

IT&C FOR TIME MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: *The efficient management of time is essential in any profession and in any activity domain. Anybody can increase his capacity to organize his time and get important benefits from it. The way in which one organizes his time will always have a direct impact on the objects of his work (resources and activities), so that it is worth allocating time for developing some instruments and techniques that could help planning and organizing time efficiently and attaining the objectives while meeting the deadlines.*

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Introduction

While being the most exercised of the human skills, communication is also the main source of misunderstandings and human failures, even in our times. This happens at all levels of the social life. People are different and these differences (education, temper, environment, genetics etc) can affect communication when they are not understood. That is why we say that there are no receipts for communicating efficiently and that a conscious adaption effort is needed. If it is controlled in time, the communication process contributes to reducing stress, and the desired result can be achieved easier, saving time and energy.

Time has the following characteristics:

- it is inelastic (it can't be accumulated nor saved);
- it is atypical (it can't be compared to any other resource);
- it is equally available (anyone has the same amount of time everyday – 24 hours);
- it is indispensable;
- it can't be substituted.

How well we organize our time is up to each of us, it shows how disciplined we are, how we control our desires, how we refrain that need for immediate reward which we all know brings us more regret than satisfaction most of the time. A way to keep it under control is to motivate ourselves continuously, to think about the consequences of our actions and to communicate to groups, to masses of people. One can rise the question if using the informational technology and communication (IT&C) technologies bring us closer when we want to communicate or they bring us apart ?

Scheduling the program from the previous day can be done by using various softwares, like Microsoft Outlook, Mozilla Sunbird and also online, by using Google Calendar etc. These programs like Outlook, Sunbird or Google Calendar offer the possibility to efficiently manage time and activities, by offering a list with the days and the hours of the day, and on that list we can choose when we'll do certain activities and the hours at

which they will occur. The fact that we see and arrange the activities help us to keep focused and to not lose time, because we know that at the hour x we have another activity and between the hours x and y and we're thus forced to stay concentrated. Moreover, there are ways to alert the user, in the form of a reminder: Outlook and Sunbird display a window together with a sound with some time before the scheduled activity has to start, and Google Calendar sends an email.

Time management skills are the abilities to recognize and solve personal time management problems. With good time management skills you are in control of your time and your life, of your stress and energy levels. You make progress at work. You are able to maintain balance between your work, personal and family life. Depending on personal situation, such obstacles may be the primary reason why you procrastinate, have difficulties saying no, delegating, or making time management decisions.

By a professional management of time we understand the process by which the daily activity is scheduled with the aim to make the most out of the allocated time, to solve the tasks assigned to each person performing a job in an organization, but also to solve his personal problems. That is why we have to know how to prioritize actions on a certain period of time, in order to meet the personal as well as the professional goals.

Thus the management of time has the following main objectives:

- defining tasks at home and at work;
- determining the time constraints;
- overcoming obstacles that impend us from doing what we wish;
- identifying the advantages of managing time and anticipating opportunities;
- scheduling and acting according to priorities;
- fulfilling tasks successfully and on time;
- avoiding excuses and blaming failures on certain actions;
- creating a feeling of freedom and control over the personal psychic;
- activities;
- maintaining excellent relationships with the family and the society.

Time constraints can be separated in 2 main categories

- constraints due to one's own fault;
- constraints due to someone else's fault.

The constraints due to one's *own* fault are:

- disorganization or lack of organization
- slowness or delaying tasks;
- lack of capacity to say no;
- unproductive discussions;
- useless perfectionism;
- an excessive preoccupation for what others have to do.

The constraints due to *someone* else's fault are:

- uninvited visitors;
- unexpected phone calls;
- useless correspondence;
- directive waiting;
- unproductive meetings;
- crises and useless reports.

