

**TIME MANAGEMENT - A JOURNEY TOWARDS SUCCESS****Prabhjeet Kaur**

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Time management is the act of taking conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities. Exercise time management to increase productivity, effectiveness and efficiency. Practice skills and use tools and techniques to aid you when accomplishing tasks, projects or are working toward goals and deadlines. Time management is about effective scheduling of your time, goal setting, prioritizing and choosing what to do and what not to do, delegating tasks, analyzing and reviewing your spent time, organizing your workspace, keeping your concentration and focus at your work, motivating yourself to work towards a goal. Time management is the act or process of planning and exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency or productivity. It is a meta - activity with the goal to maximize the overall benefit of a set of other activities within the boundary condition of a limited amount of time. Inevitably, things will not always run smoothly as you progress towards your goals. When things are not working out, you need to persevere and learn how to take a positive attitude towards frustration and failure. Mistakes are a crucial part of any creative process and each is a lesson leading you towards the right solution. Fear of making or admitting mistakes is a major handicap to taking effective action. It is said that the people who have achieved the most have made the most mistakes Try to be aware that satisfaction comes as much from pursuing goals as from achieving them. Work at effective strategies to deal with pressure - these can vary from taking exercise, to relaxation techniques such as Yoga, to simply sharing problems with friends. Being assertive can also help here, for example, politely saying no to the demands of others when you are pushed for time. Sharing tasks and problems with others will spread the burden and will bring a fresh perspective to them. Time management may be aided by a range of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing specific tasks, projects, and goals complying with a due date. Initially, time management referred to just business or work activities, but eventually the term broadened to include

personal activities as well. A time management system is a designed combination of processes, tools, techniques, and methods. Time management is usually a necessity in any project development as it determines the project completion time and scope. Time management has a subset of different concepts such as Project management, Attention management: and Personal knowledge management. A technique that has been used in business management for a long time is the categorization of large data into groups. These groups are often marked A, B, and C—hence the name. Activities are ranked upon these general criteria:

- **A** – Tasks that are perceived as being urgent and important,
- **B** – Tasks that are important but not urgent,
- **C** – Tasks those are neither urgent nor important. (This list could also include tasks that are urgent but not important.)

Each group is then rank-ordered in priority. To further refine priority, some individuals choose to then force-rank all "B" items as either "A" or "C". ABC analysis can incorporate more than three groups. ABC analysis is frequently combined with Pareto analysis.

### **Pareto analysis**

This is the idea that 80% of tasks can be completed in 20% of the disposable time. The remaining 20% of tasks will take up 80% of the time. This principle is used to sort tasks into two parts. According to this form of Pareto analysis it is recommended that tasks that fall into the first category be assigned a higher priority. The 80-20-rule can also be applied to increase productivity: it is assumed that 80% of the productivity can be achieved by doing 20% of the tasks. Similarly, 80% of results can be attributed to 20% of activity. If productivity is the aim of time management, then these tasks should be prioritized higher. This view of the Pareto Principle is explored further in *The 4-Hour Workweek* by Timothy Ferriss. It depends on the method adopted to complete the task. There is always a simpler and easier way to complete the task. If one uses a complex way, it will be time consuming. So, one should always try to find out the alternate ways to complete each task.

### **POSEC method**

POSEC is an acronym for Prioritize by Organizing, Streamlining, Economizing and Contributing. The method dictates a template which emphasizes an average individual's immediate sense of emotional and monetary security. It suggests that by attending to one's personal responsibilities first, an individual is better positioned to shoulder collective

responsibilities. Inherent in the acronym is a hierarchy of self-realization which mirrors Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of needs".

1. **Prioritize** - Your time and define your life by goals.
2. **Organize** - Things you have to accomplish regularly to be successful (Family and Finances).
3. **Streamline** - Things you may not like to do, but must do (Work and Chores).
4. **Economize** - Things you should do or may even like to do, but they're not pressingly urgent (Pastimes and Socializing).
5. **Contribute** - By paying attention to the few remaining things that make a difference (Social Obligations).

