

Time to be productive

Develop your time management skills

Harold L. Taylor



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Time to be productive: Develop your time management skills

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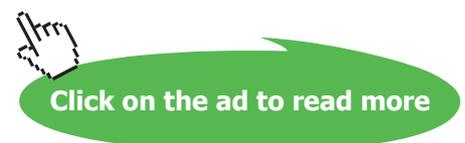
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1 Man's quest for increased productivity

1.1 Time management beginnings

People have always searched for better and more efficient ways of doing things, whether it involved a more effective way of trapping animals for food or a more efficient way of starting a fire with friction. But it wasn't until the later 1800s and early 1900s that anyone took a purposeful, scientific approach to getting things done faster with less effort.

Frederick Winslow Taylor is normally considered to be the father of scientific management. He wrote his book, *The Principles of Scientific Management* in 1911, which, together with the work of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, became the launching pad for today's time management. It started as a quest to increase productivity in manufacturing, focused on the efficiency of individual workers, quickly spread to the office, and eventually encompassed the home environment as well. Taylor sought a one best way to do every job, standardizing work methods and tools in order to increase productivity.

Taylorism, as it was called, began to change the way organizations functioned. Before this time, organizations were usually set up in homes or informal businesses where the workspaces were open. There were no barriers to communication and ideas could flow freely among employees. Instead, manufacturing areas and offices were separated, work became specialized, procedures became fixed and efficiency increased.

Unfortunately communications decreased. Temporarily at least, human relations took a back seat to productivity. This was not Taylor's intention. He was trying to make it easier for the employees as well as have them increase productivity. Although he didn't coin the "work smarter, not harder" phrase, this was his intention.

Frank and Lillian Gilbreth also had an impact by introducing time and motion study to the manufacturing process. The Gilbreths had twelve children and the movie *Cheaper by the Dozen* was based on their lives. They demonstrated that the same principles being applied in business could be adapted to the home. Their work gave rise to industrial engineering, time studies, and incentive standards, and a continuous pursuit of efficiency, not only in the plants but in offices as well.

What this quest for efficiency did in most cases was alienate the workers. Human relationships took a back seat. People were in separate areas or offices, took timed coffee breaks and lunch hours at specific times, and in many cases punched a clock every time they came and went – to keep track of hours worked. Workers were disciplined for chatting too long at the water cooler or kidding around in the factory. Policies, procedures and rules were developed. They usually stifled employee interaction, discouraged creativity and generated greater union activity.

So the backlash, if I can call it that, was the human relations movement, where it was felt that a happy worker was a productive worker. We went from isolated offices to cubicles without doors, landscaped offices with movable partitions or no partitions, office parties and Christmas bonuses. A lot of time clocks were eliminated. Communication meetings were introduced and so on. Supervision changed from an authoritative or dictator style to a consultative or participative style. But that era, and the organizational development era that followed were motivated by the same desire to maximize employee productivity.

It's ironic that the current digital era that we're in now is once again dehumanizing the work environment, decreasing personal interaction, reducing our creativity, and in some ways putting us back into the scientific management era. But this time we are doing it *willingly* rather than having it imposed on us. And it's mainly because we're being seduced by technology.

2 The changing environment in which we live and work

2.1 A new environment requires newer strategies

The business world has changed a lot in the past thirty years. I smile when I think of some of the suggestions I used to make in my time management seminars. We were still talking about using dictation equipment for business letters, installing car phones and answering machines and handling the reams of junk mail. We were urging people to use hand-written speedy memos, self-inking stamps and pocket recorders when traveling. Most managers had offices, access to secretaries, and opportunities to delegate work to others. Quiet hours, intercepted visitors and screened telephone calls were common strategies for concentrating on the task at hand.

Most time management experts were expounding the merits of “To Do” lists, time logs and multitasking. There were no Internet, laptops, PDAs, smartphones, email or voice activated software. Most people worked from 9 AM to 5 PM. We urged them to leave their briefcases at the office when they went home, get up earlier, stagger their lunch hours and prioritize their “to Do” lists.

Of course we also suggested things that are still just as valid today, such as setting goals, planning, scheduling their priorities and organizing their work environment. Over the years, managing stress and life balance were justifiably added as the speed and complexity of life increased.

But the environment, and in most cases, the jobs themselves, have changed. We are becoming a more mobile society and many people no longer work from offices but are either at home or on the road. One of my recent clients consisted of case managers who seldom visited a centralized office. They were all equipped with laptops and did their administrative work onsite at their client’s place, in their cars or at home. Since 2006, laptops have outsold desktop computers and in 2008, more businesses purchased laptops than desktops. Now handheld electronic devices such as iPhones, BlackBerrys and iPads seem to be outselling everything.

The pace of life has increased. Stress has increased. The incidence of ADD and ADHD are increasing. We are experiencing health problems such as obesity, diabetes, cancer and other diseases at increasing rates. We are suffering memory loss and lack of focus. There is also a breakdown in the family unit.

Performance now depends more on self-control than external control. Idle time and free or discretionary time is disappearing. Skills essential to personal productivity – the executive skills – are under attack. Working hours are increasing, impacting life balance, sleep, and interpersonal relationships. Family time is decreasing and is shifting from interactive activities such as charades, cards & board games to computer & video games. Computers deceive us into thinking that multitasking increases efficiency. Interruptions have become the number one time problem; but are accepted as a way of life. Reflection time, renewal time and time for creativity all continue to decrease. New addictions are forming, including the need to connect to electronic media such as email, social media, the Internet and video games.

2.2 Speed is the new currency

In my opinion, personal productivity has changed very little in the past 30 years in spite of technology. The net result of technology has been to speed up the pace of life. We are working faster, driving faster, communicating faster, eating faster – in short, living faster. The time savings gained by technology have been offset by increases in complexity, choices, interruptions, expectations, stress, delays and errors. Our bodies are not designed to operate at warp speed and we are faced with a variety of ailments to the point that “getting well” has become another time consumer.

No generation has had such a long lifespan as this current generation, yet a third of Americans claim they do not have enough time. In some respects, all we have done by introducing technology and increasing speed is reduce the time we spend on trivial and low-priority activities so we can spend time on more trivial and low-priority activities.

For example, washing machines do a wash quicker than when my mother used a scrubbing board; but now we do more washing. We have more clothes to wash and we wash them more often. Email is faster than writing or typing letters but we send & receive more messages. We are driving faster but spending the same amount of time in the car. It is believed that traveling time has been constant since ancient times. We have faster vehicles but longer distances to travel, plus more traffic, more construction and more gridlock.

Life in general is being lived at a much faster pace than 50 years ago – or even 20 years ago. We have a love affair with speed. And it borders on the ridiculous. From fast food and instant downloads to one-minute bedtime stories and drive-through funerals, businesses are competing for our discretionary time.

The average business lunch is down to 36 minutes or less. One article claims the average worker eats lunch in 24 minutes. The expression “lunch hour” is a misnomer. Everyone seems intent on packing more and more into every hour, some even gobbling down fast food as they check their email.

2.3 The hazards of speed

In order to get everything done, we are sacrificing sleep and discretionary time. The average American now gets 90 minutes less sleep a night than she did a century ago. Drowsiness causes more car accidents than alcohol. In my lifetime, the average amount of sleep we get has decreased from just over 8 hours per night to 6.7 hours. Getting less than 6 hours of sleep a night can impair motor coordination, speech, reflexes and judgment.

Because we don't make time to eat properly, exercise properly or sleep sufficiently, we are becoming obese. It is an epidemic in the U.S. Up to a third of Americans are clinically obese. It's interesting to note that children in schools within walking distance of fast food restaurants tend to be obese. About 20% of Canadians are obese. The situation seems to be better if we have to walk farther to get to our fast food restaurants.

If we are walking faster, talking faster, driving faster, working faster, sleeping less, and using technology, why isn't productivity going through the roof and what happened to all that extra leisure time?

I feel we are accomplishing little more than we have always accomplished. We're just doing it at a higher speed. The time saved is being filled by interruptions and low priority activities. Dave Crenshaw. In his book, *The Myth of Multitasking* says that studies show on average, each person loses 28% of the workday due to interruptions and inefficiency. I have seen similar statistics, such as 2.1 hours per day lost in interruptions.

Technology has helped convince us that multitasking saves time when the opposite is true. Studies show that when we switch back and forth from one task to the next, our brains' neural circuits take a small break in between – a time consuming activity that could reduce our efficiency by 50%.

In this fast-paced environment, many traditional strategies are losing their impact or simply no longer work. Quiet hours, as we know them, are a thing of the past. "To Do" lists are losing their effectiveness. Focus is becoming weak or non-existent. Multitasking has become counterproductive. In some cases, even goal-setting has become ineffective. Eating on the run has become the norm. Sleep, in many cases is seen as an annoying necessity. We are spending more time on getting well than on staying healthy. The division between work and personal life has become blurred. Discretionary time is disappearing. ADD, stress, inefficiency, and lack of balance are all commonly associated with our changing environment.

There are advantages offered by technology but there are also disadvantages Technology is eliminating the division between work and home. With PDAs and cell phones we can be contacted at any time. Our *To Do* list travels with us wherever we go. So we have to be self-disciplined enough to ignore email and turn off our cell phone

But regardless of whether we are on a flexible hour system, or we're a telecommuter or a frequent flyer, the line between work and personal time has become blurred. We can work in the evening, in a car or at a ball park. Work is no longer a place but a state of mind. Vince Poscente, in his book *The Age of Speed* (Bard Press, 2008) agrees that the boundaries that once dictated how we spend our time have become blurred or non-existent. Instead of three distinct segments of time – work, home and leisure – we have ended up with one large space filled with a mixture of work, home and leisure. You should stop thinking about work as a place you go to spend 8 or 9 hours a day, but as something you *do*. And much of it could be done anywhere.

It is just as important to schedule time with family, time alone and leisure time as it is to schedule business meetings, appointments and other business activities. We should be continually asking ourselves if the total time we are spending with our family and loved ones is in line with how much we value them. Schedule your work around your life; don't schedule your life around your work. Otherwise work may spread throughout our entire day and crowd out our personal activities, putting our lives out of balance. Most people don't need help *knowing* their priorities; they need help *living* their priorities. And of course that involves using a planning calendar, which we will cover later.

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3 Understanding time management

3.1 The difference between managing time and getting organized.

Organizing is the act of rearranging *items* that are in a disorganized, cluttered state so that everything can be retrieved quickly with less effort, maximizing both their utility and visual appeal.

Time management refers to increasing both the *efficiency and the effectiveness* of individuals and organizations through the organization of *tasks and events* by using tools such as planners and computers, and techniques and processes such as goal-setting, planning and scheduling.

The two activities are interrelated since disorganization normally wastes time. The major difference between *organizing* and *time management* is that, in general, organizing deals with *things* and time management deals with *activities* that have a time dimension. Both are important.

