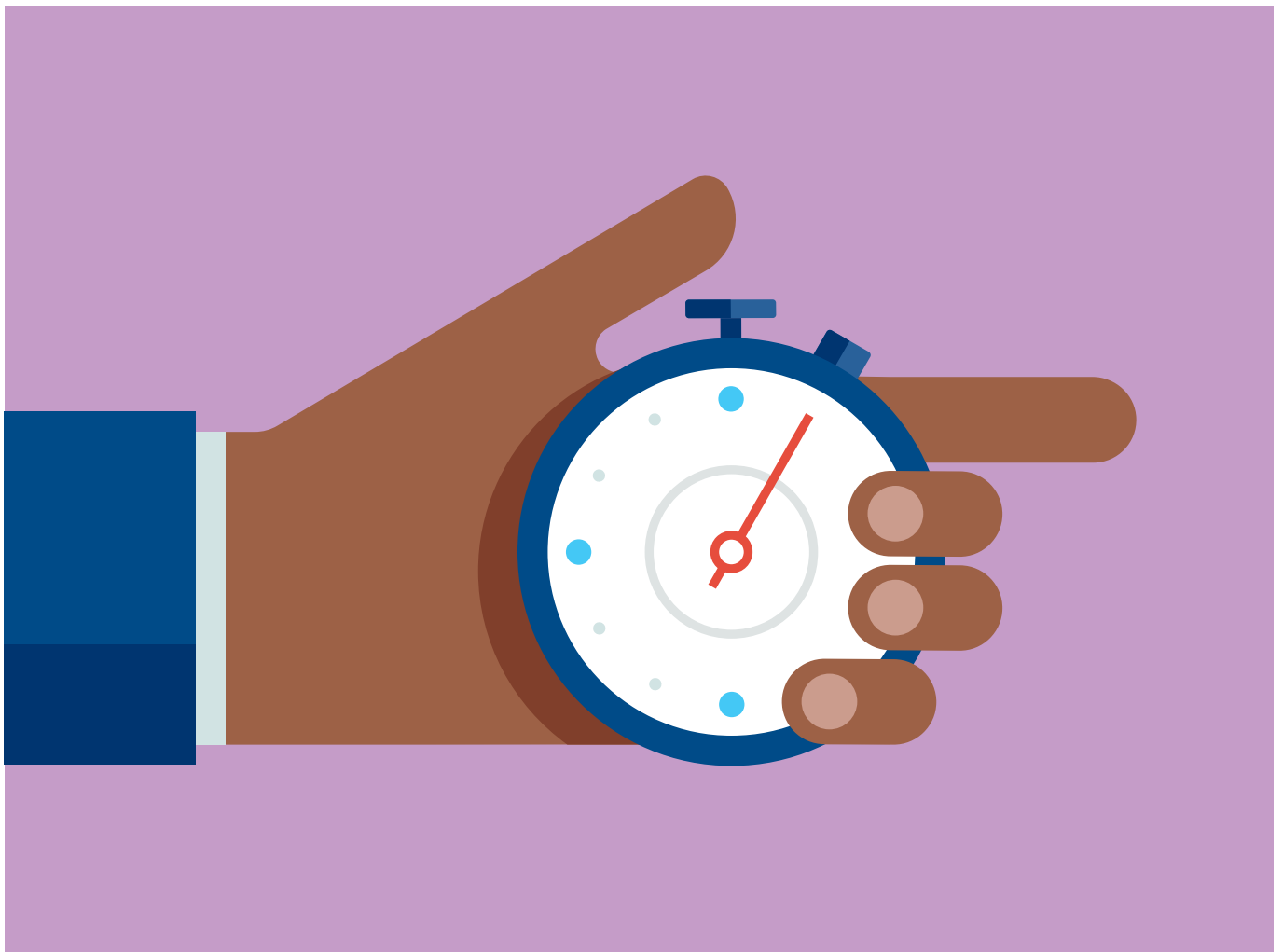


Time management guidance note

A How-To Guide on effectively managing
your time and improving your energy
levels to optimise performance



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Introduction to time management

Objective

This guidance note produced by the Back to Better Group provides a set of best practice guiding principles and behaviours targeted at time management.

Time management is the ability to use your time effectively or productively, especially at work. It's not just the number of hours we invest that determines the value we create; it's also the energy we bring to whatever hours we work.

