

TIME MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

You must have heard the stories from many people that as soon as I have more time, I shall enjoy life, buy a new house, publish a book, memorize the Quran, will give more time to the family members . In most cases, these “wishes” are not fulfilled . Have you ever thought why ?. Majority of us will state that they are very busy and do not have much time to carry out all the necessary activities. This is where time management comes into play. Proper utilization of time and energies to achieve your goals and dreams in life & enjoy them without over taxing your self emotionally and physically.

This paper discusses briefly some of the theoretical time management concepts / techniques and outlines some practical tips how to manage your time effectively and efficiently.

Objectives of Time Management are to :

- Understand importance & value of time.
- Define and identify important issues and goals.
- Establish priorities of the goals and have the will to carry them out.
- Review & assess utilization of time.
- Organize yourself and plan your time.
- Recognize that not EVERYTHING can be controlled and completed. However a number of issues can be controlled and successfully completed.
- Work on the items / issues that can be done and do not run around the impossible tasks.
- Make your life MEANINGFUL and controllable rather than just go by the wind .
- Control your own time & eliminate the time WASTER activities.
- Develop the habits and approaches to utilize the time in a better way.
- Teach OTHERS how to utilize their time efficiently. This activity is important because other people will then not waste your time.

Significance Of Time

Time is the most valuable asset. It has to be utilized properly on the spot because it can not be stopped or stored or retrieved. It should be remembered that time management is the KEY to your success in this life as well as in the hereafter. Management experts state that the most valuable commodity in the World is time. If you can not utilize this commodity properly then you can not do any thing properly or efficiently. Problem is not lack of time but how to utilize time effectively.

Everyone from a King to a labor has exactly 24 hours per day. It should be noted that about 50 % of our time is already scheduled or not under our controlled i.e. sleeping, eating, personal cleaning and praying require about 12 hours daily. Therefore, it is very important to utilize the other 12 hours effectively. Some people make a lot of contributions , publish books, deliver lectures, participate in the politics and others do not even perform their normal 8 hours duty properly. The main reason for more contributions is better utilization of time.

Goals & Priorities Must Be Explicit

Have you ever set the goals for your life ? Have you ever written down your goals ? Can you visualize them ? . What do you want to achieve ? It should be noted that without clear goals, it is impossible to manage time properly. Without clear or explicit goals, you will drift from one activity to another activity achieving very little.

WHY WE ARE NOT SUCCESSFUL OR WHY WE ARE NOT HAPPY ? The answer to this question is most of us do not know what they want. They would not even realize if their missions or goals are fulfilled. Usually people live in a dream land with hopes, wishes and desires but these emotional items cannot be the goals or objectives. Goals are those which are clear, visualizable and attainable within a reasonable time period. Right now you **MUST** write down your goals :

- What do you want to achieve during the next month ?
- What do you want to achieve during the next 12 months (yearly goals)?
- What are your life long goals ?

Every day, we have to carry out tens of tasks that need to be completed today. Hence we do not give any time to think about our goals. Therefore, we should not only write down the goals clearly and **PLACE** them at a place from where you can **SEE** them. You may post them on a wall of your bedroom , desk or on a mirror . These goals should be seen and read at least once daily to remind yourself of the goals. If you start writing down your goals **TODAY** then you will notice immediately that your efforts are spent in the correct direction and you are utilizing time in a more effective and efficient manner.

Document your goals and establish the priority for each goal. Often people do not give importance to document / writing down the goals. They say that their goals are clear in their mind therefore there is no need to document them. It should be remembered that out of sight out of mind. The task of establishing priorities influences your effectiveness and the sense of well being. Because of too many priorities ,unplanned activities without much results could lead to nervous breakdown and / or family problems.

Review & Assess Your Activities

Now you have documented your goals. The next step in the time management is to examine your daily activities to see if these activities are in line with the goals or not. Normally, we are used to our daily routine activities that may not have any relation to the goals and sometime these are against the main objectives. Usually, our activities consist of reading news papers, sitting in front of TV. and watching the programs without any plan, after prayers standing outside the mosque and talking to friends without any objective, spending long time on telephone calls , visit someone without prior appointment, etc. In these activities we waste a considerable amount of our time that has no or little relation to our main goals that we want to achieve.

It is imperative that we must control our time and recognize those activities that waste our time. Most of us think that they know how to spend time effectively. In reality we do not know because we are not aware how much time is spent on each activity. In order to assess our situation, each one of us should keep a record of all the activities for next 15 days. Any activity that requires more

than 15 minutes should be recorded. At the end of the period, review all the activities and make an assessment about :

- Have you spent the time on the right items that will help in meeting your main objectives / goals ?.
- Examine on which issues you have spent more time than necessary and identify the issues that require more attention.
- Estimate the time wasted on unnecessary items.

