



Time Management

GET IT ALL DOWN

It helps to de-clutter your mind by writing [or typing] a master list of all the tasks you need to achieve in the short, medium and long term.

PRIORITISE YOUR TO-DO LIST

Go through your list and prioritise each task based on its urgency and importance. Decide how urgent each of your tasks are; which must be done today, this week, this month or even this year. Those which are most urgent, with the shortest time limits, will obviously need to be at the top of your list. Then look at how important each task is, based on the consequences that will occur if you don't accomplish them. Determine which items warrant top priority by deciding which consequences you can or cannot live with. Re-arrange your tasks by which are the most urgent and important first, followed by the most urgent and the least important will fall to the bottom of the list.

SET YOURSELF REALISTIC TARGETS

Use your master list to draw up your to-do list for today. Only include on this list the things you can comfortably accommodate today and be sure to list everything you need to accomplish. The more you can account for, the more smoothly your day will run and the less you'll need to remember. Schedule things comfortably, allowing time for unexpected delays or mishaps; avoid an impossibly tight timetable but do set yourself an allotted time for each task. It's very easy to allow the majority of your time to be taken up by one task and then have to rush the rest to get them done by the end of the day. Break down large projects into specific tasks before writing them down on your list and feel free to revise your list [today's to-do list and your master list] as necessary. Each task's urgency/importance is bound to change as time goes on.

DELEGATE

Where reasonable try to delegate some of your tasks. Maybe start with some of the less important ones and see how things go. If you can do this internally ie through colleagues, then great, otherwise seriously consider outsourcing a few well-chosen tasks to someone suitably qualified. It's tempting to think it's easier to do things ourselves rather than delegate but we only have so many hours in a day. Spending a little time explaining something once, to the right person, could save us from repeatedly having to do the task over and over again and free up our time for more urgent/important tasks. (visit our website "How to Delegate")

LEARN TO SAY NO

There really is only so much work we can each take on, so don't overload yourself. Sometimes it's far better for us to say no to additional jobs, to enable us to complete the existing ones.

STOP PROCRASTINATING

Cleaning out the proverbial sock drawer is, at times, far more attractive than completing that all important report but busying ourselves with displacement tasks is counter productive. Putting things off makes a task seem even more daunting and makes starting it much harder. With a realistic to-do list already prepared, the amount of time you spend thinking about things should be reduced, helping you to just get on with things.

LIMIT DISTRACTIONS

If you have specific deadlines to reach, there may be times when you need to cut out interruptions. Close your door, divert the phones and let colleagues know not to disturb you. Do give them an idea, though, of when you'll next be available to them. Minimise all distractions and you'll be able to concentrate fully on those important tasks.

HANDLE EMAILS AND CALLS IN BATCHES

Although we probably feel like we ought to be receptive to phone calls and emails throughout the day, if we continually respond to them as they arrive, too soon our attention is diverted from the urgent or important tasks we were already doing. It helps to try to batch emails and calls where possible, perhaps scheduling specific breaks in our to-do list for dealing with incoming emails or setting aside specific hours in the day when people can get through to you on the phone.

TAKE A BREAK

No matter how busy we are, it's really important to allow ourselves breaks. Experts tell us that fresh air is best, at least a couple of times a day as well as a proper lunch break without work interruptions. If only for a few minutes, breaks alleviate stress, help us concentrate more fully and revitalise us for that ever-growing to-do list!



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