We're all living in a time of intense demand, both at work and at home. Our industry is well known for long hours and being challenging for personal wellbeing. As an industry we need to change how we go about our work, not only through innovation in engineering and modern methods of construction, but also in human innovation. People aren't machines that can be plugged in to recharge and go. Instead, we need to balance the energy we use with recovery. Many neglect the second part. People's wellbeing needs to be supported through a focus on sustainable high performance, so they can bring their best to their work, family and communities.

Effective time management creates habits that ensure efficiency and allow us to achieve our goals with minimal stress and anxiety.

What is time management?

Time management is the process of **planning** and exercising conscious control of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase **effectiveness, efficiency** and **productivity**. It involves balancing the various demands on a person – related to work, social life, family, hobbies, personal interests and commitments – with the limited time available.

Failing to effectively manage your time can lead to some very undesirable consequences. These can include missed deadlines, poor work quality, inefficiencies, poor reputation, lack of sleep and high stress levels. Therefore, from a personal health and wellbeing point of view the ability to effectively manage your time is extremely important.

What does effective time management look like?

Effective time management allows you to work smarter, not harder. This enables you to achieve more in less time, even when time is tight and the pressure is high.

Effective time management is important because it helps you:

- control the demands on you without compromising your work–life balance; and
- minimise stress.

If you can effectively manage your time, you'll perform better at work, grab more opportunities, have more free time and feel generally happier. Effective time management skills can dramatically improve all aspects of your life.

Why manage your time?

Managing your time effectively can directly **reduce your stress** levels. When we have no control of our time, we get tired easily, feel overwhelmed, work longer and longer hours and multi-task just to stay on top of our long-to-do lists. When you are in control of your time, things become easier and there is less stress. Being able to manage your time even helps you sleep better.

One of the best benefits of time management is a **better work–life balance**. Work–life balance is about creating balance between your professional and personal lives. Many people spend more time at work and less at home. They might miss important family events, arrive home late and constantly feel stressed. With effective time management, you understand the true value of time – and that you can achieve more in less time at work and have more time for the people that matter at home.

Effective time management will help you **free up more of your time** to do more of the things that matter most to you. This could mean spending time with family and friends, pursuing a hobby or doing something important to you. More free away from work will make you more productive, creative and energised at work.

We use our time most effectively when we can **focus** on the projects, opportunities and people that matter. Rather than trying to do everything and constantly playing catch-up, effective time management will help you focus on a smaller number of productive activities.

If you focus on minor tasks and long to-do lists, your time will be filled up with work that doesn't achieve much. When you can focus your time and energy on results, you will **be more productive**.

We waste huge amounts of time procrastinating, rather than acting. When you are clearer and more focused on your goals and your biggest priorities, it becomes easier to **stop procrastinating**.

Effective time management skills make things much **simpler and easier**. When you're in control of your time and know where to focus, you just know what to do. Rather than feeling overwhelmed and frustrated with your long to-do list, you feel clear and confident. This ensures you invest your time and energy to produce the outcomes you want.

When you can manage your time, you are **less prone to distractions**. Rather than being pulled in a variety of directions, you can schedule time more effectively and set better boundaries around it. Knowing exactly what to do and being focused on only the activities that matter will ensure you don't get distracted.

When you manage your time effectively, you have **more energy**, excitement and motivation. When you are time-poor, you feel there is too much to do and not enough time to do it all. Effective time management gives you the sense of time being abundant rather than scarce.

When you use effective time management techniques, you have **more time to think**. Time to plan, time to strategise and time to set goals that really matter. Most people find their days filled with stuff and have little time to sit back and think about what they really want to achieve. Being in control of your time gives you the time back to just think.

Overcoming personal barriers

Time management is bound up with our emotions. To improve, it is necessary to recognise these emotions.

People don't always know what drives their decisions and we often tend to address easier problems before difficult ones. Our evaluation of problems as easy or difficult is highly subjective, based on past experiences, beliefs, fears and needs.

Here are some common barriers to effective time management and tips for overcoming them.

1. Being a perfectionist

Perfectionism is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, perfectionists strive to produce high-quality work and show more conscientiousness, engagement and motivation. However, their high and inflexible standards and all-or-nothing mindset often cause stress, burnout and anxiety that impair their performance.

