

# TIME MANAGEMENT


## Competency Development Guide

### Time Management Defined:

The ability to use one's time effectively and productively, especially at work.

Effective time management, however, is a competency we can master that will improve the quality of our lives both at work and at home. We have more and more distractions and demands on our time, so it's extremely important to master the basic concepts of time management to make the most of a resource that is not renewable, never repeats and is limited each day.

Let's begin with a quick discussion of the myth of multi-tasking. Our brains are hard-wired to focus on one-thing-at-a-time. Each time we switch from one task to another, we lose time as our brains have to stop processing one thing and begin processing another.

Just think about a common thing we've probably all observed, or even done. Talking on the phone and driving. Are we better drivers? Are we more or less attentive to the road when we are talking and concentrating on a conversation? How about  and driving? There are physiological reasons we cannot do those things simultaneously. Our brains simply cannot do two complex things at the same time. Multi-tasking is the enemy of effective time management.

### Planning Ahead for Better Time Management and Productivity

Most people plan their day the first thing in the morning, and usually don't create a formal schedule. Those who are best at time management do their planning the evening before. It's the last thing they do before leaving work.

Benefits of planning at night for the next day:

- You have a sense of what to expect tomorrow.
- You sleep better without thinking about work.
- It helps you to compartmentalize work and home.
- You wake with a purpose, a sense of the day. You are less reactive.
- You enjoy family time more. You are present and focused.
- You will know if you made realistic plans for the day.
- You avoid the decision dilemma. These are the time gaps when you ask yourself, "What should I do next?"
- You have a clear focus, which reduces your stress level.

You'll still have to deal with crises and other uncontrollable issues, but planning the night before will help to reduce the chaos.

Source: Laura Stack, Time Management: How to Control Your Day in an Uncontrollable Workplace



Some facts to keep in mind about time management:

It's not really a problem of time management; it's a combination of self management, choice management, activity management, and value management.

What matters is what you do with the time you're allotted.

Time is finite, so you must figure out how to make the best use of this valuable resource.

Your time use needs to be analyzed.

You must plan long-term, be proactive, think about the future, and make contingency plans.

Source:  
Laura Stack, Time Management: How to Control Your Day in an Uncontrollable Workplace

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### Supporting Behaviors

**Focus.** Make a decision about what is important today. It might be one thing. It might be three things. But sort out what those things are and focus your attention on each one, one-at-a-time until you complete those tasks. Having daily goals for yourself is an excellent way to achieve a degree of focus.

**Plan.** Make a daily plan. But don't make the plan too big otherwise the tasks can be overwhelming. So make a to-do list that is realistic and achievable. Break things down into small, digestible bite-sized tasks. Start your day with the ugliest tasks and then move to your top priorities.

**Exercise and take breaks.** We lose productivity quickly when we try and stay on task too long or without any break. PLAN short breaks. Get up and take a walk. Do simple things to keep your energy level up in bursts. Also, plan daily exercise, even walking. Exercise reduces stress and helps produce a wide range of benefits that help us concentrate and focus.

**Communication.** Who you're communicating with, what you're communicating and how you're communicating it will positively or negatively impact your time.

### Key Communication Strategies to Optimize Time:

Understand communication preferences for those you work with the most. If you don't know, then ask.

**Use the right channel based on priority.** Is an e-mail and instant message (IM) the right channel based on the urgency or expected actions? Don't send an e-mail to deal with fire drills needing immediate attention—you can't expect everyone to be on e-mail at all times of the day. You might send an instant message to get someone's attention, but you want to avoid ping-ponging the message back and forth when details can be discussed quickly on the phone.

**Be conscientious of the audience when sending e-mails.** Give summaries and high points, if necessary, and details to only those who really need them. It saves you time in writing and other people's time in reading. Also, be concise by not writing the email version of War and Peace to ask a simple question.

**Know who needs and wants to know.** Don't reply to everyone on the email distribution (reply all) unless it is truly needed and impacts all—it cuts down on potential unnecessary email return responses.

Communication plays an important role when establishing priorities and making all of us conscientious about being productive and not wasting time. Looking at how you've chosen to communicate in the past and establishing new reliable strategies will enhance your efficiency.

Source: Thomas B. Dowd III, Time Management Manifesto: Expert Strategies to Create an Effective Work/Life Balance

### SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR STATEMENTS

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

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

### CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT:

Regularly analyzes systems, processes, and performance trends to identify opportunities for improvement.

Looks for ways to improve performance and efficiency on the job

### PLANNING:

Determines the length and difficulty of tasks and projects.

Establishes goals and objectives.

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### Development Activities and Suggestions

**Decision Making.** Is the task urgent and important? President Eisenhower used a simple matrix to help make day-to-day decisions. We refer to it as the “Eisenhower Matrix.” Using this matrix, you can begin to establish priorities for yourself which can help with focus and allow you to attend to those things that can have the most impact on the success of your day.

	URGENT	LESS URGENT
IMPORTANT	Do First	Schedule
LESS IMPORTANT	Delegate	Don't Do

**Minimize Distractions.** We all work in environments with demands on our time and energy. This type of situation doesn't really change much when we go home, either. To be productive and get the most out of our limited time each day, we have to find ways to minimize distractions that keep us from completing important and productive tasks. So take a few simple steps like shutting off music, turning off e-mail notifications, shutting off that smart phone or tablet and staying away from social media until you need a break. Just the simple step of cutting out distractions can help improve the impact of the time you allocate to productive tasks.

**Keep a Journal.** Take the time to jot down your activity in 15 minute increments for a week or two. For many of us, visualizing and actually seeing how we spend our day can be a real “eye opening” experience. It can help us make the decisions and commitments needed to plan, make decisions and really begin to maximize the productivity of our time at work and at home each day.

### Recommended Resources from The BizLibrary Collection

Time Management Tune-up: Introduction  
Planning and Scheduling for Results  
Managing the Time of Your Life Part 2  
Helping Employees Use Their Time Wisely

To watch these courses and more within The BizLibrary Collection, [request a demo today!](#)

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### SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR STATEMENTS

#### PRIORITY SETTING:

Eliminates obstacles.

Focuses energy on critical tasks.

Generates focus.

Identifies primary goals over minor objectives.

Identifies usefulness of tasks to completing a goal.

#### DECISION MAKING:

Focuses on objectives and results when considering the various alternatives to a decision.

Makes decisions in a timely manner when the options are clear and there is little pressure or risk.

#### COMMUNICATION:

Tailor communication to the level and experience of the audience.

Clarify meaning and intent of others' communication when it's unclear.