

# **Time Management**

**911<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing  
Family Support Office**

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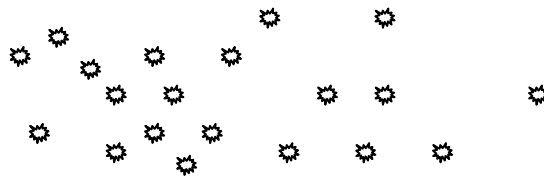
## Time Management

### A. What is Time?

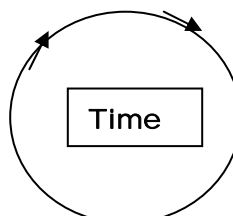
#### 1. Time is culturally determined

Different cultures have had at various times in history, radically different views of time. Our view of time shapes how we focus our energy and efforts in life. The following are some examples of non-scientific views that differ from our linear concept of time prevalent in today's Western Society.

**a. Australian Aboriginal Time:** The Aborigines of Australia were able to traverse the Ocean some 65,000 years ago in order to colonize and populate what is known as modern day Australia. They were the technological giants of the world during that era. Their concept of time is summed up in the statement that it is "Every when". They do not see it as linear or circular, rather they seem to view it as being almost without substance.

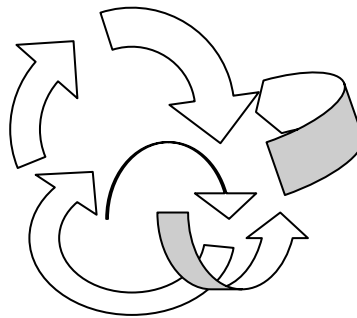


**b. Greek Time:** The ancient Greeks had a story of a young man that encountered an older man who identified himself as being the younger man in the future. The younger man remembered the event, but found it hard to believe, until as an old man he encountered his younger self, and tried to communicate with his younger self. He saw the same look of disbelief that he remembered having as a young adult. Ancient Greek time was clearly circular.





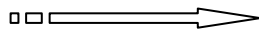
**c. Indian Time:** The ancient Indians contribute different ideas about time that is interesting. They believed that history and time evolves in cyclical fashion, with continually repeating patterns or epochs. They also have systematic meditation practices that can induce a “Fourth State of Consciousness”, where a meditator may experience a waking state, without engaging in thought. In this state there is a subjective experience of timelessness, or “eternity”.



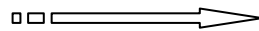
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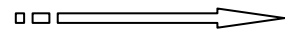
**d. Western Time:** Time is viewed similarly as to how we view the universe. It has a beginning, middle and an ending. Time is seen in a linear fashion, it is seen as being sequential and as being measurable.



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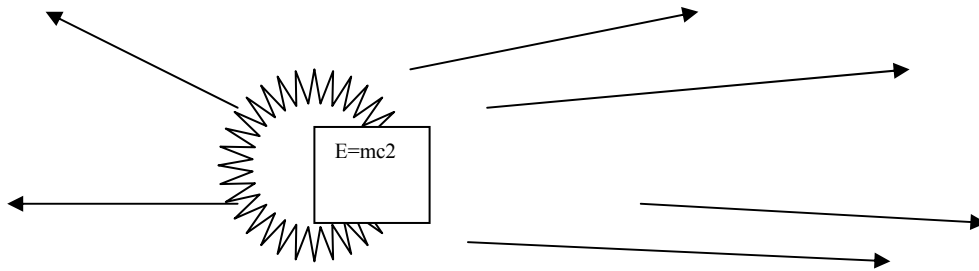


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## 2. Western Scientific Thought

Albert Einstein pioneered a different look at time when he discovered it is relative. He started out with what was known as the Theory of Relativity, and over the years, his theory has become regarded as factual. For example when we feel heat from the sun, it is heat and light that took 8 minutes to arrive here. When the Hubble Telescope shot pictures of the universe at a point some 300,000 years after its initial expansion, it was picking up light that

began a journey over 10 billion years ago. Time stops in a black hole, once the event horizon is passed. Intense gravity affects the fabric of time resulting in localized differences. Speed affects time, too. The closer a traveler approaches the speed of light, the slower time affects them, and thus they would age biologically far slower than people on earth would.



