

# It's About Time: Managing Time to Increase Productivity

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Most people find themselves wishing they had more hours in the day. Even though everyone gets the same 86,400 seconds per day, it seems that some people get more done in that time than others. The secret, while simple, is not easy – it is in the way one utilizes their time. Effective time management makes all the difference.

Time management is the way we plan, organize, and use our time to do different things. It's about working smarter, not harder, to accomplish more in less time. Effective time management, especially when the crunch is on and the pressure to get things done intense, offers several benefits.

## THE PROS OF PRODUCTIVITY

First, effective time management increases productivity. By using your time effectively, you are more likely to improve your professional image as a high achiever. This, in turn, can lead to more opportunity to advance your career or your practice. Secondly, good time management skills help you by reducing stress and giving you more control over your time. This allows you to focus on doing the things that really matter, both in your practice and in your personal life.

There are several ways to improve your time management skills. An excellent first step is to identify where you're currently spending your time. Use a calendar or download an app to track everything you do for a week. Once you have collected this data, you will have a snapshot that allows you to identify time thieves. Things to look for are the interrupters such as unplanned phone calls, e-mails, or visitors that eat into your concentration and distract you from the task you are trying to complete. Once you've identified things that are stealing your time, you can make the necessary changes to prevent more theft or at least minimize it.

Another great way to better manage your time is to make a to-do list. By making a list of the things you need to accomplish, it allows you to prioritize and focus. It also helps motivate you as you make progress with the list. This leads into the importance of planning ahead. Without a plan that helps you focus your efforts on the most important tasks, you are likely to do busy work or focus on

inconsequential things. It's a good idea to spend 15 to 20 minutes at the beginning of the day or the night before to make a to-do list of any important tasks that need to be accomplished. Meditation for even five minutes can help you focus on your intentions to help you tackle your day.

#### THE EISENHOWER TIME MANAGEMENT METHOD

Once you have your to-do list, apply the Eisenhower Time Management Method. Dwight D. Eisenhower was president of the United States from 1953 until 1961. Before becoming president, he served as a general in the United States Army and as the Allied Forces Supreme Commander during World War II.

Eisenhower recognized that great time management means being effective as well as efficient. In other words, we must spend our time on things that are important and not just the ones that are urgent. He devised a system for managing his time and deciding his priorities which has become known as the Eisenhower (or 4-D) Method that basically allowed him to distinguish between what urgent and important tasks. He is quoted as saying, "I have two kinds of problems, the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent."

#### DIVIDE & CONQUER

By categorizing your tasks into a quadrant of important and not important and urgent and not-urgent, you can decide what warrants your personal attention and what should be delegated or dropped altogether. Tasks that are important and urgent fall into the do quadrant. Tasks that are important but not urgent fall into the delay or plan category. Tasks that are urgent but not important are placed into the delegate quadrant and finally, tasks that are neither important or urgent get dropped or deleted from the list.

Using this method will help you focus on the mission critical tasks. To accomplish those, try these useful tips:

Block out distractions. These may take the form of phone calls, incoming emails, visitors, and more.

Don't multitask. Focus on doing one thing at a time.

Set a time limit for accomplishing the task.

Schedule a fresh air break between tasks to clear your mind and refocus.

Don't undervalue rest and downtime. To be effective, you need both.

By following these simple principles and action steps, you will improve the way you use your time. Better time management helps you achieve more both personally and professionally.

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