3.2 Time management continuum

Time management and personal organization are on a continuum. That is, there are degrees of organization, ranging from completely disorganized and chaotic to complete freedom from being disorganized and at a stage where we are experiencing maximum effectiveness. Probably few of us ever experience complete freedom from disorganization, but that's what we aim for. Time management, including organization, is a process rather than an event. The diagram below illustrates how time management, including organization, is a process and not a single event.

You should find this encouraging, because it's not a matter of being organized or disorganized or being a good time manager or a poor time manager. You could already be a third of the way there or two-thirds of the way there.

Time Management Continuum



3.3 Efficiency vs. effectiveness

Productivity is a measure of output per unit of input - such as the number of widgets manufactured per hour or the number of units sold in a day. A person can be more productive if she gets things done in fewer hours. But we don't know the *value* of some of the things she gets done. Getting more things done in less time says nothing about the *quality* of those things. Efficiency is concerned with getting more things done in less time, thus increasing productivity. Effectiveness, on the other hand, assures you that you are getting the *right* things done.

For example, developing life goals, plans, policies and mission statements are all aimed at increasing effectiveness. But reducing interruptions or improving e-mail and streamlining meetings are aimed at being more efficient. Similarly, personal values, career choices and life balance all aid effectiveness. Office organization, file management and the use of technology are aimed at increasing efficiency.

Efficiency is doing something in the best possible way, while effectiveness is doing the best possible thing.

Effectiveness may involve having a vision or mission, goals compatible with that vision, and a plan of action to achieve those goals or objectives. But efficiency is necessary to carry out the step-by-step action plan in the most economical, expedient way with a resultant quality consistent with the goal. A goal and plan are useless if the job never gets done. Efficiency cuts through procrastination, perfectionism and inertia, and converts a plan into action. Efficiency minimizes delays, interruptions, distractions and ensures that results are obtained.

Efficiency and effectiveness work in tandem; one is useless without the other. Without effectiveness, we lack direction drift away from the priorities, and become busy without accomplishing the 20% of the tasks which represent 80% of the value. On the other hand, without efficiency we experience the frustration of knowing exactly where we want to go, but seeing little progress in that direction. It's a "two steps forward and one step backwards" process.

Effectiveness has an eye to the future while efficiency deals with the here and now. A manager, who is effective, sets goals, plans, organizes, directs, controls and innovates. The one who is efficient conducts the “doing” portion of his or her job with a minimum of interruptions, idle time, procrastination, indecision, perfectionism or wasted effort.

Efficiency looks at the process through a microscope, analyzing every detail of the jobs to eliminate, simplify, combine, or improve segments of them so the total process can be accomplished in a minimum of time at minimum cost with minimum effort. Effectiveness looks at a process through a wide-angle lens, observing how it affects the productivity of the other processes, how it contributes to the goals of the organization and how it impacts the bottom line.

Efficiency studies may lead to an improvement in a process or job. Effectiveness studies may serve to eliminate it. Although both are important, effectiveness studies should come first, since there’s little point in improving something that may later be eliminated. Never underestimate the importance of efficiency; but never strive for efficiency at the expense of effectiveness.

The higher the level in the organization, the more time a manager must spend managing, and less time actually doing. Therefore, effectiveness becomes more essential at higher levels in the organization, while efficiency is critical at the staff level. But even a CEO has a certain amount of *doing* and limited time for its accomplishment. Efficiency never loses its importance.

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Although time management experts urge us not to be efficient at the expense of effectiveness, this should not be construed to mean efficiency is unimportant. Lacking effectiveness is like sailing a ship without a rudder. But it is no less serious to be sailing a rudder without a ship.

3.4 Don't confuse busy work with real work

Mark Forster, in his book *Do it tomorrow*, points out that real work advances your business or job while busywork it is what you do to avoid real work.

Real work includes things such as planning, goal setting, creative thinking, problem solving and decision-making. There is little visible activity with this type of work – consequently busywork looks more like real work that real work does.

There is a tendency on the part of many people to keep busy, which has little if anything to do with being effective. We should judge others by their actual results, not by their physical activity.

I would be suspicious of any businessperson who was constantly in motion. When communicating, if you're always talking, you can't be listening. Similarly, in business, if you're always busy working, you can't be doing much planning, goal setting, creative thinking or problem-solving. And these are essential activities that simply can't be multitasked.

Doing things right the first time saves time in the long run. Rushing through jobs or multitasking while you do them is not a smart thing to do.

It is even more important to do the right things. Spending time on unnecessary jobs is little better than sitting idle for the same period of time. In fact it could be worse; because if you were doing nothing, at least you would be relaxing. As Jo Owens says in his book *How to Manage* (Pearson, 2009), "being a 100% perfect at doing the wrong thing is still 100% waste of time."

Think before you act. Is that task really necessary? Does it contribute to your goals? Does it further your career or contribute to your well-being? One of the keys to effective time management is to be selective in what you do. There simply isn't enough time to do everything. If there were time for all the things you *should* be doing there would be no problem. You could simply do everything and the priorities would all get done along with all the other stuff.

The fact is, our time is limited. Doing everything is not an option. Doing one thing means *not* doing something else. And there is a big difference between the things that *should* be done and the things that *must* be done.

3.5 Holistic time management

Internal Time Management, our mind's perception of time, is one aspect of the holistic time management approach, which you will hear more about in books and workshops in the future. In my book, *Slowing Down the Speed of Life: A Holistic Approach to Time Management*, I gave a definition of holistic time management as I see it:

“The strategies necessary to lead a happier, healthier, longer, more productive & fulfilling life.”

Longevity is more important than efficiency, even from the standpoint of traditional time management. Sure you can do things faster and better and save ten minutes here and ten minutes there and eventually may even gain the equivalent of two extra years of work accomplished in your lifetime. But wouldn't it make more sense to simply live two years longer? Even if you only maintained your current level of efficiency, you would not only get as much work done; you would also have two extra years to enjoy whatever life has to offer.

As soon as you bring longevity into the equation, good health becomes an important factor. And since you don't want your body to outlive your mind, you must also pay attention to your cognitive skills, and since you will want to maintain purpose and fulfillment throughout your lifetime, you need to include spirit. So holistic time management must involve everything that affects body, mind and spirit. Now it is truly holistic – and a lot broader area of study than the traditional time management that we are discussing in this book.

If we are in top shape physically, mentally and spiritually, we know that we will be more productive – as well as have a much greater chance of extending our lifespan.

3.5.1 Internal time management

Although the focus in traditional time management training programs is on external time management or “clock” time, the greatest improvement in personal productivity is possible only through internal control. You can have an organized environment, clear goals and the top priorities scheduled in your planner or PDA and still fail to accomplish anything of significance.

Weak “executive skills” such as initiating work, staying on task, controlling impulses, and regulating emotions can sabotage any time management strategy – whether it is planning, prioritizing or scheduling. But will-power, self-discipline, attentiveness, focus, and other internal time management strategies can be developed. Self-defeating behaviors such as procrastination and perfectionism can be reduced. And working *with* your biological clock instead of *against* it will make it easier to accomplish more with less effort. These are all important aspects of internal time management, which to date has been virtually ignored.

Internal time management is just one of eight areas that you must explore if you wish to improve productivity through the new concept of holistic time management. It involves working in sync with your biological clock, and recognizing and capitalizing on the brain's role in how you both perceive and manage time.

The other areas of holistic time management are health, organization, lifestyle, spirituality, traditional time management, interpersonal relationships, and cognitive skills, which I will explore in a future book.

3.5.2 Early birds and night owls

Larks, or “early birds” as they are sometimes called, are not often appreciated by the “night owls,” Especially if they live in the same house. That’s why I am tip-toeing around the condo in the early morning while my wife slumbers. For people in a similar situation it is wise to adjust schedules so each person can do their thing without disturbing the other people in the house. My early morning walk and exercise and “focus hour” at a local coffee shop, for instance, allows my wife to sleep undisturbed. And converting a den into a “reading room” allows my wife to read into the wee hours of the morning while I snore in isolation in the bedroom.

It’s important to recognize that everyone’s biological clock is not the same. Larks are at a full head of steam by mid-morning and probably produce their most creative work before noon. But don’t expect them to be fully awake for an evening meeting. And never expect them to be creative at that time. “Owls,” on the other hand are usually most alert around 6 pm, and frequently do their best work in the evening.



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According to John Medina, in his book *Brain Rules* (2008), it's not a case of being one or the other. Most people are in between a lark and an owl and you could be anywhere on the continuum. Only about ten percent of us are larks, twenty percent are night owls, and the rest are somewhere in between.

There is a core period, somewhere in the middle of the day, where all groups are operating on all cylinders. So unless you know how everyone's biological clock is calibrated, it is probably best to schedule brainstorming sessions or arduous projects half way through the day. Oh, but avoid the "nap zone" somewhere around 3 PM. According to Medina, that's when the brain wants to take a nap, and doesn't really care what the owner is planning to get done at that time.

3.5.3 Use prime time for priorities

Prime time is when you are at your peak energy level and more mentally alert and able to tackle difficult tasks. If you don't know the prime hours of your own biological clock, Phyllis Kaufman and Arnold Corrigan, in their book, *How to Use Your Time Wisely*, suggest the following test. Try a different task, such as a crossword puzzle, at different times during the day – when you first get up, at 10 AM, at noon, 2 PM, 4 PM, 6 PM, and 10 PM. Then decide when you found the puzzle easiest.

Most people seem to have their prime time in the morning; but not necessarily when they first get up. And when time management experts tell you to get up an hour earlier and get a head start on the day, this may not be good advice. Researchers in the field of chrono-biology – the study of the body's natural rhythms and cycles – tell us that getting up earlier could be counterproductive. It depends upon whether you are a *morning person* or a *night person*. And also what is meant by *earlier*. If it's before 6 AM, forget it, according to researchers. In general, that's the time we're least alert. Our ability to think clearly and react quickly is at its lowest point between 3 AM and 6 AM.

4 Planning – the key to a successful future

4.1 Helicopter planning

In this digital age of speed with high-tech devices, both how we use them and the environment in which we use them are constantly changing. We can no longer have a “To Do” list mentality and still survive. Planning is more important than ever. Things change so rapidly, it seems as though the present is overlapping the future.

You could use the analogy of driving to work through traffic. You don’t know what the holdup is ahead; you only know that you have come to a standstill. And your focus is on inching forward one car length at a time. But if I were to lift you up in a helicopter so you could see for miles ahead, you would know that there is a major accident six blocks down the road, and that you could easily avoid it by making a right turn just ahead and traveling along a parallel street. Seeing the future that awaits you allows you to make adjustments in the present.

