

'Time is the scarcest of resources and unless it can be managed nothing else can be managed'

– Peter Drucker –

Time is the most scarce and valuable resource we have. If we do not manage our time successfully we can feel frustrated, dissatisfied and stressed. The central principle of time management is that it is important for all of us to spend our time doing those things that we value.

- ➊ **Know your goals in life:** Identify the values, activities and goals that are most important in your life. These goals are the map by which you give direction to your life and schedule your time. These large overall goals can be broken down into smaller manageable tasks to accomplish (the salami principle).
- ➋ **Rank priorities:** Activities can be ranked in terms of what is important and what is less important. The Italian economist Pareto gave his name to the Pareto Principle or the 80/20 rule. Twenty per cent of your efforts will bring 80 per cent of your rewards, while the other 80 per cent of your effort will bring only 20 per cent of your rewards. Pareto suggested we recognise and prioritise the 20 per cent. Ask yourself, 'How important is this to me?'
- ➌ **Plan and write it down:** There is a misconception that planning adds time to a task. Minutes spent in planning will be saved many times over. Use a calendar, diary, and 'to do' lists. 'When you are feeling listless make a list'. A written plan gives us the ability to stand back and develop 'helicopter vision'.
- ➍ **Delegate tasks:** One of the biggest causes of stress is the notion that we have to do everything by ourselves. Take a look at your schedule and decide what can be handed on to somebody else.
- ➎ **Work out a system:** Muddle makes unnecessary work, wastes time and creates frustration. Spend time organising your environment so that you have 'a place for everything and everything in its place'. Establish a regular routine, carving out protected time for high priority activities.
- ➏ **Don't procrastinate:** By putting off today's tasks until tomorrow you are simply storing up work for yourself. Set yourself deadlines, use them to increase motivation, and maybe add inbuilt rewards.
- ➐ **Leave slack in your timetable:** Never fill up your timetable completely, always allow a little slack or leeway. Then if something crops up, you are not overwhelmed.
- ➑ **Learn to say 'no':** If we cannot 'turn off the tap' of demands and requests of others we simply have no control over our lives. We will end up being the servant to the priorities of others, constantly deflected from what we really want to do.
- ➒ **One thing at a time:** We may have many things to do but we cannot do them all at the same time. Important tasks usually require our whole concentration and energy. This is not to say that you cannot double up at times, by for example doing the ironing and watching television.
- ➓ **Identify prime time:** Identify when you work best and plan that time for your most demanding tasks. For most people it is early in the morning, with performance tailing off by lunchtime. Similarly allocate undemanding tasks to times when your energy levels may be low.
- ➑ **Overcome perfectionism:** If you have to get everything absolutely right you will find it difficult to vary your speed according to priorities. The perfectionist often becomes bogged down in small details, missing out on the broader picture. Dare to be average sometimes!
- ➒ **Keep a balance:** Vary and contrast activities in different areas of your life, spending time in a balance between work, home, leisure, physical activity and mental activity. Plan natural breaks during the day, relax at weekends and take holidays.