

Manage Time



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Topics

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the Hat Fits, Wear It



You can't manage time. Time demand analysis (part 1)

The term 'time management' is a little misleading. Time is a constant - there are 24 hours in the day every day - and you can't manage a constant dimension like time. You can only use it or abuse it. Time management is really about managing yourself and others so that the time available to you is used productively.

During the course of your day, there are many demands and priorities which you have to juggle. One measure of how well you use your time is the amount of time you spend on your highest priority activities. Many people will be shocked to find out how much time they spend on low priority or non-value adding activities.

To find out where your time goes and to help improve your use of time, complete this 'Time Demand Analysis' on yourself. Do it honestly or you'll waste your time.

Firstly, have a look at the next pages. Then come back to this page and follow these instructions

- Reproduce the table on the page following. It helps if you can keep your analysis to one to two pages. Or use a spread sheet.
- Using 'brainstorming', make a list of all the demands on your time - daily, weekly, and monthly. Go for quantity, include everything.
- The more you can list, the more valuable this will be. Be specific about the demand. The demand could be a person or an activity or an event. This is the most important part of your demand analysis, so do it comprehensively. Don't try and do it in sequence. Just list things as they come to you in any order. A useful list will probably contain 30-50 demands.
- Be honest – include the non-work related activities like social telephone calls, social conversations, social e-mails and non-work related internet browsing. Also things like organizing, filing, reflecting, locating, tidying, necessary interruptions, unnecessary interruptions, addressing things not done properly in the first place, etc.
- Choose an appropriate time period for your calculation - say a week.
- Scan your full list and identify the demand that takes the **least** amount of your time and allocate a base unit of one (1) point. Now compare each other demand to this one and estimate the amount of time you spend relative to the item which is your base unit.



- For example, if you reckon that you spend **twice** as much time on a demand compared to your base unit then allocate **two** points to that item. If you reckon that you spend 20 times as much time on a demand as you spend on your base unit, allocate 20 points to that item. And so on until each demand has been allocated points compared to your base unit of one.
- Add the total number of points. Say it adds up to 380.
- Calculate the percentage of your time you spend on each demand. For example - take the demand on which you spend the least time, i.e. one unit or 1 point. $1 \div 380 \times 100 = 0.26\%$.
- Take the item you allocated 20 points. $20 \div 380 \times 100 = 5.26\%$. Repeat this for all items and record in the 'percentage time' column.
- Next, identify whether the demand is from an internal customer or an external customer. Allocate 'I' or 'E' in this column.
- Cover the 'percentage time' column and allocate a priority to each item as follows :

A - most important B - less important C - least important.

What is your 'time demand analysis' telling you about how productively you use your time? See questions for your analysis following.

After you have done your own analysis, you could ask your work group to conduct their own 'time demand analysis' and then discuss the results with a view to managing our time demands more effectively.

"(Napoleon) directed Bourrienne to leave all his letters unopened for three weeks, and then observed with satisfaction how large a part of the correspondence had thus been disposed of itself, and no longer required an answer."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803-1882

American essayist and poet, The Man of the World.

"Selectivity - the determination to choose what we will attempt to get done and what we won't - is the only way out of the panic that excessive demands on our time can create."

Andrew S Grove

CEO, Intel Corp., One-On-One With Andy Grove (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1987)

Time demand analysis (part 2)

Work Priorities

[illegible]

P – Priority: A - most important B - less important C - least important

Customer I/E – Internal customer or External customer



Time demand analysis example (part 3)

