



# Making time work for you

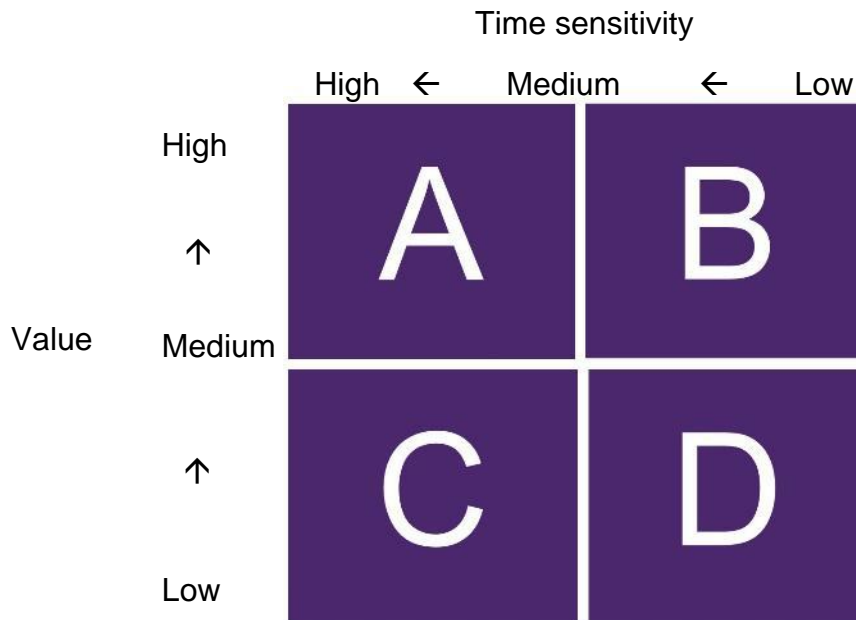
Participant guide

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## Advanced prioritization grid



Section “A”: High-Value, High Time-Sensitivity. This is the area of your “To-Do” list that you highlight and underline... these items must be completed TODAY because they are both urgent and important. This area could include an unforeseen crisis that has arisen at the last second. Or, needing to deal with an upset customer on the phone because they are demanding to speak to you now. At home, it could include dealing with a child that is ill or hurt. The downside is that when you spend a lot of unplanned time in this section, reacting to emergencies, you may not have the time to prevent them.

Section “B”: High-Value, LOW Time-Sensitivity. These are the BIG ROCKS in your schedule. These are the activities that are very important ... and they do NOT have to be done today. This quadrant allows you the time to think, plan and invest; as well, it includes prevention: preparing for and preventing possible emergencies. At work, this could be working on a key project that is not due yet or enhancing your professional skills. For executives, it could be developing strategies or procedures that will transform the effectiveness of your staff. At home, it could include an annual medical, proper nutrition and exercise, and quality time with family.

Section “C”: LOW-Value, High Time-Sensitivity. Items in this section are the root cause of the statement, “I worked so hard today, but don’t feel like I got anything done!” This section is filled with distractions; things we feel compelled to do by self or others. Many times, we confuse urgency with high value, and these activities here might seem important because they must get done RIGHT NOW. But, in fact, little is accomplished because we are doing too many unimportant things. At work, this could be some mail, drop in visitors, scheduled meetings that are not necessary for us to attend, answering all the phone calls immediately. At home, this might be seeing a movie, or a telemarketing telephone call.

Section "D": LOW Value, LOW Time-Sensitivity. These are all the "time wasters" in the day; things that are unproductive. Things like chatting on the phone with a friend, complaining, gossiping, or surfing the internet at work. As well, there are less important tasks, which eventually need to be done, but they don't need to be done right now. So why would we do a less important task right now? There are two reasons. The first reason is that we might lack the ability to prioritize, and genuinely not realize that we should be doing something else more important. The second reason is that we are deciding to avoid doing something more important through PROCRASTINATION.

## Prioritization guidelines

These guidelines help to provide a discipline in scheduling.

Carryovers:

- A items should be done on the same day its scheduled
- B items should be deferred a maximum of two times, should be upgraded to an A
- C and D items deferred more than three times should be upgraded to the next level

Not all A items are created equal:

- Assess impact
- Ask: “What happens if it is not completed today?”
- TAP requestor in determining what should be an A

## TAP: task assessment for prioritization

1. The task assignee and requestor have equal responsibility and mutual benefit to provide input to determine rating of a task.
2. This co-assessment dialogue should cover:
  - a. Impact – if it is done vs. not done then what would happen?
  - b. Time constraints
  - c. Detail level requirements
  - d. Stakeholders
3. Leading this dialogue allows us to own our schedule.

Think about it: What types of questions would you ask the requestor to assess importance?