There are also time management approaches that emphasis the need for more focused and simple implementation including the approach of "Going with the Flow" - natural rhythms, Eastern philosophy. More unconventional time usage techniques, such as those discussed in "Where Did Time Fly, include concepts that can be paraphrased as "Less is More," which de-emphasizes the importance of squeezing every minute of one's time, as suggested in traditional time management schemes. A **task list** (also *to-do list* or *things-to-do*) is a list of tasks to be completed, such as chores or steps toward completing a project. It is an inventory tool which serves as an alternative or supplement to memory. Task lists are used in self-management, grocery lists, business management, project management, and software development. It may involve more than one list. When one of the items on a task list is accomplished, the task is checked or crossed off. The traditional method is to write these on a piece of paper with a pen or pencil, usually on a note pad or clip-board. Task lists can also have the form of paper or software checklists.

Julie Morgenstern suggests "do's and don'ts" of time management that include:

- Map out everything that is important, by making a task list
- Create "an oasis of time" for one to control
- Say "No"
- Set priorities
- Don't drop everything
- Don't think a critical task will get done in one's spare time.

Numerous digital equivalents are now available, including PIM (Personal information management) applications and most PDAs. There are also several web-based task list applications, many of which are free.

### **Time management systems**

Time management systems often include a time clock or web based application used to track an employee's work hours. Time management systems give employers insights into their workforce, allowing them to see, plan and manage employees' time. Doing so allows employers to control labor costs and increase productivity. A time management system automates processes, which eliminates paper work and tedious tasks. Time management also covers how to eliminate tasks that do not provide the individual or organization value. According to Sandberg, task lists "aren't the key to productivity [that] they're cracked up to be". He reports an estimated "30% of listers spend more time managing their lists than [they do] completing what's on them". Hendrickson asserts that rigid adherence to task lists can create a "tyranny of the to-do list" that forces one to "waste time on unimportant activities".

Be flexible and relax. Allow for the unexpected in life. Other things may take precedence over a rigid and methodical routine. With most unusual circumstances, it may take no more than an hour or a few days to return to your usual schedule. Managing your time can be as simple as scrawling the day's tasks on a piece of paper, or as complex as a spreadsheet with linked tables and calendars. The supplies you need will be dictated by the method you choose. Allow a brief interval between tasks for random happenstances—a phone call, a sudden craving for yogurt, for you telecommuters, or for popping that roast in the oven. Beware the Pareto Principle. One of the greatest time wasters is spending 95% of one's time on 5% of the tasks needed to be completed. The assumption is that this is a reality because the 5% seem to be the most profitable. This is not always the case. Pick subjects and not verbs. List ideas and allot time per subject. Set your own rules to measure your achievement per time intervals. Don't "spread yourself too thin" by overwhelming your day with an unrealistic schedule that would be difficult to accomplish. Do a task beginning to end. You know those "I deserve a cookie!" moments? those are good. set way-points, and each time you reach one, reward yourself with something that takes little time, and if to be done during the project, little concentration. Take advantage of all the small gaps of time that tend to go wasted during the day. Whether it's the 15 minutes you have between class and lunch, or the twenty minutes from when you wake up in the morning to when your kids wake up, use those

spare minutes to accomplish something, because little increments of time add up. Set aside the concept of "everything has to be done yesterday" in order to create realistic priorities.

### **Suggestions for Effectively Managing Time**

#### ***1. Be Organized***

- Use time saving tools: appointment calendars, "to do" lists, e-mail, answering machines, file folders, etc.
- Have an organized workplace (don't waste time constantly looking for your work).
- Use your appointment calendar for everything, including listing study time.
- Use "to do" lists for both long-term and for each day/week.

#### ***2. Plan Ahead (Schedule it and it will happen!)***

- Determine how long your tasks will take (do this before agreeing to take on a task!)
- Consider whether any activities can be combined.
- Determine if big tasks can be broken down into smaller tasks that may be easier to schedule (such as studying for exams and visiting the library as part of an assignment to write a term paper).

#### ***3. Prioritize Your Tasks***

- Use an A-B-C rating system for items on your "to do" lists with A items being highest priority.
- Set goals for both the short term and long term as to what you want to accomplish.
- Look at all of your "to do's" to gauge the time requirement and whether additional resources will be needed to accomplish them (if yes, schedule time to obtain those resources). Don't postpone the small tasks (a sense of accomplishment is good and overlooked small tasks can become larger tasks.)

#### ***4. Avoid Overload***

- Include time for rest, relaxation, sleep, eating, exercise, and socializing in your schedule.
- Take short breaks during study and work periods.
- Don't put everything off until the last minute (for example, don't cram for exams).
- Learn to say "no" when appropriate and to negotiate better deadlines when appropriate.