Where does your time actually go? How much of your time is spent dealing with these demands over a typical week? Add any that are missing for you.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Checking and deleting e-mails | 26. Providing written information, reports, etc. |
| 2. Responding to e-mails | 27. Dealing with problems caused by another's error |
| 3. Meetings | 28. Dealing with problems caused by another's sub-standard work |
| 4. Determining who to contact when it is not always clear who is responsible for what needs to be addressed | 29. Dealing with unsafe work practices |
| 5. Unreliable equipment/technology | 30. Dealing with unsafe equipment |
| 6. Problems caused by no or poor communication between shifts/areas | 31. Dealing with problems caused by unclear roles and accountabilities |
| 7. Getting up to speed after a break | 32. Unclear limits/boundaries re authority and decision making |
| 8. Performance counselling sessions (informal) | 33. Conflicting understanding about main tasks and functions |
| 9. Resolving conflicts | 34. Indecisive or no decision making |
| 10. Resolving differences of opinion or perception | 35. Ambiguous instructions |
| 11. Private telephone calls | 36. Unclear priorities or differing perceptions of priorities |
| 12. Social conversations | 37. No agreement on priorities |
| 13. Job related reading | 38. Poor organisation by others |
| 14. Non-job related reading | 39. Unrealistic time estimates |
| 15. Day dreaming or dwelling on past events | 40. Drop-in social visitors |
| 16. Filing | 41. Interruptions by others to resolve problems they are capable of resolving |
| 17. Unscheduled meetings | 42. Lack of deadlines |
| 18. Dealing with unplanned events or non-routine events | 43. The consequences of postponing unpleasant or difficult tasks |
| 19. Dealing with problems unresolved by previous shift/other areas | 44. Dealing with customer complaints |
| | 45. Dealing with staff grievances |
| | 46. Performing your key tasks |
| | 47. ----- |
| | ----- |
| | 48. ----- |
| | ----- |

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| 20. Irrelevant interruptions | 49. ----- |
| 21. Conversations aimed at clarifying a previous instruction | ----- |
| | 50. ----- |
| 22. Conversations aimed at clarifying differing priorities | ----- |
| 23. Searching for information or materials | |
| 24. Dealing with incidents caused by a breakdown in communication in the first place | |
| 25. Dealing with incidents related to housekeeping | |



Time Demand Analysis (part 4)

What is your 'time demand analysis' telling you about how productively your time is used?

Answer these questions:

- What percentage of your time goes on non-value adding activities?
- What percentage of your time goes on low priority activities?
- What things are low priority for you but high priority for others?
- What things are high priority for you but low priority for others?
- What percentage of your time do you spend on high priority activities related to internal customers?
- What percentage of your time do you spend on high priority activities related to external customers?
- What demands could you stop responding to with little or no consequence?
- What demand priorities do you need to renegotiate with your manager?
- What demand priorities do you need to renegotiate with your staff?
- Which people make the most demands on your time and what are the priorities of those demands?
- What demands on your time could be delegated to your staff?
- Are you able to stay focused on your high priority demands?
- Which demands are routine and expected?
- Which demands are non-routine and unpredictable?
- What percentage of your time do you spend on things you like to do?
- What percentage of your time do you spend on things you dislike?
- What do you now need to do to be better focused and to manage your time demands better?

“Whoever admits that he is too busy to improve his methods has acknowledged himself to be at the end of his rope.”

J. Ogden Armour, 1863-1927, President Armour Meat Packing Co,
Conversations and Reflections



Time- saving tips

Here are some time-saving tips that you can apply at work.

- Get ideas out of your head - reduce the clutter in your mind. Do your thinking where you can see it. Use a whiteboard or put it down on paper or in your journal or on your computer, smart phone, tablet, etc.
- If considering a proposition, list the stakeholders who can influence your proposition and the things working for and the things working against it. Record what you need to do on your 'To Do' list.
- Set up three piles for documents and material crossing your desk. (1) Urgent and important. (2) Important but not urgent. (3). Unimportant and not urgent. Review pile (3) weekly to throw most of it in the bin.
- Do the same with e-mails – create the same three folders. Set aside time each day to deal with folders (1) and (2).
- Keep your work station uncluttered. Only have on your desk things relevant to whatever you are working on at the time. Keep other material handy, but out of sight to avoid being distracted. Mess equals chaos, distraction and inefficiency.
- Fight the urge to do things on impulse. Have an 'impulse' file. When an impulse hits you, note it in your file for later action. Just writing it down or typing it reduces the strength of the impulse.
- Write answers to memos on the original, keep a copy for your records and return the original.
- Reply to e-mails with your responses embedded in the sender's e-mail.
- If you spend most of your day sitting, stand up and walk around for a couple of minutes every hour or do some of your work standing.
- Discuss ways we waste time with others and agree actions to use our time more effectively.
- Meet people in their office or workplace so that you can leave their office or workplace rather than having to wait for them to leave yours.
- Take an overwhelming task, break it up into small parts or steps, decide an order of priority and tackle that big project bit by bit.
- Every day, tackle one task that you find unpleasant or difficult. Have a set time to do this each day.
- Every 12 months, do a 'clean out' of your files. Be hard on the junk you normally hang on to. If you haven't used something in the past 2 years, throw it out or archive it.
- Stay focused on your highest priority at any given time during your day. Work on only one task at a time.
- Create a 'worry' list. Jot down those things which are cluttering your mind with worry. Most of them won't happen anyway. You will spend less time



being distracted by unproductive thinking. Review your 'worry' list each week.