### 3. Western Fringe Ideas

There notions that people can project their conscious thoughts into various locations in the world and also into different times, to include concepts such as remembering the future, etc. Stanford University has done pioneering work on Remote Viewing, and the Department of Defense has allegedly participated in these activities, to include a notable episode involving a terrorist kidnapping.



#### 4. Final Thoughts On What Time Is

The philosopher Descarte said, “I think therefore I am”. Unfortunately, while thinking is important for us to subjectively appreciate time, his statement was not a proof for our existence? It would be more proper to say that we exist, therefore we think sporadically, but that we should never mistake our thoughts for who we are.

Time is both subjective and dependent upon the observer. Chemical reactions in the brain speed up our thinking in a crisis, thus giving us the perception that everything slowed down as our vehicle slid on the black ice toward the precipice of the cliff for example. Universal factors can literally warp or change the fabric of objective time.

Since we live in a society that treats time in bits and increments, we are compelled to treat it with respect if we want to remain employed or succeed in life. The rest of this handout addresses time in the Western sense. In a life sense, our mortality makes time precious because when we die, time in this dimension ceases for us. We will have truly lived up to our potential, as no further potential is left to us. To have life is to have hope. To properly manage time is the key to a bountiful life experience.

#### B. Time Management

We change our lives by changing our attitudes and perceptions. The author Peter Drucker said that, “Time is the scarcest resource and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed.”

1. **Time:** The occurrences of events in sequence one after the other.
2. **Management:** The art, act or manner of controlling.
3. **Time Management:** The act of controlling the occurrences of events in sequence.
4. **Conditions Affecting Control:** “Help me to control the things I can, adapt to those I cannot, and grant me the wisdom to tell the difference.

5. **Conditioning Effects:** There are events we think we can't control but we can.
6. **Adjusting to Reality:** There are events we think we can control but can't.
7. **The Self-esteem Factor:** "People who feel good about themselves produce good results" Ken Blanchard
  - a. **Event Control**
  - b. **High Self-esteem**
  - c. **High Productivity**

### **C. Tales from the Crypt or Reasons for Being Late**

**1. Chronic Lateness:** "Why am I always late? Despite my best efforts, I'm never on time. It doesn't seem to matter if I'm meeting a friend for lunch or If I am running errands on the weekend, I end up forcing others to wolf down their food or to get to places after they are closed. It's frustrating! I was even late meeting my fiancé the night he proposed. It's not like I want to inconvenience people—I just can't seem to get it together. What can I do?"

**Tardy**

#### **2. Response to Tardy from Cheryl Carmin, Ph.D.**

Dear Tardy,

Being late can be the result of any one or combination of factors. Unfortunately, when being late occurs repeatedly, it can cause problems. For example, people may regard you as unreliable, you may inconvenience others, which will make them angry with you; you may miss deadlines at work, thereby putting your job at risk; or there may be other equally serious consequences. Let's look at what kinds of skill-related situations may contribute to being chronically tardy.

- o Poor time-management skills: Some people just haven't developed the knack for estimating how much time all of their daily activities may take. This may sound surprising, especially if these are routine activities like commuting or work-related tasks. If you can't gauge how much time things will take, you run the risk of always erring on the side of underestimating how much time is needed.
- o Difficulty with organizing: Sometimes the problem isn't so much that the task can't be completed in the allotted time, but that you haven't estimated all that is involved in the job. There may be several organizational steps that you hadn't



anticipated. As a result the project takes more time and you are running late. You may need to take a hard look at how you approach a task and make sure you aren't leaving things for the last minute. Give yourself a few extra days if this is something that you have never done before and aren't sure exactly what is involved.

