What lessons can I learn from my incompletes? How can this make me stronger?

You might hear something like this: I'm tired of wasting time on projects that never go anywhere. Obviously I'm only going to get results if I complete something. So before I set any new goals or tackle any new projects, I'd better be sure I'm going to see them through to completion. If circumstances really do change in unexpected ways, and the project becomes obsolete before it's done, then it's okay to dump it and move on to something else. But if the original decision is still sound, then let's keep pushing through to the end and get it done.

I need to avoid overloading myself with too many projects at once. Ideally I should keep things simple and stick to one serious project at a time, perhaps two projects for variety. When I'm done, then I can add something new. But trying to do 10 things at once obviously isn't working. I need to stop saying yes to new projects when I still have important incompletes to close.



## Abandoning Failed Strategies

Notice which strategies you've already tried to get yourself to take action consistently. If you've tried something a few times, and it has never worked, stop doing it.

Quite often people get into circular patterns where they keep trying the same failed strategies every few years, hoping that somehow things will be different. That doesn't work.

An example of a strategy that has never worked for me is trying to associate more pain to incompletion and more pleasure to completing a project, such as by using NLP techniques. I can safely abandon this strategy because I know it's a dead end. My mind is smart enough to see right through these silly attempts at conditioning. It might work for a dog, but my mind resists such obvious attempts to make it less conscious. I always know that I have a choice. So I don't use or revisit this strategy because it's ineffective.

Consciously acknowledging this realization helps me avoid using the wrong approach. When I feel overwhelmed, instead of trying to get myself to feel more motivated and work harder and faster, I say no more often, cancel some items, and pay more attention to simplifying my life.

What are your failed strategies? Are you willing to drop them, so you can free your mind to figure out something more intelligent that might actually work?

## Resting in the Space of Possibility

One positive step forward is to recognize that it's at least possible for you to complete projects, even very difficult ones.

Perhaps if you think back, you can recall some projects you did actually complete, and you can remember the results you got from them. Maybe it was something as simple as completing a school project and getting a good grade on it.

Take a moment to acknowledge that for whatever goal or project you'd like to tackle next, it is at least possible for you to complete it in a timely manner. You aren't attempting the impossible. There is a way to get it done. The action steps are doable. The project is achievable.

## Accepting the Difficult Work

Worthwhile projects don't normally complete themselves. A good project will frequently require a serious investment of time and energy. Even if the work is enjoyable, you may still need to put in many hours to see it through to the end.

Almost every meaningful project will include some unpleasant or difficult tasks. You aren't going to enjoy those tasks, but they're essential for the project's completion.

You have the option of only doing what's easy, but if you stick with what's easy all the time, most of your projects will be pretty low on the value scale. Even if you complete them, they aren't going to make much of a difference.

If you wish to stop having so many incompletes and see more of your projects through to completion, you must accept that certain tasks will be difficult and to decide to do them anyway.

It's easy to say that you're committed to completing a project. Anyone can say they're committed. But a real commitment means that you're willing to do the dirty work. It may slow you down. It may frustrate you. You may need to take more breaks in order to get through it. But when you're committed, you accept the existence of difficult work, and you decide to push through it regardless of the difficulty. This is a key difference between starting projects and finishing them.

Most of the perceived difficulty has nothing to do with the true nature of the task anyway. You're simply interpreting the task in a way that creates resistance. So a commitment to complete difficult tasks is really a commitment to face and overcome your own resistance. It's a commitment to overcome the limiting beliefs that bias you against doing certain types of work.

The advertisement for Linnaeus University is divided into two main sections. The left section has a solid yellow background. At the top left is a black logo of a stylized tree. To its right, a black speech bubble contains the word 'Scholarships' in white script. Below this, the text 'Open your mind to new opportunities' is written in a large, black, serif font. Underneath, a paragraph in a smaller black serif font describes the university's size and international focus, ending with 'Welcome to join us!'. At the bottom left, 'Linnæus University' is written in a large, bold, black serif font, with 'Sweden' in a smaller font below it. The right section of the ad features a photograph of a modern university interior with large glass windows. A person is captured mid-air, performing a backflip. In the background, several people are sitting at tables. The text 'Lnu.se' is in the top right corner of the photo. A black rectangular box at the bottom right of the photo lists university programs in white text.

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To complete a project, you must eventually do the steps required for project completion. If you don't feel like doing a particular step, and you use your feelings to justify avoidance of that step, then your project will remain stuck in an incomplete state. A better approach is to recognize that a task is just a task, and it's subject to many different interpretations as to how pleasant or unpleasant it may be, so instead of looking at it from a perspective that creates unpleasantness, you can choose to regard the task as simply one more stepping stone on par with all the others.

### Asserting Your Dominant Will

There are countless techniques you can use to push through inner resistance when the going gets tough. I've shared many of them in previous articles like *Do It Now* and *Overcoming Procrastination*.

It's nice to have a toolkit of techniques, but that isn't enough by itself. Many people know plenty of anti-procrastination techniques, but they can't get themselves to apply them consistently. The problem is if once you fall into the trap of procrastinating, you can just as easily procrastinate on overcoming procrastination. Anti-procrastination techniques don't self-activate. The nature of this problem is that it encourages you to resist solving it.

A strategy I've found that works well is more of a mindset than a technique. It's the mindset that says, No matter what, my conscious will is ultimately in charge, and it always has the ability to step in and take command immediately.

When you tackle a challenging goal, you're going to catch yourself going dark now and then. At some point your conscious will steps in and says, Hey, you're procrastinating. This is a waste of time. That barely noticeable voice is your inner alarm clock. Instead of hitting the snooze button, pull that thought into the center of your consciousness and amplify it. Give it your full attention.

When you give that thought your full attention and let its voice be heard, it gets louder: WTF, you lazy ass! You don't need to be checking the news right now. You have much more important things to be doing. Get your ass back to work!

The mindset aspect here has to do with your relationship to that voice.

When you succumb to procrastination for long periods of time, and that voice shows up, you'll have a tendency to push it away. You define the part of you that procrastinates as "me" and the part of you that wants to get some real work done as "not me," as if the strong part (not you) is trying to push the weaker part (you) into action. As long as you maintain these kinds of inner relationships, procrastination will be your constant companion.

To overcome procrastination, do the opposite. When that alarm clock voice shows up, realize that this strong voice is the real you. And the lazy procrastinator is not you. When you procrastinate, you go dark and become something less than your true self. When you wake up and recommit to your goals and projects, that's the real you.

#### Self-Dominance vs. Self-Abuse

When you wrap your identity into the part of you that wants to procrastinate, you'll have a tendency to beat yourself up. When you look back and realize you wasted a lot of time, you're identifying with the part of you that procrastinates. So when you get frustrated with that part, you're getting frustrated with yourself. And when you beat up that part of yourself for its bad habits, you're abusing yourself.

This won't help. It will simply perpetuate the cycle and keep you stuck.

The problem is that when you self-identify with the part of you that procrastinates, and then you beat up that part of yourself, you're lowering your self-esteem. You're saying to yourself, I'm such a loser. I suck. I can't get anything done.

This is self-abuse. It cannot help you. Don't do this.

Avoid self-identifying with the part of you that procrastinates. Imagine that the part of you that procrastinates is the animal part of you. It's prehistoric baggage. It has many positive aspects that keep you alive, but you can't let this part of you run amok. Your conscious mind needs to keep a tight leash on it.

The real you is the part of you that's conscious and aware. This is the part of you that's capable of making high-level decisions. This is the part of you that sets goals and takes on projects that aren't essential for survival.

Your arms are a part of you, but you probably wouldn't say that your identity is that of an arm. Your conscious will dominates your arms. You can wave them around, use them to pick up objects, train them to get stronger – whatever you desire. You're the boss of your arms.

Similarly, you're the boss of the lazy part of yourself that wants to procrastinate. Acknowledge that it's there. Recognize that it's a part of you, but it can't fully define you, just as your arm can't define your body. Appreciate the good it does for you, like directing your fight or flight impulse to keep you alive in emergency situations. But whatever you do, don't give your power away to this part of you. It is your servant. It isn't meant to be your Master.

In order to shift yourself to a place of achievement, you must claim your role as Master over the part of you that wants to be lazy and expedient. You have the power to be dominant over this part of you. Your conscious will is so much stronger.

### Strengthening Your Will

Just like a muscle, your conscious will grows stronger when you exercise it regularly, and it atrophies when you fail to exercise it.

Fortunately, no matter how weak you've allowed yourself to become in this area, you can always train yourself back up to a place of strength.

Practicing self-dominance can actually be fun. A good way to practice is to verbalize your commands to yourself out loud. Tell yourself what to do, as if commanding the lazy part to get in line.

For example, if you have a tendency to want to linger in bed when your alarm goes off, say to yourself, On your feet now! Get dressed and brush your teeth. Imagine that this commanding voice is your true self commanding aspects of your lower self. Your fully conscious self is commanding parts of you that are less conscious. See the truth that the real you really does want to get out of bed. You want to have that experience today. Choosing to do the opposite isn't really you.

An advertisement for SKF. It features a woman with long dark hair smiling in the foreground, with a white wind turbine and a blue sky in the background. The text 'Brain power' is written in large white letters. To the right, there is a block of text about wind energy and SKF's role. At the bottom left, there is a call to action to visit the SKF website. The SKF logo is in the bottom right corner.

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**SKF**

No matter how much you struggle with this, that's okay. It's a lifelong challenge, and perfection isn't a realistic standard. Sometimes you'll go dark. But when you eventually rise again to a new level of consciousness, strive to maintain it as long as you can.

I'm taking a 10-week course where the current assignment is to check in with myself every hour for two full weeks (an hourly alarm can serve as a reminder). At least once per hour I must pause and reflect on what I'm thinking and doing in that moment. Am I behaving wisely? Or have I slipped into unconsciousness? Am I creating my life, or am I merely reacting?

I'd encourage you to try a similar challenge. Whenever you catch yourself slipping into negative emotions, unconscious behavior, or self-identification with laziness and procrastination, take a moment to reassert your dominant will. Take stock of who you really are, and issue the proper commands for what you are to do in this moment.

Don't project your higher self as something outside of you. Embrace the beingness of your higher self in each moment. Your higher self is the real you.

#### About the author

Steve Pavlina (born April 14, 1971)[2] is an American self-help author, motivational speaker and entrepreneur. He is the author of the web site [stevepavlina.com](http://stevepavlina.com) and the book *Personal Development for Smart People*. Pavlina's blog covers topics such as personal development and success; consciousness and courage; productivity, motivation and goal setting; career, wealth and business; and spirituality. (Wikipedia)

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# 11 The Obama Model of Time Management – How to Achieve Balance Through Value-Based Priorities by Astrid Baumgardner

Some people seem to breeze through life knowing exactly what they are doing at any given period of time. As busy as they are and even when a crisis hits, they keep their cool, focusing on the big picture and not getting distracted by minutiae. What is their secret? They live by setting values-based priorities.

To me, the model of this behavior is President Obama. He seems to know exactly what it is that he wants to accomplish. Whether or not you agree with his policies, you have to admire the fact that he concentrated a lot of his time and energy on health care because he clearly feels passionately about the fact that all Americans should have insurance. I suspect that he places a high value on fairness and equality and thus decided to prioritize health care.

