

Some Hints in Time Management

By Craig Lock

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I believe the key to effective time management is having a PLAN. Once you have done that, communicate your plans to others involved in your life (those nearest and dearest to you), or those people working with you in business.

1. Prioritise your goals. Set up the following:

* A weekly plan: Plan for a week at a time.

* A 'don't forget' list.

* A 'what now' list.

2. Focus on the important things - the things that really matter to you.

3. Throw out irrelevant bits of paper.

4. No matter what pressure you are under, try to control your stress level at all times.

5. Control interruptions (even a 'closed door' policy is not a bad thing).

6. Don't procrastinate.

7. Prepare a reminder list of essential details.

8. Plan to get the routine tasks out of the way as quickly as possible.

9. Develop routines. Ask yourself this question: can any (procedures) be eliminated or speeded up?

10. Focus on one task at a time.

N.B:

10. Pat yourself on the back each day by reviewing your accomplishments.

11. Self monitor and self evaluate your progress on the way to your goals.

12. Set and keep deadlines for yourself and others (Don't "interrupt" yourself).

13. Learn to say "no" to others' demands.

14. Slow down for success.

15. Distinguish the really urgent from the seemingly urgent. Sort out low priority work. Put it aside for later or eliminate it totally.

16. Encourage others to get to the point on the telephone or at meetings. Without being too rude, of course!

Waffle less (I love 'em), yourself!

17. Respond less formally, but with more speed, eg. a hand-written compliments slip rather than a typed letter.

18. Make time for yourself to relax; because this recharges the batteries. I must be running on Dura(not ex)Cells. All donations for free advertising gratefully received by a povertystriken (is that all?) writer!

19. Delegate for success. Ask yourself the question: Is this only something I can do? If not, to whom can the work be appropriately assigned? Is this person prepared now, or does he/she need further instruction to complete the task efficiently?

20. Provide clear and realistic expectations. Keep only the paper you need on your desk (if you are lucky enough to have a desk, that is!). Clear out irrelevant files. A tidy mind is an effective mind, but tidy desks are really rarely creative. Thank goodness I have an excuse then!

21. Communicate clearly to your sub-ordinates and co-workers. Hard if you are at the bottom of the barrel, like me! Get messages across clearly the first time.

22. Set aside time to mentally regroup, to think and to plan. Very important. Review progress regularly to see which plans are working and which ones aren't. Work with individual players and set aside time for individuals. Remember everyone is a unique individual with their own needs.

23. Have direction. Believe in yourself and what you are trying to accomplish. Review your skills periodically and pat yourself on the back with your progress to date.

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SELECTING APPROPRIATE TECHNIQUES IN TIME MANAGEMENT:

Note TM is not transcendental meditation as practised by those levitating hippies. I once had a girlfriend who hovered like a cross-English channel hovercraft. What's that got to do with the subject, I hear you asking? Nothing (absolutely "f-all") just a sign of my wandering mind.

To get back to the subject... No two people approach TM (time management) in exactly the same way. Identify a few techniques which work best for you.

There are two groups:

1. The first group of people focuses on direction

and

2. in the second are those who control the pressure in both their work and non work situations.

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TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR DIRECTION.

1. Establishing yearly, six month and three month goals and monitoring them carefully.

2. Developing a time scale for certain major accomplishments and milestones to measure progress.

3. Ensuring consistency between personal goals and coaching goals.

4. Planning for each week with an emphasis on high priority work. Ask yourself firstly, what is IMPORTANT. Then what is URGENT (eg. answering a ringing telephone "tring-a-lingo")...and the two are NOT the same.

5. Sharing plans with your colleagues; encouraging feedback and assistance.
6. Building a filing system based on key activities.
7. Preparing a reminder list of necessary details and keeping the list with you at all times.
8. Deciding to complete routine tasks quickly.
9. Assigning sufficient time to complete important projects before deadlines. Continually monitor the effectiveness of your time.
10. Segmenting (impressive word) large projects into smaller, more manageable units and using the short periods of time available during a busy day to work on these projects.
11. Setting and keeping deadlines for yourself and others using reminders for individuals who tend to be late.
12. Focusing on one task at a time by mentally establishing successful outcomes and working back to identify the details that lead there.
13. Sorting out the low-priority work and putting it aside for later or eliminating it altogether.
14. Recognising the importance of delegating work.
15. Setting limits based on realistic expectations and communicating them to the team, assistant coaches and parents.

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TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR CONTROL.

1. Concentrating on controlling demands and finding time for yourself in the midst of busy daily routines.
2. Not being afraid of controlling those demands because of imagined consequences.
3. Controlling interruptions honestly by making others aware of your need for privacy. Especially relevant for me as a very private person, er sorry, person!
4. Preventing procrastination with mental disciplining cues that encourage starting sooner. Sounds very technical!
5. Patting yourself on the back each day by reviewing

accomplishments.

6. Organising your work area to be comfortable and distractionfree.

7. Avoiding self-interruptions by locking in with self-directing messages.

8. Writing important details and developing reminder files with the details for procedures regularly used.

9. Concentrating on getting messages across clearly the first time and encouraging others to get to the point on the telephone and at meetings.

Sounds like a businessman, my "highly efficient high-powered alter-ego" writing this! Perhaps I'm a schizophrenic, like my housemate (there's another book).