- o Need for Better Assertion Skills: Some people just can't say "no". We all know someone some one who is frequently asked to do "just one more thing" or "fit this into your schedule please!" Because this person has trouble turning down a request, he or she becomes overwhelmed by commitments and is always running behind. Alternatively, this may be the kind of person who automatically answers the phone or gets involved in a conversation in the hallway, even though he or she is presenting at a meeting that starts in a minute! On occasion, everyone picks up the phone or is sidetracked by a conversation when pressed for time, but the person who has difficulty asserting him or herself will not offer to call the person back or excuse himself/herself out of fear of offending someone.
- o Don't want to be there/do that: Of course one fundamental reason that people may be late is that they do not want to be where are supposed to be or they do not want to do whatever it is they are supposed to do. The activity may be viewed as an imposition or something basically unpleasant. Obviously, it would be easier for everyone involved if you simply said you didn't want to be there/do that. Sometimes, though, we are put in a position where refusal just isn't possible. Arriving late or procrastinating clearly doesn't help the situation any, but may be a strategy that some people employ.
- o Not using a watch: This may sound painfully obvious, but there are some people who just don't wear a watch. Or if they do, they don't look at it. One of my colleagues refused to wear a watch. He insisted there were clocks all over the medical center. Of course these didn't help him keep on time since very few of these clocks were synchronized or accurate! Every clock in the place had a different time! He finally overcame his habitual lateness when his wife bought him a lovely pocket watch for Christmas, and much to everyone's relief, he began using it.

### **3. Negative Delay – Procrastination**

Most often when people are delaying things they are procrastinating – putting them off until they are unavoidable. Procrastination slows achievement of current goals, and restricts future opportunity as time is clogged up. The time spent before the job is properly tackled is usually wasted.

Procrastination can come about in a number of ways:

- *Paralysis by planning:*

Here the planning process is drawn out to avoid confronting an issue. Plans are argued and polished and perfected, but implementation of the plans is delayed unnecessarily.

- *Perfectionism:*  
Often tasks are fussed over long after they have been achieved to a quite sufficient level. This often serves to delay tackling other problems. Often perfection simply is not required, and is not cost effective to handle.
- *Boredom:*  
Boring jobs are very easy to delay for spurious reasons. Here self-discipline is needed.
- *Hostility:*  
Where you are hostile to the task, or to the person giving the task, there is strong temptation to delay?
- *'The Deadline High'*  
Coming up against a tight deadline and meeting it is immensely satisfying. It can be associated with strong impulses of adrenaline. The problems with this are being delayed precisely to get the rush of adrenaline, and that occasionally jobs may fail because they have been left too late.

The way to tackle procrastination is to set deadlines by which goals should be achieved. The way to deal with Deadline High procrastination is to set intermediary goals that must be achieved.

#### **D. How to Achieve More With Your Time**

Time management is a set of related common-sense skills that help you to use your time in the most effective way possible.

By using time management you can learn to:

- Determine which of things you do is important, and which can be dropped
- Use your time in the most effective way possible
- Increase the time in which you can work

- Control the distractions that waste your time and break your flow
- Increase your effectiveness and reduce stress

By becoming more effective in your use of working time, you can reduce stress by:

- Being more in control of what you are doing
- Being productive, and secure in your job because of this
- Enjoying what you do
- Giving yourself more quality time to relax and enjoy life outside of work

## **1. The Central Shift in Attitude**

At the heart of the subject is a simple, but obvious, shift in focus

*Concentrate on results, not on being busy*

Many people spend their days in a frenzy of activity, but achieve very little because they are not concentrating on the right things.

This is neatly summed up in the Pareto Principle, or the 80/20 rule. This states that Typically 80% of unfocused effort generates only 20% of results, and that the remaining 80% of the results are achieved with only 20% of the effort. By applying time management, including planning we aim to change this to ensure we concentrate as much our effort as possible on the high pay-off tasks. This ensures that we achieve the greatest payoff possible with our investment of time.

## **2. Why Don't People Manage Their Time?**

Despite the benefits of time management, very many people do not use it. This can be because:

- They don't know about it?
- They are too lazy to plan

- They enjoy the adrenaline buzz of meeting tight deadlines
- They enjoy crisis management

The problem with crisis management and tight deadlines is that while they can be fun, often they lead to high levels of stress, a disrupted private life, tiredness and occasionally, to failure of projects.