- Practice self-discipline. Write down the things you do which most waste your time and the time of others, e.g. compulsive talking. Keep the list where you can see it. Set small goals to achieve each day, e.g. I will deliberately resist three urges to speak compulsively to my colleagues. Keep a list of the thoughts that pop into your head and discuss them all at once at a later time.
- Constantly ask yourself the question, "What is the best use of my time right now?" Place this question somewhere you can see it at your work station.
- Take time out to relax physically and mentally. Do two, ten minute relaxation exercises every day.

"People who employ their minds too much with trifles often make themselves incapable of doing anything serious or great."

Francois de La Rochefaucauld, 1613-1680. French politician, writer and philanthropist, Reflections, or Sentences and Moral Maxims.

"There's never enough time to do it right, but there's always time to do it over."

Jack Bergman. Vice President, Jordache Enterprises Inc. Speech. Brooklyn, New York, 1987

"I'm going to stop putting off things starting tomorrow."

Sam Levenson, 1911-1980. Teacher and comedian, You Don't Have to be in Who's Who to Know What's What. (Simon & Schuster 1979).



Where does the time go? More time-saving tips.

We cannot manage time ... but we can manage ourselves and others.

How often do you find that you have too many things to do and not enough time in which to do them? People hounding you - where's this, where's that? Up goes the stress level - sleepless nights follow. Our tolerance level drops and everyone suffers.

Balancing work life and personal life is a difficult thing to do. Both place demands on us. For those of you who are forever running from point A to point B, take time out to look over these pointers. They just might help you.

- Set aside 15 minutes each day to identify your daily/weekly work requirements.
- Prioritise your work requirements by listing the most important things to do followed by the next most important and so on.
- Allocate – A – most important. B – Next most important. C – Next most important. Then prioritise the A's – A1, A2, A3, A4 etc. Then prioritise the B's – B1, B2, B3, etc. and the C's – C1, C2, etc.
- Start with A1.
- Minimise unwanted interruptions which reduce productivity by setting aside a time when you must not be disturbed.
- Prepare others so you can delegate task to others who are willing and able.
- Organise your work station to ensure ease of location of materials and documents needed to complete your work.
- Organise your computer folders and files the same way.
- Remain focused on a particular task until it is completed. Do this by checking that you are doing what you have set out to do and have not been side tracked to a lesser task.
- Provide for breaks of up to 10 minutes every hour in your work day to optimise your thinking ability. Get up and walk around your office or workplace, stretch, make a call which will be quick, but unrelated to what you are currently working on, drink some water (the best beverage for mind and body), see people who you sent away while you were busy and find out what they wanted.
- Review the effectiveness of your time management. Make a list of all the things that you do or others do to you which waste time. Set some personal goals to eliminate or modify your and other's time wasting habits.
- Ensure you have enough sleep to enable you to cope with your daily work requirements. Calculate how much sleep you require to function effectively and adjust your retirement and rising times accordingly. Catch



up on lost sleep over the weekend or during breaks.

- Participate in exercise and recreation/leisure activities as these will help to keep your productivity levels high.
- Use a diary to plan your time and mark in important events and appointments.
- Use a daily planner or 'to do' list for your work-day in enough detail to allow you to be clear about what you will be doing.
- Use a monthly/year planner to gain an overall picture of your work commitments.
- Arrive at work with enough time to prepare for your day. Say 15 minutes before you are scheduled to arrive.
- Say "no" to others when you do not have enough time to help them. Particularly when you are trying to work on a priority area.
- Seek assistance from others when you have too much to do.
- Give yourself 15 minutes of quiet time to reflect on how your day went. Make notes of things to do tomorrow.
- Stay focused, stay centred. Check yourself when you are spending time going over things that have already happened or contemplating things that are yet to happen. Stay in the present moment. Right here. Right now.

