It's About Time

What is Time Management?

Effective time management is about getting **more done** with your **available time**.

80:20 Rule
- 80% unfocussed effort generates only 20% results
- 80% results achieved with only 20% effort

Top 5 Time Management Mistakes

1. **Failing to Keep a To-Do List**
Trick is to *prioritize* tasks on your list.
A-F coding system (A is important, F is unimportant).
2. **Not Setting Personal Goals**
Essential to give a destination and vision to work toward.
Where will you be in the next 6 or 12 months?
3. **Failing to Manage Distractions**
Emails, IM chats, phone calls, and interruptions from co-workers prevent you from achieving *flow*, the effortless and constant work we do when we're 100% engaged.
4. **Not Taking Breaks**
Breaks ≠ wasting time!
Provides valuable down-time, which enables you to think creatively and work effectively.
If this is hard, try scheduling breaks for yourself and set an alarm as a reminder.
5. **Ineffectively Scheduling Tasks**
Are you a morning person or night owl?
Schedule high-value work during your peak time and low-energy work (returning phone calls, checking email) during your down time.

Time Management Toolbox: To-Do List and Action Program

To-Do Lists: The Key to Efficiency

Step 1: Write all tasks you need to complete.
- If they are large tasks, break it into smaller tasks and write it with the larger task.
- Tip: Try compiling categories of lists (personal, study, workplace).

Step 2: Allocate priorities from A (very important) to F (unimportant).
- If too many tasks have a high priority, run through the list again and demote the less important ones. Rewrite the list in priority order.

Put it into Action! Begin with A priority tasks first, then Bs, then Cs, and so on. As you complete them, tick them off or strike them through.

Tip: Spend 10 minutes at the end of the day organizing and updating their to-do list for the next day.

Remember the Milk: Make your to-do list paperless! Remember the Milk is a popular free online task management tool that will sync with your smartphone, PDA, and email and Google calendar. Try it out http://www.rememberthemilk.com
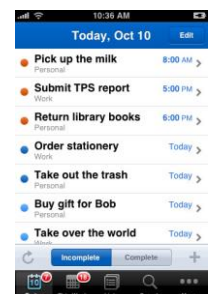
Action Programs: Plan B

To-do lists are a great tool – if used effectively. For most of us, our to-do lists are not planned, focused, action lists. If there are more than 20 tasks, it becomes cumbersome and difficult to use.

Why Action Programs? Action programs are "industrial strength" versions of to-do lists, which incorporate short, medium, and long term goals.

- Helps you plan your time without forgetting long-term commitments.
- Avoids wasting your time on low priority activities.
- Helps you delegate jobs to increase your effectiveness and productivity.

Step 1: Collection

- Make a long list of things in your life that require resolution – urgent or not, big or small, personal or professional.
- Ex. ideas in your head, projects you want to run, scattered pieces of paper that need to be gathered in one place.
- Make sure you include **personal goals.**

Step 2: Pruning

- Process your list and by deciding whether you should actually take action on it.
- If it's not worth your time, take it off your list.

Step 3: Organizing and Prioritizing

- First, group together the separate, individual tasks that are part of larger projects. Ex. "Home" might have smaller tasks like, "repaint living room" and "clean bathroom."
- Next, prioritize the tasks in order of importance (A is important, F is unimportant).

Example template

Category	Task	Priority
Launch New Product	Research our target market to ensure advertising department is on the right track.	B
	Finish cost-comparison report.	A
Study for MBA	Research local MBA programs.	B
	Speak with employer about getting help with funding for MBA.	C

Don't forget! Review and update your action program periodically (ex. once a week that you set time for in your calendar). Delete or archive items you've completed, add new items, and move items from the project catalogue list to next action list as you make progress.

How to Delegate

Delegation is a time management strategy that takes practice. When you learn to delegate effectively, you'll be rewarded with a win-win situation – more time to yourself and a staff that is more confident and empowered.

- **Clarify your expectations** – Tell the person to whom you are delegating what you need accomplished and why it's important.

- **Establish checkpoints –** Track his/her progress by establishing checkpoints at the end of project stages. This doesn't mean asking, "How's it going?" every hour but by being proactive and staying in the loop at key points within the project.

- **Delegate the results, not the process** – Focus on the end result and, unless the person to whom you're delegating is inexperienced, allow him or her to determine how best to achieve it. If you dictate exactly what to do, when to do it, and how to do it, you limit the learning potential, and you risk not taking proper advantage of the person's experience.

- **Define your role** – Explain how much support you'll provide. Should he/her wait for your instructions or make independent recommendations and decisions? Often, the more authority you give, the better the end result will be – however, use your own discretion.

- **Talk about consequences –** Inform him/her of the consequences of both successful and unsuccessful results. What rewards can they expect if they do a great job? What will happen if they don't achieve the expected results?

Take Control of Time Wasters

1. **Unexpected Visitors**
   What do you do when people are dropping by while you are trying to work?
   - Invent a deadline and suggest meeting later.
   - Get rid of any comfortable spare chairs in your workspace.
   - Stand up when someone comes to visit.
   - Lead the person away from your workspace to the coffee machine or water cooler - it will be easier for you to make excuses and leave.
   - Visit them before they visit you.

2. **Emails/Phone calls**
   With advances in technology, we are now available 24/7. This is a major time waster of our precious *leisure* time!
   - Check/respond to your emails and phone messages at set times during the working day, for example, early morning, just after lunch, and late afternoon. It is not absolutely necessary to respond right away when you're at work.
   - Switch off email alerts and put your phone on silent outside

of those times. Your callers may be impatient at first when you don't give them an instant reply, but they will get used to it and learn to respect your schedule.

3. **Interruptions by your Manager/Team Members**
   You may have spent time on your to-do list and your action program, but what do you do if your manager is a poor time manager and constantly interrupts your time management plan?
   - Ask to meet your manager at least once a week so that you can discuss your plan for the week ahead. If your manager is more aware of your workload, he/she may think twice before giving you short notice to do extra tasks. If this does happen, discuss what work should be dropped in lieu of the new tasks.
   - Similarly with your team members, inform them of what work is on your agenda and negotiate reasonable timeframes for completing new tasks.

4. **When the culprit is YOU**
   Are you someone who finds it hard to work on a task for prolonged periods? Are you constantly looking for diversions, such as a cup of coffee, a quick browse on the internet, or a read of the paper?
   - Set short-term deadlines that keep you challenged. Tick them off in your to-do list or action program when you have them done.
   - Are you up with the larks, or are you a night owl? Chart your energy cycle. Find the time of the day when you have most energy, and plan your important work for that time.
   - An early morning swim or walk can really help concentration levels so that you make the best use of your time.
   - Take yourself off to a quiet spot - an unused office, the library, coffee shop, and stay there until you get the task done.

Resources: http://www.mindtools.com/, http://www.practical-management-skills.com/

Life Wheel