Tips:

- Get comfortable with imperfection. Attention to detail is great but it can be very time-consuming. Often, a handful of imperfect tasks bring more results than one task that meets your high standards.
- Reflect on your progress regularly.

2. Not being able to concentrate and maintain focus

Most of us have had the experience when you read a paragraph of text over and over and can't get a grip on what it says. Or you need to write an article or prepare a report, but your mind is wandering and unable to concentrate.

Tips:

- **Know your enemy.** Identify workplace distractions that interfere with your ability to focus and be productive. Learn which distractions damage your concentration most and how to eliminate them.
- **Take better care of your health.** Sleep deprivation can easily disrupt concentration, memory and attention. Regular physical activity improves concentration and attention and maintains brain health in older adults (see Energy for more details).
- **Use your peak performance time.** Identify the most productive parts of the day and use them to schedule the most demanding tasks. Don't use peak time to process emails or make phone calls.

- **Take breaks.** Breaks are not only fun, they also refresh your mind, replenish mental resources, restore motivation and reduce decision fatigue.
- **Set daily goals.** Our brains like short-term goals. When we succeed at something, our brains release dopamine, inspiring us to experience this sense of accomplishment again.
- Practice **single tasking.** Multi-tasking has many adverse effects on your concentration and performance: it slows down your progress, makes you prone to making mistakes, stresses you out and more. Instead, focus on one task at a time.
- **Limit your internet and social media time.** Paying too much attention to social media and search engines narrows our attention span and ability to focus

3. Scheduling tasks ineffectively

Effective scheduling is an important part of an efficient time management strategy. You can't manage your time and focus if you prioritise the wrong things and invest time into tasks that don't return results. Even if you've learned how to sort out priorities, a never-ending circle of demanding and challenging tasks can still cause anxiety, stress, depression and burnout.

Tips:

- At the end of the day, write down the six most important tasks for tomorrow and put them in order of priority. The next day, start working on the most important ones.
- Avoid the 'mere urgency effect'. According to research, we tend to choose urgent tasks with objectively lower payoffs over important tasks with more significant and long-term consequences. Prioritise tasks that are both urgent and important. Next, choose important tasks over urgent ones.
- Eat the frog. Mark Twain once said, "Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day." Do the most important or challenging task – the one you are most likely to procrastinate on and probably the one with the greatest positive impact on your life or project – first.

4. Lack of vision

There's no point mastering time management if you don't have a clear vision of where you are heading. If tasks and responsibilities that you want to manage with more skill and grace don't inspire you, you need to develop more direction and meaning first. Without a vision, you

have little chance of creating the results you want and feeling joy and excitement to keep on going.

Tips:

- Get a bird's eye view. Maintain your focus on the end result – it will bring you the inspiration and energy to keep going. Adjust your vision if necessary but never lose sight of it.
- Identify time wasters. Most management problems come from spending too much time on things that don't move you forward. Make sure to invest your time into meaningful tasks and projects.

5. Never thinking about tomorrow

People who create extraordinary results in life are typically visionaries. To make their visions a reality, they must think strategically and set short-term goals that bring them toward their visions step by step. When you think about tomorrow, you'll be better prepared for what's coming next and feel more motivated to put the effort in every day to attain the results you want.

Tips:

- Develop awareness and adaptability. Think about how your time and the effort you invested today will contribute to your reality tomorrow and bring you closer to your goals (for example, how will today's tasks impact next week's tasks?). Adapt your plans to changing circumstances.
- Consider the seven-minute rule. Spend seven minutes in the morning to plan your day and seven minutes before you go to sleep to review your day and prepare a plan for tomorrow.

6. Doing everything on your own

It doesn't matter who you are; you can't do everything on your own. We all have 24 hours in a day and limited energy. If we push ourselves too hard, we are more likely to become stressed, less effective and less able to deliver quality results.

Tip:

Delegate. Let's say you are a manager in a marketing team and you've got a lot on your plate: meetings, job interviews, reports, management routine tasks. Consider delegating a report building task to one of your most reliable and detail-oriented team members. This way, they'll learn some new skills and will be able to back you up in the future, while you'll have more time on tasks that require your direct involvement.

7. Being busy instead of effective

Being busy and being productive are not the same thing. You can be busy clearing your inbox and crossing tasks off your to-do list all day and still accomplish nothing meaningful.