I see our president doing the same thing on a personal level. He goes to the gym every day and eats dinner with his family every night that he is in town. The rest of the day, he devotes himself to the challenges of his office. Again, family, self-care and balance appear to be very important to him and he organizes his time in accordance with his values.

That is the beauty of living your life in accordance with your values-based priorities: there is a sense that you are managing yourself so that time works for you. So let's see how you can begin to start setting priorities so that you can do the things that are important to you and start flowing through your life.

The first step is to know your core values. Values are your personal code by which you live your life. They are the principles that you would leave a relationship over or stake your life on. Once you know your core values, you can begin to filter all your decisions through the lens of values so that you are doing the things that are most important to you.

Next, set your long-term goals so that they reflect your values. Goals are the things that you want to accomplish in any given period of time. The more your goals align with the principles that are vital to you as a person, the more motivated you will be to work towards those goals.



Third, set your priorities to reflect your long-term values-based goals. Priorities in essence are short-term goals: the things that you want to accomplish in the next month or two. How are you spending your time these days? How satisfied are you with the way you are spending your time? How much time are you spending on the things that are really important to you? How much time are you devoting to activities that are not in alignment with your long-term goals?

Once you have some answers to these questions, you have a choice because you can begin to bring in more of the important activities into your life. Too busy, you say? Maybe take a page from the book of President Obama and see how you can start saying yes to the things that will advance your long-term goals and core values and saying no to the rest.

#### About the author

Astrid Baumgardner, JD, PCC is a professional life coach and lawyer, Coordinator of Career Strategies and Lecturer at the Yale School of Music and the founder and President of Astrid Baumgardner Coaching + Training, which is dedicated to helping musicians, lawyers and creative professionals take charge of their lives and experience authentic success. In addition to her work at YSM and her individual coaching practice, Astrid presents workshops at leading conservatories and law firms on topics including Career Planning, Goal-Setting, Time Management, Dynamic Communication, Conflict Management and Personal Branding and Networking. She is the author of numerous articles on the various aspects of how to achieve and live authentic success.

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# 12 Precious Moments by Steve Goodier

I probably golf about as well as a slug wages war.... In fact, out of consideration for my friends (I embarrass them), I quit playing with anybody I know. It was too hard for them to watch. But I can still appreciate what a golf enthusiast said about the game.

He listed three mental techniques to improve one's golf game. And the great part is this: these techniques not only help to improve a game, they can help all of us live better lives. They are mental attitudes that can help you and me live more in the moment and less in the past or the future. Here they are... golf tips for better living.

1. Resist the urge to add up your score as you go along. If you anticipate your score, you'll be distracted from the task at hand.

In other words, live more in the present. Clear your mind of past mistakes and even past successes, and try to think only about the here and now.

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Inés Aréizaga Esteva (Spain), 25 years old  
Education: Chemical Engineer

– You have to be proactive and open-minded as a newcomer and make it clear to your colleagues what you are able to cope. The pharmaceutical field is new to me. But busy as they are, most of my colleagues find the time to teach me, and they also trust me. Even though it was a bit hard at first, I can feel over time that I am beginning to be taken seriously and that my contribution is appreciated.



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2. Focus. Concentrate on hitting great shots rather than worrying about bad ones or what others will think if you miss. Visualize the ball going to your target.

This is a terrific technique for daily living. Focus. Concentrate on doing the present task well rather than worrying about what others will think if you should “mess up.” And get a picture in your mind’s eye of succeeding at the thing you are doing right now.

3. Keep your mind on the hole you’re playing. Don’t think about how you are going to play the last hole.

This is about resisting the urge to think ahead. If we pay close attention to the present, the future will take care of itself. Our present moment is full of power and wonder. It deserves our full attention.

Now, did you notice what all of these tips have in common? They are not about understanding the past or setting goals for the future. They are simply about living in the present moment.

Writer H.G. Wells once noted, “Man must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind him to the fact that each moment of life is a miracle and a mystery.” Anybody can get more out of life who concentrates on and cherishes the here and now – and we’re not talking about golf.

The present is too important not to pay attention to it. One doctor said, “I have learned from speaking to many cancer survivor groups that (when you have cancer) the watch on your hand no longer says, ‘Tick, tick, tick.’ It now says, ‘Precious, precious, precious.’”

#### About the author

Steve Goodier holds a B.A. in anthropology and sociology (New Mexico State University) and an M.Div. degree from Emory University. He is an ordained United Methodist minister, district superintendent in the Rocky Mountain Conference UMC, and the author of numerous books about personal development, motivation, inspiration, and making needed life changes.

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# 13 You'll Never Be Finished Anyway by Kevin Stacey

Sadly, many people keep themselves going and going in a vain attempt to reach a place that doesn't exist. That place is being completely finished with nothing else left to do. The reason why many people have trouble sleeping is that even though they are physically in bed, mentally they are still not done, and thoughts of the things still left to do are regurgitating in their mind. Balanced people accept the fact that they will never be completely caught up and don't get themselves all frazzled and worked up trying.

Even though we know there is a limit to what we can accomplish in one day, we often set unrealistic expectations for ourselves. When we can't accomplish everything on our "to do" list, we berate ourselves for not working hard enough or fast enough. Many of us live with a constant sense of guilt that we didn't accomplish enough, no matter how unrealistic our expectations were in the first place. But do you realize that if you did everything that needed to be done in your life in one day, you wouldn't be a human being? You'd be a superhero.

Our inability to live up to the superhero image keeps us feeling like we're always one step behind. Letting go of this image is the first step in setting realistic expectations for ourselves. Start to let go of your superhero tendencies by recognizing that there is only so much any one person can do in one day. Acknowledge that you have limits, and that pushing yourself beyond your limits will only lead to frustration and exhaustion.

The next thing you can do is simply declare yourself "done" on a daily basis. You firmly resolve that after a certain point or time of day, you're not going to attempt anything else and will not "do" anything of substance. This is an extremely freeing exercise that allows you to recharge your capacity to produce.

We all know that life is temporary, but sometimes we forget that we don't know when our last day is going to be and how many moments we have left. Since we don't know, one of the most important things has got to be being fully present in the moments of life and enjoying each step along the way- not getting everything done. Remember that even though you will never be finished, you decide when you are done on a daily basis. Lastly, remind yourself that there has to be a reason why we are called human "beings" instead of human "doings."

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<http://www.Time-StressManagement-Training.com>

#### About the Author

Kevin Stacey helps companies and professionals achieve maximum productivity and effectiveness through stress management and time management training. He is available to speak on these topics. For more information visit <http://www.TrainRightInc.com> or call 1-800-603-7168.


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# 14 The Tyranny of the Urgent Can Cause Priority Overload by Jim Clemmer

“He that is everywhere is nowhere.” – Thomas Fuller, 17th century historian, scholar, and author

A frantic manager burst into a travel agency and exclaimed, “I need an airplane ticket immediately!” “Where would you like to go?”, the travel agent asked. “I don’t care, just get me on a plane. I’ve got business everywhere,” was the desperate reply. Time management author and consultant, R. Alec Mackenzie once observed, “Urgency engulfs the manager; yet the most urgent task is not always the most important. The tyranny of the urgent lies in its distortion of priorities. One of the measures of a manager is the ability to distinguish the important from the urgent, to refuse to be tyrannized by the urgent, to refuse to manage by crisis.”

Unsuccessful organizations are often beehives of activity and hard work. Reflecting on the performance of his struggling company, a departmental manager observed, “We have lots of projects, goals, and priorities. We’re constantly making lists and setting action plans. But we seldom see anything through to completion before some urgent new priority is pushed at us. Our division manager’s thinking seems to be ‘random brain impulse.’ He’s like a nervous water bug that flits from one half-baked strategy to another.”

In the midst of tumultuous change, many managers are confusing “busy work” activity with results. Missing what’s really important to long-term growth and development, they allow themselves to be tyrannized by short-term urgencies. But we just can’t do it all. The list of dreams we could pursue to realize is a lengthy one. The number of improvements we could make to our performance gaps are countless. Searching and exploring to create tomorrow’s markets and customers can uncover endless innovation possibilities.

So we’ve got to choose. From all our long-range options, alternatives, and possibilities, we’ve got to establish short-term goals and priorities. There are as many things we’ve got to stop doing, as there are actions we’ve got to start taking. Some actions will drive us forward, many will hold us back, and some won’t matter much either way. But without clear targets and a strong sense of what’s most important, I – and everyone on my team or in my organization – won’t be able to tell the difference.

Effectively establishing goals and priorities has both strategic and tactical components. The strategic decisions are what goals and priorities we choose to pursue. Tactics are how we get organized and manage our time to reach those goals.

#### About the author

Jim Clemmer has been writing and speaking about leadership, change, team, and organization effectiveness for over 30 years. His extensive research, broad experience with hundreds of organizations and thousands of people, and deep understanding of these topics makes him an internationally recognized leader in the field. Beyond his seven books, he's written hundreds of columns and articles for newspapers and magazines.

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# 15 Time Management Bandits by Victor Gonzalez

So I'm sitting in a waiting room waiting to go and do one of my talks on success. In comes this wonderfully excited lady who had been looking for me and was hoping to get some 'quality time' with me. She introduced herself and got right into her problem. (Note: People seem to confuse a speaker with a therapist, but that's another article).

She said, "How do you stop people from loading you down with last minute projects?"

I looked at her with a deadpan face and use the Ronald Reagan drug program line, "Just say no!"

Suffice it to say it wasn't the enlightening response she was anticipating. She said, "No, seriously."

I said, "Yes, seriously."

"But Victor" she retorted, getting a little peeved, "I just can't say no to my bosses."

I said, "Bosses? How many do you have?"

She said, "Too many. I get direction from too many people."

Sound familiar....

So I paused to give her situation some thought. I asked more questions since I still had another 20 minutes before show time. A few minutes later we hatched a plan of attack to fend off the time bandits who were robbing her of her most precious commodity; time. Here is the 4 point program I gave her:

Point 1: Realizing that she had a lot of people to report to AND were taking her for granted, I suggested that her first step was to speak with the 'big cheese'. Every organization has a big cheese, where the proverbial buck stops...the boss. She mentioned that she had frequent access to the boss. This was perfect.

Point 2: Having identified the big cheese and gaining access was key. I then told her to have a sit down with the Boss and discuss what projects were important to him and the university. This would allow her to define which projects to focus on and get the Boss to buy in. I then told her to get the Boss to prioritize the 5-10 projects. Again, more boss 'buy-in'.

So far the master plan was going well....

Point 3: I then told her that the next step would be to adopt a “I’m a team player, BUT...” mentality. In other words, the next time someone approached her with an unplanned project, she shouldn’t reject it but instead inform the person that she is working on projects that the boss deemed important. And, that she would be more than happy to work on other projects, BUT, they would have to speak with the Boss. I told her, “People will not want to go to the Boss, or at a minimum will have to justify their request the boss.” This technique allows her to shift the weight of accountability to the person requesting help.

Point 4: This could also be Point 1. I told her she needed a job description. The next time she spoke with her boss, I told her to get specifics about her duties and responsibilities. This will help her in fending off those who want to graciously ‘expand’ her responsibilities when it’s convenient for them. So the next time someone approaches with a project that falls outside of her job description, she can still use the strategy of redirecting them to the boss or simply saying that according to what you been instructed to do, you simply can’t. But you would be willing to do so if approved by the boss. See what I’m saying?

