

**THE  
ADVANCED  
OFFICE  
ASSISTANT**

TIME MANAGEMENT

# TIME MANAGEMENT

*“Why do we always have time to do things over but never time to do things right?”* Author unknown

Managing time effectively will enable you to balance work and personal life. It will reduce stress and improve your health. Above all, it will improve your career since you spend more time productively - doing what should be done - and not wasting time on correcting mistakes caused by bad time management.

Time is a precious commodity because it is a non-renewable resource. If used poorly or inappropriately, it cannot be recovered. Furthermore, time wasted leads to missed deadlines and can result in poor customer service. Here are some practical ideas that will help you manage time more effectively:

## **GETTING STARTED:**

- Visit your office over a weekend and clean house:
  - Throw away all miscellaneous pieces of paper such as Post-it notes.
  - Record all your information in your computer filing system.
  - If possible, improve your filing system; make it practical.
  - Put things where you can gain access to information quickly and easily.
- Analyse how you spend time. Use labels:
  - (A) for time spent on important daily tasks and
  - (B) for time spent helping someone, sorting out problems or doing things over that was not done right in the first place.
  - (C) Mark time spent non-productive with a (C) - like chatting to other staff members, taking personal telephone calls and listening to other people's problems.

Record your time spent doing (A), (B) and (C) for a week. Categorise the time. Analyse how much of your time was wasted and make a note of the circumstances under which this occurred.

- Develop a plan to reduce (B) activities. Write down the plan. Commit to implementation. Often consult the plan.
- Plan the occasional (C) activity. Having fun and doing the things you like should be done to preserve your sanity. But, don't get too caught up in those activities as they interfere with the (A) items.
- Invest in time management systems on your computer to give you a structure to work with.

#### **DAILY:**

- Start each day with a list of activities you wish to accomplish
- Next, prioritise each activity as A or B activities. A for those that, if not done, will either adversely affect your reputation or negatively affect your service. Any others are B's.
- Do A activities first. Avoid committing more than 70% of your day to A activities since unforeseen problems will invariably upset your plans and use up unavailable time.
- Allocate B items to other dates, not necessarily the next day.
- Avoid procrastination. Identify and deal with the source of your discomfort. The longer you procrastinate, the higher the stress level!
- Keep a daily checklist handy.
- Ensure that your desk is neat at all times and things are put in places that they can be found easily.
- Do only one thing at a time. Complete it before taking on the next task.
- Get those who work with you to respect your quiet time - time you use to plan in the morning or sort out your desk at the end of the day.
- Do less pleasant but important items first. You will gain a sense of relief and achievement.

### **OFFICE INTERRUPTIONS:**

- Stand when people come in to chat. This will prevent them from getting comfortable.
- Ask them if it is important.
- Ask them if you can talk later - in their office where you can control the length of the conversation.
- Close your door.

### **TELEPHONE:**

- Leave complete messages for people who are not available so they won't have to call back.
- Use voice mail systems.
- Have incoming calls screened when you are busy.
- Avoid chit-chat by answering with a greeting, followed by your name and a question such as "how may I help you?".
- Increase your chances of speaking to someone after you were told that the person is 'away from his desk' or 'in a meeting' by asking:
  - Can he be paged?
  - Could you find her for me?
  - Can he be interrupted?
  - I'm returning her call, which was important.

### **PAPERWORK**

- Keep your desk clean.
- Deal with each piece of paper once. File it, respond to it or dump it!
- Reduce time spent corresponding by using e-mail - this will prevent a paper pile-up.

### **REMEMBER...**

***Time is nature's way of keeping everything from happening at once!!***

Day of the Week	Mon	Tue	<del>Wed</del>	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Date: <i>22 Feb 06</i>
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SCHEDULE		A, B, C Priority	TO DO LIST	OK
08:00	<i>Staff Meeting</i>	<b>A</b>	<i>Submit Time sheets to H/O</i>	
08:30		<b>B</b>	<i>Assist debtors clerk with</i>	
09:00			<i>queries</i>	
09:30		<b>C</b>	<i>Lunch with Dispenser</i>	
10:00				
10:30				
11:00				
11:30				
12:00				
12:30				
13:00	<i>Johnson &amp; Johnson Rep</i>			
13:30				
14:00				
14:30				
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16:00				
16:30				
17:00				
17:30		<b>TEL. CALLS &amp; CORRESPONDENCE</b>		
18:00				
18:30		▪	<i>E-mail head office re new employee</i>	
19:00				
<b>BUFFER TIME FOR UNFORESEEN TASKS</b>		▪	<i>Call Mrs. J Steyn re problem with her account - 0825571416</i>	

MONTH:

2006

**MONTH AT A GLANCE**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>DAY</b>	<b>AM</b>	<b>PM</b>
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## **MORE TIPS ON TIME MANAGEMENT**

A few ways you can manage yourself more effectively in the time you have (thereby alleviating your stress) are:

- Do difficult jobs first; get them out of the way. The longer we put things off, the more they nag at us. Call the complaining patient right away and get it over with.
- Take care of one patient at a time. It's too difficult and too confusing to try and deal with more than one patient's wants, needs and expectations at the same time. If there is no one else to help, acknowledge each customer and advise him that you will be with him as soon as you can.
- Plan your day. Organise yourself so that you are not doing routine tasks in peak customer traffic times. Remember, customers are number-one priority. Take care of them immediately. Follow-up, updating information and organising systems are things we do when we don't have a patient in front of us.
- Keep your work area clean and organised. Time is saved when it is not spent rummaging through clutter to find things.
- Group similar jobs together. If you need to fill purchase orders, do them at the same time. Jumping from one type of task to another wastes time.
- Take control of conversations. Plan what you need to discuss so that you can cover the needed information quickly and efficiently.
- Develop a team effort. At peak customer periods, it may be more time effective if each team member handles a specific part of the process.
- Make suggestions to your superiors for the restructuring of any systems, processes or physical layout that would be more customer friendly and time efficient.