Similarly, in business and in life in general, you must see beyond your daily “To Do” list and weekly schedules and get a glimpse of the future and how you can best adjust and prepare now for what lies ahead. I refer to this as “helicopter planning” – rising above the busyness of each day and spending a portion of your time visualizing and planning for the future.

I use the analogy of a helicopter because it can rise straight up, getting some space between you and the current situation, and it can hover so you still have a good view of what’s going on now, while still looking ahead to see what the situation will be further down the road if you continue doing what you are doing.

All successful business owners need to get out of their day-to-day busyness and make time for long-range planning.

So helicopter planning requires that you get some space between you and the clutter and busyness of everyday operations. It could be in the form of a weekend retreat with a few business advisors or in a local hotel for or a day or two in an unstructured meeting alone or with your advisory board, partners or whatever.

If you are a one-person business, the least you should do is block off a half day each week or two – dedicated to business planning. This is the time that you're no longer working in the business, but on the business. Since Tuesday is considered to be the most productive day of the week, you might want to leave that time to work on the plan that you develop. You might consider a Friday morning, for your helicopter planning. Or you could make it Saturday morning if necessary. You might recruit two or three retired businesspeople to serve as an advisory board. There are probably more than enough people who would gladly volunteer their services. All successful business owners need to get out of their daily grind and find time for helicopter planning.

If you are not in business, you can still use the same concept for your personal life. In this case you would involve your family as well.

In these planning sessions you might focus on areas of the business that are critical to making it to next month, the next quarter and next year. You will have to decide which three or four priorities take precedence over everything else. These might be such things as managing cash flow, focusing on customers and quality service, and accelerating revenue growth. For personal planning, it might involve your career, financial status, self-development, family vacation, and so on.

Since change is occurring so rapidly, long-range planning is shrinking in length. We used to think of long-range planning as being 10 or more years with medium-range being five or more and short-range being one year or more. Now you could consider five years long-range and short-range six months or less.



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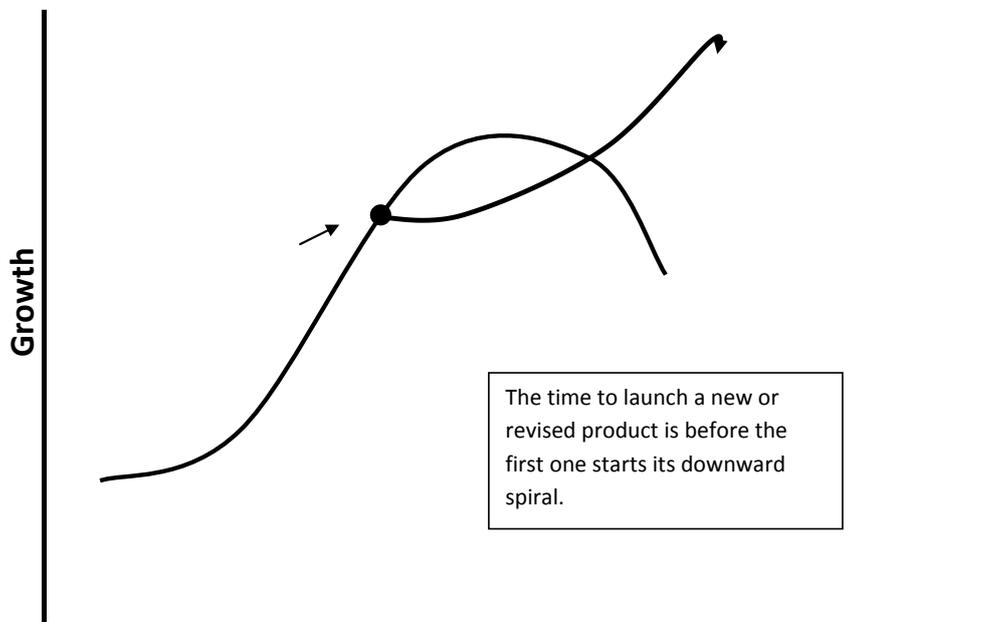
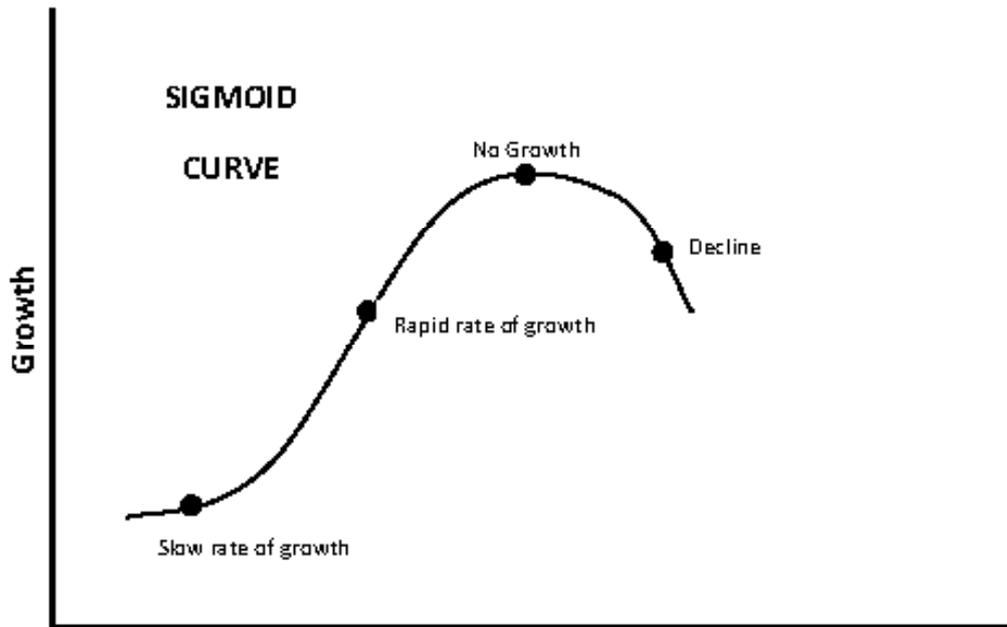
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4.2 The Sigmoid Curve

Below is a Sigmoid Curve. Charles Handy in his book, *The Age of Paradox*, makes an interesting case for launching a second career *before* the first one starts going downhill. or a second business *before* the first one starts to falter or a new product before the sales on the first one starts to peter out. Handy feels the *Sigmoid Curve*, an s-shaped curve tilted forward, sums up the story of life.



For example, if we start a new business, we usually start slowly, sales take off, and then level off and finally start to decrease. The time to make a change is while we're approaching the crest of the curve, while everything is going great. At that point we have the energy and resources needed to get a new curve through its faltering first stage. But we are reluctant to change when things are going great and tend to ride the first curve down to oblivion. The various stages of growth are marked on the diagram.

Take products for example. I have developed well over 50 products over the last 30 years, if you include manuals, self-study programs, books, training programs, videos and so on. But we probably had less than 30 available on our website at any one time. You can't wait until one product fizzles out before developing a new product. When things are going well, it's easy to sit back and do nothing. My public seminars were still doing well when I started doing teleseminars, and electronic products on flash memory sticks were developed long before book sales declined. You shouldn't wait for sales to plummet before introducing something new.

You can guess the fate of paper planners. Although I think the Taylor Planner is a more effective planning tool than any electronic handheld device, I didn't have to wait until we were bankrupt to see that paper planner sales would no longer support our business.

My experience in large companies showed that such things as austerity programs and cost-cutting measures took place whenever the company was on a downswing – at a time when the company could ill afford the damaged morale and resentment that normally ensued. By then it was too late anyway. Band-Aid approaches seldom work. Companies should have examined their spending habits during prosperous times when sales and profits were soaring. Living high on the hog during good times and panicking during recession is no way to run a company.

A similar situation could occur in our personal life as well. If we get a higher paying job, an inheritance, a big sale or some other sudden influx of money, we might go on a spending spree that eventually escalates to a lifestyle. And when the source of the extra money dries up, we find ourselves unable to stop the downward spiral to personal bankruptcy.

It's difficult to determine where we are on the sigmoid curve at any point in time, only that we're on an upswing or a downswing. But companies usually underestimate how far they are on the upswing. Taking action before reaching the peak is a lot better than finding we're on the verge of a downward slide. Successful companies introduce new products; packaging or other innovations while things are going well, not as attempts to turn things around.

The things that make you successful are rarely the things that keep you there. The environment in which we live keeps changing. It takes courage and a degree of risk to change things when everything's going well. But if you don't, it may lead to disaster.

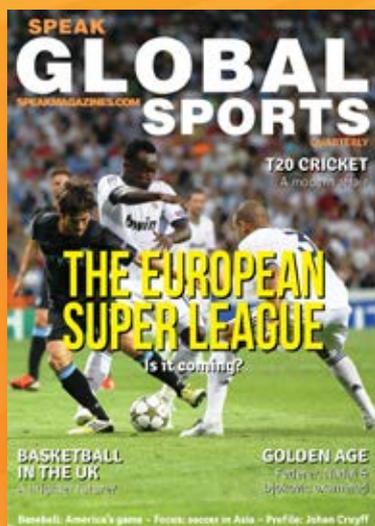
The *Sigmoid Curve* because it is more than just planning, it's anticipation.

How do you know where you are on the curve? You don't really know until it's too late. So you must guess. In this fast-paced environment where change is exponential, it's likely that you're farther along on the curve than you think. In his book, *The Age of Paradox*, Charles Hardy refers to a study of 208 companies over a period of 18 years to find out which ones were consistently successful. Only three companies lasted for the entire 18 years. 52 percent could not maintain their record for more than 2 years. By that example, it would be reasonable to introduce change after 2 or 3 years. If you start a second curve too soon there are no great consequences. Start too late and it could mean disaster.

But Handy's book was published back in 1994. Since then we have entered the digital age of speed, and everything has accelerated, I suggest that we develop new products, services, strategies, innovations or whatever every 6 months, not every 2 years. Just look at today's newspapers and note how quickly companies such as RIM and Microsoft and Apple are launching new products or upgrades. What used to be long-range planning is now short-range planning, and short-range planning has become immediate.

The things that don't change rapidly include our vision of what we want to do and become in the future, our mission statement, and our personal policies. They are all included in the planning process.

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4.3 Vision

Your vision is simply what you visualize yourself doing in the future, say 10, 15 or more years from now. If time, money and circumstances were not factors, how would you spend the rest of your life? What turns you on? What did you enjoy doing as a child? What are you good at doing? What do other people say you are good at doing? This requires time for reflection. Think about what you were doing in the past when you lost all awareness of time and were completely absorbed by the activity - so much so that you didn't want it to end. What do you dream and fantasize about? No hurry. This is an ongoing self-analysis that could take weeks, months or even years.