Now, I want you to take this model and tweak it to what you think would work for you. The key points are the following:

- 1) By defining with the boss what projects are important, you and the boss are on the same page.
- 2) By making those who dump projects on you accountable for jeopardizing other pre-approved projects, you are creating an ‘inconvenience’. So they now have to talk to the Boss in order to justify why their project warrants priority over the original items agreed upon.
- 3) The problem the young lady had was that every time someone came to her with an orphan project (i.e., no one wanted to own) she said yes. What she was in fact doing was conditioning those people to dump more stuff on her because they knew she never said no. By setting up the barrier of approval from the boss, she made it tougher for them to do so.

When someone has an emergency, and they come to you to solve it, and YOU DO, guess what will happen the next time they have an emergency? That’s right! They’ll come to you again with no warning. This is known as ‘positive reinforcement’ of the negative kind...this is bad conditioning.

As we parted and I took to the stage, I reminded her of the adage, “An emergency on their part, does not constitute an emergency on your part.”

Final Point: You need to be diplomatic and polite when you ‘redirect’ people to speak with your boss. You can’t say, “It’s not my job.” This approach will ostracize you and over time you’ll get a reputation as not being a team player. Learn never to say “No”, but to redirect them through your boss.

What happens if your boss says, “Yes” to another project. That’s fine. At least he’ll be aware of how much you’re contributing to make the organization successful. Whereas before your added contribution was going unnoticed and unappreciated.

About the author:

Born and raised in Chicago’s inner city, Victor Antonio G. has achieved a level of success few would have expected: By the age of 35 he had become Vice President in \$3B Fortune 500 company at the time and built-up an international market from \$14M to \$97M in two and half years, and went on to become President of Global Sales & Marketing to help build a \$420M company. He is currently CEO of a privately held multimillion Cable and Satellite Company.

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# 16 Love and Time by Steve Goodier

Writer Gary Jennings said this: “Love and time, those are the only two things in all the world and all of life, that cannot be bought, but only spent.”

I love that. And HOW I spend my love and time is what it is all about.

My work and interests require me to spend probably an inordinate amount of time in front of my computer. At least according to my wife Bev.

She and I were talking one day about death and funerals and what to do with each other’s remains. I asked. “What will you do with my body? Burial? Cremation?”

She answered, “I think I’ll just have you stuffed and propped up in your chair by the computer. That way when I walk through the room I won’t even notice that you’re gone.”

I got the point – too much computer time. And how I spend my time and my love is all important.

The question I ask myself is this: “Do I generously and freely give love and time away – and especially to those closest to me?”

Charles Francis Adams was the United States ambassador to Great Britain during the Lincoln administration. He had the habit of keeping a daily diary. He also taught his son Brooks the value of journaling his activities in a diary.

One memorable day, eight-year-old Brooks recorded, “Went fishing with my father, the most glorious day of my life.” It must have been a glorious day, for the next forty years Brooks repeatedly mentioned it in his diary. It became a life-long memory.

His father also wrote about the fishing trip. His own diary on that pivotal day for his son reads, “Went fishing with my son; a day wasted.”

He didn’t get it. That one single day he generously and freely gave love and time away to Brooks may have been the one of the most important days of his son’s life. Did he feel that, as a United States ambassador, his time was too valuable to be “wasted” with his children? History seems to show that a fishing trip with his son paid huge dividends in Brooks’ life.

I only hope I will spend love and time so well.

#### About the author

Steve Goodier holds a B.A. in anthropology and sociology (New Mexico State University) and an M.Div. degree from Emory University. He is an ordained United Methodist minister, district superintendent in the Rocky Mountain Conference UMC, and the author of numerous books about personal development, motivation, inspiration, and making needed life changes.

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# 17 Triple Your Personal Productivity by Steve Pavlina

Have you ever had the experience of looking back on your week with the sinking feeling that you didn't get as much done as you'd hoped? When building a successful career or a business of your own, your time is perhaps your most valuable asset, and your income is a direct result of how you spend your time. You cannot buy any more time than you're given, and the clock is always ticking. A few years ago, I discovered a simple system that allowed me to nearly triple my productivity, and in this article I'll share some very practical ideas you can apply right away to increase your effectiveness without working any harder than you do now.

Keep a detailed time log.

The first step to better managing your time is to find out how you're currently spending your time. Keeping a time log is a very effective way to do this, and after trying it for just one day, you'll immediately gain tremendous insight into where your time is actually going. The very act of measuring is often enough to raise your unconscious habits into your consciousness, where you then have a chance to scrutinize and change them.

Here's how to keep a time log. Throughout your day record the time whenever you start or stop any activity. Consider using a stopwatch to just record time intervals for each activity. You can do this during only your working time or throughout your entire day. At the end of the day, sort all the time chunks into general categories, and find out what percentage of your time is being spent on each type of activity. If you want to be thorough, do this for a week, and calculate the percentage of your total time that you spent on each type of activity. Be as detailed as possible. Note how much time you spend on email, reading newsgroups, web surfing, phone calls, eating, going to the bathroom, etc. If you get up out of your chair, it probably means you need to make an entry in your time log. I typically end up with 50–100 log entries per day.

You may be surprised to discover you're spending only a small fraction of your working time doing what you'd consider to be actual work. Studies have shown that the average office worker does only 1.5 hours of actual work per day. The rest of the time is spent socializing, taking coffee breaks, eating, engaging in non-business communication, shuffling papers, and doing lots of other non-work tasks. The average full-time office worker doesn't even start doing real work until 11:00am and begins to wind down around 3:30pm.

Analyze your results.

The first time I kept a time log, I only finished 15 hours worth of real work in a week where I spent about 60 hours in my office. Even though I was technically about twice as productive as the average office worker, I was still disturbed by the results. Where did those other 45 hours go? My time log laid it all out for me, showing me all the time drains I wasn't consciously aware of – checking email too often, excessive perfectionism doing tasks that didn't need to be done, over-reading the news, taking too much time for meals, succumbing to preventable interruptions, etc.

Calculate your personal efficiency ratio.

When I realized that I spent 60 hours at the office but only completed 15 hours of actual work within that time, I started asking myself some interesting questions. My income and my sense of accomplishment depended only on those 15 hours, not on the total amount of time I spent at the office. So I decided to begin recording my daily efficiency ratio as the amount of time I spent on actual work divided by the total amount of time I spent in my office. While it certainly bothered me that I was only working 25% of the time initially, I also realized it would be extremely foolish to simply work longer hours.

Efficiency Ratio = (Time Doing “Real Work”) / (Time Spent “At Work”)

Cut back on total hours to force an increase in efficiency.

If you've ever tried to discipline yourself to do something you weren't really motivated to do, you most likely failed. That was naturally the result I experienced when I tried to discipline myself to work harder. In fact, trying harder actually de-motivated me and drove my efficiency ratio even lower. So I reluctantly decided to try the opposite approach. The next day I would only allow myself to put in five hours total at the office, and the rest of the day I wouldn't allow myself to work at all. Well, an interesting thing happened, as I'm sure you can imagine. My brain must have gotten the idea that working time was a scarce commodity because I worked almost the entire five hours straight and got an efficiency ratio of over 90%. I continued this experiment for the rest of the week and ended up getting about 25 hours of work done with only 30 hours total spent in my office, for an efficiency ratio of over 80%. So I was able to reduce my weekly working time by 30 hours while also getting 10 more hours of real work done. If your time log shows your efficiency ratio to be on the low side, try severely limiting your total amount of working time for a day, and see what happens. Once your brain realizes that working time is scarce, you suddenly become a lot more efficient because you have to be. When you have tight time constraints, you will usually find a way to get your work done. But when you have all the time in the world, it's too easy to be inefficient.



Gradually increase total hours while maintaining peak efficiency.

Over a period of a few weeks, I was able to keep my efficiency ratio above 80% while gradually increasing my total weekly office time. I've been able to maintain this for many years now, and I commonly get about 40 hours of real work done every week, while only spending about 45 total hours in my office. I've learned that this is ideal for me. If I try to put in more time at the office, then my productivity drops off rapidly. The interesting thing is that the system that allowed me to optimize my effectiveness at work also created a tremendous amount of balance in all other areas of my life. Even though I was able to use this approach to triple my business productivity, I still gained plenty of time to pursue personal interests.

Time logging is the intelligent choice to ensure optimal productivity without increasing your hours. But time logging need only be done periodically to provide these benefits. I do it for one week every 3–6 months, and over the years it has made a huge difference for me, always providing me with new distinctions. If I go too many months without time logging, my productivity gradually drops as I fall back into unconscious time-wasting habits. You'll probably find as I do that your gut feelings about your productivity are closely related to how much real work you actually get done. When you feel your productivity is lower than you'd like, raise your awareness via time logging, measure your efficiency ratio, and then optimize your efficiency to boost your productivity back up where it belongs. Time logging is a high leverage activity that takes very little time and effort to implement, but the long-term payoff is tremendous.

#### About the author

Steve Pavlina (born April 14, 1971)[2] is an American self-help author, motivational speaker and entrepreneur. He is the author of the web site [stevepavlina.com](http://stevepavlina.com) and the book *Personal Development for Smart People*. Pavlina's blog covers topics such as personal development and success; consciousness and courage; productivity, motivation and goal setting; career, wealth and business; and spirituality. (Wikipedia)

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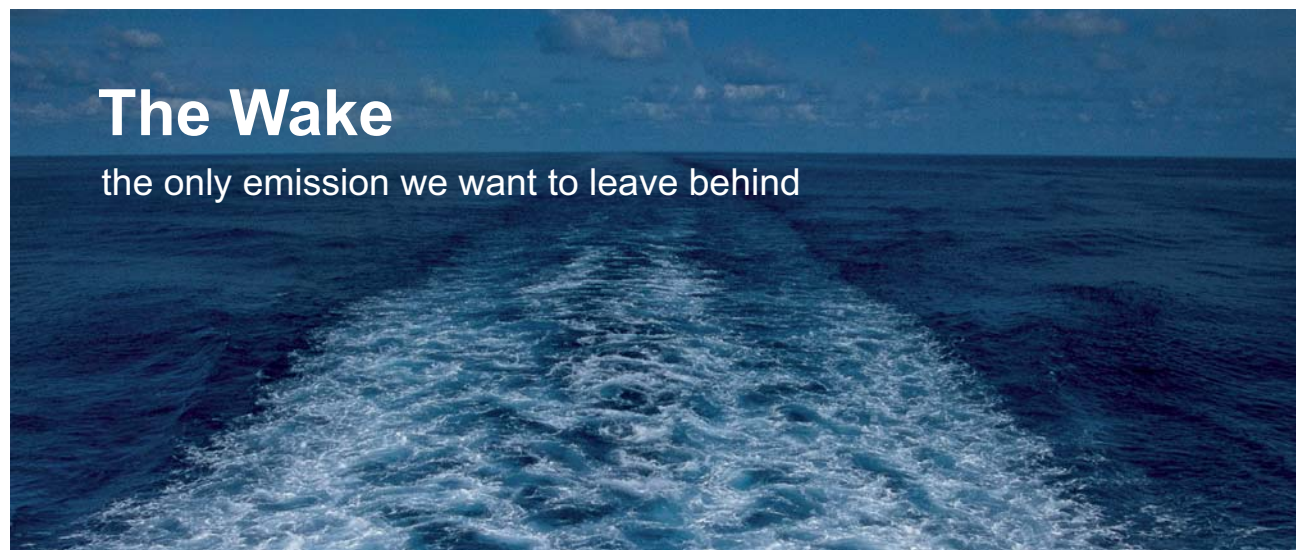
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# 18 One Week On, One Week Off by Steve Pavlina

If you'd like to boost your productivity far beyond the results you get with the 9-to-5 grind, an interesting alternative work schedule to consider is the One Week On, One Week Off approach. Instead of working week after week, you alternate between one intensive work week followed by one vacation/personal week.

