

TIME MANAGEMENT

Catherine Kennedy

School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences,
The University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW

c.kennedy@unsw.edu.au

Abstract

Time management is an umbrella term that covers a number of components including planning, organization and managing interruptions. Making better use of your time involves knowing where you currently spend your time and setting realistic goals and then sticking to working to achieving them. Time is a unique resource, everyone has the same amount, it can't be accumulated, you can't turn it off, it can't be replaced, and it has to be spent at the rate of sixty seconds every minute. Time management is a very personal thing and must fit your style and circumstances. In a sense the phrase time management is misleading- we cannot actually manage time: we can only manage ourselves in relation to time. We can only control how we use time. So time management is about self management.

Introduction

Have you ever noticed that some people get tremendous amounts done in a seemingly effortless way? They make it look easy. Others buzz around like flies in a bottle but actually achieve nothing. A key difference between these types of people is the way they manage their time. Working hard and being effective are two entirely different things. Results are what count. What we do with our time determines what we do with our life.

This presentation will look at some things you can do to use your time more effectively, discuss personal management and the use of time logs. It will address the barriers of effective time management and finally, look at tips for getting things done.

Freeway Analogy

Scheduling many tasks in our day can be likened to driving a car on the freeway. The freeway has limited capacity for handling traffic. When the freeway has reasonably light traffic, the driver of a vehicle can determine its speed. If more traffic enters, other drivers' change lanes, individual cars travel at different speeds; each individual driver can accommodate these changes and still reach the destination in an effective timeframe. The freeway at this point is a robust system, able to accommodate changes easily. However, when a freeway has heavy traffic i.e. peak hour, the average car moves more slowly and its speed is determined by the flow of the traffic, no longer by the driver. The freeway is moving the maximum number of cars through the system at an efficient rate. However, at this point there is danger of overload. At this point the freeway is a fragile system, another car entering the flow or a car changing lanes can easily lead to overload and cause a collapse of the system. No cars getting through: the freeway becomes a parking lot. Critical tasks are like cars on a freeway. Often we plan to work at full

Pareto Principle (80/20 rule)

The Pareto principle states that a small proportion of people, effort or time (20%) accounts for a large proportion of the results (80%) e.g. 20% of sales people in a team account for 80% of sales; 20% of customers yield 80% of the profits; 20% of the employees cause 80% of the problems. Do 20% of your efforts yield 80% of your good results? Do 20% of your interruptions account for 80% of your wasted time? The trick is to spend 20% of your time on the tasks that are of the greatest importance and are likely to yield the greatest results.

Time Wasters

Have you ever thought about what gets in your way? Time wasters can be grouped under two main headings:

1. Self generated (disorganisation, procrastination, can't say "no"); and
2. Environmental (visitors, phone calls, meetings, unexpected tasks and crisis).

Tips on time management

- Plan your week rather than you day
- Leave room in your plans for reserve capacity
- Organise your work environment
- Set priorities and deadlines
- Plan to do the difficult or least favourite tasks at your peak time (when you have the most energy)
- Beat procrastination
- Avoid over commitment
- Don't be a perfectionist
- Use effective planning tools e.g. diary, planner.
- Delegate tasks whenever possible
- Divide big jobs into smaller ones
- Be aware of how you use your time (use a time log)
- Reward yourself

Conclusion

Time management is an umbrella term that covers a number of components including planning, organization and managing interruptions. Making better use of your time involves knowing where you currently spend your time and setting realistic goals and then sticking to working to achieving them. A time log can be used to investigate where your time is spent and rating the tasks as critical, important or useful. The Pareto Principle pointed out the importance of spending 20% of your time on tasks that are of the greatest importance and are likely to yield the greatest results. It is important to identify timer wasters and what causes them. After identification you need to employ strategies to deal with the interruptions and distractions.

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