

# Time management for maximum effectiveness: how time perspectives influence the workplace

## Goals of this Module

To help organizations, managers, and employees:

- Establish more effective time management skills and habits.
- Increase perceptions of time passage and time value.
- Develop time management discipline and overcome personal time biases.
- Communicate expectations and time limits (deadlines) in assertive and balanced ways.

## Overview

We all make major decisions and react to important situations based on our perception of time and its value. For an organization, the commodity of “time” is best saved and spent if management can teach staff the importance of time as a resource, encourage time discipline, and communicate time constraints and deadlines.

One of the greatest obstacles to creativity and innovation within the workplace are individual ideas about time. In reaction to time pressure, some staff may procrastinate because “things just aren’t the way they used to be.” Others may react with fear and think “we need to react now regardless of the consequences.” Still others may be more comfortable putting tasks off to the future by saying “we can deal with that at a later time.”

The key to organizational productivity and advancement is a blended perspective of all three of these reactions, plus the ability to relate that perspective to employees. The hallmarks of quality time management include:

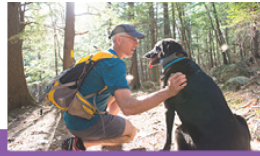
- Staff’s ability to set reasonable time expectations, and use time conservation strategies.
- Staff’s understanding of different personal time perceptions, strengths and weaknesses.
- Staff’s sensitivity to time constraints (deadlines) and ability to evaluate and re-evaluate current goals based on time.
- Staff’s respect for others’ “time values,” while also communicating realistic time limits.

## Objectives of this Module

1. Break patterns of time waste and procrastination.

Bad habits are hard to break and require complete dedication and concentration so as not to slip back into old patterns. Replacing old habits with new ones is one of the most effective ways of assuring success. Here are some time-saving strategies:

- Sequencing – creating effective lists of what needs to be done.
- Possessing comprehensive vision – understanding each task in relation to overall goals.
- Focusing– attending to one item at a time..
- Creating realistic tasks – breaking goals into



manageable sub-projects.

- Clarifying – communicating tasks and objectives for yourself and others.
- Delegating – enlisting others to take on well-defined tasks.
- Reorganizing– adjusting schedules when necessary to meet emerging new goals and directives.
- Combining – merging smaller tasks together, and using shortcuts to gain larger returns.
- Prioritizing – putting tasks in order of importance to gain momentum and efficiency.

## 2. Gain control over the perceptions of time.

While none of us can control time, we can manage our use of it which begins with a solid perception of the dynamics of time. Many individuals have false perceptions of time because they:

- Perceive time as an inexhaustible resource: Have a poor perception of how quickly time moves. Are convinced that time is all “relative.” Have never been held accountable for their use of time. Have problems with boundaries and constraints. Feel that quality or quantity of production is more important than expediency.
- Perceive themselves as an inexhaustible resource:
  - Take on more tasks than time will allow. Perceive that they are faster than they really are. See their own time as more important than others’-who can wait. Work beyond their capacity to endure fatigue. Believe they have others’ resources at their disposal.
- Perceive others’ time as an inexhaustible resource:
  - Undervalue other people’s time. Overvalue other people’s time. Punish others by wasting their time. Act oblivious to the wasting of other people’s time.
- Perceive time as their enemy or friend:

- Wish that they could re-live events. Wish that they could go back in time. Long for the “good ol’ days.” Experience difficulty adjusting to a faster/slower pace. Feel overly conscious of time (spend more time analyzing it than utilizing it). Seem surprised or disappointed by time. Use time as an excuse or weapon. Push things off for another time.

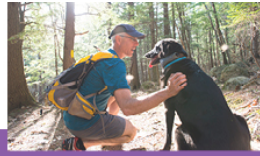
## 3. Use time as a limited resource with exhaustible limits.

- Provide time guidelines and expectations for the workplace.
- Provide tools, techniques and strategies to conserve time and better spend it.
- Expect clear workplace goals and objectives based on tasks and time frames.
- Map out time sequenced use of time in job performance evaluations and eliminate unnecessary task and repetitive overlap.
- Direct use of time on priority basis with most important tasks completed first.
- Determine use of discretionary time periods based on job flow and work demands.
- Evaluate personal time perceptions in relationship to time use behaviors.
- Encourage workplace communication regarding time allotment and time demands.
- Normalize workplace negotiations regarding time priorities and expectations.
- Hold all employees accountable to the use of their own and others’ time expenditures.

## 4. Create time sensitivity:

- Set realistic expectations.
- Communicate honestly about time.
- Re-commit to new time frames when necessary.

This material provides a general overview of the topic. Health information is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment by a therapist, physician or other health care professional. Contact a health care professional with any questions or concerns about specific health care needs.



- Re-assess time resources.
- Start meetings on time.
- Challenge time excuses.
- Review time usage and task sequencing.
- Evaluate workloads, responsibilities, commitments and job demands.
- Prepare time contingency plans for unexpected delays.

## Summary

### Tips for Time Management

1. Manage your expectations of others and your expectations of yourself.
2. Discover if you are living too much in the past, present or future.
3. Understand how others perceive their time and yours.
4. Learn to set boundaries that define the limits of your resources.
5. Maintain respect while communicating personal and professional values.
6. Use negotiating dialogue to communicate time constraints and goals.
7. Develop shortcuts and corner-cutting techniques to maximize time usage.
8. Eliminate procrastination by eliminating its root causes.
9. Strengthen planning skills and utilize your task list as a reference point.
10. Break the patterns of time waste through rewards and incentives.

This material provides a general overview of the topic. Health information is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment by a therapist, physician or other health care professional. Contact a health care professional with any questions or concerns about specific health care needs.

