

SAMPLE

TIME MANAGEMENT

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WHY BOTHER TO MANAGE TIME?

Time is a finite and precious resource, once it has been wasted it cannot be recaptured - that time has gone! There is nothing that you can do to make more time because it is fixed.

There are only **24** hours in a day, which equates at **1440** minutes and it is important to remember that we all receive the same amount of time; we just choose to use it differently. The average working day consists of **7** hours and in that time a number of tasks need to be done. In order for you to feel in control and efficient you must learn to manage this finite resource.

If time is not managed, it tends to slip by or indeed drag by, resulting in feelings of disillusionment and sometimes panic. Poor organisers, those who consistently miss deadlines, who never complete tasks are viewed negatively by colleagues and this can have an impact on the efficiency of the organisation. These are the people who blame others, they often say " I don't have enough time".

It does not have to be like this. We can all manage our time but we need to choose to do so. This choosing is the key to success and by doing so a number of benefits to both yourself and the organisation will accrue.

Benefits:

- Being valued.
- In control - more job satisfaction.
- Less stress.
- Increased chance of promotion.
- Greater opportunity for skill development.
- Less time spent rectifying mistakes.
- Greater customer satisfaction.

MANAGING TIME

To do their job effectively, people need to call upon three major resources, all of which should be at their disposal.

1. Their own skill and experience.
2. The skills and experience of their colleagues.
3. Time.

Of these resources, it can be argued that time is the one which is considered the least and managed the worst.

All of us complain that we do not have sufficient time to do tasks well. This could be because we have too much to actually do; because our jobs are so fragmented so continuity becomes difficult; or it could be that we simply do not organize our own time efficiently enough nor utilize the resources at our disposal.

One of the main aims of examining how we use time is to establish whether we are spending it on tasks which:

- Do not have a high priority in organisational terms yet are a factor of every day life.
- Could be delegated to others.
- Could be done in a different method.
- Don't really need to be done at all!

Remember we have a choice; either we can manage our time or let time manage us.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPAL TIME WASTERS?

CHATTING?

MISPLACED FILES?

INTERRUPTIONS?

NOISE?

WRONG NUMBERS?

DUPLICATION?

CORRESPONDENCE
LOST?

MESSAGES WITHOUT THE
CORRECT INFORMATION?

UNREADABLE
MEMOS?

NOT BEING INSTRUCTED
PROPERLY ?

MISINFORMATION?

TRAVELLING ?.

POOR EQUIPMENT?

ATTENDING MEETINGS?

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION?

NOT KNOWING WHO TO
CONTACT?

SPENDING TIME ON PERSONAL
PHONE CALLS?

LOOKING THROUGH
ENDLESS DOCUMENTS?

NOT KNOWING EXACTLY
WHAT YOU NEED TO
COMPLETE A TASK?

ARGUING WITH OTHERS?

URGENCY MODEL

| | VERY IMPORTANT | NOT SO IMPORTANT |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| VERY URGENT | DO IT NOW | DELEGATE |
| NOT SO URGENT | PUT IT OFF | PUT OFF |

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THE CONSEQUENCE OF ERROR

Another way of setting priorities, is to consider the consequence of NOT doing something:

- The more drastic the consequence the higher the priority.
- What will happen if I do not read this paper now?
- What will happen if I do not attend this meeting?
- What will happen if I do not speak to these very distressed relatives now ?
- What will happen if I do not complete the time sheets today?
- What will happen if I am late for this appointment?
- What will happen if I do not conduct supervision with a member of my staff today?

ACTIVITY - PLANNING YOUR TIME

Your time is an expensive resource and needs budgeting. Although you may not be in a position to plan too far ahead you should be able to begin your working day with clear intentions as to how you will spend it. Which of the following ideas are you already using or willing to try out?

- | | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Do you keep a diary, noting appointments and meetings for the days ahead? | | |
| 2. Do you spend some time between one working day and the next thinking about: | | |
| • What you expect to be working on the next day? | | |
| • What you expect to complete/achieve? | | |
| 3. Do you make a written note of your work-plan? | | |
| 4. Do you keep the plan where you can see it clearly throughout the day? | | |
| 5. Does your plan distinguish between things you MUST do, and things you could do if you complete your priorities faster than you expect? | | |
| 6. Does your written work-plan take the form of a timetable, splitting the day into 15 or 30 minute slots and showing what you plan to be doing in each? | | |
| 7. Do you take care to leave enough slack time in your daily plan for dealing with unforeseen problems? | | |
| 8. Do you allow for the possibility that you may be able to cope better with certain jobs during some parts of the day than others? | | |
| 9. Are you realistic about how long you can devote yourself to one task (especially a creative one) before needing a change? | | |

Yes No

10. Are you strict enough about building in a regular slot each day for your own thinking time (as opposed to dealing with other people)?
11. Do you review your plan at the end of each day, noting what has been accomplished and what must be continued next day or later?
12. Can you learn from such reviews- about how realistic your time-estimates are and what kinds of interruptions have prevented you from accomplishing all you planned?
13. Can you find little treats to offer yourself for those days when you really did get it all done?
14. Might it be worthwhile drawing up a schedule (less detailed of course) about what you plan to be doing and completing for the next week/term.
15. Might it be worthwhile encouraging some of your colleagues to make and display their own daily schedules?

Adapted from A practical guide to improve your managerial skills - D. Rowntree

WHAT IS STRESS?

The word stress is now in common usage, so much so, one could argue that it has become meaningless and that the term is simply used for any type of problem an individual encounters.

Yet stress is real and a killer, it has been estimated that stress related absences cost industry over 20 billion pounds per annum and that we should expect that an average employee will probably have around one and half years absence through stress. Doctors have reported that around three quarters of the problems they see are stress related and yet as a nation and as individuals we do not appear to be taking preventative action.

A definition that is commonly used is the following:

“Stress is a process of mental, physical and emotional reactions caused by a significant increase in pressures without a strengthening of coping resources”.

Stress can be explained as anything that makes you anxious or frightened and as result of this emotional stimulus, your heartbeat increases, muscles tense, adrenaline is produced and acid pours into the stomach.

Such physiological changes are required, if indeed you need to flee or fight as they obviously assist you in terms of strength or speed and as a consequence the body has functioned well and has used the chemicals effectively.

However, in today's world it is rare that we have to either flee or fight and yet anything that frightens us still results in the physical changes; unfortunately because we allow the fear to take hold, we are not able to control the changes or use the chemicals produced effectively. As a result of this ineffective use they build up to an unacceptable level causing illness.

In short, our bodies cannot withstand these continual anxiety attacks and we need to examine ways of reducing the fears that result in physiological changes. It is this area that we have not tackled successfully.

WORK STRESS - THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES

Although stress affects individuals differently; there are areas that managers may wish to consider when attempting to reduce work related stress.

Feedback from employees tells us that work stress is on the increase and they can highlight the key points.

Change

Most of us find major change stressful; this can be increased if the need for the change is not apparent compounded by a lack of consultation about how it can be implemented. It is reported that managers often fail to recognise that individuals need to go through the transition phase and need to support whilst doing so.

Communication

Organization's that appear to have closed communication systems can often engender stress unintentionally. Where information is passed by rumour this can lead to anxiety and frustration. Open communication means communicating with everyone - using an appropriate method and considering the time factor. The adage of communicating on a need to know basis is not always conducive as how does the manager always know who needs to know!

Job design

Most individuals need to be challenged healthily, if jobs are purely repetitive or continually harassing then some individuals are likely to suffer. Jobs need to be designed to ensure that employees have an element of autonomy; where people feel they have no control over their work they are more prone to feelings of frustration or anger. It is important not to either overload or indeed underload individuals.

MANAGERIAL BEHAVIOURS

Managerial style is an area that most employees rate as an important factor in terms of job stress. Where they consider the style inappropriate their performance and motivation can be adversely affected. Common complaints are that managers do not spend enough time **listening** to staffs' views but spend the time **telling** staff what they should be doing and how to do it.

Delegation is another key area; if it is done well that it can act as a motivator; if done badly eg. the individual feels dumped upon or there is continual interference then it can add to stress.

Support for most of us is crucial; if we feel isolated we may withdraw and our work suffers. Managers need to consider what support mechanisms are in place and whether they are being used effectively.

Crisis Management is all too familiar in times of change; however staff find the lack of planning frustrating and want to feel that the organization/department still has direction. Without purpose motivation wanes quickly.

Relationships

Where these have broken down stress can occur, the social aspect of work is an important area, if individuals feel harassed or there is no formal attempt to resolve conflict then difficulties can escalate; teams can be divided and individuals left unsupported.