### **3. Time Management Issues**

The following areas will be expanded on in order to enhance Time Management Skills:

- Evaluating your use of time
- Focusing on your priorities
- Planning for effective use of time
- Creating more time
- Avoiding distractions

## **E. Evaluating Time**

### **1. How much is your time worth?**

If you work for an organization figure out how much you cost it each year. For military members this would be your salary, allowances, medical coverage, commissary benefits, etc. In the past the Air Force has sent out statements showing members what their cost to the Air Force is. For DoD civilians the rule of thumb is your salary plus 25%. None of these figures include the cost of doing business such as facilities, utilities, supplies, communications, training costs and so forth.

Put in business terms you may want to calculate the amount of *profit* you need to bring to the organization. If were to go into private industry, they very much are focused on the value added impact hiring you may have versus the expenditures your hiring results in. If you were to become self-employed, or a small business employer you would find yourself in the same situation.

From the figures above you may be able to calculate your hourly rate: A DoD civilian earning \$12.00 per hour would in effect directly cost the government \$16.00 per hour. This does not include overhead, but those figures could be calculated by dividing your organizations equipment, equipment maintenance costs, and amortization of the cost of the facility and supply costs each year by the number of persons in the organization, then adding that to the figure. If in the future the military were to meter each building for energy use, then costs could be determined for that factor, too.

## **2. How do you spend your day now?**

Memory is a very poor guide when it comes to assessing how you spend your time – it is too easy to forget time spent talking to colleagues, making coffee, eating lunch, etc. It can also function poorly when you are at low ebb during the day.

You may also be unaware that your energy levels may vary through the day. Most people function at different levels of effectiveness at different times. This may be caused by the amount of sugar in their blood, the length of time since they took a break, routine distractions, stress, discomfort, etc.

## **3. Use an Activity Log to find out**

A revealing technique is to keep an *Activity Log* for several days. Without modifying your behavior, note down the things that you do as you do them, from the moment you start working.

### **How to Use an Activity Log**

- o When noting what you are doing, make a notation each time you change activities to include the time
- o Examples of changed activities are: opening mail, working, making coffee, dealing with customers or colleagues, gossiping, going to collect paper from a printer, etc.
- o While noting the change of activities, also note how you feel, i.e. alert, flat, tired, energetic, etc. This should be done periodically though out the day.

## **4. Analyzing your log**

Once you have logged your time for several days, analyze the log. You may be alarmed to see the length of time you spend opening the mail, talking to colleagues, dealing with disruptions, or doing low value jobs.

You may also see that you are more energetic in some parts of the day and flat in other parts. A lot of this can depend on the rest breaks you take, the times and amounts you eat, and quality of your nutrition. The activity log gives you some basis for experimenting with these variables. Fit your schedule to match periods of optimum mental acuity, so that more demanding mental tasks are handled then where more rapid process can be made.

## **F. How Should You Use Your Time?**

An important part of focusing on results is working out what to focus on! Many people work hard all day doing little jobs that do not actually affect the quality of work that they do.

This section concentrates on three areas – clarifying what you enjoy, working out what your strengths and weaknesses are, and working out both what your job is and what constitutes excellent performance.

### **1. What would you like to spend your time on?**

It is important for your own quality of life that you enjoy your job. If you know broadly what you like and dislike, you will be more able to move your job towards doing things that you enjoy. This is important, as you are more likely to do a job efficiently and effectively if you enjoy it, than if you loathe it. **Note:** The Air Force still recruits without using temperament instruments to identify what a person feels comfortable doing over a period of time, versus merely determining by using the **ASVAB** what they have the “horsepower” or aptitude to do. This oversight often affects the quality of work that is achieved and is a determining factor in retention that is being ignored.

### **2. What do you do well?**

It is important to know what your talents and weaknesses are. There are a variety of ways to do this. One is to reflect back on aptitude results that reveal what you have the capability to do academically or otherwise. Examples include the ASVAB, SAT, ACT, GRE, MAT, which match knowledge with reasoning abilities. IQ tests purport to measure general reasoning ability by testing verbal, mathematical, spatial and manipulation skills. The ASVAB and other work assessment tests determine more specialized aptitudes, such as electronics, clerical, analytical, and mechanical capabilities.