When you will review your daily activity list, you will be astonished to find out that how wrong you were about yourself. Now you know where and on what items time is wasted. Therefore make the necessary changes. In order to do proper changes to your time management you must perform the planning function correctly.

Planning

It is always difficult to make a decision that which items are REALLY important. Once you have made the decision about the PRIORITIES then you must concentrate on them rather than distracted towards unimportant issues. It is human nature to lean towards easy tasks and try to finish them and leave the difficult jobs for the future. This way we keep on delaying the important activities. The main reason for this delay process is due to the lack of PLANNING. You must have heard some people saying “ I am too busy and I have too much work to do. Therefore, I do NOT have time for planning.” Usually, we do accept this illogical answer. On the other hand would you accept this statement from a sick / ill person “ I am too sick and too weak. Therefore, do not take me to a hospital .” In this case, you will carry the person quickly to the nearest hospital for immediate treatment. Similarly, in future if someone tells you that he / she is too busy to do planning then you should immediately register him / her to the next available time management seminar.

Usually, most of us do not make firm plans regarding time management. Instead they carry out the activities one after the other without much consideration about the priority or importance. It is important to note that work does not get done by itself. It needs to be done by yourself. Work done in a planned way is always more organized ,thorough and of high quality.

Everyone accepts that planning is necessary. But very few people give time for planning. It is imperative to dedicate the necessary time for planning. In reality, planning should be a habit. People who do planning regularly have no problem in finding more time to do more things. It is a well-known management principle that if you want something to be done quickly then give it to the busiest person because he manages his time better and performs the planning function effectively.

It takes only 15 minutes to prepare a daily plan and 30 minutes for a weekly plan. If you prepare daily and weekly plan for just 6 weeks then you will become a habitual planner. The best approach for the preparation of these plans is to prepare the weekly plan on the last working day of the week (Wednesday) and the daily plan (for the next day) just before leaving for home . Your weekly plan must include the followings:

- Identify which goals need to be worked on.
- State clearly what activities have to be performed to achieve the above goals.

- Assign priority to each activity.
- Determine how much time should be spent on each activity.
- Assign which activity should be done on which day of the week.

Once you made your weekly plan, now you can prepare your daily plan by assigning each activity a specific time. This is also a very important task. You should know which item to do at what time and why.

Control Your Time

When you start specifying the time allotment for each activity you should pay more attention to the early part of the day i.e. morning because you are well rested and fresh. Therefore, proficient time managers always assign the morning times for important tasks. This approach will lead to the best results and maximum output in very short period of time. Usually, most people use the morning times for reading news papers , making telephone calls and doing unimportant tasks. All of us know that as the day progresses one gets tired and is exhausted by the evening. Always remember to spend your best time for the most important tasks (morning or after taking some rest in the afternoon). Similarly, do the minor tasks when your energy level is low or tired.

You should assign two lots of one hour sessions daily for important tasks. During these periods you should not receive any telephone calls or any visitor or any form of interruption. You should pay full attention to the important scheduled tasks. If two sessions are not possible then one session is absolutely necessary.

In addition to the above, our daily program should have enough flexibility to handle an unscheduled important task. Therefore the daily plan should have 25 to 50 minutes for unscheduled important activities. You must ensure that unimportant and unscheduled tasks should not be carried out until they are properly schedule. You must keep on asking yourself all the time “ Am I utlizing time correctly and spending on the important issues ?”. This feedback mechanism will help you in controlling the time.

Would you let other people control your money and spend the way they want ? The answer is NO . As you know, time is more valuable than money therefore you must control your own time rather than let other people and external activities to control your time.

Time Wasting

It is not important what are you doing or in what activities you are involved. The most important item is what do you want to ACHIEVE. Many times we will find individuals are working day and night without any results because they make themselves busy in the activities without having a clear mission in front of them.

Most of us WASTE at least three hours daily. This waste of time is not done intentionally. If it is done intentionally then it is very easy to correct it. Unfortunately, this waste of time is caused due to our bad habits for example we will start one job and before finishing it we will move on to another priority. After some time we will come back to start the first job again. This way we will spend lot more time then really it requires. Some of the time wasters are :