Hygiene factors

The environment where people work can induce stress especially if other stress factors are in place. If work areas are dirty, untidy, noisy or over occupied this can affect individuals. It is often reported that unkempt work areas are a signal of how people feel they are cared for.

PERSONAL EXERCISE - STRESS

The Holmes-Rahe scale

LIFE EVENT

| | |
|--|-----|
| Death of spouse | 100 |
| Divorce | 73 |
| Marital Separation | 65 |
| Imprisonment | 63 |
| Death of a close family member | 63 |
| Personal Injury or illness | 63 |
| Marriage | 53 |
| Dismissal from work | 50 |
| Marital reconciliation | 47 |
| Retirement | 45 |
| Change in health of family member | 45 |
| Pregnancy | 44 |
| Sexual Difficulties | 40 |
| Gain of a new family member | 39 |
| Business readjustment | 39 |
| Change in financial state | 39 |
| Change in number of arguments with partner | 38 |
| Major mortgage | 35 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Foreclosure of mortgage or loan | 32 |
| Change in responsibilities at work | 30 |
| Son or daughter leaving home | 29 |
| Trouble with in law | 29 |
| Outstanding personal achievement | 29 |
| Spouse begins or stops work | 28 |
| Begin or end school | 26 |
| Change in living conditions | 26 |
| Revision of personal habits | 25 |
| Trouble with boss | 24 |
| Change in work hours or conditions | 23 |
| Change in residence | 20 |
| Change in schools | 20 |
| Change in recreation | 20 |
| Change in church activities | 19 |
| Change in social activities | 18 |
| Minor mortgage or loan | 18 |
| Change in sleeping habits | 17 |
| Change in number of family reunions | 16 |
| Change in eating habits | 15 |
| Vacation | 13 |

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Christmas | 12 |
| Minor violation of the law. | 11 |

USING THE HOLMES-RAHE SCALE

Scoring over 300 points in one year greatly increases the risk of illness, 150 - 299 points reduces the risk by 30%, while a score of less than 150 involves a slight chance of illness.

But illness is not an inevitable result of change. Your own personality and your ability to cope will determine how well you react to life events.

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SPLIT BRAIN THEORY

LEFT

logic

deduction

processing

ordering

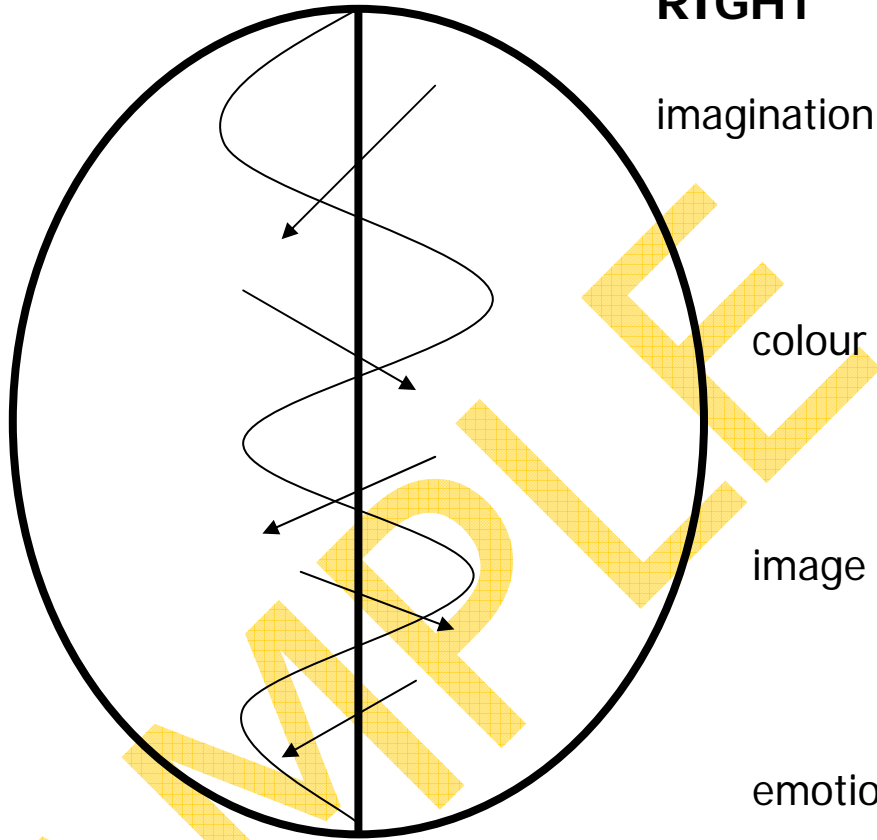
RIGHT

imagination

colour

image

emotion



BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING

There are times when all managers do in fact 'get it wrong'. This is part of the learning process, but before we can learn from our mistakes; it is important to examine the barriers which may have led to the problem becoming worse or the poor decision being made. Given below are some of the common blocks.