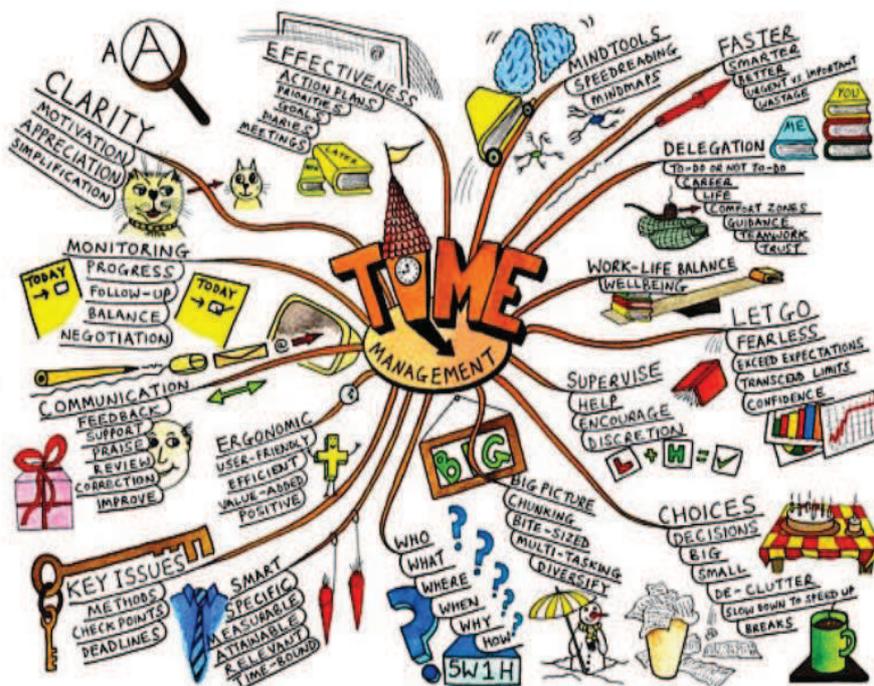
The repercussions of a wrong time management are:

- not completing tasks on time;
- delaying meetings and coming late to meetings;
- maximum stress at work and at home;
- inefficiency and lack of results;

- lack of planning;
- personal disorder;
- the attempt to do too many things in a short amount of time;
- unclear responsibilities;
- people and resources that are not adequately organized;
- useless discussions;
- useless documents;
- badly organized meetings;
- tasks are not finalized;
- inadequate controls;
- weak socialisation with the surrounding people;
- unexpected visitors;
- delaying solving problems etc.

Literature review

Time is a resource that is absolutely necessary for all human activities and the key for the success of every person is the way in which he knows how to manage his time (see figure below).



Source: [Http://www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com)

Figure 1 Ways to manage time

David Allen (2001) says that “our productivity is directly proportional to our ability to relax”. The more time you spend managing your system, the less time you'll spend reaping the rewards of increased productivity. Studying time management has been an extremely worthwhile endeavor. While the claims made by people selling products in this field are often exaggerated and overhyped, I did realize some genuine productivity benefits from applying the best ideas. The sad truth is that most people are so incredibly

bad at managing their time that rock-bottom personal productivity is simply accepted as normal. So anyone who can consistently invest 80% of their time each day in intelligent, productive activities is going to look like an overachiever by comparison. The average college student in particular is probably operating at only 20-30% of their capacity, and I'm referring to their social life in addition to academics. Most people are completely unaware of just how poor they are at time management until some "overachiever" enters their lives and makes them look bad by comparison. The essence of time management is the following:

- Decide what to do
- Do it

These appear to be very simple steps at first glance. Even a child can do them. However, when we look at them through the lens of optimization, they become much more complicated. In order to optimize these steps, we must concern ourselves with identifying the "right" or the "best" way to complete each step. We can easily see that some decision-action combinations produce better results than others. So our question becomes, "What is the best action to take right now, and what is the best way to do it?". Answering this question should be the main purpose behind any time management system. Yes, there are side benefits like getting organized, becoming more clear-headed, and reducing stress. But ultimately these benefits all contribute to the decision-action process.

