

# LEVERAGING **TIME**



# INTRODUCTION

In the business world, time is one of the most important assets for any organization. Unfortunately, many businesses fail to use 'time' to their advantage. Leveraging time is a strategy of using time resourcefully to pursue important goals and maximize outcomes. Time management is the day-to-day process used to leverage time for scheduling, accomplishing to-do lists and delegating responsibilities. Effective time management doesn't come naturally, it's a challenge for all of us, whether we're business people, workers, students or stay at home parents. In order to make the most out of leveraging time, individuals must be motivated and willing to make the necessary behavior changes. Successful time management doesn't mean you do more work, it means focusing on the tasks that matter most.

## BENEFITS OF MANAGING TIME

- Reduced Stress
- Increased Sense of Achievement
- Increased Flexibility and Adaptability
- Reduced Friction and Conflict
- Reduced Effort and Improved Performance



# PLANNING

To manage time effectively, one must look at the objectives and determine how to accomplish those objectives. In simple terms, planning is pre-determining a course of events. This involves realistically looking at the task ahead and mapping out what's required to accomplish the goals, then developing a reasonable timeline for completion.

Planning is an up-front investment in success. The planning process assists individuals in developing new rituals over time. It may be difficult at first, but like anything else—planning takes practice. Making small changes in your daily schedule will eventually become habits, and habits develop behavior. The result of little investments made consistently over time will produce huge results.

*Planning is an up-front investment in success.*

## FIRST THINGS FIRST MATRIX

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<b>QUADRANT 1</b> Crying Baby Kitchen Fire Some Calls	<b>QUADRANT 2</b> Exercise Vocation Planning
NOT IMPORTANT	<b>QUADRANT 3</b> Interruptions Distractions Other Calls	<b>QUADRANT 4</b> Trivia Busy Work Time Wasters

Steven Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, introduced the First Things First Matrix as a way for individuals to prioritize work aimed at long-term goals. His 2x2 matrix is simple: classify tasks as urgent and non-urgent on one axis, and important and non-important on the other axis.

Covey's approach assists individuals towards reaching their goals, at the expense of tasks appearing to be urgent, but are in reality less important.<sup>1</sup>

Quadrant 2 contains items most of us neglect—but spending time on the non-urgent, important tasks will increase overall effectiveness. Covey's method is a perfect tool to assist with one's focus on important tasks. It's tempting to handle urgent tasks all the time—but that won't leave much time for the tasks necessary for completing long-term goals.

# PROCRASTINATION—THE ROOT OF INEFFECTIVENESS

Procrastination takes the form of 'time wasters'; or actions that lead to decreased productivity. Time wasters come in all shapes and sizes. They can be physical or mental, created by you, or imposed on you by other people. The causes of procrastination are endless—but once the cause is identified, it can be resolved.

## **Perfectionism**

When tasks are fussed over long after they have been achieved to a sufficient level, the task begins to delay other issues requiring attention. Often times, perfection is not necessary to complete the task at hand and is not cost-effective to achieve.

## **Boredom**

Mundane jobs are typically put off until the last minute.