This method isn't very well publicized, but it's commonly practiced by some of the most successful business people in the world. I first learned of it several years ago when Jay Abraham mentioned it on one of his audio programs. He said that it was a method Napoleon Hill had learned from many successful people while doing the research for *Think and Grow Rich* but that Hill didn't comprehend why it was so effective and therefore didn't integrate it into his book.

There are many variations on this method. Some people work for one week and then take two weeks off. Some do two weeks on, two weeks off. Some do one week on, three weeks off. The basic concept is that you work in fairly short intense bursts of no more than a week or two at a time (one week seems to be an upper limit for most people), followed by a period of no work for at least a week.




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## On Weeks

During your “on” weeks, your focus is on work, work, and little else but work. You can limit yourself to 40 hours, but it’s wise to experiment with longer hours. Try pushing yourself to do 60, 80, or even 100+ hours of work during this week. Fully engage in what you’re doing. Play full out.

Pick one project, and make a big dent in it during this time. Don’t get caught up in minor busywork. Bite off a meaningful piece of work, and get it done quickly and with solid focus.

Work hard. End your days with a feeling of being spent.

Put off distractions. You can always watch TV and surf the Internet later.

Tell yourself that it’s only a week...really just a few days...little more than a cup of coffee. The time will pass quickly if you immerse yourself in a project. Your goal is to fully engage in what you’re doing for this short period of time.

Allow yourself to become obsessed with your work during this time. Everything else can wait. Friends and social outings can wait. Family can wait. Personal tasks can wait. Recycle your dirty clothes if you must, but stick with solid work tasks during this time. Remember – it’s only a week.

## Off Weeks

An “off” week is all about sharpening the saw. Let me clarify that this is NOT the same thing as having a lazy week. It’s not about taking time off and chilling out. That’s the equivalent of putting the saw down. The blade won’t get any sharper if you just put it down.

Off weeks are a time for personal renewal and fun. This is the time to really live. Go out and have a life.

Think of your off weeks as vacation weeks. Treat them as seriously as you do your work weeks. However, instead of focusing on your work life, focus all your attention on one or more aspects of your personal life.

Go travel to another city during this time. Have some fun new experiences. Go skydiving or scuba diving. Read a few new books. Go out and spend many hours with friends. Attend a workshop or seminar. Learn to dance. Do something that will enrich your life instead of just spinning your wheels.

If you have a family, consider taking a week to be with your family, giving them your full attention during this time. But don’t just sit around doing nothing. Go out and do fun activities with them each day. Travel to a new city with them. Go to the beach. Go camping. Go outside!

You can also “work” on personal projects during this time. Clean out your garage. Purge and donate unwanted items. Replant your garden.

### Benefits of This Method

Why would you want to manage your life this way? Here are some of the benefits.

#### Motivation

Because of the time constraints, you’ll likely see a major boost in your motivation. Knowing that you’re going on vacation in a few days can help you flow through a lot of work. And knowing that your vacation week will soon end can help you pack in a lot more renewal time.

You will typically hit the start of your workweek with a strong desire to work. (If that doesn’t happen, you should definitely consider a career change.) And you’ll hit your off weeks with a strong desire to focus on your personal life for a while. Before you have a chance to start feeling demotivated and bored, it’s time to switch cycles. This keeps life fresh, interesting, and fun.

#### Focus

Instead of trying to work on all parts of your life in a single day or two, you focus on one important slice at a time. It’s okay to be largely unavailable for your significant other during your on weeks if you know you’ll be 100% present for him/her during an off week. This is far superior to not being fully present week after week.

Would you like it better if you had a significant other who was 100% there for you, enjoying your company for days at a time, but you also had breaks of several days where you each focused on other parts of your lives? If this sounds interesting to you, then try it. You can always switch back if you don’t like it.

#### Productivity

The productivity boost can be significant due to your increased motivation and focus during the work weeks. But it’s also interesting to note that your personal weeks can be just as productive. Instead of wasting your personal days on idleness, you’ll be putting those days to good use.

Also, the weekly flip-flopping helps you think more realistically in terms of planning and scheduling. You’ll be inclined to start thinking ahead and allocating certain weeks to projects, travel, etc. This is a good discipline to develop. It helps you avoid biting off more than you can chew.

In one solid week of focused work on high value tasks, you can easily exceed the normal output of two regular weeks. So even though it seems like you're taking a lot more time off, this overall method is geared to produce a net productivity gain compared to sustained back-to-back 40-hour weeks.

Don't overlook the positive impact this method can have on your personal life. When you work week after week and only take weekends off, it takes a huge toll on your personal life that you don't even see. Weekends and evenings just aren't enough to have a life outside of work. You need to devote significant chunks of time to the personal side as well. Otherwise your work will seem endless, and your motivation and passion will eventually tank, even if you normally enjoy your work.

### Money

Higher productivity can easily generate an income boost. Money isn't a result of time spent at the office. Hourly rates are largely a joke. Money flows from completing important tasks that deliver value. During your on weeks, you'll be focused on completing meaningful projects and tasks. What can you finish before the week is up?

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Also, your off weeks will give you more motivation to boost your income because that's a great time to enjoy your money. You can expect to spend a lot more money during your off weeks, especially if you love to travel, eat out, and enjoy fun experiences that cost money. When you get a taste of what your money can do for you if you spend it wisely (to enrich your life instead of creating clutter), you'll be more motivated to earn even more, so you can continue the pattern. Imagine how fun it would be to take one or two weeklong vacations each month – and still get more work done than you do now.

A lot of very wealthy people use this method or something similar. For example, in the personal development field, many friends of mine will put on a seminar for a week, during which they'll work very hard, sometimes 12–16 hours per day. After that week they're totally spent and hardly capable of productive work, even though their work is very fulfilling. So they'll take off for a week or two or three and go travel, play golf, or spend time with their families. They try to do very little work during their off weeks. Once they're restored they return to the office and begin working intensely on another project for a week or two, and their families don't see them much during this time. Because they focus on high-value tasks while working, they can generate more than enough income during one solid workweek to offset a month of expenses, even while traveling and vacationing.

### Balance

This method may look unbalanced at first, but it can actually create more balance in the long run because it helps ensure that you attend to your professional and your personal life without allowing one side to overpower the other.

You'll work hard with this approach, but you'll also play hard and have a lot of fun. Your life will become both productive and enjoyable. It feels great to be in such a state of flow.

Think of all the cool personal projects, experiences, and vacations you'd love to indulge in – if you only had the time. Well, just imagine what it would be like if you devoted 26 weeks – minimum! – to that side of your life this year.

No one is stopping you from making this a reality but you. You really hate it when I remind you that you're 100% responsible for your results in life, don't you? ;)

### Perspective

Alternating between your work life and personal life helps you regain perspective periodically. For example, during your work weeks, your subconscious mind will be processing some of the experiences from your last off week. How could you have enjoyed that week even more? Did you hold back? Did you overindulge?



During your off weeks, you'll be processing many work-related ideas in the background. When you start on a fresh week, you'll be kicking it off with a fresh perspective, inspired by new ideas. This helps you avoid getting stuck in long-term patterns that don't serve you.

There are other benefits of course. These are just a few to get you thinking.

#### Personal Experiences and Some Tips

I'd like to share some extra tips based on my personal experiences that may help you avoid some pitfalls and gain some additional insights. I haven't used this method religiously, but to the degree I've applied it at various times in my life (sometimes accidentally), it's been effective. This year I'm aiming to apply it more deliberately than I have in the past. So far I'm off to a great start.

First, it's important to keep a reasonably solid line of separation between your work weeks and personal weeks. Decide what goes in each week, and do your best to prevent cross-cycle leaks. During your on weeks, put your personal life on the back burner, and focus hard on your work. During your off weeks, do as little work as possible, and indulge deeply on the personal side.

I still check email and handle some communications during an off week, but I keep it to a minimum, ideally just 15–30 minutes per day, sometimes less. I delay any complex business communication until the next work cycle. People understand if I respond with a quick note to let them know I'm traveling and will follow up with them in a week or two.

If you're sloppy about keeping a hard line of division between your on weeks and your off weeks, you'll lose the benefits of immersion. It's like getting non-restful sleep and then being a zombie the next day.

Second, don't neglect your off weeks. This isn't just time off to hang out and be lazy. This is an active time for growth, renewal, or completing personal projects. If you need a break or a lazy day (which is totally fine), use the weekends for that, or give yourself a down day or two between cycles. But don't go through your off week in a semi-conscious haze of web surfing and TV watching. This is the time to really go out and have a life.

Travel is a terrific use of an off week, especially if it keeps you away from your work environment. Attending a workshop is another great use of off weeks. Even immersing yourself in computer games for the whole week is great if you love playing a certain game. Indulge fully in your personal desires – guilt-free.

Third, the perspective shifts that come from switching cycles are really powerful. They can accelerate your growth tremendously by giving you time to reflect with some distance.



During an off week, I keep getting ideas for new articles I want to write, so I'm bursting with ideas when I finally get back to work. I also gain a better perspective on which work tasks are worthwhile and which aren't. When I have limited time for work before going on vacation again, low-value work tasks become annoying really fast because they steal time from high-value work. Low-value tasks don't generate serious income, which means they don't help me on the personal side either.

Emotional feedback plays an important role here. How I feel during one cycle has a lot to do with what happened during the previous cycle. If I blow my work week on trivial stuff, I don't feel as good during an off week. I regret that I didn't work as intelligently during the last work cycle, and it's a little bit harder to fully enjoy the personal side. This helps me commit to a better work cycle the next time. However, since the off weeks are still guaranteed, I don't have the option of deluding myself into thinking that I can steal time from my personal life to make up for low productivity at work.

While I'm in the midst of a workweek, I get ideas for how I can improve my next off week. For example, my girlfriend and I were a bit too indulgent food-wise during our last week together. (L.A. just has so many incredible vegan restaurants.) That can be fun every now and then, but it's not a wise idea to do that every week we spend together. So next time we may want to tone down that aspect and incorporate more exercise (the vertical kind, that is). An overindulgent week now and then is okay, but in the long run it's important to strive for balance. On the bright side, it became clear that we both love traveling together, and we have the flexible lifestyles to make that a reality, so we've been discussing other cities we might explore together this year.



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Fourth, the intensity that comes from such immersion is really awesome. When you give yourself permission to blow off all personal concerns and fully immerse yourself in work for a week, it seems clear that you can get a lot done. But more important than the quantity of work is the quality of work you can produce during the times you can work for days on end without distractions.