Once you discover what you want to do for the rest of your life – your passion or purpose for living – it becomes your motivator. It gives you a reason to get up every morning and to persist through hardships and set-backs to do what you were created to do. When you are fulfilling your purpose in life you are self-actualizing.

4.4 Mission statement

Once you decide what it is you are going to do, who you will do it for or to, how you will do it and the purpose for doing it, you express this in the form of a mission statement.

I have virtually the same mission statement today and it has kept me from being side-tracked from what I do best. Each year I enter my mission statement in the space provided near the front of my *Taylor Planner*. Currently it reads as follows:

To help individuals and organizations manage their time and their lives, through time management training, products and services, so they are able to free up time to work on their personal and organizational goals.

Mission statements should be brief – one sentence if possible – so it can easily be reduced to writing and committed to memory. If it's a company or organization, every staff member should understand it. It provides direction and focus in your business. It should be clear, brief and memorable.

If it's a personal mission statement it should reflect who you are. Goals are specific. They tell you exactly what you will do, when you will do it and how you will do it. But a mission statement explains *why* you will do it.

I encourage people to have a personal mission statement that reflects what they want to do with their life. My personal mission statement is essentially the same one that I use for my company because it is my passion. I truly believe it is my life purpose and I continue to do it long past the age of retirement – whether I get paid for it or not.

4.5 Personal policies

Corporate policies such as *the customer is always right, we will not be undersold and satisfaction or money refunded* have been around for over a century. They serve as guidelines for employees to make tough decisions, provide consistency and express the organization's philosophy. They also save time.

It is similarly effective for *individuals* to develop a set of *personal* policies or value statements to help guide them through life. Policies help people make decisions regarding their personal use of time and prevent them from getting involved in activities inconsistent with their beliefs. I also wrote down, some personal policies, such as *I will not accept speaking engagements on Sundays*, and *I will work only two evenings per month*. I didn't want to accept a lot of evening work since I would soon find myself speaking every night of the week telling people to manage their time and spend more time with their families. You have to walk your talk. So it makes sense to draw up some personally policies to guide you through life.

Here are some examples of personal policies.

- I will not compromise my beliefs, values or personal mission.
- I will not attempt to do two things in the same time frame or be all things to all people.
- At no time will other peoples' lack planning become my crisis.
- I will not become an activity packrat; for every new activity I take on, one of equal time value will be subtracted.
- I will have as much respect for my own time as I have for other peoples' time.
- Business decisions or choices affecting my family will be discussed in advance with my family.
- I will not be coerced into changing my priorities; they will be changed only if my heart is in it.
- At no time will I take on projects that conflict with my personal values.

A policy is a predetermined course of action that guides and determines present and future decisions. Personal policies will save us time and frustration by speeding up the decision-making process. Personal policies could also include such statements as *I will always get up at 6 AM, I will not work on weekends, or I will save 10 percent of my pay.*

Personal policies help us develop self-discipline in areas where we tend to be weak. A policy of *never eating between meals*, for example, once we adhere to it for a few weeks, becomes a habit. Eventually, it will take little willpower to say no to an afternoon snack since we say it automatically.

Personal policies also help us to achieve goals, since they are *standing plans* that lead us in a specific direction, such as towards financial independence, cardiovascular fitness, weight loss, etc. They provide stability in our lives and accountability for us.

To establish personal policies you must first determine the values you want to protect and the image you want to project. Once you are clear on your priorities and how you want to use your time, put your statements in writing and post them where they'll be a constant reminder. This might be at the front of your planner or in your PDA or other electronic organizer. Be sure to discuss your policies with family members or others who will be affected by them. You could end up modifying them, but be sure that you end up with a set of guidelines that reflect *your* beliefs, not those of others.

With your personal policies in place, you will be able to say *no* at the appropriate times, and use your discretionary time wisely. For example, if someone asks you to serve on a volunteer committee, your policy prompts you to say *no* unless you can free up time for it by releasing a current activity. You won't have to waste time deliberating or taking it under consideration or giving the person false hope with a *maybe*. Or if you were asked to do something unethical, you would quickly refuse. Policies speed up the decision-making process and prevent you from straying from your life mission.

Policies are guidelines, not rules. They are flexible depending on the situation. For instance, you may decide not to refuse to work overtime if your job actually depended on it. However, if you were consistently confronted with overtime at the threat of losing your job, you would either start looking for another job or change your policy. You cannot continue to live in opposition to your personal values. To do so would increase stress, diminish your self-esteem and take much of the fun out of life.

Your policies can be modified as time passes. Your priorities may change as your situation changes. As people grow older, for instance, they may have a greater respect for free time and less respect for money. Single people may have different priorities if they marry and have children. The important thing is that we maintain control of our lives by deciding our priorities and how we spend our time. Policies help us to live by design, not by default.

I usually ask people to try writing out some personal policy statements that will help achieve goals that they have set for themselves. It's good to review them each morning until they are committed to memory. Then adhere to them throughout the days ahead.

5 Shaping your future with goals

5.1 Do you really need goals?

Goals-setting is instrumental to the effective use of your time. Without goals, you will not know what's important and what you should schedule in your planner. It's important to set goals in all areas of your life, including business or career, self-development, family, health and spiritual goals.

Everyone knows they should be working on priorities. But many of us struggle with identifying the priorities. It sometimes seems like everything's important. By setting goals, you will be identifying the top priorities in your life.

A detailed chapter on goals is included in Sean McPheat's excellent book, *Successful Time Management*, published by Bookboon.com. I will not repeat what is contained there, but will add some further comments.

I find in my workshops that most people do not have clear cut goals in writing. Many don't believe they need goals. After all, they have a good job, a happy home life, and are enjoying their current lifestyle. Why bother with goals?

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I have developed a brief exercise that you can use to determine whether goals would help you in enjoying life to the fullest. If you don't need goals, fine. But in my experience, most people who claim they don't need goals end up playing the "If only" game later in life – "If only I had done this and if only I had done that."

If you are not convinced that having specific personal goals in writing would make any difference, you could use the following exercise, which I refer to as the *Extrapolation Technique*.

5.1.1 The extrapolation technique

Draw two vertical lines on a sheet of paper to form three columns as illustrated in the form example that follows. In the left hand column, enter all the areas in your life that are important to you, such as your job or profession, education, income, major accomplishments, health family, travel, etc., and jot down your present status in each of these areas. In the second column, indicate where you'll be in each of these areas in ten years, assuming you keep doing what you are doing now. In other words, extrapolate your life. You may be thinking about attending night courses, buying a house, changing jobs, going on a diet, or any number of things. But if you are not actually doing anything about it at this time, chances are that's what you'll be doing about it in ten years – nothing. There's a big difference between intention and commitment.

When you work on this exercise, be honest with yourself. If you have not registered for that education program yet or have not started saving for that new house or have not blocked off time for your family this week, what makes you think that you will do so in the immediate future? It's so easy to procrastinate.

Of course, you may *not want* to make any changes to your current lifestyle. Perhaps where you will be in ten years is exactly where you *want* to be – doing the same things you're doing now. If that's the case, you don't need goals. But at least you can verify it with this exercise.

This extrapolation exercise forces you to look at your future as well as your current situation. Continuing to do what you are doing will get more of what you are already getting, but little else.

If you are not happy with where you will be in ten years, now is the time to do something about it. Fill in the third column with the things you would like to do, achieve, acquire and experience. These will become the basis for the goals that you will set for yourself.

Then you only need to express them clearly and succinctly according to guidelines that we will provide you, record them in your planner, and schedule time to work on them.

The Extrapolation Technique

Current life Situation	Extrapolating current lifestyle 10 years	Where I would like to be in 10 years
Date:		
My Age:		
Age of my family members (parents, spouse, children):		
Profession or occupation and brief summary of responsibilities:		
Formal education completed and self-development courses taken:		
Hobbies, leisure activities:		
Annual Income:		
Most important personal possessions:		

Current life Situation	Extrapolating current lifestyle 10 years	Where I would like to be in 10 years
Total cash in the bank		
Total money owed (mortgage, loans, credit cards etc.)		
Investments, pension, life insurance, disability insurance, will:		
Accomplishments that gave greatest sense of achievement, including travel:		

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Current life Situation	Extrapolating current lifestyle 10 years	Where I would like to be in 10 years
Associations in which I am actively involved:		
Close friends and relatives I spend time with:		
State of my health, weight, eating habits, exercise:		
Spiritual growth and other significant areas of my life:		

5.2 What makes for effective goals?

When providing information on goal setting, or anything else for that matter, it helps to use acronyms to make it easier for them to recall the information later. You have probably all heard of the acronym SMART for the requirements of effective goal setting. In fact, Sean McPheat's book, *Successful Time Management*, mentioned previously, provides detailed descriptions of these SMART goals.

Specific (Exactly what you will do)

Measurable (So you know when you have reached it)

Attainable (Realistic as opposed to pie in the sky dreams)

Results-oriented (Describes what you are actually going to accomplish)

Time-framed (deadline date on each goal)

There are a few other important characteristics of effective goal-setting that I suggest be represented by adding the word WAYS to the word SMART to make sure the information is complete. The WAYS stands for

Written (Preferably in your planner)

All areas of your life (To maintain balance)

Your goals (Not other people's idea of what you should do)

Scheduled (Increases your chances of actually achieving the goals).



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Benefits of goal setting

- Creates a climate for motivation.
- Enables us to plan and gain greater control over our own destinies.
- Adds challenge to our lives and a sense of achievement.
- Provides a means of self-evaluation.
- Makes us results-oriented so we work smarter, not harder.
- Adds a new dimension of meaning to our lives.
- Enables us to manage our time more effectively.
- Reduces the stress normally attributed to the feeling of “not getting anywhere”.
- Increases our chances of success.
- Allows us to determine whether our jobs are compatible with the things we really want out of life.

It's one thing to have goals, but quite another matter to achieve them. That's why scheduling time to work on them is so important. “To Do” lists are intentions; but scheduled appointments with yourself to work on your goals and other priorities are the real commitments.

6 Converting plans into achievements

6.1 A planner is your most important time management tool

Scheduling is the first step in converting plans to achievements. Time should be scheduled to work on your goals. An ideal planner shows a week at a glance with sufficient space to jot down the name of the project or the task you will be working on. It should include all seven days as well as evenings. The *priority* items from your To Do list are spread throughout the week so you can actually see at a glance how much of your time is being consumed. It would be foolish to take on more commitments this week if all your time is already spoken for – unless you are willing to displace one of those priority tasks that you have already scheduled.

The point is that a To Do list and a pocket calendar just won't do. You have a lot of choices in planners but it needs to have more than little squares for the days. You need to be able to spread your activities throughout the days and weeks and there should be space enough to schedule the more important items directly into time slots.

We all have more things to do than we can possibly get done. But we can insure the important ones get done by blocking off time in our planner to get them done. A To Do list is only an intention. A scheduled block of time is a commitment. A planner should be used for scheduling appointments with *yourself*, not just appointments and meetings with others.