## **Hostility**

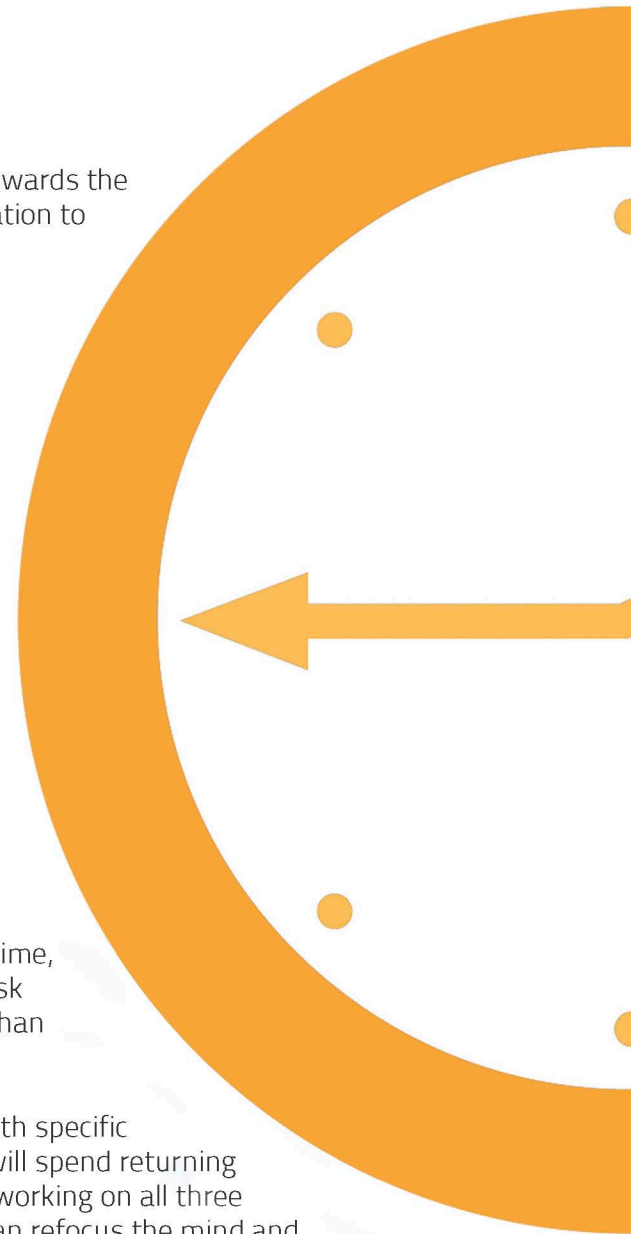
When an individual feels hostility towards the task, or towards the person who appointed the task, there is a strong temptation to delay doing it.

When faced with actions that are unpleasant, boring, complex or time-consuming, procrastination creeps in. Many times we put off completing tasks because we are unable to see the overall value. When combating procrastination, it often helps to determine whether or not the action is really important to us. Individuals are less likely to procrastinate on things that hold value. Senior management holds the responsibility of communicating the value of tasks to employees, in an effort to fight off procrastination.

# MULTITASKING

A number of scientific studies on multitasking have produced the same results—multitasking does not increase productivity. Multitasking can actually result in wasting approximately 20–40 percent of an individual's time, depending on the task at hand. Individuals who multitask will produce average results on several projects, rather than exceptional results on each one individually.

Rather than multitasking, focus on planning each day with specific times for tasks. For instance, map how much time you will spend returning calls, answering emails and doing research, rather than working on all three simultaneously. Taking short breaks in between tasks can refocus the mind and reduce stress levels. If something urgent comes up, pause to make a note of where you left off, before giving attention to another task.





# A TIME TO DECIDE

Decision-making is the most essential task a leader performs. Leaders make spontaneous decisions everyday, and each decision is based on knowledge and experience. As every leader knows, there is no magic formula to wise decision-making. Decision-making is an integral part of problem solving. If there were no problem to solve, there would be no decision to make. Decision-making follows the study of a particular problem and is followed by action to carry out the decision.

When making decisions regarding time-management, it's important to devote time towards the long-term goal. Each decision must lead towards a more effective way of managing time.



## THE POWER OF 'NO'

**NO**—The most powerful word in time management. It's vital to effectively managing time. It may not be easy to say no, but the truth is, the most important things are typically not urgent and the urgent things are often not that important for long-term success.

Your ability to say no is a very valuable component of your time management skills. Saying no determines how much of your time will be wasted on solving someone else's problems as opposed to accomplishing your goals. This isn't a selfish action—it's a constant awareness of the difference between helping people and being used by people.

Some personalities will have a difficult time saying 'no'. Rather than considering it as being mean, think of it as a commitment to your goals. It's important to have clear goals and commit to a plan where you can be assertive in your time management and decision-making abilities. Assertiveness is a skill similar to time-management—it can be learned if one commits to it. Co-workers will develop greater respect for you when clear boundaries are established. If you are on a path towards accomplishing your goals, their respect for your goals will increase.

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<sup>1</sup> Covey, Stephen. *First Things First*. London: Simon & Schuster, 1999. Print.





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