This is especially powerful on the personal side, especially when it comes to relationships. Instead of going on dates for a few hours at a time with big gaps in between, imagine diving into a new relationship by spending days on end with each other 24/7. Consider what it would be like to go on a date – even a first date – for a whole week instead of for a single night, including sleeping together every night and sharing every meal together. That can get pretty intense, but if you can handle it, you can build a connection in a matter of days that might otherwise take months.

Applying this to dating might sound strange, but take a moment to ponder all the good practices you'd have to adopt in order to commit to a weeklong first date with someone. You'd probably get really good at pre-screening people for compatibility, so you wouldn't have to deal with bad dates. And your communication skills will advance very quickly if you're going to be with the same person for a full week. But since you also know the week will eventually end, it motivates you to enjoy the time spent with your partner as much as possible without taking him or her for granted.

You can use this approach with your family too. Instead of being a half-assed parent on nights and weekends because you're burnt out from weeks of endless work, consider spending a week out of every month with your family. Give them your full attention during that time. Lately I've been thinking about how I might travel with my kids and explore different cities with them, especially when they're in their teen years and capable of enjoying more of the grown-up stuff.

Fifth, the alternations are more important than the durations. It's not that critical how many days you spend on each side. What matters most is that you keep shifting back and forth to keep your motivation for both sides sky-high.

At the start of this year, I spent a week working hard to prep for the January Conscious Growth Workshop. I also spoke at a friend's workshop. Then I spent several days hanging out with my girlfriend Rachelle, during which time I didn't do much work at all. Then I did the workshop, after which I felt totally spent, and less than 48 hours later I was in Puerto Rico for a weeklong leadership retreat. I gave a one-hour presentation there, but the main focus of the week was personal renewal, so it was definitely an off week for me. Next I returned to Vegas and spent more time with Rachelle, had a poker night with friends, and spent a day at Circus Circus with Erin and the kids. Then Rachelle went to Hollywood, and I worked solo in Vegas for a few days. Next I headed to Hollywood to spend a few days with her there for her birthday, "kidnapped" her back to Vegas with me for the weekend, and then returned to Hollywood to spend another week with her there. When we were in Vegas, she and I also enjoyed a night of wrestling, video games, and hide-and-go-seek with the kids, and we saw two movies and a show on the Strip.

While I was enjoying my off time, I did virtually no work. I didn't do much blogging and spent only minimal time on communication. Most of that time Rachelle and I were busy having fun together 24/7. Last week we enjoyed a day at Disneyland, explored the L.A. Natural History Museum, strolled along Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica and the Walk of Fame in Hollywood, shared a walk along the beach under the stars, attended an L.A. social meet-up, and indulged in a lot more gourmet vegan and raw food than we should have (including a 6-course gourmet raw dinner for Valentine's Day).

At the end of the week, Rachelle and I noted that we had committed 4 of the 7 deadly sins. During breakfast yesterday I tried to piss her off so we could check off wrath as well, but my best efforts only made her laugh at me and roll her eyes. Later that morning she definitively kicked my ass at Star Trek trivia for the second time in a row. "Khhhhhhaaaaaaaaaaannnnn!"

Today I'm back in Vegas, and after so much indulgence in my personal life, I'm filled with a renewed drive to get some serious work done, starting with this blog post. No girlfriend in town (which is good for Rachelle too because she needs to work on her next play – she's a playwright and an actress). Then in a few more days it will be time to shift into personal mode since my family and Erin's family are coming to town this weekend to celebrate my daughter's 10th birthday. Wow...10 already. They really do grow up fast. :)

These back-and-forth shifts don't fall cleanly on weekly borders, and that's okay. The benefits come from the shifting. The duration of each cycle isn't as important as the fact that you do cycle – and cycle often.

A weekend – even a 3-day weekend – simply isn't long enough to complete a serious renewal cycle. Six to seven days is a more realistic minimum. It normally takes a few days just to let go of work and become fully immersed in vacation mode (or personal project mode). Taking off every weekend doesn't cut it. Think of taking a full week off as the minimum, not the maximum. You'd be surprised to learn how many people achieve awesome productivity results with cycles closer to one week on, two or three weeks off. After taking so much time off for personal renewal, they're itching to get back to work, so their on weeks are highly productive.

If you've never tried this method before, I encourage you to experiment with it. If this is the first time you've heard about it, it may sound a bit alien. You may have a hard time grasping why it works. But don't reject it out of hand just because you've been conditioned to work a certain way. For now simply let this idea sit there in the back of your mind, and remain open to trying it at some point when that becomes realistic for you. This idea will resurface and nag at you when the time is right.

Obviously you need a flexible work schedule to pull this off, so it's up to you to create that. Whatever you do, don't succumb to lame-ass excuses like "My boss won't let me." (If you were about to blurt out some wimpy, whiny, give-away-your-power crap like that, you need to read this article and then this one. And for good measure, this one too.) You chose your boss, your employer, work environment, and your work schedule after all. You can't pretend you don't have the freedom to make this work schedule happen if you really want it. If you want the flexibility to experiment with higher levels of productivity and a richer personal life, then you're always free to make new choices. You're responsible for your results in life. Are you getting the results you desire?

#### About the author

Steve Pavlina (born April 14, 1971) is an American self-help author, motivational speaker and entrepreneur. He is the author of the web site [stevepavlina.com](http://stevepavlina.com) and the book *Personal Development for Smart People*. Pavlina's blog covers topics such as personal development and success; consciousness and courage; productivity, motivation and goal setting; career, wealth and business; and spirituality. (Wikipedia)

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#### Original resource:

<http://www.stevepavlina.com/blog/2010/02/one-week-on-one-week-off/>

# 19 Time Well Spent by Paul Lemberg

The first step towards making the transition from Entrepreneur to Chief Executive, and from manager to leader.

Many entrepreneurs and executives play the role of Chief Cook and Bottle Washer on the job. They feel that it is their responsibility to do everything and anything to expand their business. Although this is often appropriate in start-ups, there comes a time when the CC&BW approach to running your company will hold it back.

At a certain stage, your company needs a Chief Executive – a CEO. What is a CEO? My definition, pieced together from assorted dictionaries, is that a CEO is the person of the highest rank, with the power to determine or settle issues, and chargeable with being the source of the management and direction of the business.

Role of the CEO

I've compiled the following list of activities which comprise the role of a Chief Executive:



The advertisement for Linköping University features a light grey background. In the top left corner is the Swedish flag with the text 'Sweden Sverige'. The main text reads 'Linköping University – innovative, highly ranked, European'. Below this, it says 'Interested in Computer Science? Kick-start your career with an English-taught master's degree.' and includes a button that says '→ Click here!'. At the bottom left is the 'li.u LINKÖPING UNIVERSITY' logo. On the right side, two young women with long brown hair are smiling and leaning against a red door frame.



Craft the company vision and strategy

Communicate the vision to insiders and outsiders (this includes executives, managers, individual contributors, customers, partners, vendors, shareholders and the public).

Make the big decisions

Inspire people with the vision and strategy

Delegate the work, then hold people and teams accountable for the results

Develop new leaders

Foster key relationships with vendors, customers, partners and government.

Making the shift

Making the shift from CC&BW to Chief Executive requires three transitions.

Understanding your highest value contribution to your company and focusing on that role.

Recognizing your position as a leader and owning the job.

Delegating everything else, and holding others accountable. Without apology.

In this article we will focus on Transition One.

Understanding your highest value contribution

As CEO, you make the highest value contribution to your company's growth by acting consistently with the list defined above. Providing leadership inside and outside of your company is an act of great leverage in the truest sense of the word. Through vision, strategy, enrollment and inspiration, you provide energy and the direction to expend that energy – dramatically multiplying the effectiveness of your team.

In your organization, you may hold other roles in addition to CEO, such as head of sales, or technical guru. Such roles exist outside of the CEO role and as soon as it is cost-beneficial, you will give them up. For now, it is important to distinguish the CEO role.

Time for a bit of introspection. Considering all your roles, make a list of your top priorities. Limit the list to no more than seven. Your list could include priorities such as developing new leaders, coaching middle level executives, closing key sales, and working with the board. Ask yourself this, "What am I directly responsible for and what actions do I take, which make the most difference?"

Review your list and test it – are the priorities you’ve listed 1) important, and 2) practical? Make sure the priorities you have defined are consistent with your values. Then ask yourself this key question: “If everything I did, all day long, was something related to this list, would that move the company forward faster?”

If the answer is yes, then 1) you’ve created the right list, and 2) why are you working on anything else?

Find out how you really spend your time.

What do you do all day long? Most executives think they know but in fact do not. Are you ready to find out?

Keep a time log. Commit to a two-week program. Carry around a small stack of 3x5 index cards or a small spiral notebook. Every fifteen minutes or so, make a note of what you’ve been doing. At the end of the day, sum it up. At the end of the week, sum it up. At the end of two weeks, sum it up again.

You will probably find the results surprising. Your time will fall into three categories:

Things inside the scope of your priority list. Keep doing these things. Find ways to allocate even more time to them.

Things to delegate. Find someone in your organization to do these things, or outsource them to a professional services firm or contractor.

Things no one should be doing. You will know these things as soon as you think about them.

There are two special categories of items which may show up on your list:

One is called “Things I Do Best”. Look closely and examine if this is true. Is there someone else in the organization who might do this thing just as well? Maybe it is time to train someone. Maybe it should be outsourced. Regardless of how well you do this thing, if it is not on your list of priorities, get rid of it.

If there is something your company counts on you, and only you, to do, particularly as part of day to day operations, you are a bottleneck. And if you are out on the road, or out with a client, or meeting with The Governor – that thing, whatever it is – will not get done. Get out of the way.



The other special category is called “Things I Like To Do.” These are things you really enjoy, but even you know could best be done by someone else. Give them up. At a certain stage in your company’s development, you simply have to stop debugging programs, or handling every customer complaint, or ordering supplies. Treat this category similarly to things you do best. Stop doing them.

Use your priority list to evaluate how you spend your time. If a contemplated activity will not forward one or more priorities, do not do it. Delegate it to someone else. Period. If there is no one to give it to, don’t do it.

The bottom line.

This sounds like time management. What does it have to do with being Chief Executive?

Everything! As Chief Executive, your primary role is source of the management and direction of the business. Your priorities should support this role. You are like an enzyme or an accelerant. You help other people make things happen. You are, in the words of General Colin Powell, a force multiplier.

