Managing Workload

In a recent book titled *Time, Money, Happiness* (2007) Alison Haynes notes the state of constant rushing we find ourselves in our modern lives. Haynes signals that the culture of time management is usually associated with doing as much as possible in as little time as possible, but suggests “Time management is not about filling up all the little squares. It’s as much about making sure enough of them are empty” (244).

Being conscious of time help you use it in a way that is consistent with what you regard as important, opening space for creative reflection to avoid that feeling of always being rushed. In terms of your leadership development, that time for critical reflection is crucial. Without the time to reflect on what you have learnt, test new approaches and reflect on their success your leadership development will be limited.

Read through the information here and if you think your approach to time management is holding you back complete the exercise sheet.

Some points worth considering:

- Learn to prioritise: you can’t do everything well, choose the tasks that you want to do well and take time over them.
- Avoid feeling overwhelmed by applying the 80/20 rule. Eliminate the 80% of what you do, which brings you only 20% return. Generally speaking it is only 20% of what you do that brings you the greatest return for effort.
- Use systems and lists. Set targets daily, weekly and monthly.
- Are you a perfectionist? Run a daily cost-benefit analysis. What are the benefits of being perfect each day and how do they measure up against the advantages of not being perfect? Is it necessary to do everything every day to the very highest standard?
- Save tasks that require less concentration for those moments when you’re tired. Pick the job to suit your current state.
- Double up. Organise jobs geographically. Plan several jobs for the one journey.
- Treasure your downtime and relax.
- Avoid scheduling too much.
- Forget multitasking. New research suggests that you can be more effective by focussing on one task at a time for an extended period.
- Consider blocking out time for specific tasks like responding to email.
- Start difficult jobs early—do the part of the task that doesn’t overwhelm you to avoid the cycle of procrastination.
- Don’t be afraid to delegate.
- Spend quiet time planning.
- Handle each piece of paper once. Once you open an email, respond to it immediately or delete it.
- Leave 10% of your schedule open. This will allow you to deal with unexpected jobs or emergencies.
- Avoid confusion and unnecessary clutter.
- Remind yourself about your role and key responsibilities.
- What are your key deliverables, job requirements and interests? How do these position yourself in your career. Being clear on these and your deliverables for the year helps you to say “No” to those things that detract you from these goals (no matter how interesting).
- Continually review work practices (yours and your team’s).
- Set boundaries: say no when appropriate.
- Continually develop skills and knowledge (yours and your team’s). For example, is procrastination an issue for you or a member of your team? Consider a workshop or suitable seminar on the topic.
**7 Habits of Highly Effective People**

Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (1994) argues that time management is about managing yourself. He identifies four quadrants that our activities fall into. He argues that you should spend most of your time on the not urgent and important items (quadrant II) and less time on those not urgent and unimportant (quadrant IV). By focusing on quadrant II you prevent these issues from becoming quadrant I: urgent and crisis driven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not Urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I</strong> (MANAGE)</td>
<td><strong>II</strong> (FOCUS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent</td>
<td>Not Urgent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>Preparation/planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical emergencies</td>
<td>Prevention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pressing problems</td>
<td>Values clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline-driven projects</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last-minute preparations for scheduled activities</td>
<td>Relationship-building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quadrant of Necessity</td>
<td>True recreation/relaxation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>III</strong> (AVOID)</td>
<td><strong>IV</strong> (AVOID)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Urgent</td>
<td>Urgent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruptions, some calls</td>
<td>Trivia, busywork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some mail &amp; reports</td>
<td>Junk mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some meetings</td>
<td>Some phone messages/email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many “pressing” matters</td>
<td>Time wasters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many popular activities</td>
<td>Escape activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quadrant of Deception</td>
<td>Viewing mindless TV shows</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(from: [http://www.orgcoach.net/timematrix.html](http://www.orgcoach.net/timematrix.html))
Managing Meetings

For a lot of academics meetings consume a lot of time, often with little benefit to the individual. Before organising or committing to a meeting ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is the goal of the meeting?
2. Does the meeting have a clear purpose, agenda and maximum duration set? If not, don’t attend.
3. Is the meeting time allocated really needed? Can you get the same amount done in 30 minutes instead on an hour?
4. What are the benefits to you in attending? Ask yourself what will happen if you don’t attend.
5. What is it that you are supposed to contribute?
6. Is it crucial that you attend? Can you send a proxy in place?
7. Can you receive the information in an alternative format?

Finally, a well run and effective meeting should have one person designated to keep the focus and notes should be kept with clear actions (including who is responsible). This information should be forwarded to all participants and other relevant people shortly after its completion.

Golden Rule:
If you think the meeting will be a waste of your time, don’t go. If you must go, make sure the meeting won’t be a waste of your time! (Stewart, 2004)

Managing Email

Another key complaint from academics is the overabundance of emails. Here are some tips to consider when managing your email:

1. Determine your policy regarding email and stick to it! For example, don’t reply to cc’d messages that don’t require your feedback.
2. Tell family and friends you don’t want to receive joke, chain, and other junk emails.
3. Create rules to manage your email using Outlook. For example, auto store cc’d emails and newsletters for later revision (Tools-Rules and Alerts-create new Rule).
4. Challenge yourself to disconnect. Check emails at set times each day (Tools-Options-click Email Options and then Advanced Email Options. Un-tick all four boxes under "when new items arrive in my box...").
5. Use folders to store your emails under relevant headings.
6. Follow the four D rule: Dump it, Delegate it, Do it or Decide when to follow up (Actions-Follow-up-Add Reminder).
7. Subscribe to alerts with care.
8. Be critical of your outgoing email. Respect others’ time.
9. Train others to use email efficiently.

Adapted from E-Mail Management: 50 Tips for Keeping Your Inbox Under Control by Nancy Flynn (2007), published by Crisp Fifty-Minute Series, NETg, and Working Sm@rt with Email. Priority Management. training@priorityperth.com.au
Time Management Worksheet

Based on the information above and the experiential learning cycle employed in the Academic Leadership for Course Coordinators Program (Experience, Reflection, Conclusions, and New Application for subsequent experiences), answer the questions below and develop strategies to attend to your time management challenges.

1. What eats up most of your time (e.g. emails, procrastination, interruptions, meetings)?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

2. What strategies can you put in place to improve the situation? For example, focus on reducing meeting time by 10%, attend a workshop run by the university on managing procrastination, set goals in relation to email management, etc.)

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

3. Set yourself a time management goal within a set period:

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

4. Use your reflective journal to identify key learnings from the process.

5. Review with your peer coach/significant work partner (set a date):

___________________________________________________________________________

6. Apply the conclusions you have drawn back to managing your time.
References


Working Sm@rt with Email. Priority Management. training@priorityperth.com.au

More Resources


[www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com) has a wealth of information relating to time management.