1. Perceptual blocks

- Seeing only what you expect to see.
- Stereotyping.
- Not recognising a problem exists.
- Not seeing the problem in perspective.
- Mistaking the causes of the problem.

2. Emotional blocks

- Fear of making a mistake or looking foolish.
- Impatience.
- Not wishing to provoke a conflict - fear of anxiety.
- Fear of taking risks.
- Not being interested enough - no personal gain.

3. Intellectual blocks

- Lack of knowledge or skills in the problem/decision process.
- Too rigid - no creative thinking.
- Not being methodical.
- Not using the right information.

4. Expressive blocks

- Using the wrong language or not being familiar with techniques to present information.
- Inappropriate management style (either passive or dominant).

5. Environmental blocks

- Inappropriate management style from your manager.
- Distractions.
- Poor environment.
- Lack of support and expectations of others.
- Stress.
- Boring work.

6. Cultural blocks

- Acceptance of the status quo.
- Dislike and fear of change.
- Over emphasis on the *way* in which a task should be done.
- No encouragement to be creative.

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GENERATING SOLUTIONS - CREATIVE THINKING!

Everybody has the potential to think creatively. It rarely involves inventing completely new ideas. Most creative solutions to problems incorporate existing ideas which have been combined in a unique or imaginative way.

There are four things you can do to establish the right conditions for generating more creative solutions.

1. Approach the problem with an open mind

Avoid the tendency to relate the problem to a similar problem which you have experienced and apply the same solution. Treat each non-routine problem as a new problem.

2. Suspend judgement

Avoid reacting to problems with an immediate and obvious solution. Allow time to generate as many ideas as possible around the problem before evaluating the ideas to select a feasible solution.

3. Be prepared to take risks

Most of us try and conform by meeting the expectations and reflecting the views of those around us. We try not to appear foolish by suggesting what may appear to others as 'silly' ideas.

4. Involve others who do not own your problem

Share problems with staff or colleagues - their non ownership of a problem may enable them to produce different ideas which could help you to reach a better solution.

PROBLEM SOLVING TECHNIQUES - A SHORT SUMMARY

1. Brainstorming

This is a method of generating as many ideas as possible and only evaluating them at the end. Typically, a group of individuals would be brought together and asked to throw out ideas within a set period. On no account must ideas be questioned or scorned - once all the thoughts are out, then the evaluation occurs.

2. Discussion Groups

Similar to the above, however the group is facilitated in a structured way and ideas are evaluated and discussed - not as creative as brainstorming.

3. Dreaming (day)

This personal activity involves allowing yourself time and space to consider the problem positively - instead of thinking about the worst outcome; you should visualise the desired outcome and what steps need to be taken to meet the desired state.

4. Force-field Analysis

An individual or group method, which requires you to identify the driving and resisting forces that keep a problem in place. By identifying the forces and examining how you can influence them you may be able to effect some movement.

5. Jogging

Sometimes called 'BUGGING' - a method that children use and it revolves around asking the simple question of why? Q. Why am I doing this? A Because my boss has asked me to Q. Why has he asked me to? A Because I am the only person who can work the computer?

6. Metaphors and analogies

These methods revolve around language and by forcing you to think differently a solution may appear. A classic example of analogy was a defence contractor who developed a rocket that had to fit so closely within its silo that it couldn't be pushed in. Using the analogy of a horse that refuses to be pushed into a stall - the solutions to lead it in. The solution for the defence contractor was to **pull it in with a cable**. The

metaphor asks you to liken one thin to another eg, Work is like driving a car because - it requires concentration.

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BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is useful method of gaining ideas on how to solve a problem. It is fun and can be used to bring people together to discuss certain issues. However there are some simple rules that need to be adhered to and these are:

- Suspend judgement
- Go for quantity
- No idea is silly
- Keep to a time limit
- Evaluate afterwards

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