"Scales and clocks ar-re not to be thrust-ed to decide annything that's worth deciding. Who tells time be a clock? Ivry hour is th' same to a clock an'ivry hour is diff'rent to me. Wan long, wan short."

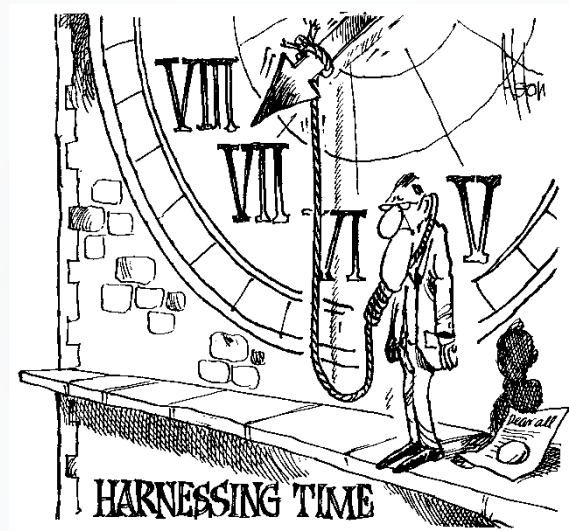
Finlay Peter Dunne 'Things Spiritual,' *Mr Dooley Says* (1910)

"The days come and go like muffled and veiled figures sent from a distant friendly party, but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away."

Emerson, *Journals*, 1847



Waste not want not



How much spare time do you have in your day? None? Join the club. Yet why do some people seem to get more done, to achieve more with the same amount of time, seem less stressed, more in control than others? Who you don't seem to hear saying, "Well, if I had more time I could"

The fact is that we all have the same amount of time available to us. It is your own thinking and doing which dictates how effectively you use your time. "BULL....!" I hear you shout in exasperation as you cite your boss, your customers, head office, senior management, your staff, et al, as the reasons why you are flat out with not enough time to get things done.

Fair enough, it's true that people can place constant and unfair demands on your time which leaves you frazzled and exhausted at the end of the day never seeming to catch up with your backlog of work. But until you stand in front of the mirror and recognise that you and you alone ultimately control how you use your time, nothing much will change. Now I admit that this is a hard line to take and I'm sure you can think of situations in which an individual has no control over their time, but read on anyway. And if you think you're wasting your time - take control - stop.

- Negotiate deadlines with everybody who places a demand on your time. Don't say yes to any time demand that you can't meet without undue stress. If it's your boss, ask what other things can drop back in priority to accommodate this new demand. Or at least cover yourself (take the pressure off) by saying, "No problem. I'll get on to this straight away, but I'll need a few extra days to finish (the current job)."



- Try to negotiate on tasks that are not doable in the time-frame. Ask, “What is the priority for this one and when do you expect it to be done? What priority does it take compared to the other things I am doing?”
- At the end of your day, prepare your ‘to do’ list for tomorrow. List all the things that have to be attended to tomorrow in random order. Then go through each item and allocate priorities A, B or C. Doing it the night before will clear your mind and help you relax overnight. Next day, start with your A’s and then your B’s. Forget your C’s - they weren’t important anyway. Place your ‘To Do’ list somewhere where you can see it all day.
- If your first ‘A’ task is a complex task - overwhelming in its size - break it down into its constituent parts. All big jobs are made up of a number of little jobs. Describe the little jobs, then decide their order of priority and start with the number one priority ‘little job’.
- Analyse that job you’ve been putting off to find out why. What is that you are fearful of? What is it about the job you don’t like? Why? How do you feel when you are actually doing that job? Does it really hurt? Where? How? Is your mind playing games with you and creating an aversion to the job based on what is really a ridiculous or immature notion? Are you aware of how to actually go about the job? Do you lack the knowledge or skill to do the job? Is it just that there is no excuse at all and you are just avoiding the job because it’s boring or unpleasant? Do you accept that through procrastination, you can create a more serious problem?
- Stay focused on the one job at a time. As you get distracted ask what is my priority at this moment. Record distracting but important ideas in your diary/journal to recall later. Repeat an affirmation in your mind to help you stay focused and to practice self-discipline - “That would be fun. That would be interesting, but I want to stay focused on this right now.”



