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# ARL™ NEWS

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## **TIME MANAGEMENT** <sup>(1)</sup>

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### **The Art of the Effective Use of Time**

The amount of time available in a day is the same for everyone. Some just make better use of their twenty-four hours than others. Certainly they seem to know how to use time in a more rational, efficient way than others. It is impossible to save time. We can only allocate it better. Interestingly, successful people are more concerned about time, because they are aware that time can limit their effectiveness.

### **Our Results depend on how well we use time**

Time-management is actually self-management. By being aware of, and by reviewing, our habits and daily routines, we discover what we can and must change. More than a set of rules and principles, time management is an attitude that helps us live in the present without losing the perspective of the future.

Good or bad results will be the consequences of good or poor use of our time.

### **Know Thyself-- and how you use your time**

Do you know how you allocate your time? Have you ever tried to keep track of your daily activities to analyze them afterwards, to see if you optimized your day?

You need to know where and how you spend your time. It has been found that there is little consistency between how executives THINK they use their time – and the way they actually do.

“Know thyself” was for the ancient Greeks a key to wisdom. One way to get to know yourself is to observe carefully how you use your time: it will reveal your habits, behavior patterns, ways of acting and reacting to daily demands..

The way we use time is based on habits. To change or improve habits we must first identify and understand them. Here one of the most useful instruments is the Time Track, a template to write down our different activities by the hour. By analyzing it we can establish:

- if we are paying attention to the important things
- if we are neglecting them or procrastinating
- if we are keeping a balance between routine tasks, innovation tasks and long-term results tasks

- if our “firefighting” activities are at their minimum
- if we are allowing unnecessary interruptions
- if we are doing unnecessary tasks
- if we are zipping from task to task without completing them
- if we are spending more time on less important activities

## How are you managing your time?

If you feel you don't have enough time to do all you have to do, the problem is not time itself.

A main failing of executives is their inability to understand the requirements that their position, role and responsibilities impose on the use of their time. Most of them indicate they need 25-50% more time than that given to them to accomplish all they are expected to do. This is an alarming statement if we remember that the hours available are finite. It is clear, therefore, that the problems that arise are not due to the amount of time, but to the difficulty in allocating appropriate time to all our activities. How we organize our allotted hours is what makes us more or less efficient in doing our tasks.

Those who have their goals well defined and go after them are the ones who use their time in the best way. To have time is above all, a matter of choice, preference, options and priorities.

## Score your time management

If you are interested in evaluating how you manage your time, we invite you to respond to the [Questionnaire](#).

## The Four Principles of Time Management

To control our time and our life we need to adopt four principles to guide our thinking and action:

- 1) **A Goal:** It orients us in the right direction and helps us to gain perspective of our efforts. It is the end, what we want to achieve.
- 2) **Focus:** It allows convergence of all our efforts into a defined point (the goal or the task), within a certain time frame. Having a focus avoids disjointed efforts.
- 3) **Protection of our valuable Time:** It allows us to obtain more efficient results with fewer resources
- 4) **Control:** Control helps us to know how we used our time and if we did it as planned. By gaining control we can redirect our efforts, make corrective decisions to achieve our set goals.

These Principles are applicable in any situation, be it personal, social or professional.

To keep them in mind, ask yourself these questions:

- What is my goal?

- Where should I focus?
- What can I avoid or eliminate to increase the productivity of my time?
- Did I get the results I planned?

## **The Goal**

To express a goal in writing helps us to gain clarity in what we want to achieve, and also helps to define better the means (activities) required to achieve it.

### **Goals are related to our values, wishes and needs**

Our goals are not always clear even to ourselves. This is why we frequently should review our situation, rethink our values and redefine our needs and wishes, answering questions like these:

- Which were the activities I enjoyed most among those that I have done in my different roles?
- Which did I like the least? Why?
- What are the skills that I have that I haven't been able yet to fully utilize?
- What opportunities do I have today or could I have today, that I am not currently exploring?
- How do I want my tomorrow be different from my today? What do I want to change?
- What do I want for myself in five years from now? In ten years from now? What roles would I like to play, what activities would I like to be doing? Where? What life style do I want to pursue?

Only after answering those questions we will be able to define our goals.

### **Guidelines for setting goals**

1. The goal has to begin with an action or achievement verb, not a simple activity but it has to imply an achievement associated with an activity. Examples of these verbs are: develop, implement, prepare, plan, anticipate, promote, correct, adapt, maintain, reduce, eliminate, increase, discover, obtain...
2. The result sought has to be quantified
3. A date for completion must be indicated.
4. Required time and/or money investment has to be specified.

### **Classify the goals**

We tend to set more goals than we can achieve with the available resources. In consequence, it is important to classify the goals into

- Core goals: Our success depends on them. If we don't achieve them, we fail
- Necessary goals: They are needed to improve performance but are not key for survival
- Marginal goals: They are not connected to the core, and don't impact survival

### **Three levels of goals**

For a balanced life, it is useful to organize the goals into three levels:

- Professional
- Family related
- Personal

One possible way of setting goals in the three levels could be:

#### **A) Professional Goals**

1. Short Term (next 6-12 months)
2. Long Term (next few years)
3. Development related (training, expanding your job, new job, etc)
4. Long Term Career Goals (what you would like to do in your work life)

#### **B) Family Related Goals**

1. Life style and habits
2. Financial goals: Short Term (6-12 months),  
Long Term (insurance, retirement, investments)
3. Family Planning/projects
4. Others

#### **C) Personal Goals**

1. Personal development (readings, hobbies, artistic activities, etc)
2. Free time activities
3. Community Work
4. Others

## **The Focus**

Our success depends mainly on our ability to prioritize.

- What is the impact on our three levels of goals?
- What to do and what NOT to do?
- What actions will have the greatest return?
- What are the few critical tasks that will contribute the most to the results I am aiming for?

To practice focus requires a relaxed state of mind, an ability to tolerate the pressure. Many times focus is lost because of one's own anxiety and restlessness.

Remember that if you accept tasks and activities that don't contribute to your goals, you will not have time for those that will lead you to your goals.

### **Are you living in a crisis?**

A crisis is an alteration in the regular course of events, a sudden loss of balance in a situation. Crisis is, by definition, an exception to the norm. Something that only happens occasionally.

If you are engaged in putting out fires, living under permanent stress to solve urgencies and crises, surrounded by unexpected problems, working late to meet deadlines – you are living in a state of crisis.

But when a crisis happens frequently it is a sign of bad management. Periodical or repeated crisis need to be analyzed, anticipated and eliminated.

A crisis should never be taken as normal or typical for your business. A crisis is the result of a long process that started at a distant point. It is not a sudden event.

Therefore it is possible to identify and anticipate a potential crisis before it occurs.

*For a [list of Causes of Crisis](#).*

### **TO FIND THE [FULL ARTICLE](#)**

(1) With permission of the author

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