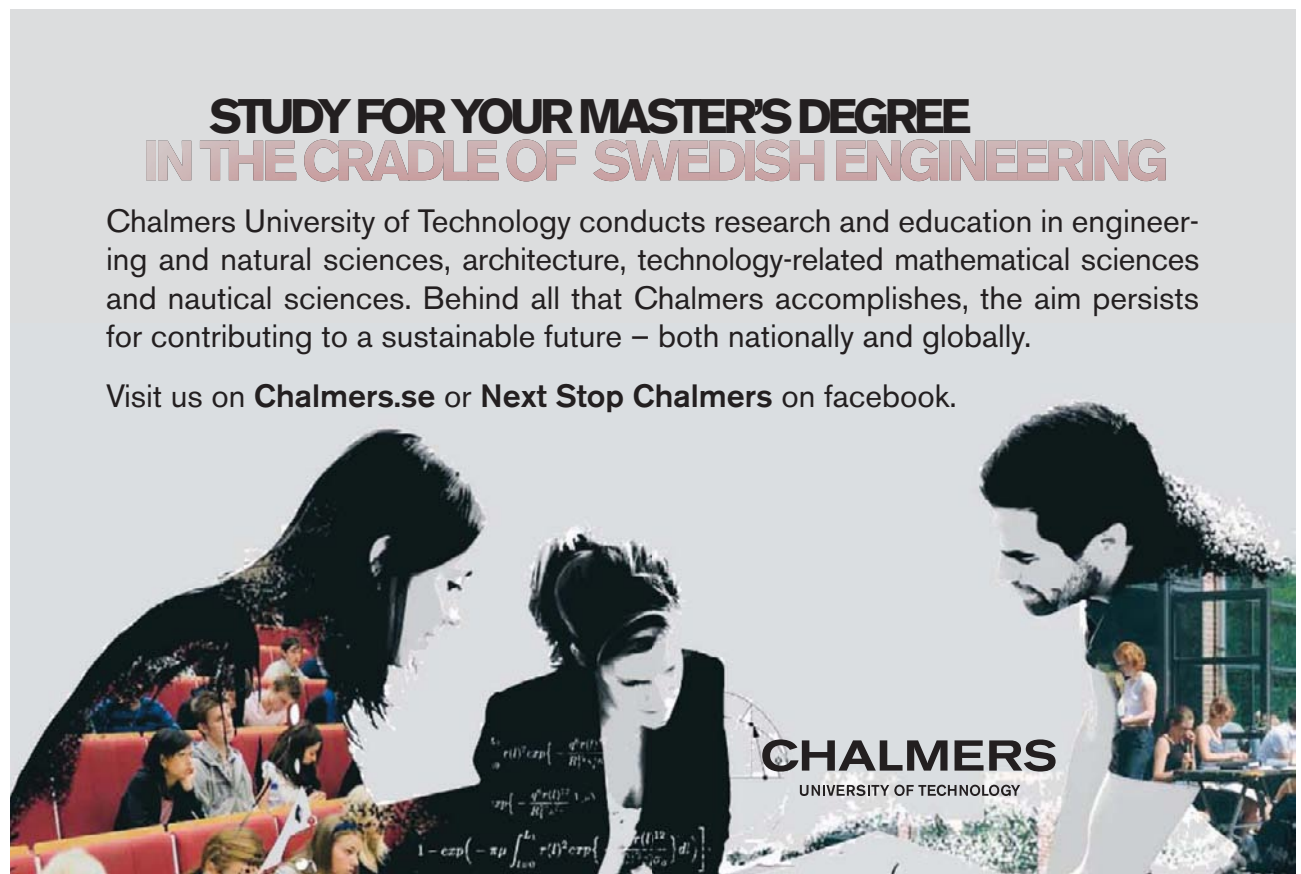
When you act in the role of CEO, things speed up. When you don’t, things slow down or stand still. You are the true leverage in your organization. And you can’t be that if you are debugging a program or writing checks to suppliers.

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#### About the author

Paul Lemberg is the president of Quantum Growth Coaching, the world's only fully systemized business coaching program guaranteed to help entrepreneurs rapidly create More Profits and More Life(tm). To get your copy of our free special report with detailed steps on how to grow your business at least 40% faster, even when you aren't sure what to do next, let Paul help you find your business development strategy.

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# 20 Time Travel: What's Your Speed and Direction? by Eric Garner

Our personalities are the key to finding out what kind of time manager we are. Whether we tend to do too much or too little, overwork or underwork, buzz around like a bee or freeze through procrastination, all comes down to one thing: which of the following Time Travellers are you?

## 1. The Perfectionist.

The Perfectionist is one of the worst examples of a workaholic. They fill up their days with work activities in the belief that everything they do has to be as perfect as possible. George Bernard Shaw was a typical workaholic. He wrote mechanically every day of his career. Looking back on his life, he said, "When I was a young man, I observed that nine out of ten things I did were failures. I didn't want to be a failure, so I did ten times more work."

## 2. The Socialiser.

The Socialiser is not a good time manager. If you are in conversation with a Socialiser, you'll know this for they are the hardest people to break away from. Socialisers simply love to be with people, talk about people, and be of service to people. This invariably means putting time and other duties into second place.

## 3. The Achiever.

Achievers have mastered the art of looking like perfect time managers. They seem to be good at everything they take on, seem to manage things with effortless ease, and seem to enjoy themselves in the process. But, beware, a lot of the impression may be false. Achievers are good at show and not so good at substance. When you are dealing with an Achiever, always look under the surface at what they've actually achieved.

## 4. The Artist.

When you are dealing with an Artist time personality, you'll know it. They look different, dress different, and behave different from others. They also have a cavalier attitude to time which they regard as a constraint and restriction. They thus arrive late or early, ignore rotas, and frequently miss deadlines. But the work they produce is invariably one of a kind and in their eyes makes up for their lax attitude to time.

5. The Analyser.

The Analyser has a touch of the absent-minded professor about them. They can easily get so wrapped up in their thoughts and ideas or in conversation with others that they can forget the routine details of daily life – such as preparing a meal, going to bed on time, keeping appointments. But while their outer life may be muddled, their inner world of thoughts is invariably rich and gifted.

6. The Procrastinator.

The Procrastinator is a person who hesitates to act because he or she is unsure whether they should. It may be because something hasn't been decided, or information isn't yet available or because a higher authority hasn't sanctioned it. Procrastinators are the great doubters, questioners and hesitators. In workplaces, Procrastinators prefer to let others own their time rather than own it themselves. They will therefore drop anything at any time if asked to, no matter what the cost in piled-up work or stress.

7. The Hurrier.

The Hurrier is a person who manages to combine a wide range of activities in a short space of time. Everything they do is done at a quick pace: they move quickly, talk quickly, think quickly. They are multi-talented and never say No to any job that comes their way even if they move on to something more interesting before they finish it. They are the human equivalent of the Hare in Aesop's fable.

8. The Rebel.

Rebels are life's fighters. They believe that time is something to be challenged and beaten. They thus like to run late for deadlines, coming to life in the tension this creates and knowing that they will beat it in the end. They push time to the limit. They embody the sentiments of Edna St Vincent Millay who wrote: "My candle burns at both ends; it will not last the night. But, ah, my foes and oh, my friends: it gives a lovely light."

9. The Wanderer.

Wanderers are people who enjoy the freedom to do what they like. In organizational settings, this can cause a problem. They may not be totally committed to the work ethic and may go at their own speed which makes them appear lazy. On the other hand, Wanderers are far more in tune with the pace of the world and may achieve a far higher level of contentment than the rest of us.

When you know the kind of Time Traveller you are, you can make adjustments in your plans to iron out the features that don't serve you well and enhance the ones that do. That's the secret of successful Time Travel!

#### About the author

Eric Garner runs ManageTrainLearn, the site with the biggest and most original range of management training materials on the Internet.

<http://www.managetrainlearn.com>

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# 21 Creating a Sense of Accomplishment by Kevin Stacey

One of the biggest producers of stress is going to bed feeling like you accomplished nothing all day but spin your wheels. Anxiety is sure to arise after an unproductive day where tasks are beginning to accumulate. When that happens, it is almost impossible to relax and shut off the world for the night.

On the other hand, when we end the day with a sense of accomplishment, we can exhale, breathe deeply, relax and sleep soundly. Our minds are free to focus on other pursuits, and we wake up feeling re-charged, in balance and ready to face another day.

By implementing a few simple time management strategies, you can create a sense of accomplishment every day, no matter how often you are interrupted or side-tracked by other people:

Divide your daily activities list into two columns: offensive and defensive. The items on the offensive side of the column are tasks on your to-do list. They may be projects with a looming deadline, or they may be usual, predictable activities. The items on the defensive side of the column are reactionary tasks, such as responding to crises, interruptions, voice-mails and e-mails. Your lists will vary greatly according to your industry and how much autonomy you have in planning your day and allocating your time.

Review your list of offensive items. Ask yourself, “What is one task that I can complete today, or make significant progress towards completing, that will make me feel better about myself, my day, my job, or my work ethic? What achievement would make this day a success?” This task may not be the one you want to do. In fact, it may be the one you have been procrastinating on the most.

Commit to spending a defined amount of focused time on the item you selected. If it’s realistic to complete the entire task that day, firmly resolve to work on it for the entire day until it is finished. If it’s a long-term project that you can’t realistically complete in a day’s time, give it a minimum of one hour. Spending an hour on offense is an hour more than nothing! No matter how much time you allocate, make sure you fulfill the commitment. Use a stopwatch to time yourself and turn it off every time you get interrupted. You will quickly see how fast your offensive work becomes defensive reacting.

If you can, leave your workstation and “hide” in an empty cubicle or conference room. If you’re uncomfortable saying no to others and cutting off interruptions at the start, try working in a place where you can’t be interrupted during your offensive time. If that’s not possible, turn off the phone, close the door, shut down your email or put on headphones to give yourself some uninterrupted work time. When you have to push others away in order to get your work done, remind yourself that this will help you relax tonight and feel like your day was a success.

Almost everyone can go on the offensive for at least some part of the day. Some of us may have to arrive earlier or stay later when there is no one else around. Others may have to take more drastic measures like making themselves scarce in an alternative location, or directly telling co-workers, “I’m trying something different, and I’m not going to be available from 10–11 am. Thanks in advance for your support.” Many people will feel some initial discomfort when they stop acting defensively and start proactively managing their time. But remember, it’s only when the pain of the old way supercedes the discomfort of the new way that change happens. However, if nothing changes nothing changes. So, what are you going to change?

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#### About the Author

Kevin Stacey helps companies and professionals achieve maximum productivity and effectiveness through stress management and time management training. He is available to speak on these topics. For more information visit <http://www.TrainRightInc.com> or call 1-800-603-7168.

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## 22 No Room in the Bank by Steve Goodier

Is your life full and busy? If you're like me, maybe it is TOO busy. Sometimes I fill my life so full doing things I think I SHOULD do, I don't have time for the things I WANT to do, even if some of those things are important. It seems that I have a thousand deadlines to meet, and too often I can't find enough time to write, I skip my exercise routine, or I neglect uninterrupted time spent solitude and meditation.

But it helps to remember a story about a young girl and her bank.

The little girl's father had just given her a silver dollar to put into her bank. She excitedly ran off to her room to "deposit" the coin. However, in a few minutes she returned and handed the silver coin back to her father.