Busy time that doesn't bring you closer to your goals makes you feel anxious and unsettled. In contrast, productive time feels like steady progress towards your goals. The main reasons people get stuck being busy include bad prioritising and overthinking instead of getting things done.

Tip:

Implement the ABCDE approach. A: most important tasks, B: less important tasks, C: tasks with no consequences, D: delegate, E: eliminate.

8. Not managing distractions

Distractions include emails, notifications, social media and paper clutter. There are thousands of articles on the internet on how to manage these. But in reality, on top of this, we are distracted from important work by other lower-priority work.

It's happened to all of us: urgent calls from clients and colleagues asking for our immediate attention. It doesn't mean that we must block these distractions entirely, because that would create roadblocks and impact team productivity. Still, we need to learn to manage such things wisely.

Tips:

- Define your boundaries. Make time for phone calls and emails, use chat statuses to communicate when you are available, and most importantly, schedule time for important tasks that require your deep focus and attention.
- Learn to say no. Avoid participating in team chit-chats and gossip and postpone low-priority tasks. When you say no, explain your reasons professionally and provide an alternative.

9. Not breaking down big projects

Big projects look overwhelming and this often leads to stress and procrastination. When you break them down into digestible parts, individual tasks seem more approachable and doable. After you finish a tiny task, you will feel accomplishment and more motivation to keep going. Your progress becomes more visible and you'll feel more productive and efficient.

Tips:

- Break it down. Whenever you start a new task, break it down into steps that you can complete in 20–30 minutes, even if they look trivial.
- Develop a logical sequence. The easiest tasks may seem more attractive, but it's better to complete them in order, one by one.
- Review your progress regularly. When working on a big assignment, you may not always feel the progress.

10. Not making the most of technology

Technology and the internet create many obstacles and distractions – but also provide opportunities for better time management and quality of life. Used wisely, time trackers and project management tools can save you hours each week.

Tips:

- Use technology to plan your day. Consider online calendars and scheduling apps for personal time management purposes. Break your day into a sequence of activity blocks, allow some time buffers and go through your schedule step by step.
- Experiment with time trackers. There are thousands of time tracking tools on the market for personal and business purposes. It may take you a while to find the right one for you. Two things to keep in mind: the benefits must exceed the cost; and the gains should outweigh the time spent using the app.
- Consider project management tools. Modern project management tools provide time tracking features and automate management routines in a single environment.

Managing meetings

Meetings are an effective way to organise people, make arrangements and plan tasks. They exist for one purpose: **to get something done**.

However, meetings can sometimes be a waste of time, money and effort, particularly if they are poorly organised and run.

Consider the number of meetings you attend and the time you spend in them. Can you say that all those hours are fully productive?

Effective meeting guidelines

1. Don't arrange meetings for the sake of it

You should only arrange a meeting if you have a clear purpose and focus in mind. If not, you risk wasting everyone's time deciding what to discuss. You will likely leave the meeting in no better a position than when it started.

If you have frequent meetings scheduled, but you have nothing to specific to discuss, cancel the meeting. While staff meetings are useful for good communication, you need to find a good balance between this purpose and productive uses of your time.

2. Be selective with who you invite

This doesn't mean that you should be personal about who you choose to invite. Instead, you should ask yourself: "Do all these people need to be in the meeting?"

Having people in the meeting for the sake of it is a waste of money; they could be using their time more productively elsewhere. For example, say your meeting is half an hour long. If you have 10 people in there with you, that's five hours of work time. If you reduce the meeting to four people, that's six people who are using their time elsewhere. In turn, you return three hours of productive time to your company.

3. Decide outcomes and set objectives

You should decide what you want to achieve from the meeting before you have it. When the meeting is arranged, you should then set these points as objectives.

4. Follow the agenda

Write and share an agenda before the meeting. This should include your objectives so that everyone knows what to expect when they're in the meeting. Sharing an agenda lets people know if there's anything they need to prepare in advance.

Your agenda should be realistic: there's no point setting a lot of objectives and only giving yourself twenty minutes to achieve them.

In the meeting itself, having an agenda gives you a clear focus and helps you to stay on topic.

It may also help to assign somebody as the meeting facilitator. That way, if the meeting goes off topic, they can bring people back to the agenda.

5. Be prepared

This follows on from creating and following an agenda. You must always prepare for meetings and complete any necessary tasks before you attend. Not only will this help to keep the meeting on track, it will also show that you care enough about the meeting to prepare for it.