It takes two to tango



How much of your time is wasted through disruption by others? How much time do you spend in conversations with others which achieve nothing of any use? How much time do you spend on low priority activities initiated by someone else?

Social intercourse in the office or workplace is necessary and can be very beneficial, but be aware of those people who want to waste your precious time with idle chat. Remember that for these people to waste your time, **you have to let them**. They can't do it without your permission. The 'drop in' visitor needs you to let them drop in. Every 'interrupter' needs an 'interruptee'.

Here are some ways to try to control the 'drop in' visitor:

- ✚ Develop a process for screening visitors. Make sure that your 'open door' policy is not being abused. Get visitors used to the habit of making appointments.
- ✚ Don't look up when you hear the office 'chatter-box' is heading your way. Keep your head down and look pre-occupied. Frown.
- ✚ When it is absolutely important that you are not disturbed, use a colour-coded tag on the door. A red tag means 'not to be disturbed' and a green tag means 'visitors are welcome'. Explain to staff what the tags mean and clarify any events which would be exceptions to the red tag.
- ✚ Use your morning and afternoon breaks or lunch breaks as your socialising periods. Do it away from your workstation.



- ✚ When delegating, ensure that people are clear on what authority they have to make decisions without constant reference to you. Clarify the situations which you expect them to deal with and the situations they should refer to you.
- ✚ When people bring problems to you which they are capable of resolving, show them a problem solving process, but don't accept the problem as your own nor solve it for them.
- ✚ With the 'chatter-box', get in first. "Hey Bill. Good to see you. Sorry mate, can't stop. I've got a deadline to meet and I'm way behind. I'll catch you later" as you unlock eye-contact and focus on your screen or swivel away to reach for a file or tool or something.
- ✚ Be alert. When an unnecessary visitor drops in start focussing on tactfully terminating the conversation as soon as it turns social.
- ✚ Ask your staff to only report to you when things change from what was agreed or planned or in an emergency.
- ✚ Apply the 'Pareto Principle' to your visitors. Keep a list of visitors over a typical week and think of ways to reduce the visits by the 20% who make 80% of the interruptions.
- ✚ Take control of visits by being the one to end discussion. Have someone else politely interrupt or phone you at a pre-arranged time to remind you of another appointment.
- ✚ Stand up as the visitor enters, remain standing during the conversation then start moving toward the door when you wish to end the discussion.
- ✚ Take the initiative by going to the other's workplace so that they can't trap you in yours.
- ✚ When all else fails, try borrowing \$20 from the chronic visitor every time she or he visits.

"This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803-1882, American essayist and poet



Catch-22

The most frequent response I get from people when it comes to making improvements to systems, procedures or work practices is, “I’m too busy. I don’t have enough time to do this.” An organization of 20 or more people can collectively waste up to 30% of the time they have available because their time is wasted by ineffectual systems, procedures and work practices – summed up as systems error and human error.

It’s funny that there is never enough time to make sure that we get it right in the first place, but there is always enough time to do it over again. Joseph Heller from the title of his magnificent book gave us the phrase, ‘Catch-22’. Meandering a little from the meaning of Catch-22 and applied in the context of time it is symbolised thus:



We have **no time** to change the things that happen in the first place that cause us to **waste time** which means that we have no time to change the things... Get it? We are all so busy. No one has any spare time. Here’s another observation. People have no trouble bringing up daily examples of where time is wasted. But the cause of the time wasting is never them. It is always somebody else who caused the time wasting. But when you ask the ‘somebody else’ he or she will tell you that it was ‘somebody else’ again. So if you follow that through to its logical conclusion, no one is causing time to be wasted. I’m still looking for the elusive ‘someone else’ and when I find him or her I’ll let you know.

Time is the irreplaceable resource. Once gone, it is gone forever. Yet we still manage to fritter it away.

An example:

Benson - “I thought you said you wanted...”

Suzanne - “No. I never said that. I told you I wanted...”

Now both parties are using their time to correct something that didn’t happen the way it was intended. By now there are probably other people affected, so



additional time will have to be spent redressing that as well. And here's yet another observation. There is no scientific proof proffered here but run it past your own 'gut feel' test to see if it hangs true based on your experiences. The additional time required now to redress the situation will exceed the time that was devoted to it in the first place. Why is this so? Because now there is still the time required to effectively address the original problem plus the additional time now required to address the ramifications of the first ineffectual action. You still with me? And you can probably also now factor in the time of others who are hindered by the first ineffectual action.