A good way to do this is to employ a **SWOT** Analysis. This provides a formal approach to evaluating your internal strengths and weaknesses, and the external opportunities and threats you face.

### SWOT Analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

A more systematic method is to use SWOT Analysis to detail or examine your or your organization's Strengths and Weaknesses, and to examine the Opportunities and Threats it faces. Often carrying out an analysis using the SWOT framework will be enough to reveal the changes that can be usefully made.

To carry out a SWOT Analysis for yourself or your organization, write down answers to the following questions:

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
What are your advantages?	What could be improved?	What are the good chances facing you?	What obstacles do you face?
What do you do well?	What is done badly?	What are the interesting trends?	What is your competition doing?
Be realistic; look at it from your point of view and from your customer's point of view.	What should be avoided?	Useful opportunities come from changes in technology and markets on both a broad and industry specific scale.	Are the required specifications for your products and services changing?
If stumped start by writing down a list of your organizations characteristics.	Face any unpleasant truths now, rather than at a crucial point.	From changes in governmental policy, or changes in social patterns, population profiles lifestyle changes, or employment trends.	Do you have bad debt or cash flow problems?

### 3. Job Clarification

One excellent way of ensuring that you concentrate on the right things is to agree with them with your Boss!

You should ask the following questions:

☺ *What is the purpose of the job/task?*

If possible, this should be expressed in a single sentence starting with the word 'To' – e.g. 'To ensure distribution of flyers to the 17 TRW.

- ☺ *What are the measures of success?*  
Work out how he/she will be deciding whether you are good at your job/task or not. Find out what the key targets to be achieved are, and how they will be measured.
- ☺ *What is exceptional performance?*  
Find out what this is considered to be, and work out how to achieve it.
- ☺ *What are the priorities and deadlines?*  
Do this so that when work builds up you know what to focus on.
- ☺ *What resources are available?*  
This ensures you are using all of the tools at your command.
- ☺ *What costs are acceptable?*  
This lets you know the boundaries within which you can move.
- ☺ *How does this relate to other people?*  
What is the broader picture within which you have to work?

Getting answers to these questions and referring to them frequently should help to ensure you do your job in precisely the right way. You know what exceptional performance is and will be able to plan to achieve it using all the resources available, within the correct bounds.

- ☺ You are successful in your job, as you know exactly what is expected of you.
- ☺ You can become more in control of what you do
- ☺ You are more productive and secure in your job
- ☺ You can plan and move into job areas that you enjoy
- ☺ And you can avoid staying late at work, giving yourself more quality time to relax and enjoy life outside of work

## **G. Focus on Priorities**



## Informal Planning

Some simple tasks do not require elaborate planning mechanisms, nor do they fit into personal goal setting therefore the best technique may to use prioritized To Do Lists. These are used mainly to schedule a number of daily activities. Action Plans, another alternative, list the tasks necessary to achieve a particular goal.

## H. Prioritized To Do Lists

### 1. What Are To Do Lists?

'To Do Lists' are lists of tasks to be carried out to achieve goals. These goals might be specific targets, or may simply be the efficient administration of your day. By ordering these tasks in order of importance, you may have prioritized your To Do List.

### To Do List Instructions

1. Write down the tasks that face you.
2. If theses tasks seem large break them down into smaller tasks
3. Once having done that run through your tasks and rate them A-F in terms of criticality.
4. If too many of the tasks seem high priority, go through them and reprioritize them.
5. Once have done all of that rewrite your list placing the most critical items first.

A to do list allows you to separate the important jobs from those that are not so important. It allows you to avoid trivializing your work, and may also provide the basis for delegation of certain tasks. These lists help motivate you to get things done that need doing.

### 2. Preparing To Do Lists

It is a good idea to prepare To Do Lists whenever suits you: some people recommend doing them at the end of each day for the next day, others at the beginning of the day, others whenever you feel like things are getting

out of control – the important thing is that you use them in a way that suits you.