One study of Steve Pavlina (2008) showed that the „best managers in the world tend to have an extremely high tolerance for ambiguity“. After Steve Pavlina there are seven principles total: truth, love, power, oneness, authority, courage, and intelligence. All of these are universal principles, so they can be applied to any area of your life -- health, relationships, spiritual development, finances, daily habits, etc.

Truth, love, and power are the primary principles. The other principles are secondary because they can be derived from the first three. The diagram shows how this works:

- Oneness = Truth + Love
- Authority = Truth + Power
- Courage = Love + Power
- Intelligence = Truth + Love + Power

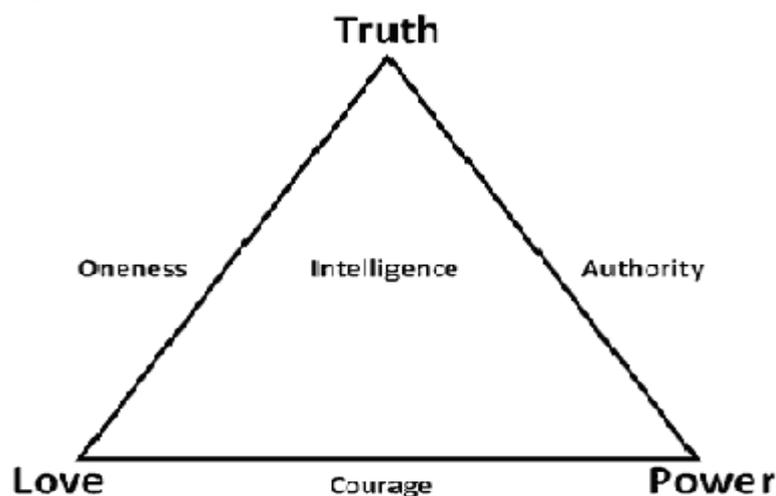


Figure 2 The Core Principles of Personal Growth

What arises from this model is a new definition of human intelligence: *Intelligence is one's degree of alignment with truth, love, and power.*

Multitasking means doing several things in the same time, more concurrent tasks. Nowadays almost everybody does multitasking, from the kid that plays lego and watches TV to the grandma who cooks while listening to the radio. We all do multitasking, from time to time. We check the email while listening to the radio, or we even work and listen to the radio, to music or we talk in the same time on chat, we drive and talk on the phone, we walk while listening to music etc. Although we have the impression that we can do more in a shorter amount of time, we deceive ourselves, because we do them worse and they take us slightly more time to perform. Mark Forester, in his book „Do it Tomorrow“ considers his principle of doing one thing at a time as fundamental. When people do multitasking, they combine an pleasant with an unpleasant activity (i.e. homework + music) in order to feel the time passing faster and to feel that work is done by itself. They try to feel the pleasure from the thing they like and to minimize the discomfort from the thing they dislike.

When you don't do multitasking you will feel more free, more concentrated, calmer, more efficient, because the mind will not be disrupted by so many activities. There are studies that prove the negative effects of multitasking, as for example the fact that the more productive employees don't check email every 5 minutes, or that kids that do their homework while watching TV do them worse. The psychologist David Meyer, from the University of Michigan discovered that multitasking favours the secretion of stress hormones and adrenaline, which, if not controlled, can create health problems on the long term. It was discovered that workers that get too much email and too many phone calls suffer from a decrease in IQ that is twice bigger than the one found at marijuana addicts.

Methodology

The key elements of time management are:

- planning and programming time;
- Planning time doesn't.

Planning time doesn't necessarily suppose complicated techniques, but we have to try to predict activities and their execution time. If planning means defining *what* we will do and when the action will be completed, to program means to decide when we will act and *what* resources we will use.

