

# **Article for Module 1**

## **How to Plan Your Day and Improve Your Time Management the Agile Way**

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September 8, 2021

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With Covid-19, the advancement of the tech industry and the development of hybrid teams, the digital overload is increasing and exhausting 85% of the employees. A LinkedIn survey found that: 74% of women say they were very or somewhat stressed for work-related reasons, compared with just 61% of employed male respondents. On a generational level, millennials (ages 25 to 39) were most likely to report work-related stress, at 71%. Conversely, baby boomers (ages 55) were least stressed, at 61%.

A [McKinsey research](#) that showed companies that practiced agile methods were better at adjusting during this crisis emphasized the need to become agile to improve productivity. While agile Scrum and Agile practices were designed by and for software developers, the principles can be applied to other industries beyond technology, especially to improve personal productivity.

While personal productivity can seem daunting, making small changes every week to your routine can drive significant results, reducing your total working time and making it more efficient and best of all, enjoyable. Planning your day in advance will reduce not only stress but also prevent procrastination.

Here are some steps to plan your week and improve your time-management:

1. Decide how many hours you want to work a week; that can be your “sprint” in Scrum terms.
2. Define three main objectives that you need to accomplish during the week. Simply think of the main tasks or projects you NEED to complete.
3. Now go to the details: have a list of all the tasks that you want to accomplish (aka backlog in agile)
4. Time-box in your calendar all the events and meetings that have a due date or specific timeline.
5. Prioritize those tasks based on the urgency (due date) and importance (are they linked to your objectives?). Sometimes we prioritize based on first in, first out, or based on the urgency of others. Define your own priorities in advance.
6. Add time estimates to your tasks to get a better sense of your workload. Make sure to include everything you need to accomplish the task: the total time for

writing an email, for example, includes writing it, reviewing it and sending it. If you don't plan time for all three steps, you are overestimating your calendar.

Now that you have your baseline for the week. The trick is not to plan every day but to organize the workload by day. This way, you are agile enough to adapt to any changes, delays, or new tasks. Here is how:

1. On Sunday evening, select the tasks you are going to do on Monday. If you already assigned time estimates, you can plan the maximum number of tasks that you can actually do without going over the number of hours you want to work.
2. Make sure again the tasks are organized based on the priority you set before. Arrange your tasks in the order that you want to work on them
3. Combine into a single to-do list your calendar events, meetings pending emails and tasks. Sometimes you have your own to-do list on paper, then another one online, and your team uses a different one: make sure all of them are aligned.
4. Bump to another day any not essential tasks for you to get done that day, not to push yourself to the edge.
5. Have a backlog ready with the rest of the tasks you need to accomplish during the week, so in case you finish earlier with your current list, you already have something else to work on and prevents procrastination.
6. Set a timer to know exactly how much time you spent on each activity vs. plan and to make sure you focus on one task at a time. (this is maximizing the amount of work not done in agile terms)
7. What time would you like to wrap up work? Add it to your calendar to prevent working long hours. It would help if you also considered the time for breaks, lunch and exercise. Add them to your calendar if needed (aka time-box your activities).

The key to avoiding getting frustrated in the time-management process is improving your workflow by planning doable to-do lists aligned to your priorities, having a balanced workload and being disciplined about following the to-do list. By analyzing what went wrong and what went well at the end of each week, you will be able to get the best time-management process that fits your own needs.