## **I. How to Estimate the Time to Achieve a Project**

It is always difficult to estimate the length of time that a task will take, particularly if it is not a task that has been carried out before. It is quite normal for the time taken for completion of a project to be seriously underestimated, as the influence of the unexpected or unscheduled high priority work is forgotten.

### **1. Taking Unpredictable Events Into Account**

When you have to guess time, and particularly when you are likely to be held to a time estimate, ensure that you allow time for:

- ❖ Other high urgency tasks to be carried out that have priority over this one.
- ❖ Accidents and emergencies
- ❖ Meetings
- ❖ Holidays and sickness in essential staff
- ❖ Break downs in equipment
- ❖ Let downs from suppliers
- ❖ Quality control rejections

If the accuracy of time estimates is critical, you may find it effective to develop a systematic approach including these factors. Typically this would be based on past experience.

### **2. Estimating Time Taken on Complex Projects**

Where you need to carry out a complex project in which resources are limited or performance of one task is dependent on completion of another task, then techniques such as **Critical Path Analysis** can be useful. Time estimates for each stage will allow for unpredictable events described above. Critical Path Analysis is described in

## **J. Using Time More Effectively**

The key to managing time effectively is to concentrate on results, not on being busy. In order to do that we need to improve the quality of our time.

## **1. Improving the Quality of your Time**

It is important for you to understand that you function at different levels of effectiveness at different times of the day.

If you have been keeping an activity log for a number of days, you may see that a pattern emerges of times when you think clearly and effectively and process a lot of work. There may be other times of the day when you feel flat and tired. You may find that the quality of your work suffers during the less energetic part of the day.

You can use this information to schedule work. Important work or activities that need creativity and intelligence should be scheduled for the time when you are most alert. Routine and mundane tasks should be carried out during periods of low energy.

## **2. Eating Patterns, Rest and Energy**

You may find that your energy levels throughout the day are driven by your eating patterns.

Having a good breakfast with plenty of carbohydrates will keep your brain supplied with sugars for the early part of the day. You may find that these sugars fade sharply by mid-morning as your body reacts to high levels of sugar by burning it faster, and then finds supplies running down. Some people find it useful to have a mid-morning snack to avoid this. Other people recommend eating a higher protein breakfast, i.e. eggs, meat, in order to avoid an energy dip.

On the other hand, eating a huge lunch seems to divert blood from your brain to digestion. This usually makes you feel sleepy. This would be much worse if alcohol were consumed at lunch as it is a sedative.

You may also find that energy levels are affected by whether you take rest periods or not. If you work through the day with no breaks, you may find that you fade badly during the end of the afternoon. Often taking a lunch break will allow you to start the afternoon refreshed for quality work, if of course you have not overeaten.

With intelligent eating and adequate breaks, you may find that you can extend the amount of quality time available to you in a day quite significantly.

Try experimenting with different eating and rest patterns to see which ones suit the way you work. It is worth trying each approach for a few days before trying another to make the experiment more reliable, as this helps minimize the effects of random events.

## **K. Creating More time**

For those of you who don't appreciate theory, the following materials provide practical ways to make your time relatively greater.

### **1. Creating extra hours – get up early!**

This is an extremely simple way of creating more time, but it is intensely effective. If you get up one hour early for a year, you have effectively created around 10 additional working weeks.

An important thing to realize that as an employee, while you are at work, your work enriches your organization. In a military organization, recognition is provided for a job well done. Yet, it is also important that you reserve time for your own development.

When you work at home on your own projects, this work directly enriches you and your family. It may come in the form of better financial planning, family planning, work around the house, or a less stressful day at work, as there is no rush into work. Yet, very few people try this technique.

The trick behind this is get into a routine of getting up at a specific time: the first time you haul yourself out of bed before dawn will be painful, but every following time will be easier. Eventually, you may reach the stage where you are awake and ready to move just at the alarm clock goes off.

You may find that you are tired for a few weeks, but in time your body will adjust. If necessary go to bed a little earlier.