"To Do" lists encourage procrastination if not used correctly and in moderation.

The trouble with many people is that they lack focus. A small business owner, for instance, may haphazardly do everything she can to increase profits rather than focus on the 20 percent of the possible actions that would lead to 80 percent of the results. A planner allows you to focus on what's important by scheduling goal-related activities directly into its pages. So if you feel it's imperative to write a book in order to gain credibility as a consultant, you would estimate how much time it would take to write a book. Initially it's a wild guess. After working on the project for a few weeks you can adjust the time allowance. If you estimate 100 hours of uninterrupted work to complete a project and you have 50 weeks to complete it, you would have to schedule 2 hours of uninterrupted time each week to complete the project. But there's no such thing as uninterrupted work, so you schedule 3 hours per week to allow for those unexpected interruptions or self-interruptions that are bound to occur. It varies depending on the nature of your job, but as a rule of thumb, I schedule about 50% more time than I think the job will take.

If you find it difficult to block off a 3-hour chunk of time in one day you might consider scheduling one and one half hours twice per week.

There's a difference between what *should* be done and what *must* be done. Keep the "*shoulds*" on a *To Do* list but move the "*musts*" to specific time slots in your planner.

To Do lists are one-dimensional – they tell you what has to be done; but they don't tell you how long those things will take or when you are going to do them. People usually put themselves on a To Do list and others in their schedule. So we end up meeting with all those people; but never get to our own priorities.

The 80–20 rule applies to *To Do* lists as well. 80% of the items collectively contribute only 20% of the results. If you're in doubt about whether something should be scheduled or put on a *To Do* list, ask yourself, "What would be the consequences of not getting this done?" If the answer is "Very little," add it to your *To Do* list.

The Pareto Principle or 80/20 rule tells us that the significant items in a given group normally constitute a relatively small portion of the total items in the group.

I have always believed that it's best to record your *To Do* list, in your *planner*, not on separate sheets of paper. People are forever misplacing lists. And they often spend time copying the remaining items to another list. Your planner, on the other hand, is more difficult to misplace; it is with you everywhere you go, and the crossed off items are still visible so you can see what you have done in weeks gone by. With a weekly *To Do* list you have the option of spreading your things to do over several weeks. Each time a new task surfaces, you decide whether it should be done this week, next week or even later, and add it to that page. This makes your workload manageable.

Whether you use a week at a glance or a day at a glance planner is a matter of personal preference. I prefer to see how my week is shaping up. I like to be able to instantly spot my plans for the entire week and see what time I have left for additional projects. A page of my planner is shown below. It has been reduced in size slightly, but you can get an idea of what it looks like.

In the age of speed it is even more important to schedule your personal and family activities into the same planner in order to keep your life in balance. When you schedule time for tasks, always schedule more time that you think you need – because you will have interruption and must allow for them. Also don't schedule too tightly. I schedule about 25 to 30% of my planner in advance so there will be room to work on those other urgent priorities that always seem to crop up. For work activities, I don't schedule more than two weeks into the future. Otherwise I would be making too many changes.

Taylor Planner

THIS WEEK'S PRIORITY		20		21		22		23		24		25		26	
Follow ups:		Follow ups:		Follow ups:		Follow ups:		Follow ups:		Follow ups:		Follow ups:		Follow ups:	
		110		111		112		113		114		115		116	
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
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PERSONAL:	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
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9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

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6.2 Choosing a planner

Planning involves visualizing the future you *want* and then taking the necessary action in the present in order to make that vision a reality. *Your goals are simply snapshots of the future you visualize.* These snapshots are then expressed in writing and entered into your planner as a constant reminder of where you are headed. Here are five things an effective planning calendar should include.

1. A place to record your goals since they are an integral part of the planning process.
2. A place to record your mission statement as well since it reminds you of why you your purpose in life and forms the launching pad for your goals
3. Each day broken into 15 minute increments, including Saturdays and Sundays as well as evenings to facilitate the scheduling of personal as well as business projects and activities.
4. Daily follow-up sections to record deadlines for assignments due, birthdays and other special events, and notes reminding you when to check the follow-up file.
5. Weekly and daily “To Do” sections to record non-priority items that should be done.

6.3 Time for a “work break.”

Accept the fact that the business environment has lost much of its structure, and in many cases the people within that environment have lost their self-discipline. With the Internet, e-mail, and devices such as the iPad, iPhone and technology in general vying for our attention, our time is under attack 24/7.

Interruptions, distractions and incessant communications are now the norm. We need strategies that allow us to cope in this digital age of speed, multitasking and constant interruptions.

In the past we were able to successfully schedule coffee breaks to relax and unwind. I propose that we now schedule “work breaks” to get the important things done. Make these breaks relatively free from interruptions by engaging voice mail, turning off your smart phone, ignoring email and either closing your door or moving to a more isolated area such as a boardroom, vacant office or coffee shop.

When scheduling “work breaks,” do so in 90-minute chunks of time. Ninety minutes is a reasonable length of time to be unavailable to other people. It also minimizes self-interruptions & fatigue, allows you to capitalize on your “prime time” each day, avoids the inefficiency of marathon work sessions, and makes it easier to build a consistent habit of working productively each day.

Those who think they are good at multitasking are usually the worst at it. Although researchers have identified a few “supertaskers,” who can focus fully on two or more things at the same time, chances are we’re not one of them. Stick to one task for 90 minutes – less if you find you can’t focus that long. If you are able to get two of these work sessions into each day, you will be head and shoulders above most people when it comes to personal productivity.

6.3.1 The 90-minute rule of scheduling

Scheduled “work breaks” won’t be entirely free of interruptions. You might even interrupt yourself as your mind wanders. Occasionally there will be real emergencies that you can’t ignore. So when I schedule 90 minutes, I do so with the belief that I will get at least one hour of productive work accomplished. Also, I find it’s better to schedule time rather than tasks. It’s so difficult to estimate how long it will take to complete a task or project, I find it is less frustrating and less stressful if you schedule one or two 90 minute periods each week to work on the project with the intention of completing it within the estimated timeframe to neutralize the Parkinson’s Law effect, but without the pressure of a “do or die” deadline. This is one of the subtle changes to alleviate the stress that’s inherent in today’s workplace – but it’s really just a shift in mindset. There are other reasons that I feel 90 minutes is a good choice.

One of the biggest problems for most people is sustained attention, which is one of the “executive skills.” Working for shorter periods of time is generally more efficient since the longer you work on a project, the more difficult it is to maintain focus, and the more susceptible you are to interruptions – either by yourself or others.

Consultant Marcia Yudkin claims that concentration rises and falls in 90 minute cycles, and I find that 90 minutes is about the maximum time that most people can concentrate without actually *looking* for interruptions. Many people can concentrate effectively for only 20 minutes or less.

90 minutes is an acceptable wait time for most people before they receive an answer to their e-mail, text message or phone call. Of course a few people expect instant replies, but those people are simply being unrealistic. 90 minutes isn’t an unrealistic period of time to be unavailable to staff members either.

90-minute segments allow at least four major projects to be worked on each day – two in the morning and two in the afternoon – keeping the goal-related priorities on target. 90 minutes also allows prime time for at least two projects. This is usually in the mornings when most people experience their peak energy level and are most mentally alert. They also fit the typical day’s schedule – two projects in the morning, and two in the afternoon, falling in line with the “time policy” concept described in my book, *Making Time Work for You*.

90 minutes is about the minimum length of “working time” before “make-ready” time becomes a factor and starts having a negative impact on your efficiency. If you select too brief a period of time, you spend as much time getting your materials and your mind ready as you spend working on the project.

I recommend you actually schedule 90-minute “appointments with yourself” in ink if you use a paper planner since you have every intention of keeping those appointments. When we *react* to something, a different part of the brain is being activated than if we *plan* to do something. Writing down what we intend to do switches us to a more rational mode of thinking. When an interruption does occur, either something you think of or a remark someone else makes, jot it down so you can deal with it later. But continue with your planned activity.

If you want to keep to do lists fine. But they should not replace “work breaks” People who work from To Do lists, without scheduling time in their planners to work on priorities, are seldom as effective as they could be in their jobs.

Most people still work from To Do lists and only use their planner for scheduling meetings, appointments and major events. In my opinion this is the main reason for their lack of personal productivity, and excessive busyness and stress.

Handheld electronic devices, if they are used as substitutes for paper planners, encourage the “To Do” list approach even more.

6.4 Ten ways “To Do” lists can work against you.

To Do lists are intentions, not commitments. Writing things down on the list only ensures that you won't forget them; but it doesn't mean you will do them. Making an appointment with yourself is more of a commitment. You have reserved the time in which To Do them. People could have a list of things To Do today and they could be in a meeting or seminar all day.

To Do lists are only one dimensional. They remind you of all the things you want To Do, but don't tell you how long they're going to take or when you are going To actually Do them. Scheduled activities, on the other hand, are three-dimensional and provide a more realistic indication of when they will be completed.

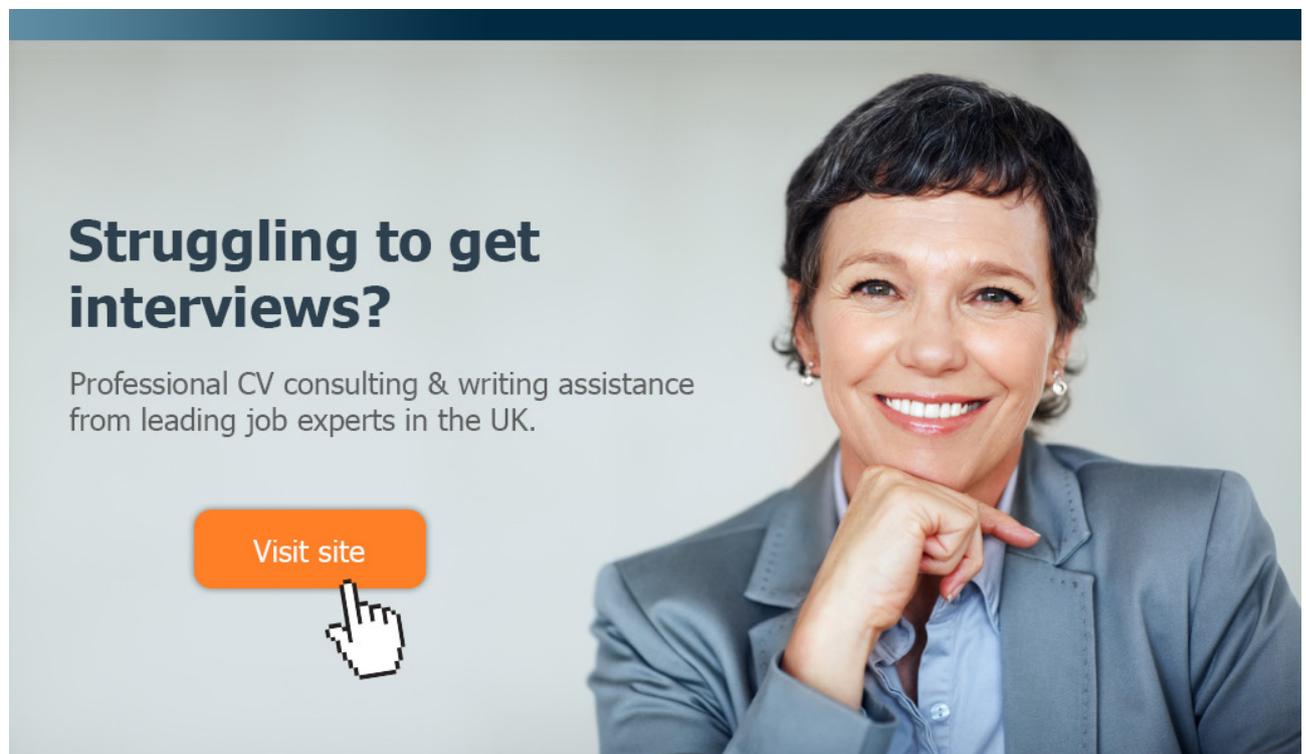
To Do lists are open-ended. They don't give you any sense of closure or accomplishment since the list is never completed. Items are always being added. The tendency is to cross off as many items as possible – encouraging you to go for quantity of items as opposed to the important items.

