



Is There Any Such Thing as Time Management?

Time is an independent dimension of life. It advances outside your sphere of influence. No matter how obsessed you become with it, time defies your management. To get more from life, instead of trying to manage time, you should focus on managing something much more important. (Reading time 180 seconds).

We can't pause, rewind, fast forward or change time in any way. Since it ignores us completely and inevitably plods forward, what do we really mean by time management?

We mean, "How do I manage myself to get more done...in less time?" and "How do I manage myself to do the most important things for my life instead of defaulting to lower priorities?" When we are late for an appointment, aren't prepared for a meeting or don't get a project done on schedule, it is not a time management problem; it is a self management problem.

When you are tempted to say, "I didn't have enough time for that" the more accurate phrase is "I didn't manage myself to get that done." If you consciously decided to blow off a low priority item in favor of something more important that's fine.

But when things that are important to a relationship or your career or income don't get done, it is rarely because you didn't have enough time. Instead it is because you chose to direct your efforts towards something less vital rather than managing yourself to complete your more important objective.

So if you want to become better at doing the most valuable things for your life in a more timely way, you don't need to become better at time management. You need to get better at self management; better at pausing, rewinding, redirecting and sometimes fast forwarding yourself...your actions, your thoughts...priorities and aspirations.

You know you can do it. Think of the early and extra effort you'll put forth to do things you are excited about...like planning for a vacation. I recently went on a 4-day fishing trip and some of the friends that joined me started buying equipment and preparing their tackle four months in advance.

And you probably have managed yourself to work late in a very focused and productive way when a FINAL-FINAL deadline is on you for some critical commitment. When you "want to" and when you perceive you "have to", you can make things happen early and quick.

How can you manage yourself to do that more consistently? How do you accomplish more of your A priorities sooner rather than consistently escaping to less important, more routine C priorities. Below are a few of many simple tips that help...but recognize them not as methods to manage your time but as methods to manage yourself.

Hit the Pause Button...and Think - Self-Managing the Big Things

The clearer you are on what you want from life the higher the probability that you will get it. It takes self-management though to distill what is often a mental fog into a clear view of what you want from life; what is most important for you today, for this month and for your entire future.

To do this, create your A-List. Expand your self discipline horizon over the next 30 days by writing down what are the must do's for the upcoming month – your "have to hit deadlines". This is the "if I don't do this, I'll get fired or people might hate me" part of the list. Put an A by each of those items.

Now write down what are the most valuable things to your career or personal life that don't have a deadline and as a result just keep getting put off. Put an A by each of those as well. Now you have your A-List of the deadline critical and life critical priorities for you to either finish or at least start this month. If you can self-manage yourself to just do this – to simply take out a piece of paper and do your thirty day A-List now, the next tip is easy.

Fast Forward to the Good Parts

Take at least two things from your A List and fast forward them to the present. Decide what is needed to just start (not finish) each of those A to dos. It probably will be as simple as making a phone call, setting an appointment or outlining an initial draft for the page, project or conversation. Write that specific for each of your two A's in your calendar on a SPECIFIC DAY this upcoming week to start on.

Hit the Play Button

Starting is the key. Once you get started, it is so much easier to self-manage to finish or continue your top priorities. Once you hit the Play button, the probability is you'll watch the rest of the movie. This sounds very simple, and it is. That's why it works to positively change your life if you elect to self manage yourself to do it – like now.

Keep in mind that your A Priorities for the next 30 days are not just about work and finances. They also include self priorities, relationship priorities and play priorities. What makes life worthwhile is meaningful achievement and enjoyment with all the important people in your life, self included.

Don't Unplug from Your A's

Self-manage yourself not to abandon your A objectives for C or lower priorities. A typical example of unplugging from your most important objectives is the seductive, seemingly justifiable escape to email. Unless your job requires it, checking and answering emails more than three or four times a day indicates a costly self management lapse. For most people email provides an easy diversion of their attention from the more demanding mental task of starting or staying with an important A project.

There are lots of other similarly distracting, easy to engage C's that offer themselves up to you every day. Self-manage yourself to avoid unplugging from your A's to pursue those mostly unproductive C's. And don't over stress about the B's; you'll get to them on your schedule and will adjust for new A's as they pop up.

I'm Going to Manage Myself Today!

So don't worry about managing time today. Instead say to yourself, "I'm going to manage myself to take the first step on the treadmill...today", or "to create a personal budget" or "to do one thing to start the key project due at the end of the month."

And in the future, when you are baffled by why you are not getting enough things done on time, or at all, don't look at the clock...look in the mirror. Then smile. You have met your solution. Manage it well today.

Jim Bird
Publisher

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Quotes by Quintus Horatius Flaccus

"Why do you hasten to remove anything which hurts your eye, while if something affects your soul you postpone the cure until next year?"

"He has the deed half done who has made a beginning."

"Rule your mind or it will rule you."

"Mix a little foolishness with your serious plans. It is lovely to be silly at the right moment."

Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65 BC – 8 BC) was a renowned Roman Satirist and Lyrist.

Waldo Emerson's handyman, and helped him edit the Dial, for which he wrote extensively.

e-tip

Self-discipline like any habit is developed only with practice. Choose a time waster to eliminate or new beneficial behavior to initiate. Then commit and practice making that change for the next 7 days. If it's getting an earlier start on your day, commit yourself to getting up 30 minutes earlier every day for the week. Pat yourself on the back every day you do. At the end of the week decide if you will extend that self-discipline commitment forward. At the end of a month, chose a new one to start.

Work-Life Balance Lessons

By Beth DiBattista

If somebody had told me five years ago that I could do my job in fewer hours every day, I never would have believed them.

Then I had a child.

Now, as I approach the birth of my second child (a daughter we will be enjoying by the time this is published), I realize that it is possible to get more done in less time – as long as you work smarter. With a toddler waiting for me at home and a pregnancy that has depleted some of my energy, I had to find a way to work more efficiently. Here's what I've learned:

Tune out the critics. Every workplace includes people who pass judgment on what time colleagues arrive or leave work. In reality, they don't know how much you accomplish every day, whether or not you worked at home for three hours the night before, or if you're dealing with extenuating circumstances. The only opinion that matters is your supervisor's.

Tap the wisdom of others. While pregnant the first time, I asked many Turner moms in the Albany and New York City offices for their advice on what was to come. Hearing about their experiences and learning about what did or didn't work for them helped me feel better prepared for my new role as a working mother. I continue to view these women as an important part of my support system.

Embrace your neighborhood deli. We eat carryout food for dinner far more than we used to, but the convenience is worth it. When my husband and I get home from work, we can focus on feeding and bathing our daughter instead of cooking and cleaning up after dinner. It makes a huge difference.

Draw the line. Because Turner employees are very committed, it can be hard to leave at a reasonable time to spend a few hours with family or friends. It's important to understand that the place won't fall apart when you leave. If you constantly give without taking time for yourself – including your vacation – you'll become resentful. That's never good.

Take care of yourself. Even though my due date is just two weeks away, I still walk the dogs every night so we all get some exercise. Take just 20 minutes for yourself – everybody can find 20 minutes.

Work with the best. I realize that not everybody can select their colleagues, but when you're part of a great team, you have an advantage. I can count on my team to do their jobs and to do them well. They help make it possible for me to get the work-life balance I need – and I try to do the same for them.

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