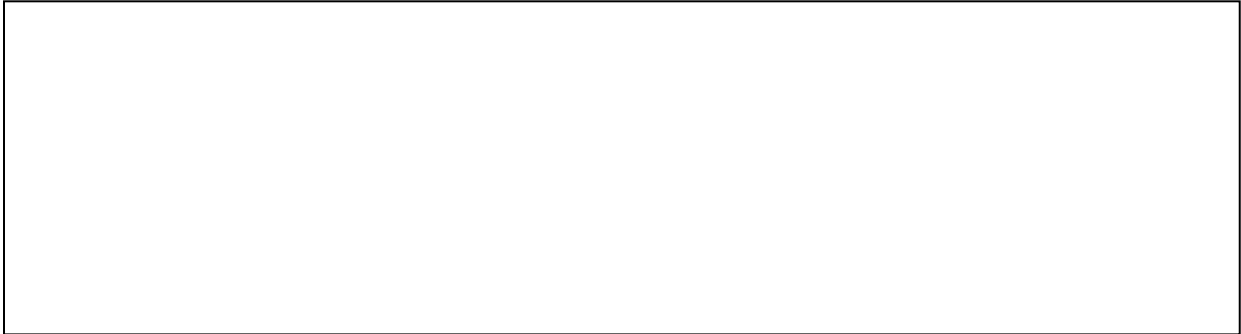
## Activity: prioritizing your “to-do” list

1. Write the name of the tasks you must accomplish below.
2. Decide the priority of each task, based upon their “Value” and “Time-Sensitivity”.  
The more valuable and the more time-sensitive a task is, the greater a priority the task is likely to be. You will likely decide to complete the higher-priority tasks first.
3. Then, summarize your TOP 3 Priorities, top 3 time emergencies, and top 3 time wasters. Consider which section they might belong to. A? B? C? D?
4. NOW, PLAY A GAME... what time can you start on your #1 MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITY? Keep track of this as your day progresses.


Name of task or activity + priority

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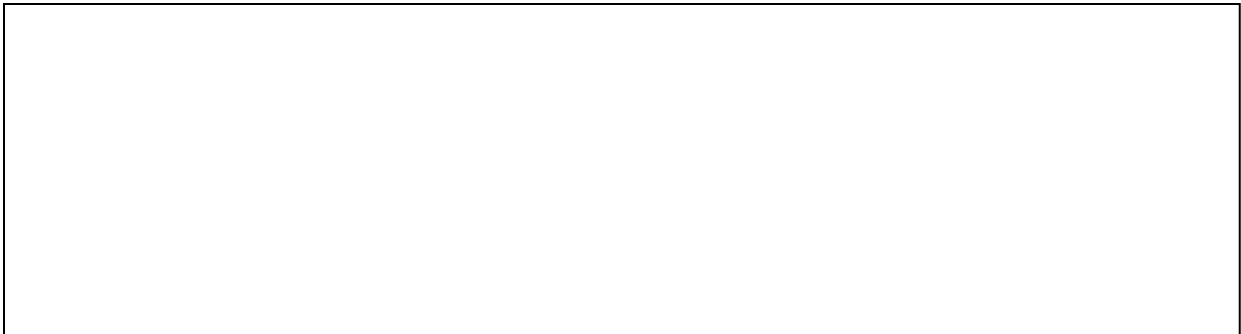
What are my TOP 3 priorities for the day?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their top 3 priorities for the day.

What are the most common problems that tend to throw off my schedule?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write the most common problems that tend to throw off their schedule.

What are the TOP 3 Time WASTERS of the day?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write the top 3 time wasters of the day.

# Managing interruptions

## Tips to manage phone interruptions

- Filtering through OBSTACLES: If you can, have the receptionist screen your calls to determine if they are high value before you take them. If you don't have an assistant to do this, let it go to your voicemail. A smart caller who sincerely needs a callback will leave a message detailing the reason that the call is high value. Then you can decide. Lastly, your voicemail message can say "Please feel free to email as well, since I read email throughout the day."
- Begin the call in a business-like way to reduce socializing. If someone comes onto the phone and says "Hey Bob! How was the weekend?" You answer in a professional manner, "Fine, thank you. James, how can I help you?"
- Get to the point quickly. Set a limit for how long you are going to talk. Tell the person "I have two minutes to chat before I go into a meeting." Determine the purpose of the call up front and decide if it really is as important as the person says. If not...
- Diplomatic deferral: If you've determined it's not urgent, gently ask: "Can I get back to you?"
- Time your calls. Lots of people take too long in their conversation by socializing and not getting to the point. Did you take 10 minutes to say what you could have said in two minutes? Find out. Watch the clock as you speak... or use a timer of some sort to keep track. You'll be amazed
- Develop client and colleague expectations. Have your voicemail say, "I will return all calls between 11-12, and 4-5pm." People want to go to lunch or go home, so they will naturally be faster

## Diplomatic deferral

The 'diplomatic deferral' is a way to diplomatically defer interruptions and protect your time.

Start with ...

*"Hello, I am in the midst of a..."*

Or

*"Hello, I am just about to..."*



Then add any of the following ...