To Do lists are present oriented as opposed to future oriented. They keep you focused on the immediate things that have to be done as supposed to scheduled tasks, which force you to look at future days and weeks. By scheduling in the future you can see how the various tasks will affect the time you have available for other projects, activities and events.

To Do lists are difficult to prioritize. It is impossible to list things in order of priority since you are always adding more things. People have tried rating them as A, B or C or highlighting the most important ones. Doing so still doesn't guarantee they will be done in that order. By scheduling, on the other hand, you are automatically prioritizing when you schedule something this week as opposed to next week, for instance. You are giving it priority treatment. And only important items should be scheduled anyway. So scheduling involves a selection process.

To Do lists can be both stressful and overwhelming. To Do lists are never ending. It is depressing and demotivational to have tasks that are never finished. The brain seeks closure, but that is impossible with a To Do list.

To Do lists encourage overtime. Because of the brain's search for closure, the tendency is to complete everything on our To Do list, which of course is impossible. Daily To Do lists are even worse than weekly To Do lists. One study, conducted many years ago among pastors revealed that those who used daily To Do lists work longer hours than those who used weekly To Do lists. That's the reason we originally designed our planner with only a weekly To Do list.



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To Do lists separate the jobs you have to do from the time in which you will have To Do them. In fact many people keep separate To Do lists on pads or forms – separated altogether from their planners. If your planner does not include time for the priorities on your To Do list, that time will frequently be filled by other people's priorities. Items that are scheduled usually get done while items on a To Do list are usually postponed or abandoned.

To Do lists are like buffets as opposed to planned dinners. With buffets it is easy to take on too much, choose the tasty items instead of the healthy ones, and waste time making choices. Planned the dinners require no decision. You get to eat what you have in front of you. And the planning allows those items to be the best ones for you – the priorities, so to speak.

To Do lists are open invitations to natural tendencies that are counterproductive. For instance, we tend to work on those items that are easy, brief, pleasant and urgent, as well as those that please other people, rather than those that will further our own personal goals.

Now I have to say that To Do lists are better than trying to remember all the things you have To Do. At least, it gets your intentions into writing. You can always put everything on a To Do list and then select the most important ones to schedule. But To Do lists by themselves give you a false sense of accomplishment because people tend to measure progress by the number of items crossed off as opposed to the importance of the tasks completed. A recent survey by *LinkedIn* found that only 11% of professionals actually complete all the tasks on their daily To Do lists. (Globe and Mail, June 15, 2012.)

6.5 PDAs vs. paper planners

Hand-held electronic computers can boost productivity immensely. But they are computers, not planners. Don't throw away the kitchen sink just because you buy a dishwasher.

With a hard copy planner you can see your entire week, complete with scheduled tasks and your "things To Do" list at a single glance. Flipping a page brings you a whole new week of plans, appointments and projects. You can see your activities take shape, be completed and remain visibly intact as permanent trophies to your weekly accomplishments. A hardcopy planner also serves as a journal, reflecting not only your past activities, but your uniqueness – taking on your personality, character, and philosophy. It reveals your habits and style as well as your priorities. Color coding, sticky notes, self-adhesive labels and hand written notes can form a permanent footprint of your presence in this world and the impact you made.

Nobody wants to be left behind in this information age where technology is king; but it's not a case of either using an electronic handheld device or using a paper planner. They both have their place. You can continue to plan and schedule using a paper planner while using your handheld device for contact information, databases, electronic communications, Internet access, and the dozens of other functions used on a regular basis such as GPS, photography, ebooks, email, banking and Google searches.

7 Managing technology

7.1 Control technology without it controlling you

Leaders of the future will be those who can master some of the more useful technology that becomes available while maintaining their interpersonal skills. Not only will they be able to work efficiently, they'll be able to relate to other people, negotiate, gain consensus, close deals, network effectively and motivate and inspire others.

Technology is good; but you can have too much of a good thing. Research published in the February, 2008 *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, shows that daily social contacts may boost brain power and cognitive abilities. In a *University of Michigan* study of 3500 people, it was revealed that more time spent chatting with friends was associated with higher scores on memory tests. Interaction with people provides greater brain stimulation than watching a computer monitor or TV set. Technology, on the other hand, encourages multitasking, which in turn leads to stress, anxiety and inefficiency.

Technology writer Danny O'Brien interviewed top achievers and found one thing in common that may account for their increased productivity. They all used some sort low-tech tool, such as a written "To Do" list or a plain paper pad.

It pays to limit technology and maintain balance in your life. A UCLA study found that people who adopted a healthy lifestyle instead of constantly manipulating their BlackBerrys and cell phones showed improvement in memory scores and reasoning within a matter of weeks.

Technology allows us to get trivial, unimportant tasks done faster so we can take on more trivial, unimportant tasks.

We must be careful that technology doesn't become all-consuming and addictive. For many people it is already invading their personal space. An article in the November 12, 2012 *Toronto Star* reported on a survey by Infosecurity Europe in London that found that 70% of the workers surveyed spent at least a half hour a day working in bed. Another survey by Good Technology revealed that half of the office workers polled were answering emails while in bed. The trend is encouraged by suppliers who are offering everything from pyramid pillows to laptop trays designed specifically for bed workers.

People in general are overloaded, stressed and ineffective because they have gotten away from the basic time management process of planning, setting goals, scheduling and getting the work done. They have bought into the "technology is everything" myth, and are so busy doing things, that they have no time to think or plan. As a result, much of what they are doing may be things of little importance, and they may be ignoring many of the things that are the most meaningful.

By using technology indiscriminately, they are putting their lives in high gear, multitasking, responding to crises, and filling their lives with incessant interruptions and trivia.

We are seduced into buying the latest gadget, and considered to be behind the times if we still use a land line or a paper planner. TV, itself addictive, glorifies video games, and by 2006, approximately 145 million people were playing video or computer games. According to Dr. Gary Small and Gigi Vorgan, in their book *iBrain*, players of one game spent an average of 22 hours per week at it. The average young person's brain is exposed to 8 hours of technology each day. Technology is becoming an addiction.

You know something must be wrong when companies design 12-step programs to tackle email addiction. Or when psychiatric investigators in South Korea find that 20% of Internet-addicted children and teens end up with relatively severe ADHD symptoms. Or when people report a loss of energy and a sense of depletion after a marathon session with their TV or computer. People may believe they are in complete control of their lives, when the opposite is true. They are being *controlled* by technology. You can't say you are in control when you sleep with your BlackBerry, check email during a game of golf or spend 30 hours per week surfing the Internet.

"It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity."

– Albert Einstein



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Dr. Edward Hallowell, a psychiatrist in Sudbury, Massachusetts, and author of *Driven to Distraction*, sees a lot of patients wrapped up in this multitasking mania. Over the past decade he has seen a tenfold increase in the number of patients showing up with symptoms that closely resemble ADD, but of the work-induced variety. They were irritable, their productivity was declining, they couldn't get organized, they were making quick off-the-cuff decisions – all because they felt pressured to get things done quickly.

He gave the condition a name – *Attention Deficit Trait* (ADT) (*Time Magazine*, January 10, 2006) ADT takes hold when we are unable to prioritize. They're not only distracted and impulsive, but feel guilty and inadequate. They feel it's their fault that they're falling behind. They think they have to work faster and longer, which only makes it worse.

Technology, like most things, is good in moderation. But we seem to have forgotten that when you go high-tech, you also need more high-touch. Twitter and LinkedIn and text messaging and blogging are not the same as interacting one-on-one with people. People are good for your brain; technology, not so good. Research indicates that time spent chatting with friends in person tends to raise scores on memory tests. High-tech gadgets, video games, TV and the like have the opposite effect. In fact they have been shown to contribute to ADD in both adults and children. Chronic Internet and high-tech users tend to have poorer social skills and less focus. We should think twice before allowing time with email and the Internet to crowd out time with family and friends.

Top achievers combine high-tech with high touch. They interact socially, participate in face-to-face meetings, and even use paper-based systems such as planners or simple note pads as tools to get things done.

I will never apologize for scheduling in a paper planner or drawing mind maps on a scratch pad or scribbling an idea on an index card. In fact people who think a BlackBerry or any kind of smart phone is a planner is mistaken.

7.2 Why isn't productivity increasing?

In spite of technology, extended working hours and 24/7 connectivity, productivity in most countries is still falling. And yet, according to a recent article in the *Toronto Star* (Why Canada's productivity keeps falling, June 14, 2012), as our workforce shrinks, we must become more productive in order to sustain our high standard of living.

I believe that major factor is the decreasing personal productivity of the workers. For example, the May 23, 2012 issue of the *Globe and Mail* reported on a survey of 65,000 people over the past decade that revealed the number one complaint was being distracted by the speech level while working at office cubicles. Not only is distraction increasing, we are becoming more vulnerable to distraction as our brains are being bombarded by digital technology.

We are losing control. We are becoming more reactive than proactive and becoming slaves to technology. Worse still, we are accepting distraction as the norm and forming habits that keep us on a treadmill – working faster and longer but reaching fewer of our personal goals.

7.3 Technology is a double-edged sword

Back in 2006, a survey by salary.com and AOL revealed that employees, on average, spend 1.86 hours out of an 8-hour day doing something other than their jobs. And this does not include lunch and scheduled breaks.