#### ***5. Practice Effective Study Techniques***

- Have an appropriate study environment.

- Split large tasks into more manageable tasks.
- Read for comprehension, rather than just to get to the end of the chapter.
- Be prepared to ask questions as they come up during study, rather than waiting until just before an exam.
- Do the most difficult work first, perhaps breaking it up with some easier tasks.
- Don't wait until the last minute to complete your projects.
- Read the syllabus as soon as you get it and note all due dates (and "milestone" times) on your calendar.
- Be a model student! (be attentive and participative in class, and punctual, prepared, and eager to learn)

#### ***6. Be Able to be Flexible***

- The unexpected happens (sickness, car troubles, etc.); you need to be able to fit it into your schedule.
- Know how to rearrange your schedule when necessary (so it doesn't manage you - you manage it).
- Know who to ask for help when needed.

#### ***7. Have a Vision (why are you doing all of this?)***

- Don't forget the "big picture" - why are you doing the task - is it important to your long-term personal goals?
- Have and follow a personal mission statement (personal and career). (Are your activities ultimately helping you achieve your goals?)
- Know what is important to you. (What do you value most?)
- Have a positive attitude.

#### **Myths about Time Management**

Before exploring specific time-management techniques, consider several common myths which contribute to poor time management, especially undermining your efforts to establish and follow your priorities. Sometimes one thinks that my life is completely controlled by external events. But the fact is that you can have some control over many aspects of your life, but you and you alone are responsible for initiating that control. Learn to recognize what you can and can't control before making your choices. Anticipate the future and clarify the external demands that must be faced. From there, it is easier to determine what can be done,

and within what time frame, despite the demands. The needs and demands of others may be inappropriate for you and your lifestyle. They may be poorly timed, highly questionable, or simply unattainable. They may be of a different priority than your own. By trying to meet the expectations of others, you may be shortchanging yourself and your needs. First become clear about what your needs are and then you consider what others expect of you. So don't think that you should meet everyone's expectations. Set your limits. We all have limits, failure to acknowledge this may cause you to become perfectionist in your expectations. Perfectionists are especially prone to procrastination because the perfection they demand is impossible. For example, no paper will ever be perfect in all ways. The immediate consequence of turning in an imperfect paper may be brief, acute anxiety, but the long-term consequences of procrastination—e.g., inconveniences, academic or career losses and lingering self doubts—are usually more devastating.

**Conclusion:** While it is important to develop your own style for managing your time and work, consider how the following techniques might help you. Use your biological rhythms to your advantage. Identify the times of day when your energy levels are at their highest and do your most important work at those times. For example, if you work best in the morning, do not plan all your studying for the evening. Optimize your work environment. Keep things you need in your work area and make sure the physical environment is conducive to concentration, not just comfort. You may need to experiment to determine the right work environment. For example, some work best in a quiet setting while others work best with background music; some work best amidst clutter, while others need a cleared desk or table; some work best at a place reserved only for study while others work best at the kitchen table; etc. Find what works best for you. Safeguard blocks of work time. Protect your time by saying “no” to various interruptions, activities, requests, or persons. Interruptions are a two-fold problem: the interruption itself, and the expectation of further interruptions. Both reduce effectiveness considerably. Some interruptions can be avoided by keeping in mind the following: Arrange your work area so that your back is to the traffic flow. Close your door; open it selectively. Find and use a special space such as a library carrel or an office where friends will be unable to find you. Unplug your phone, or install an answering machine. Return telephone calls when it is more convenient for you, perhaps when you take a study break. Second, prioritize the things you wish to do. Develop an overview of everything that you want to accomplish. Start by determining the time frame you'd like to work with (a

semester, a month, a week, a day?). Five goals for the week, for example, might include studying for an exam on Friday, spending more time with a friend you've been neglecting, exercising three times for half an hour each time, attending clothing sale, and watching a few "soaps." Notice that the goals include not only academic responsibilities but also personal and social activities. Write each of your goals on a separate index card. Then organize your goals according to their priority. Think of priorities in terms of two dimensions, urgency and importance. First, determine how urgent each of the goals is and separate your index cards into urgent and non-urgent piles. Studying for the exam and attending the clothing sale may be more urgent than socializing or exercising because they have deadlines coming up soon. Next separate the pile of urgent items into important and non-important items, and similarly the pile of non-urgent items into important and non-important items.

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