Managing Time

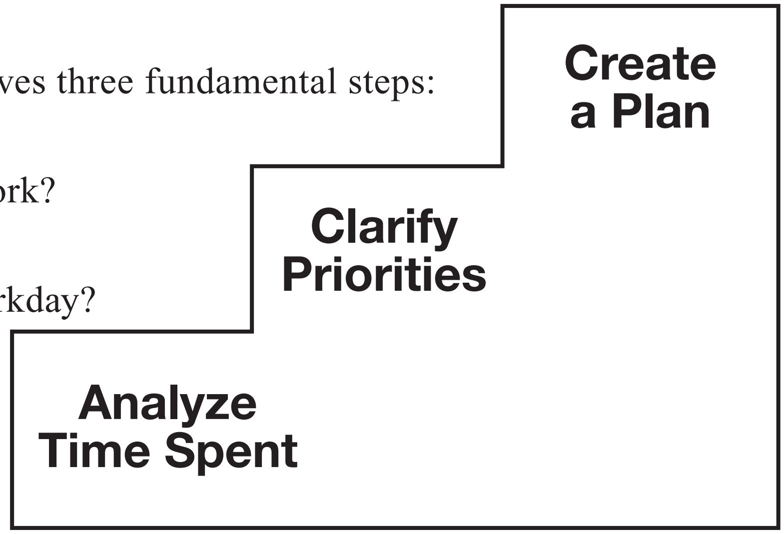
PLANNING YOUR TIME

The time-management process involves three fundamental steps:

Analyze Time Spent
• How do you spend your time at work?

Clarify Priorities
• What are the priorities of your workday?

Create a Plan
• What do you want to accomplish and by when?



Step 1: Analyze Time Spent

ACTIVITY AND TASK SHEET

Date:____________________

PRIORITY T, U, or G	ACTIVITY OR TASK	COMPLETED BY (DATE)	DELEGATE TO	FOLLOW-UP DATE

Top Business Priorities

• ____

• ____

Step 2: Clarify Priorities

Best Practice Ideas for Prioritizing Challenges

Conflicting Priorities

Are there situations in which your priorities might change or come in conflict with each other?

Yes or No

Step 3: Create a Plan

Plan Daily

- Spend 10 to 15 minutes planning every day. Plan at a time of the day when you are most efficient.
- Be consistent.

Review Yesterday's Plan

- Check off tasks that have been completed.
- Review and reprioritize what wasn't completed yesterday.
- Check e-mail and voice mail.
- Review yesterday's notes from meetings and telephone conversations.
- Transfer deadlines to new list.

Create a New List

- Use a new page of your planner.

Prioritize Your List

- Be sure "T" items receive attention first.

Stay Flexible

- Things change!

Remember: It's just a plan.
The best time-management plans can be disrupted
by unexpected interruptions!

Schedule Your Activities

- Create a formal plan for the day by assigning each activity a specific time slot.
- First, schedule appointments and meetings.
- Next, schedule other “T” priorities.
- Then, schedule “U” priority items.
- Finally, review and schedule “G” tasks (as appropriate).

Daily Plan

DATE:____________________

TIME	PRIORITY	ACTIVITY OR TASK	RESULT
5-7 A.M.			
7 A.M.			
8 A.M.			
9 A.M.			
10 A.M.			
11 A.M.			
NOON			
1 P.M.			
2 P.M.			
3 P.M.			
4 P.M.			
5 P.M.			
6 P.M.			
7 P.M.			
8 P.M.			
9 P.M.			
10 P.M.			

INTERRUPTIONS

ACTIVITY AND TASK SHEET

Date:___________________

PRIORITY T, U, or G	ACTIVITY OR TASK	COMPLETED BY (DATE)	DELEGATE TO	FOLLOW-UP DATE

Daily Plan

DATE:___________________

TIME	PRIORITY	ACTIVITY OR TASK	RESULT
5-7 A.M.			
7 A.M.			
8 A.M.			
9 A.M.			
10 A.M.			
11 A.M.			
NOON			
1 P.M.			
2 P.M.			

INTERRUPTION PRACTICE

Directions

There are three rounds of practice opportunities. This is how each round of practice will go:

- The **worker** will pick the scenario that is most appropriate for his or her workplace environment: a face-to-face meeting or a telephone call.
- The worker tells the intruder which situation he or she wants to practice.
- The **intruder** will read the scenario and prepare for the role he or she will be playing.
- The **observer** watches and takes notes on the form provided in the *Participant's Handbook*.
- Each round will have 4 minutes to role-play the scenario.
- After time is called, you will have one minute for a debriefing from the observer about how the skill practice went.

Debriefing Steps

These are the steps for the debriefing:

- The **worker** tells what he or she thinks went well in the practice and what he or she would like to improve.
- The **observer** gives a review, first noting what the worker did well and then noting any suggested improvements.
- The **intruder** can then add anything he or she observed.

HINT: Look in the appendix of this handbook for additional help with handling interruptions.

Note: Be creative. Feel free to ad lib during this exercise. However, do not take more than five minutes for each scenario.

HAVE FUN!

INTERRUPTION PRACTICE

Face-to-Face Interruptions

Remember those time-eating sharks? Face-to-face encounters can really eat into your well-planned day. Your first step in dealing with these time-eating sharks is to determine if discussing this topic NOW is an efficient use of your time. Ask yourself, "Is this important?" If your answer is "yes," then continue with the conversation. If your answer is "no," follow these guidelines:

- Be honest about how much time you have available.
- Schedule a meeting if extra time is needed. This will let the person who has interrupted your day know that what he or she wants to discuss is important to you. By setting a future date you are able to give the subject your full attention.
- Clarify the person's expectation or solution when he or she asks for your opinion. This will give you an idea of what he or she expects as an outcome of the discussion. This will also give you an idea of the time it will take to reach the solution.
- Stand up when you are finished, thank the person for his or her time, and move toward the door or away from your work area. This is a subtle way of saying you have no more time to discuss the subject.

