

# PRIORITY SETTING

## Competency Development Guide

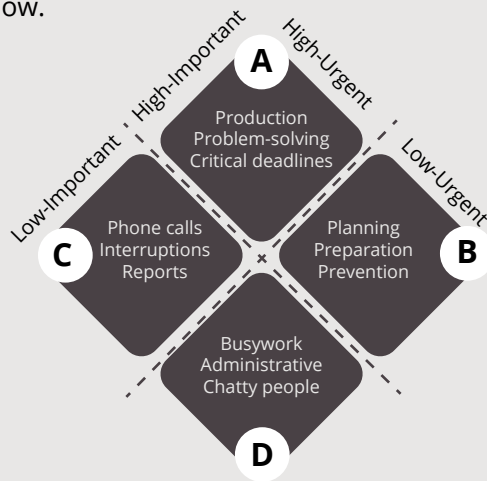
### Priority Setting Defined:

Organizing tasks and managing time based on importance.

If you want to get more work done, you can always work longer hours. The problem is, there are only so many hours in the day. At some point, this “work longer” strategy is going to fail, because there’s no more “longer” to work.

Since time’s a limited resource, you have to use it wisely. It’s the 80-20 rule, where 80 percent of the benefits tend to come from only 20 percent of the tasks. Some activities are more critical than others, which is why you need to spend as much of your time as possible doing the big things first.

To do that, you need to prioritize the tasks on your To-Do list. One way to think about priority is to look at “urgency” and “importance” ... either of which can be high or low.



Tasks that are **high-urgent** and **high-important** could include things like: production, problem-solving, crises, productive meetings, and critical deadlines. They typically have a strong impact on key business results.

Tasks that are **low-urgent** and **high-important** could include: planning, preparation, pursuing opportunities, relationships, meetings, and prevention. They need to be done, but there isn’t the same time pressure on them.

Tasks that are **high-urgent** but **low-important** could include things like: phone calls, interruptions, e-mail, some reports, and many meetings you attend. There’s pressure to get these done, but they don’t deliver the commensurate value.

Then there are tasks that are **low-urgent** and **low important**. These include things like: busywork, administrative, needless meetings, people stopping by to chat ... all the time-wasters you encounter during the day.



“Once you have a clear picture of your priorities, that is values, goals and high leverage activities organize around them.”

**Stephen Covey**

“Managing your time without setting priorities is like shooting randomly and calling whatever you hit the target.”

**Peter Turla**

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### Ranking Tasks by Priority:

**A's are must-do's:**

The high-urgent and high-important tasks. A lot of money may be at stake. They may impact other departments. There may be firm deadlines. Bottom line, if you don't do your A-tasks, you'll get in trouble.

**B's are good-to-do's:**

The low-urgent and high-important tasks. These are things you're expected to do, but that don't carry the same level of importance as A-tasks. You need to get your travel expenses submitted. You have to get your team's appraisals written up. You need to get your production reports up-to-date. You need to get your filing done.

**C's are nice-to-do's:**

High-urgent and low-important tasks. The copier's due for a new drum, but working fine. There's a seminar for supervisors who wish to sign up. The company newsletter wants you to write an article. There's a deadline, but there's nothing that has to be done.

**D's are never-do's:**

Those low-urgent and low important tasks. Do you have some front-line administrator from headquarters, who keeps sending out these blanket e-mails to everybody, asking for all kinds of data that takes forever for you to compile, but then nothing is done with the data? Is there this report that you fill out, that no one reads? Do you need to return the phone message of a vendor selling something that you don't have authority to buy? If there's no impact, then it's a never-do.

### 3 Rules to Follow When Prioritizing Tasks:

1. You should always first do the highest priority tasks on your To-Do list. They should take precedence, and get your best effort.
2. You should only do lower priority tasks when there are no higher priority tasks left for you to do.
3. You should never do D-level tasks.

### Planning and Scheduling Based on Priority - Worksheet

Activity Plan				Activity Review	
Strategic Initiative or Business Impact	Project/Task Name	Task Description	% Time	Comments	% Complete

## SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR STATEMENTS

To identify competency skill gaps consider outlining key supporting behaviors that are important in your organization.

You can assign a basic Likert scale to each behavior statement (examples outlined below) and have the employee and the employee's manager rate proficiency.

### ACHIEVING RESULTS:

Sets clear, well-defined desired outcomes for work activity and tracks progress.

Sets challenging goals and demonstrates a strong sense of urgency and persistence about accomplishing them.

Establishes plans that break complex projects into their component parts, each with its own timeline.

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### Recommended Resources from the BizLibrary Collection

Time Management: Prioritize Your Tasks

Time Management: Getting Organized

Time Management: Planning Your Week

Planning and Scheduling for Results

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## SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR STATEMENTS

### PLANNING:

Determines the length and difficulty of tasks and projects.

Establishes goals and objectives.

Organizes work into processes

### PRIORITY SETTING:

Focuses energy on critical tasks.

Generates focus.

Identifies primary goals over minor objectives.

Identifies usefulness of tasks to completing a goal.

### RESULTS ORIENTED:

Seeks and gives performance feedback to others.

Pays attention to quality and quantity of performance.