

28 Time Management Tips To Getting More Done Every Day

Written by Neal Whitten, PMP



These ideas can help you improve your time management effectiveness.

We all are looking for that time management formula that allows us to complete work in less time, get more done each day, waste less time, find more free time, take control of your day, improve your reputation and lower your stress. Here are 28 time management actions to help put you in the proper mindset to make the best use of your time.

1. **Maintain a Master To-Do List.** List all the tasks that you need or want to accomplish at some point. Assign a due-date and prioritization (1-4) to each entry in the Master To-Do List.
2. **Use a technique for assigning priorities to tasks.** Although there are many techniques out there, I have chosen the Time Management Matrix by Stephen Covey that was famously published in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.
The Time Management Matrix is represented as a box with four quadrants and distinguishes between importance and urgency. By importance is meant tasks that contribute to the achievement of your goals. Urgent means tasks that require immediate attention.
3. Urgent means tasks that require immediate attention.

URGENT

NOT URGENT

IMPORTANT	Quadrant 1: Urgent & Important	Quadrant 2: Not Urgent & Important
NOT IMPORTANT	Quadrant 3: Urgent & Not Important	Quadrant 4: Not Urgent & Not Important

Notice the four-quadrant matrix box consists of two rows and two columns that will be used to assign the value of a task. The two quadrants in the first row are associated with tasks that are considered “important,” also referred to as high-valued tasks. The two quadrants in the second row are associated with tasks that are considered “not important,” also referred to as low-valued tasks.

The two quadrants in the first column are associated with tasks that are considered “urgent.” The two quadrants in the second column are considered “not urgent.”

Said another way:

- Quadrant 1 represents **priority 1 tasks** that are urgent and important. These are tasks that need immediate attention such as important deadlines with high urgency. Examples are emergency issues, demands from superiors or customers, planned tasks now due, meetings, appointments and fire-fighting.
 - Quadrant 2 represents **priority 2 tasks** that are not urgent but important. These are tasks that are important but do not require immediate attention such as long-term development and strategizing. These are tasks that you plan to do such as planning, designing, testing, training and relationship building.
 - Quadrant 3 represents **priority 3 tasks** that are urgent but not important such as distractions with high urgency. Covey recommends minimizing or eliminating these tasks as they do not contribute to your high-value achievement. These tasks might be candidates for delegating. Examples are trivial requests from others, apparent emergencies, ad-hoc interruptions and distractions, pointless activities and meetings, and a boss’ whims. Tasks in this quadrant can also be driven by one’s ego.
 - Quadrant 4 represents **priority 4 tasks** that are not urgent and not important. These time-waster tasks yield very little or no value and should be eliminated such as computer games, net surfing, gossip, social communications, daydreaming, doodling, excessively long breaks, reading irrelevant material and over embellishment.
4. **Create a Daily To-Do List either at the start of the day or the evening before.** If there are any priority 1 tasks, they should appear on the Daily To-Do List. If there is time available for priority 2 tasks then selected priority 2 tasks should be included in the Daily To-Do List.
 5. **Identify your top three priority tasks that should be worked each day.** These tasks could be designated priority 1 or 2 tasks from your Master To-Do List. Visibly display the three priority tasks to encourage you to focus on them.
 6. **Spend most of your time—starting early in the day—working on priority 1 and 2 tasks;** these are high-valued tasks and are most critical in defining your contributions and value to the organization as well as your overall career.
 7. **Resist allowing low-value (priority 3 and 4) tasks to consume a significant amount of your time.** Minimize, eliminate or delegate priority 3 tasks. Eliminate

priority 4 tasks; however, these tasks may be engaged for pleasure during moments of relaxation.

8. **Reserve blocks of time on your daily calendar for accomplishing non-meeting work** such as time you need to prepare for meetings you will attend today, placing and returning phone calls, servicing your emails and time required to work other tasks that you have listed in today's to-do list. The reserved time can also include some contingency for working unplanned but important or urgent items that can arise throughout the day.
9. **Expect interruptions** but be prepared to professionally manage them.
10. **Find a get-away place.** If you are unable or unwilling to stop interruptions when you are trying to focus on working off tasks, find a place to get away for blocks of time of at least 30-60 minutes. This is when your productivity can be at its best.
11. **Before you start a new task, ask yourself if this is the best use of your time.** Remember, you have a limited amount of time but a near infinite number of tasks vying for your attention.
12. **Manage phone calls.** Schedule times to return phone calls. When on a call, keep to the topic at hand and avoid tangents. Consider silencing your phone during periods where your concentration is especially important.
13. **Reduce multi-tasking**—it typically results in a loss of productivity. Do your best to finish a task before starting another task, or to remain on the same task for as long as you can before switching to another task.
14. **Seize control of your day** where you spend your time and for how long. Resist allowing others to control portions of your day.
15. **Avoid or limit use of social media tools** such as Facebook® and Twitter® unless you use these tools to function real-time.
16. **Invest a few minutes reviewing how you spent your time each day and identify the time wasters;** do this at the end of each day or first thing the next day. Then think about how each of these moments could have been better handled. Apply those lessons in planning and managing the next day.
17. **Learn to accept “good enough.”** When you are performing a task, there is a point where the task is sufficiently complete to fulfill its need whereby to continue to work the task to perfection fails to produce an adequate return on your additional time and energy investment.
18. **Reduce the number of meetings you attend.** Consider only attending meetings that will reveal information you need or that you have information someone else needs. In the latter case, consider giving that information to the meeting leader or coworker who is attending and do not attend yourself.
19. **Create, distribute and enforce rules for your meetings** so they run effectively.
20. **Limit checking email to 3-5 times a day.** For example, you could decide to check email early in the day, just after lunch and at the end of the day. If your day allows, you could optionally check email midmorning and midafternoon. Email is one of the biggest time-management detractors.
21. **Turn off the alert that notifies you when an email arrives.** If you are not tempted, you will be less likely to peek.
22. **Keep emails as short as possible** whether sending or replying.

23. **Break larger tasks into smaller tasks.** The smaller tasks will be far easier to schedule and you will gain a sense of accomplishment as the tasks are individually completed.
24. **Learn to say “no.”** But do this responsibly and earn a reputation for playing fair.
25. **Don’t procrastinate working high-value tasks.** Procrastination can cause huge missed opportunities throughout your career as well as your life.
26. **Reserve some “me time” each day.** Use this quiet time to relax, be mindful and reenergize. Even periods as short as 5 minutes can go a long way to help you collect your thoughts and reinvigorate you.
27. **Know how and where you spend your time** so you can make better time management choices. Keep a log of where you spend your time for a full week. Track your activities in increments of 30-minute intervals. At the end of the week, look for the lessons.
28. **Power nap.** If beneficial, find 10-15 minutes to take a power nap around mid-day to early afternoon. The energy boost will help your afternoon be more productive and enjoyable.
29. **Solicit a time management mentor.** Find someone you believe is good at time management and is willing to coach you in this area.

Time management is not about being busy; it’s about being effective. Knowing how to prioritize and complete the work that matters the most on a daily basis can be the difference between a sterling career and just barely staying afloat. Good time management does not require extreme effort but it does require deliberate discipline. Effective time management can significantly and positively affect the rest of your life.

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