More than half the people surveyed said their biggest distraction during work hours is surfing the Internet for personal use. Other distractions included socializing, running errands outside the office, and simply “spacing out.”

According to *Inc. Magazine*, the cost to the companies of the time wasted in the 2006 survey was \$544 billion.

A year earlier a similar study showed that workers wasted just over 2 hours per day. But at that time, a third of the workers said they did so because they didn't have enough work to do, and others said they did so because they felt underpaid.

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I don't think too many people today would say they didn't have enough work to do. I'm not sure about the underpaid part. The sad thing is, the Internet and probably most technology, are time wasters as well as productivity boosters. Companies are not getting the full value out of technology.

7.4 Don't get lost in the electronic jungle

A 2011 poll conducted by Poll Position determined how many hours a day people spend looking at either TV, computer screen, e-reader, PDA or cellphone. About a third spend one to three hours, another third spend four to six, and the remaining third spend between seven and more than 10 hours a day viewing content on electronic devices.

Much of this time was spent on social media and email. As of September 2012, there were eighty million BlackBerry subscribers worldwide. Social networking is now the most popular online activity, ahead of email, and accounts for almost 20 percent of the total time spent online. Facebook, for example, wasn't launched until 2004, and already has over one billion users. Europe tops the list, followed by Asia and then North America.

And the impact on time is obvious. The question we must ask ourselves is whether the time we are spending on electronic devices and social networking is helping us better achieve our personal goals or distracting us from them. So we must be purposeful, selective and self-disciplined when we navigate the electronic jungle.

7.5 Is the Internet making us stupid?

We tend to ridicule those who print articles from the web instead of reading them in electronic format where they may be accompanied by links to supporting information, images and videos. But according to Nicholas Carr, author of *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains* (Norton, 2010), studies by psychologists, neurologists and educators find that when we go online, we enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and superficial learning.

Links are particularly distracting, and studies show that jumping between digital documents impedes understanding. Comprehension declines whether or not people actually click on them.

According to Carr's book, the depth of our intelligence hinges on our ability to transfer information from working memory (short-term memory) to long-term memory. But a bottleneck is created since working memory can only hold a relatively small amount at a time.

When we are swamped with information, links, images, and advertising, the information spills over, so to speak, and doesn't make it into our long-term storage. It's like watering a house plant by continuing to pour on more water without giving it a chance to soak in.

But when we read books for instance, we transfer information a little at a time into long-term memory and form associations essential to the creation of knowledge and wisdom.

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8 Email: use it without it using you

8.1 Email has become a 24/7 phenomenon

The habit that employees have of checking e-mail in the mornings, evenings and weekends has not gone unnoticed by employers. Many of them are more lenient on lateness as a result. But the scales tip in favor of the employers since 80% of those managers interviewed feel they could call employees at home at night.

Mozy Inc., a U.S. – based company surveyed 500 employers and 500 employees in France, Germany, Ireland, UK and the USA. The bottom line is that along with the technology and the flexibility of the workday comes the expectation that employees are “open for business” during off hours.

What employees thought was an option has now become the new norm. If you want to be a member of the team, you are expected to keep your smart phone in readiness and say goodbye to the good old nine to five workday. For those who live by the “To Do” list, your life itself may become one as well – an endless one that expands your working day and shrink your personal life. You must take action to prevent this from happening.

8.2 Managing your email.

Handling email is one activity that you must control if you are going to master technology. It seems to be increasing exponentially for everyone in my workshops. Most participants claim it consumes well over two hour a day.

With the mobility of today’s workforce and work itself being more a state of mind than a place that you go to, self-discipline and self-structure are more important than ever.

The age of speed has people accepting as inevitable cell phones ring during lunch hours, text messages arriving at night and email popping up while watching your son’s baseball game. We are allowing technology to control us, rather than the other way around.

Unfortunately to change this requires will power or self-discipline. I say unfortunately, because self-discipline is not something that comes naturally to most people.

Most people don’t accept responsibility for the impact speed is having on their lives. They blame it on the email, or cell phones that keep interrupting them. It’s as though it’s impossible to ignore email or turn off the cell phone or to schedule specific times to review messages. They think that life is something that happens to them rather than something that happens because of them.

So the first step in controlling our time and our lives is to accept responsibility for what is happening to us – and to decide to change it. Self-discipline or self-control is simply the power to do something when it is easier not to do it. We all have the power but it's not exercised. The more you exercise it, the stronger it becomes.

Self-discipline has a greater impact on how we manage our time than any other strategy. It is needed in order to form good habits, to defeat procrastination, stay organized, and to reap the benefits of delayed gratification.

We must make small changes first. Don't make it difficult for yourself if you initially lack self-discipline. Build it gradually. For example, if you're checking email consistently throughout the day, decide to check it four or five times a day, at specific times. Say, first thing in the morning, mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon and evening. Once you have a routine, cut out the early morning, evening and Sunday sessions – and so on – until you have complete control. You will tend to cheat a little at first, and backslide, and that's OK. You are building a habit, and if you persist, it will become easier to maintain self-discipline.

Schedule specific times to review your email. Work on that one suggestion, and you will be strengthening your self-discipline at the same time.

Schedule enough time to actually dispense with your email messages, not just quickly review them.

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Assume you check email ten times per day, spending ten minutes each time for a total of one hour, forty minutes. During this time let's say you can handle 50 emails – either replying, deleting, forwarding etc. Instead, if you check your email four times a day, and spend 20 minutes each time, for a total of 1 hour, 20 minutes, during this total time you would probably be able to handle the same 50 emails. But you have done it in 20 minutes less time.

No matter how small the task, there is a setup time. You have a setup time for both the email (opening the program, clicking in the inbox etc.) and for resuming the task that you interrupted in order to check email. The fewer times you check email, the more time you save. An added benefit is that you won't be telling people by your actions that you respond instantly to every email you get. If you do, they will expect it. We train people how to treat us by our actions and habits. Control your email and you will go a long way to controlling your time. You will be eliminating a large source of stress and getting out of a reactive mode.

Timothy Ferriss in his book, *The 4-Hour Workweek*, claims he checks his email no more than once per week. He insists that any lost orders or other problems are overshadowed by his gain in efficiency. Personally, I wouldn't go to this extreme. But two or three times a day does not seem unreasonable.

It's not generally a good idea to check email first thing in the morning. You could easily get distracted from your plan. Make sure you get your top priority done first. I recommend that you schedule one or more priority tasks each morning and not check your email until about 11:30. You could check it again about 3:30 in the afternoon. You might want to turn off the automatic send/receive option so that email doesn't pop up in your inbox the moment you sign on. Email programs seem to be designed to control *us* rather than the other way around.

I encourage everyone to at least give it a try. Check your email twice per day for at least a couple of days and then assess the impact on your business. I'm sure most people have experienced a computer crash or an Internet access problem or a vacation when accessing email was impossible, and yet have survived the experience with no earth-shattering problems.

When you *do* check your email, make sure that you have enough time to dispense with all the email messages in your inbox. You might want to allow a half hour for instance every time you check your email. Either delete it, forward it to someone else for reply, file it, answer it, move it to an action file or To Do list, or (if it warrants it) schedule time in your planner to take the necessary action before replying. It's a similar process you would use with paper. Handle it only once where possible and never leave it in the inbox.

8.3 What is your Reactive Ratio?

Do you respond to a lot more email messages than you originate? Are you deleting emails unanswered or unread? Are you spending so much time reacting to email that you don't have time for creativity, relaxation and renewal? If so, calculate your "Reactive Ratio."

Count the total number of email messages you receive during a day. Include spam, egroup messages and newsletters whether you still read them or not. Divide the total number of incoming email messages by the number that you send during the day. The resulting ratio should be as low as possible..

You can easily calculate this ratio if you don't delete or move anything until the end of the day – even those that you have answered. The next morning, quickly count the total number of emails received the previous day as well as those sent the same day.

If the ratio is high, take action by cancelling newsletters that you seldom read, get off egroups you don't participate in, place spam filters at higher levels, and get off mailing lists. Consider using a different email address for purchases to avoid spam. Watch your outgoing messages as well. Question whether all incoming messages require a reply. For instance, don't thank people for thanking you. Consider adding "No reply necessary" to many of your outgoing messages. And investigate apps such as unroll.me.



The messages you originate also consume time and generate incoming messages. So question whether a quick phone call is better. Don't copy people unnecessarily.

Even more important than your "Reactive Ratio" is the total time you spend on email each day. Keep messages brief. Use text replacement software for longer & repetitive replies such as instructions or directions. Allocate specific times to check and respond to email. This could be one hour late morning and one hour late afternoon. If you can get by with less time, so much the better. But don't fragment your day by checking email every few minutes or every hour.

8.4 Write email messages with your purpose in mind.

Many managers receive over 100 email messages per day, and spend only a second or two deciding whether to open them. Most such decisions are based on the subject line. Even when they open the message, they may only read a line or two before deleting it and going on to the next one.

If you take the time to send an email message, take the time necessary to insure it fulfills its purpose. For instance, craft the subject line so it grabs their attention while telling them what the email message is about. Put the vital information in the first few lines and be clear and direct about what you want them to do after reading the message.

Proof the message before sending it, correcting any typos and bad grammar, and tightening up the sentences. It may take longer to write shorter messages but they will get better results. Avoid attachments if possible. Instead, cut and paste the additional information at the end of the message. Make it is easy for the reader. Their time is just as valuable as your time, and you are the one who is initiating the interruption.

9 Keep your life in balance

9.1 What is life balance?

Life balance is the process of working at all areas of your life: work, family, social, personal and spiritual so you can enjoy life and fulfill all your roles without experiencing undue stress. You can be a good parent, spouse, friend, and boss, with a healthy outlook, healthy body, and healthy mind.

Life balance does not refer to a 9 to 5 workday where you spend 8 hours per day at work and no more. It simply means a *blend* of work and personal life that is satisfying to the individual and his or her family or significant others. Your personal life could be out of balance as well. You could be spending an inappropriate amount of time on a hobby, TV, surfing the Internet, golf or any number of activities.

Balance has its rewards. It reduces stress and provides greater intrinsic rewards, such as a sense of satisfaction and peace of mind. A survey of 2500 male and female senior executives by the *Families Work Institute* and the *Boston College Center for Work & Family* showed that executives who give equal weight to work and personal life feel more successful at work, are less stressed, and have an easier time managing the demands of their work and personal lives.

9.2 Signs your life is getting out of balance

Lives usually get out of balance over a period of time, either through poor working habits, a reluctance to say no, a lack of planning, lack of goals or personal policies, or a failure to prioritize. Signs could include such things as a lack of sufficient sleep, uncompleted tasks, skipped lunches, rushing, stress, missed family activities, and so on. A common sign is when work starts infringing on other areas of your life, such as family, friends, and recreation.