You should also make sure everyone else has enough time to plan and prepare. Aim to distribute the agenda **two days** before the meeting to give people enough time to prepare. Give even more notice if there's a lot of reading and preparation to do.

Make sure you keep people's schedules in mind so you can plan around time off and other commitments and still give attendees enough preparation time.

6. Leave room for creativity

While having an agenda is extremely important to keeping your meeting on track, it shouldn't be so rigid that it discourages creativity or people expressing their ideas and opinions.

A successful meeting should have elements of creativity. Creativity often arises when people are actively listening and not just passively attending, which is another reason not to invite everyone for the sake of it.

7. Be on time

Being on time is an essential part of effective meeting management. If you turn up late, you may feel rushed and miss out on an important point, which can affect the whole meeting. Being late also shows an element of disrespect for everyone who was on time.

The meeting should also finish on time. It's important not to run over by discussing things that are irrelevant or that were missing from your agenda. This wastes time and money and may leave you feeling like the meeting was unproductive. If the meeting runs over because you didn't have time to discuss your whole agenda, give yourself a more realistic time frame next time.

8. Have no distractions

If you have distractions in the room with you, this can affect the productivity of the meeting and may cause you to go off topic. You shouldn't have mobile phones in meetings, except under certain circumstances.

9. Be respectful

You should always respect what everyone has to say in the meeting. Don't talk over people or belittle their ideas. If you create an atmosphere of mutual respect, people will be much more likely to share their thoughts and opinions.

10. Have a question and answer session

This is often pushed to the end of the meeting, without much time dedicated to it. However, the Q&A is just as important as the meeting itself.

Q&A sessions should happen in all meetings, but they're especially important if your meetings are with external clients or people outside your team. These sessions actively engage people in the meeting and make them think carefully about what was said.

Encourage people to ask questions. Often, if you don't mention questions, people won't ask for fear of imposing.

A useful tip is to ask participants to prepare questions in advance. For this, you should tell them the topic and ask what they want you to answer about it. This ensures that you cover the relevant topic and questions in the meeting. You could also ask people at the end whether you answered their question.

11. Next steps

If there are any next steps at the end of the meeting, it's important that you communicate these effectively with the necessary parties. For example, everyone should know what's required of them when they leave the meeting.

Effective delegation

When you start to think of yourself as a successful leader, you realise there are more demands on your time than you can possibly fulfil. This is a common problem faced by many leaders. The solution is to delegate effectively.

While delegation is an important tool, many leaders hesitate to use it, and this has been the downfall of many leaders. The biggest barrier to delegation is the attitude that you must do it all! The adage, “If you want something done right, do it yourself” can become a leader’s curse.

Delegation is very different from simply assigning someone a task that falls within their established job description. When you delegate, you give someone else one of your tasks to complete with the authority and control to complete it properly.

Delegation is not abdication. You share accountability for the assignment, which is why you establish checkpoints to monitor overall progress. Just as the outcomes of your entire department are your responsibility, you are also responsible for the ultimate success of the delegation process.

When delegation is done properly and for the right reasons, it helps foster a climate of trust and creates growth opportunities for your employees. Here are five principles that can help you create an effective delegation process.

1. Determine what you will delegate

Effective delegation begins with defining your responsibilities. Write down all your activities and responsibilities. Review your master list and categorise all the items into two secondary lists: things you alone must do and things that others could do or help you with. Anything that falls into the second list presents an opportunity for delegation.

2. Choose the right person to delegate the task to

The successful 18th century industrialist Andrew Carnegie said, “The secret to success lies not in doing your own work, but in recognising the right person to do it.” The key to finding the right person to delegate to is matching skills and attitude to the task at hand.

3. Clarify the desired results

When the results you want to accomplish are clear, it allows the employee to use their own creativity and resources to accomplish them. An added benefit of effective delegation is that the individual may find a better way to achieve the desired results.

4. Clearly define the employee's responsibility and authority as it relates to the delegated task

Clearly communicate the expectation, responsibilities and timeline. Be sure to ask the employee to share their understanding of these elements.

5. Establish a follow up meeting or touch points

Follow up meetings should be focused on two things: monitoring progress and determining the need for assistance. The number of follow up meetings will vary based on the scope of the task or project and whether the employee is new or a long-term member of the department.