The method of the *4 quadrans* is a concept of Stephen Covey. This ia a method that helps you do what you have to do and to leave behind what you don't have to. When we have set a program or when there are more things to do, or when there isn't enough time we have to ask ourselves if an activity can be put into one of the cathegories from the below figure:

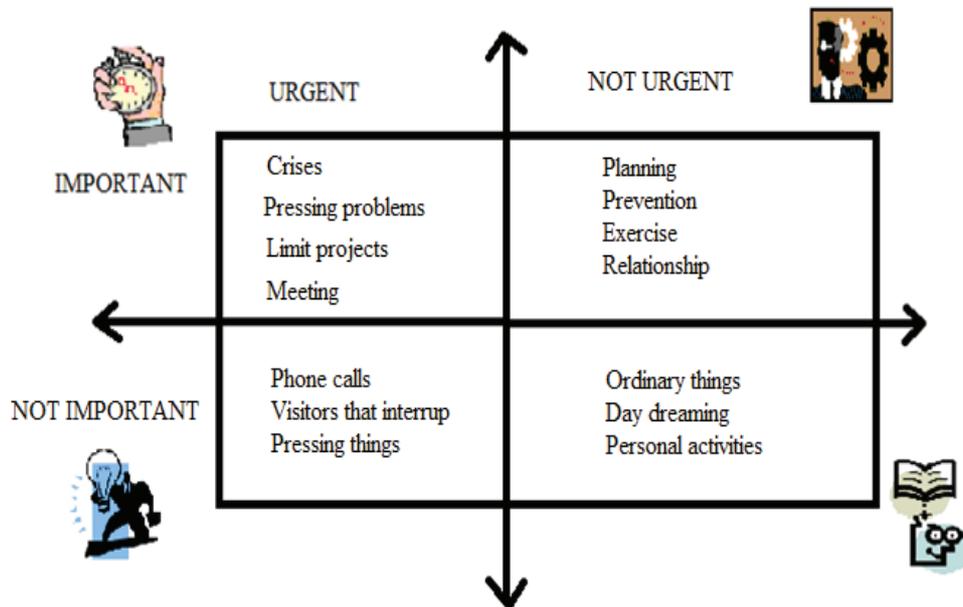


Figure 3 Four quadrans of time management

- When analysing a situation from a time management perspective we have to:
- understand why open and direct communication can bring many positive results;
 - communicate better to work more harmoniously and constructively with others, thus contributing to creating better teams;
 - recognise the behavioral profile of the interlocutor;
 - understand what is behind some arguments, messages or motivations;
 - manage more practical information in order to process both verbal non-verbal messages;
 - recognise aggressive or pasive behavior tendencies;
 - acquire a series of techniques for approaching misunderstandings and confrontations;
 - proactively open communication channels.

There are 6 types of communication blockings:

- 1) when people create opinions based on too little information;
- 2) when they leave the impression that they understood everything after little information was communicated;
- 3) when they use in their speech principles that are not accepted by everybody („it is not good to talk when you were not asked”);
- 4) when they have a tendency to exaggerate;
- 5) when one of the participants in communication has strong beliefs about things he didn't even tried to study;
- 6) when suppositions are made that are many times misleading.

The development of planning techniques became important after the second world war. The best known planning techniques are:

- the technique of Gantt diagrams or bars;
- the technique of networks of type: *PERT* (Program Evaluation and Review Technique), *CPM* (Critical Path Method), *PDM* (Precedence Diagram Method), *GERT* (Graphical Evaluation and Review Technique).

When planning a project, in order to use a network technique, the project has to be divided in the component parts: activities and events. The activities represent an

effort and demand resources: human, time, financial and equipment. In the framework of a project the activities have to be performed in a certain order, which can be: serial or in parallel. The event represents fulfillment of one or more activities at a certain moment in time. The event is like a „milestone” or a verification point for the stage of the project (for example finishing a training, handing over a program, receiving spare parts etc). The events can be seen as goals reached, while the activities represent means to attaining these goals.

Companies and person that expand internationally have a number of challenges to overcome; and one of the biggest is to change their perspective to adapt to their new markets. A personal digital assistant (PDA) allows you to efficiently access, organize, collect, store, and process various kinds of information, and work with it on the run. It is small in size, like a pocket calculator or a pocket address book. Being a hand-held electronic device, it is designed to fit your palm as easily as your pocket. Unlike an ordinary computer, it is always with you.