*“Could I call you back in XXXX?”*

*“And I only have a short window, is this quick or would you like to reconnect later?”*

## Tips to manage in-person interruptions

- Be direct. Ask them what the purpose of their visit is
- Keep your back to the door
- Meet in your colleague’s office. It is easier for YOU to get up and leave
- If possible, try not to sit down in your colleague's office
- If possible, try not to invite them in
- If possible, keep your guest chair filled with paperwork
- Politely excuse yourself from a conversation that is going on too long

## Tips on managing email

- You can coach your team and clients to highlight urgent matters with the red exclamation mark
- Minimize your email on your computer screen so that you do not receive any “new message” indications that you can react to
- If possible, remove yourself from group info distribution lists, and have someone else summarize them
- Don't answer an email with a one-word "Thanks" message. If you wouldn't take the time to hand-write the word "Thanks" in a letter, and then walk down to the mailbox and physically mail it, just decide not to respond. Try not to add your "2 cents" to the \$100 problem of email overload. Unless, of course, the other person prefers that you respond
- If you want someone to let you know when they have read an email, save them the trouble by selecting “Auto Respond” in your email system. When the person reads the email, the computer will send you a message to indicate this
- Many email systems include a feature which allows you to separate the bottom of the screen to display the first few lines of an email. This saves a few seconds by allowing you to quickly estimate the value of the email without opening it fully
- Review your email in chunks, rather than pausing to open each email as it pops up. Although the temptation to react might be great, you may find that your time is used more efficiently if you set aside a block of time and do it all at once

## Tips on saying “no” to a request

Remember, “No” is a complete sentence. Nothing more is required.

Don’t sabotage your “No” by offering excuses. In sales, an experienced salesman WANTS to hear objections. Objections are excuses. If the prospective client can tell the salesman why they don’t want to buy now, the salesman now knows what say to convince them otherwise. Once the objections are answered successfully, the excuses have been removed. The prospective client has no reason not to buy the product RIGHT NOW. The same goes with offering reasons why you said “No”. The more you explain your reasoning, the more information you give the “salesman” (the person asking you for a favor), and they will be able to shoot down your objections. Don’t feed them the ammunition to shoot down your objections.

Check your schedule, BEFORE you say “yes”. How do you know if you've got time? Honor yourself by developing the habit of looking at your calendar and the timetable for your upcoming projects. Be realistic about what is possible for you to accomplish, based on the workload you have already accepted. This is a simple habit to develop, and it is a great preventative habit to keep you out of the crisis of "too much work, not enough time".

If you can’t say “No”, ask to get back to them later. If you know you are a passive personality that wants to avoid letting people down, get yourself off the hook. Buy yourself some time by saying, “That sounds interesting, but I’ll need to check my schedule first.” Once you’ve gained your composure and feel that you won’t buckle under pressure, return the call, and explain “I’m sorry, but I have another commitment.”

Each time you say NO, you’re helping a teammate grow. People can't become champions unless they have the opportunity to learn new skills, and you are giving someone a wonderful opportunity to handle a "character-building opportunity". This tool is not to be used to avoid your responsibilities; delegate when it is appropriate.

Sandwich your “No” between 2 Positive statements. Denying a request might make the person feel very let down. A great way to respond, while still maintaining your assertiveness, is to offer a POSITIVE statement, followed by the "No" (or negative statement), followed by another POSITIVE. Instead of saying "I don't want to help with your committee," you might choose instead to say: "Thank you so much for thinking of me. I really believe in your committee, and I'm sure that you are going to accomplish great things. Unfortunately, I am not able to commit the time right now to devote to being part of the group, but I am honored that you have considered me."

## Miscellaneous time management tips

- Use only one calendar or time-management system, and record all of your activities on it. If you are using multiple systems to keep track of your schedule, you run the risk of creating conflicts
- Every time you look at/pick up a piece of paper, keep track of it by putting a mark on it with a pen or highlighter. Try not to handle a piece of paper more than twice.
- Put an egg timer on the desk; every 15 minutes keep a log of what you were doing at that exact moment. This will help you understand where the time is going
- Some people say, "It helps to have clutter all over my desk; that way, I won't lose anything!" Actually, clutter is distracting. You may want to keep an important piece of paper on top of the pile so that you don't forget it. You can rest assured... the paper won't let you forget because it will distract you every time you look at it. Deal with it immediately or mark it in your calendar to deal with later and file it now.

## Tips on procrastination

- Focus only on the smallest unit of time that is comfortable. Just do 5 minutes of work
- Resolve to simply get started
- Take a ridiculously small unit of action, so small it makes you laugh
- Ask "What bad things will happen by doing this?" "What great things will happen by doing this?" "How great will you feel about yourself by doing this?"
- Book a small time slot to take initial action. Decide "I will work from 10:00 – 10:15."
- Use your self-esteem and self-worth as leverage to take action. Intelligent, proactive, successful people, with a healthy self-image, would not put this off a moment longer
- Tony Robbins says: "TAKE MASSIVE, IMMEDIATE ACTION"
- Never allow fatigue, disappointment, or fear to dissuade you from your course
- Be accountable, to someone whose love and respect are so important to you, that the pain of disappointing them is far greater than the pain of taking action