## Time Management: Managing the Time of Your Life Part I – Transcript

Have you ever taken one of those “How long are you going to live?” quizzes? You answer a bunch of questions about your family’s health history, your current health, your environment, and your lifestyle, and in return, you get an expected lifespan.

That can be a lot of fun, or it can be scary, depending upon how big a number you end up with. But what it does remind you of, pretty bluntly, is that you have a finite amount of time to spend in your life, no matter how big or small your number is.

So the key question is, “How are you going to use the time that you have?” It’s like the old joke about the three types of people: Those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who ask, “What happened?”

One of the saddest things to hear someone say is “I wish ...” Are you going to spend your time wisely, and experience the kind of life you’ve always wanted? Or are you going to let time fritter away, wondering where the years went? Are you going to check off items on your bucket list? Or are you going to let other people suck the time, and life, right out of you? You have this life to spend, one-time only. Are you going to spend it well?

Here’s a tough question that can put things into perspective. “If you knew that you only had six months to live, how would you spend it? Would you continue doing exactly what you’re doing? Or would you *dramatically* change your life for these final six months?” If you’d dramatically change your life, then that’s a message to yourself.

And we’re not talking about spending the last six months in a string of bucket list wild adventures. The question is about what you want out of life. That’s the ultimate time management issue.

Another way to look at this, one that brings it to into immediate focus, is to ask yourself, “Am I doing anything TODAY, no matter how small, that brings me any closer to a lifetime goal?”

For example, if you’ve always wanted to speak a second language, did you learn a new foreign word today? If you’re trying to improve your business skills, did you finish two pages from a book on your reading list? Again, it doesn’t have to be a giant step. Big progress can be made with a succession of little steps, but only if you plan for it, and actually do it. Unfortunately, too many people, day-to-day, don’t do ANYTHING that gets them any closer to their goals. And then their time runs out.

This is heavy stuff to be talking about, but it gets to the very fundamentals of time management—how you’re going to manage the time of your life. Just like an organization has a strategic plan, you need a personal, long-term plan. The potential benefits are enormous in terms of reaching the lifetime goals that you have.

Here's how you can start building your plan. Take a sheet of paper and create four columns. Label the left one "Items." Next is "Today." The third column is "In five years." And on the right-most column is space for "To-do's."

Here's the process. You're going to take the major areas of your life, and start doing a personal review. In the first column are your life factors, the Items. In the second column, you'll put a plus, zero, or minus, to rate your satisfaction to dissatisfaction with where things are right now. In the third column, In Five Years, write down where you want to be then. The fourth column will be for your action plan, your To-Do's.

For the life items in Column 1, you might start with *Wellness*. Start listing factors. How old are you? What's your overall health? How about nutrition? What are your eating habits? How about your physical fitness? What are your long-term health risks? Then give each one of them a plus, zero, or minus rating in Column 2. You'll take care of the other columns later.

You could next list out *Emotional* factors in your life. How do you feel about yourself? How would you rate your overall emotional state? What makes you happy? What makes you sad? What are you angry about? What are your fears? What are your stressors? Give these a plus, zero, or minus rating.

Next you can cover *Relationships*. What's your relationship with the important people in your life ... your significant others, children, parents, grandparents, siblings, in-laws, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and so on. Are you building these relationships or tearing them down? Do you want to build a family? Rate each of these with a plus, zero, and minus.

*Learning* is another category you might list. Overall, how happy are you with what you know? What's your formal education in years? What degrees or titles or certificates do you have? What post-graduate education do you have? What self-directed learning do you do? Training programs? Books? e-Learning? Again ... plus, zero, and minus.

*Professionally*, how is your career going? Are you doing what you want to do? How happy are you in your present position? Do you enjoy your work? Are you being challenged? Are you making a contribution? Is your opinion valued? Do you have satisfactory advancement potential? You know the drill ... plus, zero, and minus.

Another important area is *Finances*. Are you spending less than you make? Are you saving enough for college and retirement? Are you getting paid enough? Do you earn enough to support your desired lifestyle? Are your assets growing? Are you investing properly? Plus, zero, minus ...

We could go on and on. The point is, this rating process needs to be totally custom to YOU. You can add any additional categories that are personally relevant to you, such as lifestyle, spiritual growth, or travel, or sports and hobbies, or whatever. And you can list any items within a

category that are additional factors in your life. You want this plan to reflect what you want out of life.

What you have now is a snapshot of what's important to you, and how you're doing with it. The next step is to turn this into a living plan for getting the most out of the time of your life.

# Time Management: Managing the Time of Your Life Part I

## Fundamentals of time management:

- How will you manage the time of your life?
- You need a personal, long-term plan.

## Building a plan:

- Create four columns on paper.
- First one is "Life Factors."
- Second is "Plus, 0, Minus."
- Third is "In Five Years."
- Fourth is "To-Do's."

| Life Factors | +/0/- | In 5 Years | To-Do's |
|--------------|-------|------------|---------|
|              |       |            |         |
|              |       |            |         |
|              |       |            |         |
|              |       |            |         |
|              |       |            |         |

## The planning process:

- Take the major areas of your life and start doing a review.
- Life Factors – Wellness, Emotional, Relationships, Learning, etc.
- Rate all of these with a plus, zero or minus.

## Reminders:

- The rating process must be totally custom to YOU.
- List any items within a category that are additional factors in your life.
- Ask yourself, "How are you going to use the time that you have?"

| Life Factors    | +/0/- |
|-----------------|-------|
| Wellness        |       |
| Age             | +     |
| Health          | -     |
| Nutrition       | 0     |
| Eating habits   | 0     |
| Fitness         | +     |
| Long-term risks | -     |