The most obvious sign that your life is out of balance is the amount of time spent on work-related activities. Working overtime on a regular basis is an indicator of imbalance.

A Canadian Health report (From the book, *Sleep to be Sexy, Smart & Slim* by Ellen Michaud with Julie Bain) claims that more than a half of all employees take work home, 69% check their email from home, 59% check voice mail after hours, 30% get work-related faxes, and 29% keep their cell phones on day and night. As a result, 46% feel that this work-related intrusion is a stressor and 44% report negative spillover onto their families. And the families are supposed to be the most effective buffer to workplace stress. Work is no longer a place, but a state of mind. And with BlackBerrys, cell phones and other PDAs, it's easier to be a workaholic these days.

Eating on the run, taking your *BlackBerry* to the beach, being consistently late for personal and business events, not having enough time to exercise are all indicators of a lack of balance.

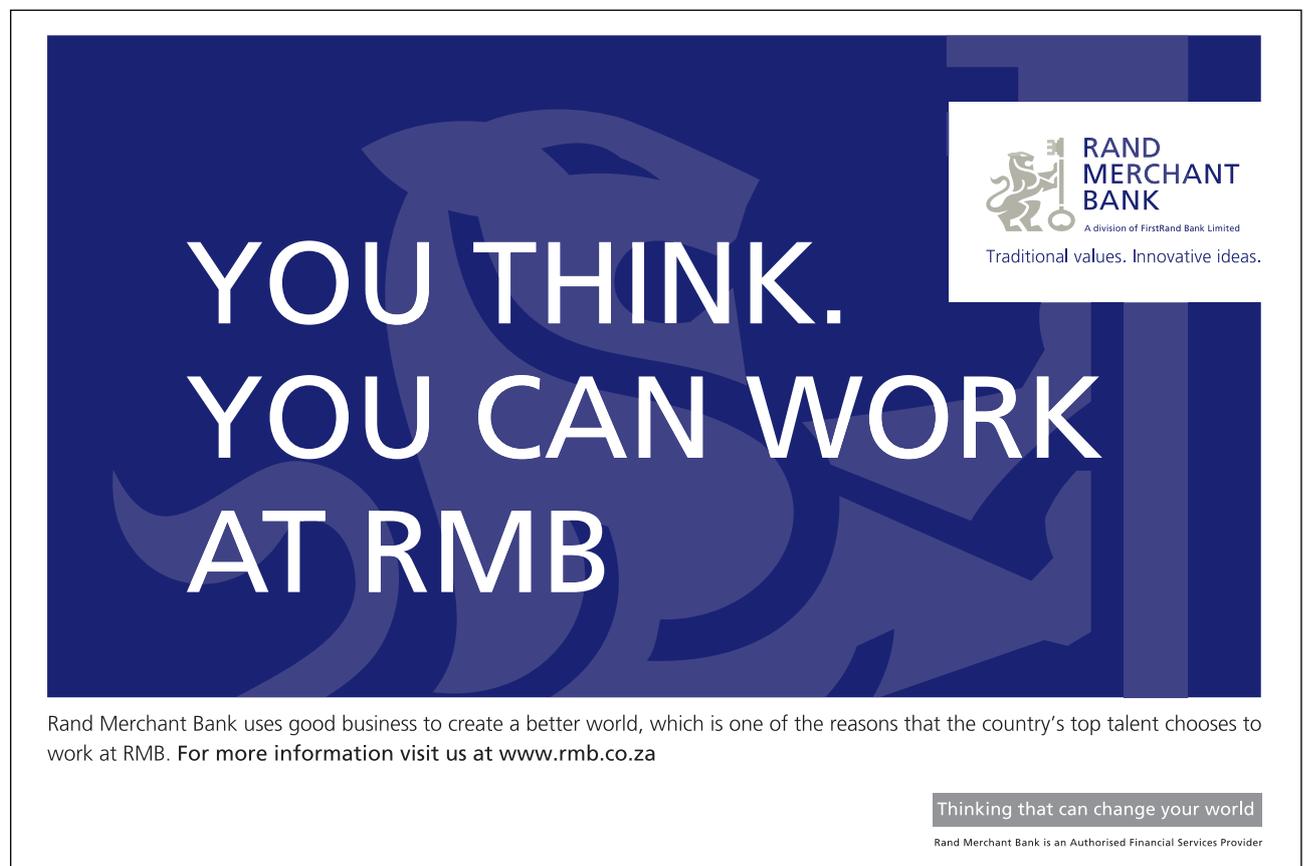
9.3 Ways to maintain balance in your life

Maintaining balance involves gaining and maintaining control of your time and your life. This means that you should set goals in all the significant areas of life, simplify your life as much as feasible, schedule time for personal and family activities as well as those other areas of importance to you in addition to work-related activities. Life balance involves making wise choices.

To balance your life you have to examine your personal values and what is really important in your life. Schedule time for the people, events and activities that are most important to you.

You could keep track of your daily activities for a few weeks to find out how much time you are actually spending on the different activities. If one or more things consume a disproportionate amount of your time, then you can fix that by drawing up a personal time budget for yourself. Planning is important in order to avoid impulse spending of time. Plan what TV programs you will watch, the sporting events you will attend, the family outings and so on.

Block off your vacations, evening classes, church activities, your child's baseball games, those scheduled dates with your spouse, those special events, that annual cruise or camping trip. Sometimes you may have to schedule personal activities during work time and work activities during personal time. Balance is a blend of work and personal life; there's no guarantee that one won't intrude on the other – but it usually balances out.



The advertisement features a dark blue background with a large, stylized white graphic of a lion's head. The text "YOU THINK. YOU CAN WORK AT RMB" is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center. In the top right corner, there is a white box containing the Rand Merchant Bank logo (a lion with a key) and the text "RAND MERCHANT BANK", "A division of FirstRand Bank Limited", and "Traditional values. Innovative ideas." Below the main text, there is a line of smaller white text: "Rand Merchant Bank uses good business to create a better world, which is one of the reasons that the country's top talent chooses to work at RMB. For more information visit us at www.rmb.co.za". In the bottom right corner, there is a grey box with the text "Thinking that can change your world" and "Rand Merchant Bank is an Authorised Financial Services Provider" below it.

9.4 Juggling a career, home and family

Some people are running a home-based business and have different challenges than those who commute to an office on a daily basis; but either way, you must adapt strategies that will keep your life in balance. These could involve delegating to family members, outsourcing some of the household tasks, enlisting the help of your spouse, streamlining procedures, eliminating unnecessary tasks, simplifying your life, organizing the home and office, being creative and taking shortcuts.

9.5 Simplifying your life

The more stuff people own, the more time it demands. Many people could get rid of half their possessions and never miss them. They could also rid themselves of many of the activities in which they are involved and reduce the amount of time they spend on the remaining activities.

Buy a bigger house and it may provide more space and comfort, but it also provides a larger mortgage, more taxes, a greater fear of robbery, more housework, and more expenses. It does not necessarily make one happier.

9.6 Ways to simplify your life

- Realize you have the right to say no. Recognize that every time you say yes to somebody else, you are saying no to yourself and are depriving yourself of things that you want to accomplish.
- Stop doing non-priority tasks. Delegate them, outsource them, or eliminate them.
- Limit the number of friends you socialize with on a regular basis. Have more family get-togethers.
- Cancel your membership in associations that do little to further your career or personal development.
- Get rid of unnecessary credit cards; consolidate debt where practicable; and set up a schedule to reduce personal debt to zero.
- Build up reserves of space, time, and money so that you can base career decisions on your goals and beliefs instead of on immediate financial concerns.
- Intentionally spend your time, money, and energy on things that are important to you and not on every little thing that gets your attention.
- De-clutter your home and office. Get rid of everything you haven't worn, used, or referred to in more than a year.
- Introduce at least one timesaving strategy into your life each week, whether it be paying bills by automatic withdrawal, organizing the items in the medicine cabinet, or introducing technology to your workstation.
- Cancel subscriptions to magazines, journals, or newspapers that you seldom read.

- Cut in half the time you spend watching TV. Choose the programs you want to watch. Never sit in front of the TV with no objective in mind.
- Keep track of your spending habits for at least one month. Stop buying things you don't need. Draw up a personal budget and stick to it.
- Start scheduling personal activities into your planner, such as vacations, sporting events, recreational activities, physical fitness, and movie nights.
- Prioritize your *To Do* list, and delegate the bottom half.
- Don't save money if it means wasting time. Time is more valuable than money. Driving across town to get a bargain is no bargain. Similarly clipping coupons, washing your car, etc.
- Consume less. Repair items instead of buying new ones. Buy fewer upgrades.
- Do less entertaining. Take more walks, hikes, and time for yourself.
- Drive less. Locate closer to work if necessary.
- Cut your spending by at least 10%.
- Each week, ask yourself, "what can I do this week to simplify my life?"

9.7 Don't put off living

Most professionals in this country are working longer hours and investing more time in their careers than European professionals according to career consultant Julie Tyros. "Work now and enjoy later" seems to be the mantra of many of us. This simply doesn't work. Don't put off living or you will be too old to fully enjoy it. Work-life balance requires that we budget our time, not just our money. A deadline on our workday promotes efficiency. There is little relationship between time and efficiency. The more time you have to get your work done, the greater the tendency to waste it.

If you get into the habit of working overtime, you are simply extending your current inefficiency to cover more hours of the day and intruding on personal and family time in the process. Instead, get organized, use technology, prioritize, schedule and practice sound time management principles during a pre-determined number of hours each day. Use the balance of the day for recreation, renewal and personal pursuits. Balance in itself will reduce stress, enhance creativity and improve efficiency during the "work" period of your day. The big payoff will be in the knowledge that you are not putting off until later, things that can be experienced and enjoyed in the present.

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11 About the author

Harold Taylor, CSP, president of Harold Taylor Time Consultants Ltd., has been speaking, writing and conducting training programs on the topic of effective time management for over 30 years. He has written 17 books, including a Canadian bestseller, *Making Time Work for You*. He has developed over 50 time management products, including the popular *Taylor Planner*, which has sold in 38 countries around the world. He has had over 300 articles accepted for publication.

A past director of the *National Association of Professional Organizers*, Harold Taylor received their *Founder's Award* in 1999 for outstanding contributions to the organizing profession. He received the CSP (Certified Speaking Professional) designation in 1987 from the *National Speakers Association*. In 1998 the *Canadian Association of Professional Speakers* inducted him into the Canadian Speaking Hall of Fame. And in 2001, he received the first *Founder's Award* from the *Professional Organizers in Canada*. The award has been named in his honor.

Since 1981, when he incorporated the time management company, he has presented over 2000 workshops, speeches and keynotes on the topic of time and life management.

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