
The Mathis Group's

Messenger

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Time Management: Take Control Of Your Time

By Dr. Keith Mathis

What is time management? It is organizing your daily activities to accomplish work on priority tasks. This sounds so easy, doesn't it? However, for many people, this is one of the hardest things to do. Many think it will take too much time to plan their time. They do not want to make changes; they do not see the need. It is easier just to run things by the seat of their pants. And, frankly, many do not really want to see how many of the must-do items were missed that day.

There are several reasons for planning your day. Putting it on paper lets you see where you are spending your day. Setting time aside to reach goals allows for focused concentration. Planning your day helps you schedule with others who are supporting some of your plans. It segments your thoughts to periods of time, which de-stresses your mind. Yes, planning can be very beneficial.

To begin taking control of your time, start with these five steps. First, treat yourself to a quiet place where you are not disturbed to begin planning your day. A period of uninterrupted concentration provides time for analysis, planning, and organizing. You will think more clearly.

Second, chart out all organizational core objectives. This will provide you with focus. Know where you are and where you are going. Be decisive; it is a good habit to have.

Third, create a must do list for each day. This will allow you to segment the tasks. Make lists as part of your planning time. There are several types of lists: customer satisfaction list, client needs list, to-do list for others, reminder list, follow-up list, call list, etc. Choose one or more that meet your needs.



Fourth, remember to schedule catch-up time for those unexpected hurdles. Expect the unexpected! Things do not always go the way we want. Life is filled with interruptions and unplanned events. It is good to have a goal and a plan to accomplish that goal, but we must always be flexible and willing to make adjustments along the way.

Finally, select a daily planning tool to assist you. Look for something that will provide structure to your chaos. Choose planners, calendars, and/or technology which match your personality and needs. Pick something that is easy and

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practical for you to use. Unless the tool is beneficial for you, it will only add to the unorganized clutter on your desk. Once you have begun taking control of your time, be on guard against the "time robbers" out there. Many are self-imposed and come from individual or personal reasons. We fail to plan. We have no self-discipline. We neglect to delegate. We procrastinate. We have a negative attitude. We are just plain ole tired.

Other "time robbers" are not of our own doing but are inherited. These come from the organization, a supervisor, or a co-worker. Examples of inherited "time robbers" are bureaucratic red tape, unproductive meetings, goal and priority conflicts, lack of training, mistakes, and slow authority.

Regardless of the source, we must be aware of all of these "time robbers" and make a concentrated effort to not let any one of them disrupt our productive day.

4 Tips for Making Meetings Productive

Meetings rank as one of the most significant time wasters. If you are in charge of the meeting, you can do several things to make wise use of the time spent in the meeting.

First, prepare for the meeting. Establish a purpose and set a goal for what you wish to accomplish. Prepare a written agenda. This will provide structure, establish an order for discussion, and help everyone stay on track as to the purpose of the meeting.

Second, begin the meeting on time. Punctuality emphasizes the importance of the meeting. If the meeting is important enough to be called, it is important enough to begin promptly. You are also acknowledging your respect for others' schedules – their time is important, too. On the same note, finish the meeting on time. Once again, it is important to be sensitive to others' schedules.

*Do not let time pass without
accomplishing something.
Otherwise you will regret it when your
hair turns gray.
Yue Fei (1103-1141)
Army general*

Third, facilitate the meeting with the same purpose you established earlier in your planning. Use your agenda, and keep everyone focused and on track with what you are trying to accomplish. Try not to "chase rabbits" unless they pertain directly to the issue at hand and will benefit the situation. Facilitate the meeting so that you do gain input from the attendees; they are a valuable resource and have much to offer. Make assignments to responsible people and utilize others' expertise and effort.

Finally, document the meeting. Record who was present and what was done at the meeting. Summarize discussions, recommendations, and actions taken. List jobs assigned and those responsible for the completion of each. By documenting the meeting, you will have a record of what was accomplished, and you will have a baseline for following up at the next meeting. You will also be able to provide written information to those who missed the meeting and to those in a supervisory position. Documentation provides good communication.



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