10. Slowing down the seemingly "urgent" requests by stopping to think before replying. Take that onboard, Joe!

11. Finding the time for yourself and making it a part of each day's routine.

12. Responding with less formality and more speed. "Speedy Gonzalez, why don't you go home?"

13. Setting aside periods to mentally regroup, to think and plan. I do that on my daily beach walks.

14. Being sure that important papers can be located easily and quickly; throwing out irrelevant items. I try to have a big clear-out of my paper-trail mess from time to time (just ask my housemates!) I must drive them "cuckoo".

15. Slowing down when you feel pressure and thinking about your priorities. Develop your own unique programme for managing time. Is it written down? That's a good technique.

Make new habit changes - small rather than major ones. Monitor yourself; because it's very easy to slip back into old ways. Focus on your goals and need for control. Periodically analyse your time in depth. Time charts can identify the source of a specific problem (s).

BELIEVE in yourself. Self confidence is essential for successful Time Management. If you believe your days cannot be controlled, they won't be. Believe you are in charge. Remember your past successes, small though they may be... and not your setbacks. Identify your most recent

accomplishments and give yourself a pat on the back.

Build lasting habits; because routines reduce stress. Stay in control. Remember everyone has good and bad days. It's not always rational to explain. You may feel an imagined slight from a friend, or traffic jams can threaten your feelings of being in control. Have a positive "I can, I Will" attitude. With control you increase the likelihood of achieving your personal and professional goals. All Time Management techniques are related to GOALS and CONTROL. It's a matter of intelligent time use. Be honest with yourself (especially about your weaknesses) and try reaching out to others.

Explain your objectives and philosophy to others (especially your employees if are the boss or manager). They then know what is expected of them and are far more likely to co-operate with your aims. Clarify and redefine the organisations objectives. The result: Enthusiasm is increased. At all times help create conditions for optimum concentration - both in the home and at work.

Allocate a "leave me alone" time for 30 minutes each day - for thinking and planning. Run short to the point meetings with the agenda announced before meetings. This saves time if people are properly prepared. Encourage your staff to manage their time. The best way to do this is to set a good example yourself. Most of your effort should be aimed at helping people reach their potential. Are you currently realising yours?

To be successful believe, really believe in the value of your efforts. Effective management depends on your willingness to establish direction and create conditions for optimum performance by your subordinates. Have a vision (a real one) where you'd like to go, set your goals, then organise the time necessary to plan strategy to achieve them. Do not expect your employees to change a great deal.... initially at least. Your changing, growing and preparedness to learn new ways of doing things will be the best example. Remember, enthusiasm is contagious.

The art of making time work for you:

First understand our own attitudes and concepts about time. Analyse your behaviour. Ask yourself: What bad habits do you want to change? Then take time to change your bad habits. Minimise interruptions (like unannounced visitors and telephone calls). Improve your powers of concentration. Delegate effectively.

HOW TO CHANGE BAD HABITS:

Our lives consist of hundreds, even thousands of habits that occur automatically or unconsciously every day. Some are good habits and some are bad habits (eg. drivers always indicating when they make turns, drivers never indicating when they make turns ("silly old farts/buggers"), having a drink after work, biting your fingernails, scratching your 'boom', picking your nose/toenails, etc. Any behaviour we respect can become a habit, irrespective of our intentions, eg. smoking. Even problem solving, or more particularly our approach to problem solving, can become a habit.

Bad Work Habits and Changing Bad Habits:

Some more (oh no!): they could be anything from letting work pile up, wasting time, daydreaming, beginning work each day without a plan (eg. a "to do "list) etc. can be very habit forming. Not surprisingly, these habits can be very difficult to change. ERADICATE! (That sounds like a pornographic word). But change them we MUST...if we are to improve the way we manage our time... and consequently our lives.

Somerset Maugham is on record as having said, "the unfortunate thing about this world is that good habits are so much easier to give up than bad ones". The corollary (what does that big word, like "earthmover" mean?) is also true, viz/zizz, old habits are easier to cling to than new ones are to adopt. Writing on the same subject almost one hundred years ago, the famous American psychologist William James identified three important factors in learning new habits...

1. Start off the new habit with enthusiasm and commitment.
2. Practice the new habit on every possible occasion until it becomes a habit, and
3. Start the new habit as soon as possible.

Old habits are not broken overnight, nor new habits put in place quickly...it takes TIME and we need a plan to change our behaviour systematically...and this often involves a great deal of effort.

But

IT CAN BE DONE

DEVELOPING A PLAN TO CHANGE.

1. Define the bad habit you wish to change.

2. Identify your goal in outcome or result terms.
3. Ensure your outcome or result is measurable.
4. List ALL the PROBLEMS of the bad habit.
5. List all the advantages of adopting the new habit.
6. Enlist others to help and encourage you in eradicating (nice word) the bad habit.
7. Practise doing it with positive affirmations. This gives you confidence to change... and continue improving behaviours.
8. Monitor your performance...use a graph so that you can see your progress towards your goal.
9. Build in rewards for successful performance.

A final quotation that I like to end off this section...

"You cannot run away from a weakness; you must sometime fight it out or perish; and if that be so, why not now, and where you stand."

- Robert Louis Stevenson.

I hope it encourages you to change your bad habits, as it worked for me.

Manage your time and you manage your life.

Good luck!

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Craig believes in the great potential of every human being in the journey of life and loves to encourage people to share their individual (and guiding) spirits, so that they become all that they are CAPABLE of being.

The various books that Craig "felt inspired to write" are available at: <http://www.bridgeniche.com>

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