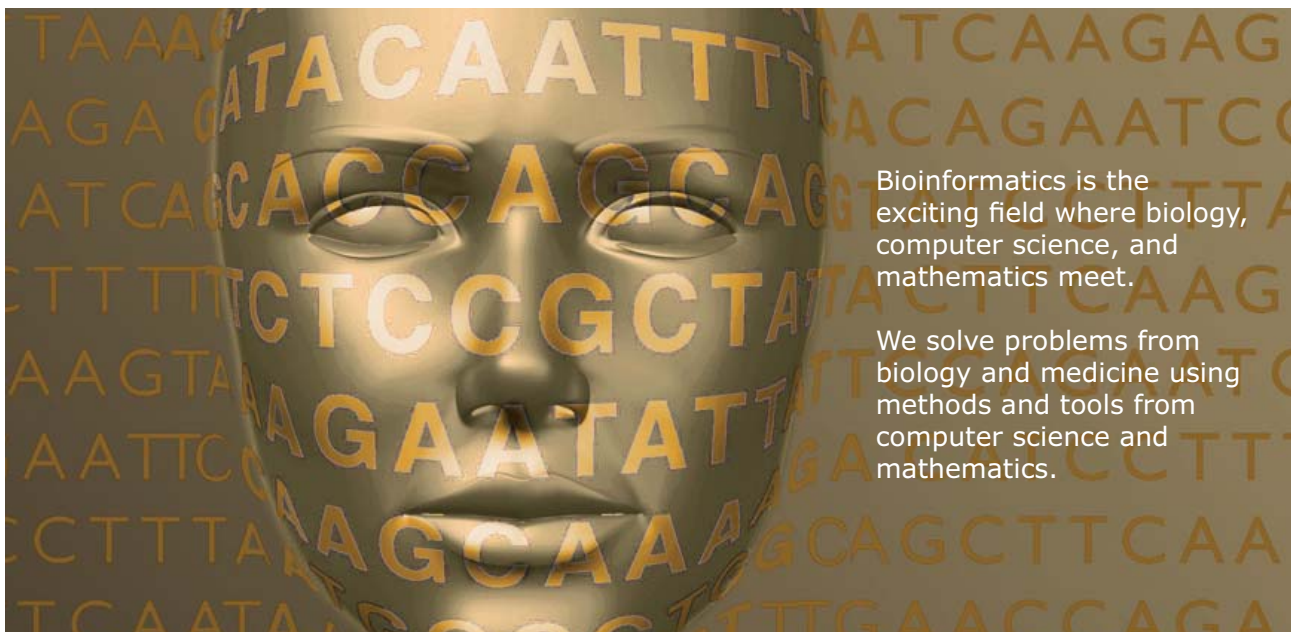
"Daddy," she said sadly, "here's your dollar back. I can't get it into my bank."

"Why not?" her concerned father asked.

"It's too full," she said, obviously disappointed.



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Her father accompanied her back to her room and, sure enough, her bank was too full to accept even one more coin. It was stuffed with pennies.

If your life ever like that bank? So full of errands, obligations and activities of no lasting value, that there simply is no room left for what is truly important – the silver dollars?

Author Grenville Kleiser once said, “To live at this time is an inestimable privilege, and a sacred obligation devolves upon you to make right use of your opportunities. Today is the day in which to attempt and achieve something worthwhile.”

Have you made room for a few large coins in your bank; for something you believe to be worthwhile? If not, you may have to take out a few pennies, but I suspect you will never know they are gone.

#### About the author

Steve Goodier holds a B.A. in anthropology and sociology (New Mexico State University) and an M.Div. degree from Emory University. He is an ordained United Methodist minister, district superintendent in the Rocky Mountain Conference UMC, and the author of numerous books about personal development, motivation, inspiration, and making needed life changes.

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<http://stevegoodier.blogspot.co.uk/2009/07/no-room-in-bank.html>

## 23 Reflection and Renewal by Jim Clemmer

“Nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought.” – Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

During the 18th century, two explorers set out with small flights of ships to find the fabled Northwest Passage that cuts through the Arctic Circle across the top of North America connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. It was widely agreed that the first to discover this elusive passage to China and India would find fame and fortune. Captain John Smith was bold and impatient. He believed that speed was critical to winning the race against the competition led by Captain Henry Jones.

Captain Smith and his crew made record time through the ice-filled waters. They rarely consulted their charts and maps. They took only quick, sextant sightings to plot their position. They had no time or patience for such nice-to-do activities, since they were too busy sailing their ships.

Meanwhile, Captain Jones and his crew kept a brisk pace, but took regular time out to check their progress against what little information was available in these vast, uncharted waters. When they encountered natives, they befriended them and spent days learning how to communicate and then probing for their understanding of this frozen land and sea. They also studied the sea currents and charted wind directions. The captain and his officers met frequently to pool their information, debate what it all meant, and decide what direction they should take.

Had Captain Smith seen this, he would have laughed heartily. He was hundreds of miles ahead and making great time. But there was one small problem – he was heading into a deadly trap. He had ventured far down a sea-lane that looked like an open passage. Had Captain Jones known where Smith and his crew were, he could have told them that it was a dead end, the sea was about to freeze over there, and they were in the most desolate, God-forsaken place in the Arctic. Jones and his ship sailed steadily onward. As the seas froze, they wintered over in a well-protected area that had a good food supply. The next year, they found the Pacific Ocean – and their fame and fortune. The speedy Captain Smith and his crew were never heard from again. Decades later, their frozen bodies and smashed ships were discovered by other explorers mapping the region.

This fictional story illustrates a major problem we encounter again and again in our work with individuals, teams, and organizations trying to move to higher levels of performance. It's the problem of balancing the speed and pace of daily life or operations, with periodically stepping back to make sure we're heading in the right direction. Going nowhere in a hurry is a timeless leadership issue that's been with us for centuries. As the pace of change quickens, it's easier to fall into this age-old trap of confusing busyness with effectiveness.

Stepping back, taking time out, assessing our direction and effectiveness, reflecting on our progress, is as rare as a proud man asking for directions. Here are a variety of perspectives showing how central reflection is, to growing and developing:

"The most excellent and divine counsel, the best and most profitable advertisement of all others, but the least practiced, is to study and learn how to know ourselves. This is the foundation of wisdom and the highway to whatever is good." – Pierre Charron, 16th century French philosopher, *Of Wisdom*

"We forge gradually our greatest instrument for understanding the world – introspection. We discover that humanity may resemble us very considerably – that the best way of knowing the inwardness of our neighbors is to know ourselves." – Walter Lippmann, Pulitzer Prize winning American journalist and author

"Self-reflection is the school of wisdom." – Baltasar Gracián, 17th century Spanish writer

"With self-knowledge we lay the groundwork for the inner life without which we're slave to chance and circumstance." – Vincent Barry, *The Dog Ate My Homework: Personal Responsibility – How We Avoid it and What to do About it*

"Self-reflection is the first key to becoming a leader...leaders must be self-directed and self-reflective, listening to their inner voice and taking direction from their values and vision." – Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith, *Learning to Lead: A Workbook on Becoming a Leader*

Like the woodcutter who's too busy chopping to stop and sharpen his ax, we get caught up in a frantic pace that may be taking us to the wrong destination. In 1891, the Anglo-Irish playwright and author, Oscar Wilde, wrote, "We live in the age of the overworked, and the under-educated; the age in which people are so industrious that they become absolutely stupid." Over 100 years later the tradition of industrious stupidity continues. If we're not paying close attention, we can get caught running flat out with our head down. We can race down dead-end roads and right over a cliff. We were too busy running to watch the signs or stop and look at a map.

#### About the author

Jim Clemmer has been writing and speaking about leadership, change, team, and organization effectiveness for over 30 years. His extensive research, broad experience with hundreds of organizations and thousands of people, and deep understanding of these topics makes him an internationally recognized leader in the field. Beyond his seven books, he's written hundreds of columns and articles for newspapers and magazines.

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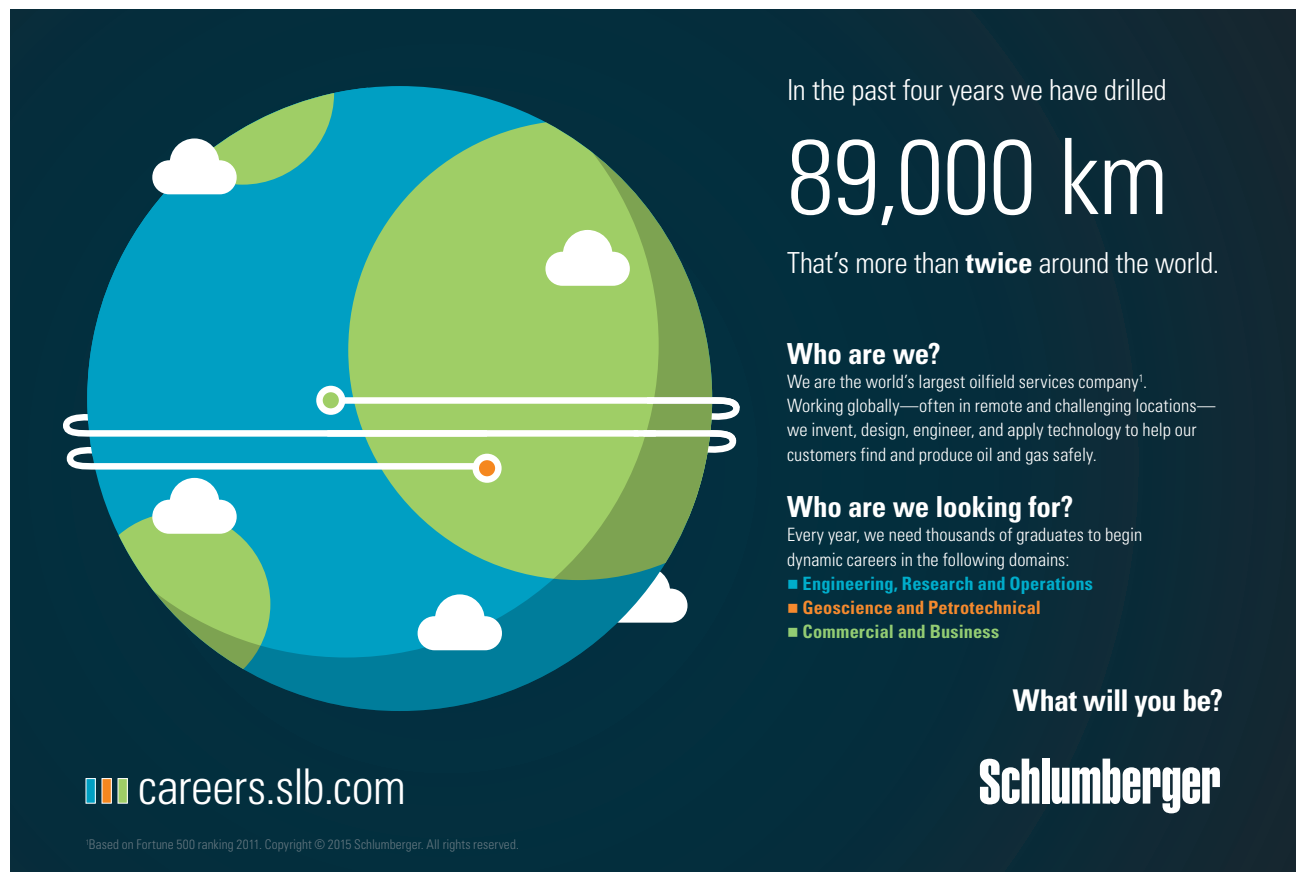
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## 24 The Stopwatch Doesn't Lie by Kevin Stacey

The day flew by. The day dragged on and on. You finished your “To Do” list with time to spare. You worked all day, yet accomplished nothing. Even though every day has the same 24 hours, our perception of how much time we have varies constantly. If you can't quite figure out where the time in your day goes, try putting yourself under the scrutiny of the stopwatch for one day. I call this exercise, “The stopwatch doesn't lie.” The goal is to use an objective measure to find out how you really spend your time.