### **2. Handle Each Piece of Paper Once**

Paperwork is a necessary evil. To gain greater control over it, decide what to do with each piece of paper (e-mail) when it comes to your attention. Then get rid of it. The key is to take action right away. So, either:

- ◆ File it
- ◆ Sign it

- ◆ Revise it
- ◆ Or toss it

### **3. Use Positive Delay**

Occasionally delay can be a positive and useful way to create more time, or to avoid the misuse of time:

- ◆ When you are tired, upset, or angry it can often be best not to tackle jobs that require sensitivity or clarity of thought.
- ◆ When you do not have the information or skills to do a job properly, it may be best to delay until you have acquired them.
- ◆ When there is something more important to do than the job being delayed.

Delay can also be useful in a situation where you feel threatened or are unhappy about any course of action needed to meet a crisis. By delaying these choices you give more time for more information to come to light to guide the choice. It allows for seeing things from a different perspective that changes your view of the circumstances. Alternatively, random occurrences may give you a useful advantage, or may reduce the severity of the problem. Making appropriate choices, even in a crisis situation can save a lot of time backtracking, and undoing an inappropriate decision.

### **4. Dropping Tasks that Do Not Benefit You**

Evaluate the tasks you have placed before you. Are they necessary, certainly if your Boss thinks they are then they are. Nonetheless, there may be times where you will want to propose the elimination of certain tasks, if they are seen as being of limited benefit to the organization. Use of the suggestion program, or input into the policy making process may save great time in the future. In the final analysis, in a military setting, “knowing when to hold them and when to fold them” is vital to career success.

## **L. Time Management Skills Areas**

The following skill areas all help you create more time, but are sufficiently involved to discuss in greater detail, and should be used as specific Time

Management Skills Sets. Each will require individual time to incorporate into your “bag of tricks”, but that time will be worth its weight in gold if you master each of these.

## **1. How to Delegate Work to Other People**

Delegation involves passing responsibility for completion of work to other people. This section examines the reasons you should delegate, failure to delegate, and what should not be delegated.

Delegation is useful for the following reasons:

- ◆ Once people have learned to work with you, they can take responsibility for jobs you do not have time to do.
- ◆ You can develop people to look after routine tasks that are not cost-effective for you to carry out.
- ◆ It transfers work to people whose skills in a particular area are better than yours, thereby saving you and the organization time.
- ◆ Transfer of responsibility develops your staff, and can increase their enjoyment of their jobs.

The ideal position to reach as a manager is one where your staff carries out all of the routine activities of your team. This leaves you time to plan, think and improve the efficiency of what you are doing.

### **How to Delegate**

The following points may help you master the art of delegation:

- ◆ *Deciding what to delegate:*  
One way of deciding to delegate is simply to list the things you do which could be more effectively done by someone who is either more skilled in a particular area, or who is less expensive.
- ◆ *Select capable, willing people to carry out jobs:*  
How far you can delegate jobs will depend on the ability, experience and reliability of your staff. Good people will be able

to carry out large jobs with no intervention from you. Inexperienced or unreliable people will need close supervision to get a job done to the correct standard. However, if you coach, encourage and give practice to them you may improve their ability to carry out larger and larger tasks unsupervised.

- ◆ *Delegate complete jobs:*

It is much more satisfying to work on a single task than on many fragments of the task. If you delegate a complete task to a capable assistant, you are also more likely to receive a more elegant, tightly integrated solution.

- ◆ *Explain why the job is done and what results are expected:*

When you delegate a job, explain how it fits into the overall picture of what you are trying to achieve. Ensure that you communicate effectively:

- The results that are needed
- The importance of the job
- The constraints in which it should be carried out
- The deadlines for completion
- Internal reporting dates when you want information on the progress of the project

- ◆ *Then let go!*

Once you have decided to delegate a task, let your staff member get on with it, or as they say in West Texas, get after it. Review the project on the agreed reporting dates, but do not constantly look over their shoulders. Recognize that your staff may know a better way of doing something than you do. Accept that there may be different ways of achieving a particular task, and also that one of the best ways of really learning something is through making mistakes. Always accept mistakes that are not caused by idleness, and that are learned from.