Once you have created a solid process for delegation, stick to it, and avoid reverse delegation. This is when a team member tries to dump the delegated task back onto you, and you may feel tempted to take it, especially if they seem to be struggling. **Helping people stretch outside their comfort zone is all part of growth and development. Use the scheduled follow up meetings to manage the delegation process, provide encouragement and monitor the results.**

Scheduling and planning work

Are you making the best use of your time?

It's the end of another busy working day and, even though you came into the office early and left late, you don't feel as if you've accomplished anything significant.

It's all too easy for this to happen. Faced with endless meetings, frequent interruptions and urgent last-minute tasks, you can easily be busy all day without making any progress on high-priority projects and goals.

That's why it's so important to know how to schedule your time properly. In this section, we'll look at ways to do this, making time for the work that really matters while still leaving time for personal development, family and friends.

The importance of scheduling

Scheduling is the art of planning your activities so that you can achieve your goals and priorities in the time you have available. When it's done effectively, it helps you:

- understand what you can realistically achieve with your time
- make sure you have enough time for essential tasks
- add contingency time for the unexpected
- avoid taking on more than you can handle
- work steadily toward your personal and career goals
- have enough time for family and friends, exercise and hobbies; and
- achieve a good work-life balance.

Time is the one resource that we can't buy, but we often waste it or use it ineffectively. Scheduling helps you think about what you want to achieve in a day, week or month, and it keeps you on track to accomplish your goals.

How to schedule your time

Set a regular time to do your scheduling – at the start of every week or month, for example.

Choose the right tools. A simple and easy way to keep a schedule is to use a pen and paper or a weekly planner. You can also use apps and software such as Google Calendar®, Microsoft Outlook® and Canva. Choose a scheduling tool that suits your situation, the current structure of your job, your personal taste and your budget.

The most important thing when choosing a scheduling tool is that it lets you enter data easily and view an appropriate span of time (day/week/month) with the level of detail that you need.

Once you have decided which tool you want to use, prepare your schedule in the following way:

Step 1: Identify available time

Start by establishing the time you want to make available for your work.

How much time you spend at work should reflect the design of your job and your personal goals in life.

For example, if you're pushing for promotion, it might be prudent to work beyond normal hours each day to show your dedication. On the other hand, if you want to have plenty of time for out-of-work activities, you might decide to do your allocated hours and no more.

Step 2: Schedule essential actions

Next, block in the actions you absolutely must take to do a good job. These will often be the things you are assessed against.

For example, if you manage people, make sure that you have enough time available to deal with team members' personal issues, coaching and supervision needs. Also, allow time to communicate with your boss and key people around you.

Step 3: Schedule high-priority activities

Review your to-do list and schedule in high-priority and urgent activities, as well as essential maintenance tasks you can't delegate or avoid.

Try to arrange these for the times of day when you are most productive. For example, some people are at their most energised and efficient in the morning, while others focus more effectively in the afternoon or evening.

Step 4: Schedule contingency time

Schedule some extra time to cope with contingencies and emergencies. Experience will tell you how much to allow – in general, the more unpredictable your job, the more contingency time you'll need. (If you don't schedule this time in, emergencies will still happen and you'll end up working late.)

Frequent interruptions can eat into your time. Learning how to manage them can reduce the amount of contingency time you need to set aside. Some interruptions will be hard to predict, but leaving some open space in your schedule gives you the flexibility you need to rearrange tasks and respond to important issues as they arise.

Step 5: Schedule discretionary time

The space you have left in your planner is 'discretionary time': time that is available to deliver your priorities and achieve your goals. Review your prioritised to-do list and personal goals, evaluate the time you need to achieve them and schedule them in.

Step 6: Analyse your activities

If, by the time you reach step five, you find that you have little or no discretionary time available, you need to go back through steps two, three and four and question whether all of the tasks you've entered are absolutely necessary. It may be that some things can be delegated or tackled in a more time-efficient way.

One of the most important ways to build success is by maximising the leverage you can achieve with your time. Increase the amount of work you can complete by delegating to other people, outsourcing key tasks or automating using technology. This will free you up to achieve your goals.

If you find that your discretionary time is still limited, then you may need to renegotiate your workload or ask for help. Use your newly prepared schedule as evidence of your heavy commitments. This demonstrates to your boss how well-organised you are and might make them more receptive to your request.