For this experiment, the only tools you need are a stopwatch, a pen and some paper. Start out by choosing one item on your “To Do” list that you want to focus on that day. It may be preparing a presentation, writing a proposal, organizing files or anything else you need to accomplish that requires some dedicated, focused time. When you begin working on the task, start the clock. The minute you are distracted and lose focus, stop the clock. Write down how much time you spent on the task. Repeat this throughout the day every time you stop and start the project. Anything that breaks your concentration requires you to stop the clock, including answering a phone call, checking email, responding to a crying child or simply daydreaming at your desk. At the end of the day, add up the actual time you spent on the designated task.

What was the result? Were you shocked by how little time you actually spent on this task that was supposed to be a priority? How many times were you interrupted? How much time did you spend attending to distractions? Did you get dizzy from the constant stopping and starting of the clock?

This exercise is often both frustrating and illuminating. It can be frustrating because, despite the fact that you felt you were working all day, the stopwatch says you weren't productive. It's also illuminating because you seek in black and white just how you are spending your time. Since the stopwatch doesn't lie, you can't pretend you spent a whole day focused on your task when in reality it was only forty-five minutes.

Don't be surprised to find that you spent much less time on something than you thought. The experiment often reveals that although you were at your desk all day, you were busy responding to interruptions, distractions and other people's concerns rather than focusing on your own priorities. Once you complete this exercise a few times, you will have a much better sense of how you spend your time and how you might organize your day for increased productivity.

To stay motivated, look at your time breakdown at the end of each day and find a sense of accomplishment in the time you spent focused on a task. Maybe you didn't finish it, but if you spent several focused hours working on it, that is an accomplishment. If you spent too much time being distracted, acknowledge that and use it to set a new goal for the next day. The goal may be as simple as spending ten more minutes of focused time on a project. You can increase this amount every day until you find a rhythm where you are carving out focused time and learning how to handle distractions efficiently. The new sense of accomplishment you will soon feel at the end of each day will provide motivation and energy for the next day.

You've all heard the expression that time is the great equalizer, meaning we all have the same number of hours in a day. How we manage those hours determines whether we remain equal with everyone else or rise to greater success. So take out the stopwatch and monitor your day every once and while. If you don't objectively measure time now and again, how do you know how you're spending it?

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#### About the Author

Kevin Stacey helps companies and professionals achieve maximum productivity and effectiveness through stress management and time management training. He is available to speak on these topics. For more information visit <http://www.TrainRightInc.com> or call 1-800-603-7168.

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# 25 7 Rules of Extreme Time Management for CEOs by Thomas Cox

In today's business world, the old time management techniques are no longer enough. With the increasing pace of change, the pressures of downsizing and the growing expectation of instant communication and fast responsiveness, the tools and practices you used to manage your time are outdated. Here are seven rules for extreme time management that will put you back in control of your time and your life.

## 1. Know Why You're Changing

What's the first step in seizing control of our time? According to Brenda Buratti of Right Now Communications, who helps CEOs achieve "Extreme time management for a 26/7 world," you first have to know why you're trying to make the change.

Our time management habits are habits – and habits change only with difficulty. You'll be much more effective when you have a powerful "why" – say, wanting to see your own kids as they're growing up – to keep you going.



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## 2. Keep a Time Log – and Analyze It

Once you know why you're changing, you have to get off of auto-pilot and become "mindful." Habits are "automatic behaviors" and cost almost nothing in terms of willpower or attention. (That's why good habits are such allies, and why bad habits are so insidious.) Most of us allocate our time without really noticing it, and we are terrible at accounting for where our time really went. So, "write down everything," says Brenda. "Every minute counts. Sometimes increasing your efficiency comes from finding five, five-minute segments that you can re-purpose." You must keep the time log in real-time, as you go through your day. Don't try to fill it in once every couple of hours based on your memory of what you did – really track where every minute goes.

Once you've kept the log for at least a few days, Brenda suggests you look for "unique time wasters" – the most common and wasteful are:

Ineffective Meetings

Interruptions

Low-Value Tasks

Bad Email Discipline (see separate article [here](#))

Executives hate many of their meetings, and no wonder. Too many are poorly run, go too long and result in neither decisions nor actions. (Learn how to make your meetings more effective.)

Dilbert explores the nature of bad meetings.

If your meetings are like this – get out of them or change them.

Interruptions are remarkably destructive of effective work. If you get a five minute interruption, log it. When your log reveals you're having ten of those a day, you're starting to see what's stealing your time.

## 3. Ask the "Four Vital Questions"

Brenda recommends asking yourself these "Four Vital Questions":

What are your top priorities? (Often our tasks and time-use habits still support last year's priorities.)

What's the best use of your time to support those priorities? (De-prioritize the tasks that support low-priority goals.)

What are your truly vital tasks – the ones that only you can do? (Newly promoted executives are notorious for holding on to old tasks they should no longer be doing.)

What's changing in your world that affects how you spend your time? (The world is changing faster and faster – and your business has to respond, so you have to respond also. If you ever hear the words “because that's the way we've always done it,” treat it as a red flag.)

Each of your answers reveals previously hidden opportunities to reclaim time.

#### 4. Eliminate Tasks

One interim CIO of my acquaintance, upon taking a new role, would turn off all reports coming out of the IT department. Then he would selectively turn back on only those reports that someone complained about not getting. Find a way to do something similar with your work.

As Marc Lesser puts it in his book *Less: Accomplishing More by Doing Less*, you really can eliminate a surprisingly large number of tasks, but you'll never do it until you challenge yourself and challenge your process. People working on auto-pilot literally cannot do this.

Brenda had a client who was bitterly unhappy with her workload. Her time log revealed lots of trivial, almost clerical tasks. She literally didn't realize until she saw it in her time log, how much non-management work she had taken on or retained. These were largely 5 to 15 minute tasks.

Next, the client delegated or just stopped doing these small tasks.

With Brenda's coaching on this single area, this executive freed up nearly 10 hours a week.

#### 5. Destroy Interruptions

The study of human effectiveness has found that any interruption will break your concentration, lowering your productivity for anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes. (The conceit of younger workers that they are good at “multi-tasking” is provably false – they're no better at resisting the productivity-destroying effects of interruptions than their parents or grandparents.)

Brenda suggests: Turn off the email notification chime – that change alone can save you an hour a day.

Identify with the time log the interruptions – and the interruptors, the people – that are most frequently breaking into your concentration. For the people who need a lot of your face time, schedule that face time so they don't need to interrupt you to get their needs met.

Some people have email chime, telephone calls, a chat window open and people dropping by. This combination of interruptions will chop up your attention and prevent you from gathering focus and being effective. (Still think you can multi-task effectively? Check yourself out here.)

6. Schedule Visioning and Strategy Time

Block out at least a half day each week to slow down and think about where you're going. This is the most powerful time we may spend all week, yet it's the first time we give up to do low-value high-urgency tasks.

7. Honor Your Time

Time is the ultimate non-renewable resource. Honor it. Spend it on purpose. Nobody else will respect your time more than you do.

About the author

Tom Cox is CEO at B-Studio Business Videos, Managing Consultant at Cox Business Consulting, Inc., and CEO at GrowthMaps

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# 26 The Best Way to Deal with Tight Timelines and Big Challenges

## by Kevin Eikenberry

Legendary basketball coach John Wooden said “go fast, but don’t hurry.” To finish projects and thrive under pressure you need a game plan for finishing fast, but not hurrying. Try these ideas to help make timelines, deadlines and challenges feel much more manageable.

When you watch the end of close sporting events you will eventually see two types of teams or players. One type, when behind, will start to press a little bit. They know they have a limited amount of time to reach their goal and they get stressed and their sense of urgency drives them to accelerate their efforts, scurry, and eventually rush. This hurried approach can sometimes lead to the desired results but more often creates errors and costly mistakes. Often these are errors and mistakes that wouldn’t occur under normal situations.

The other group, facing the same urgency and pressure, seems to look and act differently. They know the urgency, but they act as if this additional pressure actually makes them better – more confident and efficient. This second group typically performs better in this pressure packed situation and makes fewer errors in actions or judgment, and more often than not, wins the game.

The difference between these two groups isn’t their skills or abilities. The difference between these groups is best described by the legendary basketball coach John Wooden. He encouraged his teams to “be quick but don’t hurry.” The first group is hurrying – the second, more successful, group is quick – but facing the same situations they seem more calm and not hurrying at all.

This difference is as apparent in work groups as it is in sports teams once you take the time to consider these differences. Some people or teams are always rushing from meeting to meeting, task to task. These people are constantly reacting to situations and “putting out fires.” Many of these people will say that they like the adrenalin rush they get from this high pace high stress environment – which is good because in their haste they continue to create more fires, more reaction, and more reason to hurry.

Contrast those with people who always seem to have their wits about them. They are able to make decisions and take action quickly, but they never seem to get rattled or seem rushed. This second group seems to operate with a quiet, confident calm, even when timelines are tight and stakes are high. These people are nimble and quick, but they aren’t hurried or rushed.



As you read these descriptions I'm sure you are thinking that the later group is the more productive and effective, and you are right. The logical question then is, what can I do (or what can I do in leading others) to be quick, but not to hurry? Read on – the rest of this article gives you suggestions for making that shift.

### The Suggestions

Be prepared. Teams that are most effective in “crunch time” have practiced every situation long before the game. Similarly when you are better prepared you will be ready for whatever situation you are presented with, and therefore will be able to manage it more effectively.

Have a plan. People who don't plan argue that things never work out according to the plan – which is partly true. The value of the plan is that when things are going according to the plan, you can be proactive and stay ahead of the challenges and avoid many of the pitfalls. That planning then saves your heightened attention and effort for the parts of the plan that do change.

Focus – stop multi-tasking. Have you been daunted by the enormity of a project or task? When we think about everything we have to do, we often begin to hurry, rush or try to multitask. You will be more productive when you focus on one task at a time. A basketball team down by 20 points can only come back 2 or 3 points at a time. A soccer or hockey team can only score one goal at a time. As you complete one task and then move to the next, and you will be making more progress faster.

Think confidently. Be confident in your abilities! Remind yourself of past successes! (Here's a hint – when you have a plan and are well prepared it is easier to be confident.) Confidence is an under-valued skill off the court and playing field. When you think confidently you are taking the necessary first step towards acting with confidence.

Stay inside your sphere of influence. Remember that you can't change the world (or the other members of the project team for that matter). Focus on what you can impact. Stay inside yourself and proactively work on things that you have the ability to impact or change.

Remain positive. A positive attitude, approach and demeanor can make a big difference. When you really feel rushed, you probably aren't your most positive self. But when you feel on top of things, even if you are busy, you are more likely to be positive. Knowing this is true, you can create more positive actions by starting with more positive thoughts.

Take a deep breath. This piece of advice, given to me often by my grandfather and father is some of the best advice I've ever received, and it certainly applies in this case. Take a deep breath, refocus and move forward positively, confidently and quickly – without hurrying.

All of the suggestions above are powerful ways to improve your performance. Now that you have read the list, identify the one or two that seem most valuable or applicable to you or your team. Apply those suggestions and your performance will improve immediately and significantly.

#### About the author

Kevin Eikenberry is a leadership expert and the Chief Potential Officer of The Kevin Eikenberry Group, a learning consulting company that helps Clients reach their potential through a variety of training, consulting and speaking services. To receive your free special report on Unleashing Your Potential go to <http://www.kevineikenberry.com/uyypw/index.asp> or call us at (317) 387-1424 or 888. LEARNER.

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