Benefits

By using these techniques to handle interruptions, you:

- Stay in control of the situation.
- Practice effective time management by prioritizing your activities.
- Set the tone for future interruption situations.
- Appear more professional by being tactful.
- Support the other person's self-esteem and promote a positive working relationship.

TELEPHONE TIME

Making a Telephone Call

Before making a call, know what you want to say on the phone. Efficient telephone calls require some preparation before the call is made. If you are going to make a call:

- Know the purpose of the call.

- Make a list of the items or topics you need to discuss.
- Fax documents for reference on the call before placing the call.
- Know specifically what you need from the person you are calling.
- Have all documents necessary for the call available for quick reference.
- Discuss action items first.
- Script your message, if appropriate. (There may be times when you will want to script what you want to say. This is typically true when making sales calls or when responding to calls requiring specific information.)
- Avoid using acronyms.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Spell out difficult or unusual names.
- Summarize action items at the end of the call.

Leaving a Message

If you must leave a message on voice mail or with a receptionist, be sure to include the following information:

- Your name and telephone number.
- A brief summary of why you are calling (what you need).
- When you will call back.
- When you will be available for a return call.

OTHER TIMESAVING TIPS

Delegation

There are times when you are assigned an activity and you may not have the knowledge, skills, or time to complete it. In such situations, delegating to others:

- Facilitates better communication within the work unit.
- Leads to more input and shared ideas.
- Provides opportunities for growth in those to whom you delegate the tasks.
- Affords a potentially better match between knowledge and skills needed and the task to be completed.

Why We Hesitate to Delegate

We often hesitate to delegate because we are afraid that:

- "The task won't be done the way I would do it." This is a common drawback experienced most often in those who are new to delegating. Focus on the end result. Even though the method may be different than what you would use, the end result is what really counts.
- "The task won't get done at all, and I'll look bad." Delegating is not dumping. Even though you delegate a task to someone, it is still your responsibility to monitor the progress of that task through to its completion.
- "People will think that I'm not doing my job." Delegated tasks should be an opportunity for growth for the person completing the task. It also should be a way of recognizing strengths and efficiencies in others with obvious skills who can do the task much quicker and more accurately and efficiently than you can.

Reading Materials

Have you noticed how quickly reading materials accumulate? It doesn't take long at all to have a huge stack just waiting for you to find the time to read and digest important information.

Here are some questions to ask yourself about the reading material you have accumulated:

- How many prior-month issues do you have in your work area?
- Of those, how many have you read?
- How many do you think you will ever read?
- Are there others in your office that might benefit from the magazines or articles?
- Do you share these materials with others?
- With whom could you share them?

Suggestions for Efficient Handling

Effective time management dictates that you take action on reading materials such as trade magazines, professional journals, compliance updates, vendor information, company policies and procedures, and so on, as soon as you receive them. Suggestions for handling reading material efficiently include:

- Use a reading file to collect material that is good for background information but not critical to what you are working on at the moment. Use this file as an ongoing source of reference material.

- Scan magazines and periodicals. Highlight areas of interest, or use labels to refer back and quickly find what you need.
- Photocopy pertinent articles. File them with other information about that topic instead of storing the entire magazine or newspaper section you don't need.

E-mail

In today's business environment, e-mail is quickly becoming the preferred means of communication because of its flexibility and ease of use.

Here are some e-mail tips:

- Keep the message short and simple so that it doesn't waste the reader's time. The reader can understand the message faster, and you'll get quicker and more accurate responses.
- Make the message easy to read. It should be spaced like a letter. The font should be 12 points or larger. Use bolding and italics sparingly only to make important parts of the message stand out. Be careful not to use all caps. The e-mail interpretation of all-upper-case (capital) letters is that the person is yelling at you.
- Use a subject line so that the reader knows the point of the e-mail immediately.
- Keep the message on one screen, if possible.
- Make the message easy to respond to.
- Use bullets or numbers for listed items.
- Use attachments for long e-mails. When you have a long message to send, consider word processing the content of the message in separate document and attaching the document to your e-mail. You can then give the reader a brief overview in your e-mail and refer him or her to the attachment for details.
- Save important e-mails in clearly marked folders on your computer. Most e-mail programs allow you to set up folders. Think about TUG to set up priority folders.
- Delete messages you don't need.
- Use the Dr Pepper® rule for checking your e-mail messages.

Macros

A *macro* is like a recorder on your computer. It allows you to record repetitive actions so you don't have to use the same keystrokes repeatedly. For example, a macro could be used to open a specific file every time you start your computer without your having to perform all the usual keystrokes. You can also assign codes to typed information so you can retrieve it on command.

Simply defined, a macro is a keystroke recorder. To create a macro, you instruct the program to record all of the keystrokes necessary to complete a task. (The macro records your keystrokes until you turn it off.) Then you can save the macro for future use by assigning it a keyboard code. Whenever you need to perform that task, just activate the macro using the code, and the macro will automatically perform the keystrokes quickly and accurately.

Be aware that macros record everything you type, including mistakes. It is always a good idea to play back the macro in a test environment to verify that all the keystrokes are correct. If you do a lot of repetitive typing, using macros will benefit you by saving you keystrokes. A little time invested up front will save you a lot of time later.

(If you are not sure about macros, refer to your online HELP programs and look up macros. Or contact your manager, who can refer you to the appropriate person who can assist you in setting up macros for your specific work projects.)