Easy time management tips

- List actions and tasks in one place only (such as your computer or notebook).
- Do one job at a time and finish it before starting the next.
- If you are interrupted, make a note of where you have reached.
- Book appointments to do certain tasks and keep to them.
- Only agree to meetings with other where the purpose is clear, and your attendance will add value.
- Book maintenance tasks – those you know need to be done each day so that your team runs smoothly.
- Build in 'project time' for one-off tasks.
- Know yourself and your job – each role has peaks and troughs which you need to know and understand to perform better.

Time management tools

There are several time management tools that could work for you. They may not work for everybody, but could provide another tool to improve your efficiency.

The Pomodoro Technique

A time management system that encourages people to work with the time they have, rather than against it. Using this method, you break your work day into 25-minute chunks separated by five-minute breaks. These intervals are referred to as Pomodoros.

The Pickle Jar Theory

Time, like a pickle jar, is limited. Every day, everyone fills out time with important, less important and unimportant activities. The pickle jar serves as a visual metaphor to determine what is useful and what is not useful. It helps you to set your priorities for daily life and plan tasks in such a way that you have time to spare instead of too few hours in the day.

Parkinson's Law

"Work expands to fill the time available for its completion."

If something must be done in a year, it'll take a year. If something must be done next week, it'll take a week. If something must be done tomorrow, it'll take a day. We plan based on how much time we have, and when the deadline approaches, we start to make choices and trade-offs to complete the task by the deadline.

Parkinson's Law should not be considered carte blanche to set unreasonable deadlines. All projects take time; you certainly can't build a skyscraper in a day or a factory in a week. The more complex the project, the more time it typically takes – up to a point.

Parkinson's Law is best used as a thought experiment. What would it look like if you finished the project on a very aggressive timescale? If you had to build a skyscraper in a day, how would you go about doing it? By answering these questions, you'll discover techniques or approaches you can use to get the work done in less time.

The ALPEN method

This method involves creating a plan for the day within a few minutes, which makes it easier to structure the day and keep track of it. The goal is to increase performance while significantly reducing stress. Many managers swear by this simple but effective method.

One of the best things about the ALPEN method is that it is so simple. There is no complex system with diagrams and tables to learn. The plan can be created every morning in a few minutes and still has a great effect.

Time management matrix

A self-management tool developed by Steven Covey in his well known book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. It's now widely used by business and individuals to prioritise important tasks and identify time wasters. It classifies tasks into four quadrants:

1. Urgent and important <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The birth of your child• A customer complaint	2. Not urgent, but important <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your taxes• Getting your car serviced• Calling your parents
3. Urgent, but not important <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responding to email	4. Neither urgent nor important <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Netflix binge• Reading the comments on a news article

Ask yourself how you fare when it comes to **maintenance-based activities**. Start with this exercise:

- Think about which quadrant takes up most of your work day.
- Log your time for the next three days in 30-minute increments. Were you right? Which quadrant do you spend the most time on?
- Think of one activity or response you could change to shift more of your day-to-day into quadrant 2.
- What communication, help or tools do you need to make this a permanent change?

The Pareto Principle

A principle formulated by the Italian economist and sociologist Vilfredo Federico Pareto (1848–1913), according to which 80% of the results come from 20% of the inputs. Pareto discovered this principle in the early 20th century, when he observed that in Italy 20 percent of families possessed 80 percent of national wealth.

For work and time management, the Pareto Principle means recognising that typically, 20% of your activities and tasks are so critical that they contribute about 80% to the total success of your work. This means the remaining 80% of your time yields only 20% of the result.

The ratio between yield and effort is 80 to 20 from this perspective. For this reason, the Pareto Principle is also called the 80:20 rule.

The Pareto Principle is effective method for setting priorities and prioritising tasks, for identifying scheduling issues early and for developing a concrete plan for work.

Energy levels

Maintaining energy levels

As an industry, we may be brilliant at recruiting people with the right capabilities and behaviours, but those individuals may lack capacity or wellbeing. No matter how intelligent someone is, they only have so much time. Therefore we need to concentrate on people's energy levels and wellbeing to ensure maximum productivity.