- People drop in to see you without appointment
- Incomplete information & communication (after a discussion either over a phone or in a meeting, people do not know what needs to be done or when the tasks to be completed. In these circumstances people have to go BACK to the person again to acquire about the missing information . This is pure waste of time.)
- Do not look at the diary for the meetings or the commitments made with the people for certain items or not maintaining a diary at all.
- Can not say NO. You MUST learn to say no sometimes. Otherwise you end up doing unnecessary work and leaving the important tasks.
- Can not DELEGATE. You want to do everything yourself. A golden rule should be remembered that if anything can be done by some else (subordinates) then you should not be doing it .
- Answering telephone calls while in a meeting. If you spend 5 minutes on a telephone call in a meeting with 12 people then you have wasted 60 minute.
- Arriving at the meetings either too early or too late i.e. 1/2 hour.
- Receiving or making too many phones calls. Some people consider this activity as an indication of being very popular.
- Unnecessarily carrying on conversation for a long time and trying to cover all the world topics during the conversation .
- Do not assume, always make sure that both parties fully understand the requirements, information & actions. Many people always mention use your common sense. They do not know that common sense is a rare sense.
- Lack of concentration during the discussion and meetings asking people to repeat their views again. Very few people can listen to others views. Learn to differentiate between listening and hearing.
- Poor filing system.
- Unnecessary rest i.e. excessive rest on weekends.
- Unnecessary emotional discussion of political and sport events that have already happened i.e. why Pakistan lost the cricket match to England.

It should be clearly understood that wasting of time means you are spending time on the lesser important issues then your goals. In order to control and plan your time, it is imperative for you to keep on asking this question “ HOW COULD MY TIME BE BETTER UTILIZED ?” In order to answer this question, you must have your goals / objectives in front of you.

Two Key Time Management Principles

PERKINSON’S principle states that every work will expand / spread as more and more time is spent on it. Therefore, it is important to have the goals to be very clear. If you decide to give an hour for a task then it will take only one hour. If you assign 4 hours for the task then it will take 4 hours to complete. Hence it is up to you to make an appropriate assessment how much time should be assigned for each task. You should neither over estimate nor under estimate the time for each task. In order to make a correct decision, we should follow the PARETO’S principle.

PARETO’S principle (80 / 20 rule) states that most of the results i.e. 80 % can be achieved with only 20 % of efforts. This principle has been tested for various situations and is found to be true for examples 20 % of people have 80 % of wealth and 20 % of products account for 80 % of the

revenue. Therefore, we should always try to achieve 80 % of the desired results with the 20 % effort. In other words, we could complete a large number of important tasks by spending only 20 % of time required. In most of the cases, 80 % results are sufficient and acceptable to management. Therefore, you should spend only 20 % of the total required time and assess that 80 % results are acceptable or not. If you require 90 % results then you may have to spend about 50 % of the total time.

Habits Play Important Role In Time Management

You may be aware of the most of the above mentioned time management techniques. Usually, people have a lot of knowledge but they do not implement it because of their habits. We have to develop good habits. Our future is based on our habitual work. Unless we could develop a habit to control and manage our time and give up the habits that waste time, we can not be sure of a successful life not only in this world but also in the hereafter.

SUMMARY

In order to develop good time management skills try to remember the following items :

1. Establish your long term goals clearly in writing and determine their priority.
2. Keep an eagle eye on your goals. It is not important that you busy yourself day and night. The important issue is what results have you achieved with your efforts.
3. Keep record of your daily activities and analyze them to see where and how your time is spent.
4. Regularly make the daily, weekly, monthly and yearly plans.
5. In your daily plan do not forget to include the important tasks.
6. If you are spending time on minor items while you have a number of important activities outstanding this implies that you are wasting time.
7. Schedule the important tasks. Do not worry about the daily minor items . They will get done without much problem.
8. Keep at least an hour for the important tasks WITHOUT ANY INTERRUPTION.
9. Make an effort to give up at least ONE time waster per week.
10. Daily review your activities and make an assessment of your achievements. We should always remember that we will be asked about the effective utilization of time in the hereafter.
11. Maintain a diary with the following information together in one binder:
 - 12 to 18 months appointment
 - Telephone directory (A - Z)
 - Weekly Schedules
 - Annual Schedules
 - Daily Plans
 - Weekly Plans
 - Annual Plans

- 12. Always use the 80 / 20 rule (Pareto’s principle).
- 13. Use the following forms to plan your activities and to manage time effectively.
- 14. For more details on the forms and different types of forms please consult the time management seminar organized by the Pakistan Engineers Institute of Riyadh Branch.

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ANNUAL SCHEDULE (Major activities & deadlines)

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

DATE

MON.	Priority Items
TUES.	
WED.	
THR.	Waiting for :
FRI.	
SAT.	
SUN.	Deadlines:

MAJOR GOAL FOR THE WEEK:

DAILY PLANNER

DATE

07	MAJOR TASKS
08	
	MINOR ACTIVITIES
09	
10	
11	
12	TELEPHONE
13	
14	
15	MAIN GOAL FOR TODAY:
16	
17	