Results

In business and in the current activity, the days are too short. The lack of time is always a problem and that's why the one who uses his time well is easy to recognize as one who is never in a hurry, spending more and more hours at work, and this doesn't help him meet deadlines. The people who don't manage their time well changes his priorities all the time, never sets deadlines and doesn't have his objectives quantified and there is an enormous difference between doing things well and doing only the necessary things.

For better organizing the time of a day, the simplest way is the following:

3. noting tasks that have to be accomplished
4. evaluating the length of each activity
5. booking time for unpredicted cases
6. grouping similar activities
7. classifying activities according to priorities
8. delegating activities when it is possible

At the end of the working day, can be performed the following activities:

- nothing obtained results;
- reallocating time for unfinalized activities (reprogramming according to priorities);
- archiving documents that are not necessary;
- verifying activities delegated to other coworkers or subordinates.

There has to be a clear separation between: *INPUTS* (what we do with our time) – *OUTPUTS* (results of our efforts) and *RESULTS* (relevance of all that was done for attaining the established objectives). The efficient management of time means to be able to realistically estimate the necessary time for fulfilling a task depending on its complexity. Also, the efficient management of time supposes setting priorities when performing tasks depending on their importance, urgency and/or results. Moreover the efficient management of time implies organizing the activities so that to meet the deadlines and to delegate responsibilities to adequate persons in order to help meeting deadlines.

For an efficient use of time, the following should be taken into account:

- *Information* – without information, there is no accumulation of knowledge, and without these a decision can't be taken and an activity can't be performed.
- It is essential to set the *OBJECTIVES*, when you don't know where you're going you can't meet your objectives.
- *Activities* have to be always oriented toward the desired objectives;

- *Results* – suppose that a task represents 100%, we're not only interested in the whole, but also if a portion of the task is accomplished;
- *Concentration* – one can work efficiently, in a short time interval, in a single direction (one can't solve well and efficiently more tasks at a time);
- *Initiative* – if one thing is desired to happen, someone should take the initiative and act accordingly;
- *Programming* – when an activity is programmed, we can suppose for sure that it will happen before others;
- *Respect for time* – if you don't respect your time, don't expect others to do it;
- *Simplicity* – when choosing between more alternatives, it is always preferable to choose the simplest.

Some simple principles govern the efficient management of time:

- setting the objectives clearly;
- transforming them in SMART objectives;
- knowing the tasks;
- knowing the constraints;
- establishing priorities;
- planning tasks.

In order to manage well the time allocated to a project, a manager has to:

- always have available up to date information about the progress of activities and the stages of the project, including the problems encountered;
- periodically analyse the progress of the project with the personnel and all the factors involved;
- have alternative partners and providers for the project;
- redefine the priorities of the stages, the critical path etc.
- create alternative plans for bringing back the project to normal parameters if the situation in which the activity has been disrupted;
- to be an example for meeting deadlines, without forgetting the goals that need to be attained.

When programming time, one has to have in mind the following rules:

- to program first the time and then the activities that have to be executed;
- to adapt the rhythm of work, if possible, to the biological rhythm of each person;
- to use the travel time and the waiting time;
- to include in the daily program time for personal issues;
- to create a resume of the following day in the last minutes of the day;
- to have the activities programmed according to the envisaged objectives;
- to allocate at least half a day per week to reading items of professional interest.

Conclusions

Being a limited resource that is dynamically unidirectional, time has to be planned in such a way that it can be used with maximum efficiency. Being one of the resources that gets consumed irreversibly, the efficiency of using it is very important.

It is necessary that the importance of each activity is understood, including planning time resources in a project and developing knowledge and the habits of efficient planning of the goal and of the objectives of any activity.

The good communication inside a project team, regarding the planning of current activities is a step in achieving an efficient management of time.

Using the most suitable methods and techniques of managing time depending on the specifics of it, using the newest IT&C tools, like those that represent diagrams of time (Gantt graphic) or activities (Work Breakdown Structure).

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