- We can think of **capacity** as volume and velocity. If someone's capacity is exceeded, it could affect their wellbeing, capability and behaviour.
- When it comes to time, **our capacity is finite** – but our energy is not. We can all build more capacity into our daily lives to improve the way we use the scarce resources available to us.
- We can do that by **prioritising**, by valuing and recognising the effort of those around us, and by replenishing after periods of intensity.
- We should go home tired at the end of the week, but hungry for more – **not exhausted and looking for respite**. We need incremental changes that will make us better leaders and better colleagues.

What do we mean by energy?

- **Energy is the capacity to do work**. If you have more energy, you will be able to do more work.
- **Energy can be expended** and renewed. To perform at our best, we must balance using energy with renewing it.
- We have four sources of energy: **physical, emotional, mental and purpose**. We need to understand how to build more energy.
- If we don't intentionally try to **build our physical capacity**, above the age of 30, it starts to diminish. However, we can reverse this trend if we take action to change our behaviour and build our capacity back up.
- Because of the **increase in demands on us**, most of us expend more energy than we renew. The consequence is that we spend much of our time feeling depleted, which limits our performance and wellbeing.

Energy audit

Created by Laing O'Rourke for **Your Energy Playbook**, and included here with thanks.

Ask yourself the following questions truthfully. At the end, count up the number of statements you agree with (to give you a score out of 20).

Dimension	Statement	Agree / Disagree
Physical	I get at least 7 hours of sleep	
	I take regular breaks during my work day	
	I spend enough time fully disconnected from work	
	I am always conscious of what I eat and how it makes me feel	
	I do at least 3 cardiovascular and 2 strength training workouts per week	
Mental	I do the most important tasks as my first priority of the day	
	I regularly focus on one thing at a time without getting distracted	
	I set aside time for reflection each day	
	I take time during the day to intentionally quiet my mind	
	I stick to the key priorities I set	

Dimension	Statement	Agree / Disagree
Emotional	I regularly express my appreciation to others	
	I stay calm and positive at work even when demand is high	
	I take enough time outside of work for the activities I most deeply enjoy	
	When I'm with my loved ones, I'm truly with them	
	I feel enthusiastic when I get to work	
Purpose	I feel passionately committed to what I do	
	I successfully balance taking care of others with taking care of myself	
	My decisions at work are more often influenced by my own sense of purpose than by external demands	
	There is a close alignment between what I say is important in my life and how I actually live	
	I invest enough time and energy in making a positive difference in the world	

Total 'Agree' Scores	Result
17-20	Fully energised
13-16	Moderately energised
9-12	Somewhat energised
5-8	Fading
Below 5	Burned out

- What does your score tell you?
- What behaviours are undermining your energy?
- What are you allowing to get in the way of having more energy?
- Try to make a change to see if you can improve your scores.
- Review your scores every three months.

Micro-experiments

Energy is needed to make change. Behavioural changes have to be easy and simple, otherwise they are very hard to stick to. We need to make intentional choices about what we want to achieve and how.

Try to change one thing through a '**micro-experiment**'. It is called an experiment because you will need to test and learn what works for you.

- The micro-experiment will have three key features: **outcome, strategy and measurement.**
- Be **precise and specific.** Think about what your performance and renewal strategies are for that behaviour change.
- Bite off what you can chew, no more, no less.
- **Define what success looks like** from the start and measure your progress every day

Examples of a micro-experiment could be:

- Reduce alcohol, caffeine, sugar, artificial light and all other common stimulants and see whether your energy levels improve.
- Work in 90-minute waves. Building rest into your working day can focus your attention on ways to sustainably renew your energy and optimise your performance.
- Switch off your emails at a particular time of the day and/or only address emails during a set part of the day.
- Switch off your tablet or phone three hours before you go to bed and see whether your sleep improves.
- Improve your diet and/or reduce your calorie intake and see whether your energy levels improve.
- Switch off your work emails out of hours. Can you now be truly with your loved ones without being distracted?

Summary

Time is a finite resource. By becoming excellent at time management, everyone can make the most of the time they have.

Failing to manage your time means a lot of time wasted that you can never get back. To make sure that when you are working you are at your best, review ways to improve your energy levels.

Succeeding opens a world of possibilities. By sharpening your time management skills and improving your energy levels, you can expect to be more confident and effective at work. You will feel better, with a strong sense of purpose. You'll also have more time to spend with your family and to take care of your own health and wellbeing. Overall, this will drastically improve your life.

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