You can calculate the total time wasted by applying the formula:

$$T = \frac{n (ti \times tr)^2}{e}$$

Where T = total time wasted, ti = ineffectual time, tr = redressing time, n = number of people directly and indirectly involved, e = number of excuses put forward. (But I wouldn't waste my time.)

Prior to the unwanted event when Suzanne was setting this up, she did not take the extra time it takes to check out that Benson's perception of the outcome and standards to be achieved was the same as hers. Why not? Too busy? Or an underlying assumption that because it was clear in Suzanne's mind and she was committed to it, it must be clear in Benson's mind and he must be committed to it. After all, it made perfect sense. To whom? To Susanne. What about Benson? Who knows?

This problem is compounded by the fact that it is very hard to measure the cost of waste. The cost gets absorbed and goes virtually unnoticed until profit margins shrink from what was expected or deadlines are missed or our workload keeps increasing and we never seem to catch up or there is no money left in this year's budget to pay for still needed items or jobs have to be cut to save costs or overtime has blown out.

What is the cost of waste, errors, re-work, inefficient practices, poorly thought out strategies, misinformation, inaccurate perceptions, non-aligned efforts, inappropriate priorities, non-compliance with required procedures, unmotivated staff, incompetent management, poor training, lack of consequences for under-performers, etc.? One commonly used (well, it's used by me and I'm pretty common) figure is up to 30% of your total salary bill. That's a lot of gravy.

"Time is money says the proverb, but turn it around and you get a precious truth. Money is time."

George Robert Gissing.



Time waits for no one



Forget 'time management'. It's a misnomer. You can't manage time. There are always 24 hours, 7 days. It's a constant. We are talking about how well you manage yourself and how well you manage the competing demands on your time which are mostly created by others. Books on time management tend to complicate the issue. Let's keep it simple.

There are two key tools to use when it comes to optimising how you use your time (A clock or sun dial is taken for granted):

- ❑ A diary – electronic or other.
- ❑ A journal – electronic or other.

And there are two key concepts to apply:

- ❑ Priorities.
- ❑ Focus.

Diaries - I prefer a week to an opening because in a glance I can see how the week is panning out. Use your diary to record meetings, appointments, training activities, business trips, planning times and preparation times. Use highlights to signal critical activities.

Journal – Use your tablet or obtain a journal with a distinctive colour cover so that it stands out from other materials around your work station. Use this to record your daily 'to do' list. Denote the activities on your list A, B or C. A

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items are your highest priority. B your next highest after A items and C your next highest after B items.

Take your tablet or journal with you everywhere.

Record the date and key points of conversations or discussions at meetings or ideas worth recording. Only record information that will be useful later on.

Use a bullet point format. Also record things that you will do as a result of this meeting or conversation. Highlight these activities or put your initials alongside the items and bold or circle your initials so that these items stand out. Record things that others agree to do as well.

Apart from the date and time, record who is present at the meeting and the subject of the meeting.

As you finish activities on your 'to do' list and as you do the other things you have agreed to do as a result of meetings or conversations or ideas, delete them or cross them out or put a bold tick alongside them. Regularly review the pages of your tablet/journal and carry forward any yet to be completed tasks which are still relevant. When all the items on a page have been completed, draw a line diagonally through the page to indicate that this page is finished.

Use your journal where you would have used pads of paper or loose paper except for longer writing. Use your journal to record thoughts and musings. Highlight people's names, phone, fax and e-mail numbers.

Refer to your journal daily and review it daily.

Priorities - Regularly set, check and agree your monthly priorities with your manager. Then clarify your weekly and daily priorities in this context. Be very clear what your priorities are on a daily basis so you are better placed to negotiate changing priorities with others who will place demands on your time. Frequently ask yourself the question, "what is the best use of my time right now?" Evaluate everything that happens during the day in the context of your priorities for that day.

Focus - Stay focussed on your priorities for the day. Practise self-discipline. Watch for impulsive behaviour and challenge yourself, "do I really have to do that right now or could I record it in my journal and do it at a better time?"