- ◆ *Give Help & Coach When Requested:*

It is important to support your subordinates when they are having difficulty, but do not do the job for them. If you do, then they will not develop the confidence to do it on their own.

- ◆ *Accept only finished work:*

You have delegated a task to take workload off of you. If you accept only partially completed jobs back, then you will have to invest time in completing them, and your staff member will not get the experience he or she needs in completing tasks.

- ◆ *Give credit when a job has been successfully done:*  
Public recognition both reinforces the enjoyment of success with the staff member who carried out the task and sets a standard for other employees.

## **2. Why do People Fail to Delegate?**

Despite the many advantages of delegation, some managers do not delegate.

This can be for the following reasons:

- ◆ *Lack of Time*  
Delegating jobs does take time. In the early stages of taking over a job you may need to invest time in training people to take over tasks. Jobs may take longer to achieve with delegation than for you to do them yourself, when coaching and checking are taken into account. In time, with the right people, you will find that the time taken to delegate is more than made up by their increased production. Your pay back should grow each time you delegate.
- ◆ *Perfectionism – Fear of Making Mistakes:*  
Just as you have to develop staff to do jobs quickly without your involvement, you will have to let people make mistakes, and help them to correct them. Most people, with time, will learn to do their jobs correctly.
- ◆ *Enjoying 'getting my hands dirty':*  
By doing jobs yourself, you will probably get things done effectively. If, however, your staff is standing idle, then your work section will be extremely inefficient. Bear in mind the cost of your paycheck versus your employees when you try to do the job yourself.
- ◆ *Fear of Surrendering Authority:*



Whenever you delegate you surrender some element of authority (but not the responsibility!) This is inevitable. By effective delegation, however, you get the benefits of adequate time to do YOUR job really well.

- ◆ *Fear of becoming invisible:*  
Where your department is running smoothly with all routine work effectively delegated, it may appear that you have nothing to do. Now you have the time to think and plan and improve operations (*and plan your next career step*)
- ◆ *Belief that the staff 'are not up to the job':*  
Good people will often under-perform if they are bored. Delegation will often bring out the best in them. People who are not so good will not be effective unless you invest time in them. Even incompetent people can be effective, providing they find their level. The military tends to of course have boundaries that require certain levels of competence for a military member to meet. The only people that cannot be reliably delegated to are those whose opinions are so inflated they will not co-operate.

It is common for people who are newly promoted to managerial positions to have difficulty delegating. Often they were promoted because they were good at what they were doing. This brings the temptation to continue trying to do their previous job, rather than developing their subordinates to do the job well.

### **3. What Should Not Be Delegated?**

While you should try and delegate as many tasks as possible that are not cost effective for you to carry out, ensure that you do not delegate the control of your team. Remember that you bear ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of what you are trying to achieve.

Effective delegation involves achieving the correct balance between effective control of work and letting people get on with jobs in their own way.

### **3. Appreciation**

Appreciation is a very simple but powerful technique for extracting the maximum amount of information from a simple fact.

Starting with a fact, ask the question, 'So what' – i.e. What are the implications of it? Keep on asking the question until all possible inferences have been drawn.

Appreciation is a technique that is often used by military planners for analysis purposes:

Fact: *It rained heavily last night*

- ◆ *So what?*  
The ground will be wet.
- ◆ *So what?*  
It will turn into mud quickly
- ◆ *So What?*  
If many troops and vehicles pass over the same ground, movement will be progressively slower and more difficult as the ground gets muddier and more difficult.
- ◆ *So What?*  
Where possible stick to paved highways or movement will be slower than usual or alternatively enemy columns may be slowed by terrain and make for easier interdiction

While it would be possible to reach this conclusion without the use of a formal technique, appreciation provides for a quick and systematic approach that extracts essential inferences from a single element of information.

#### **4. Improved Note Taking Using Concept Maps**

Concept Mapping is a very important technique for noting information that is a significant improvement over conventional list approaches.

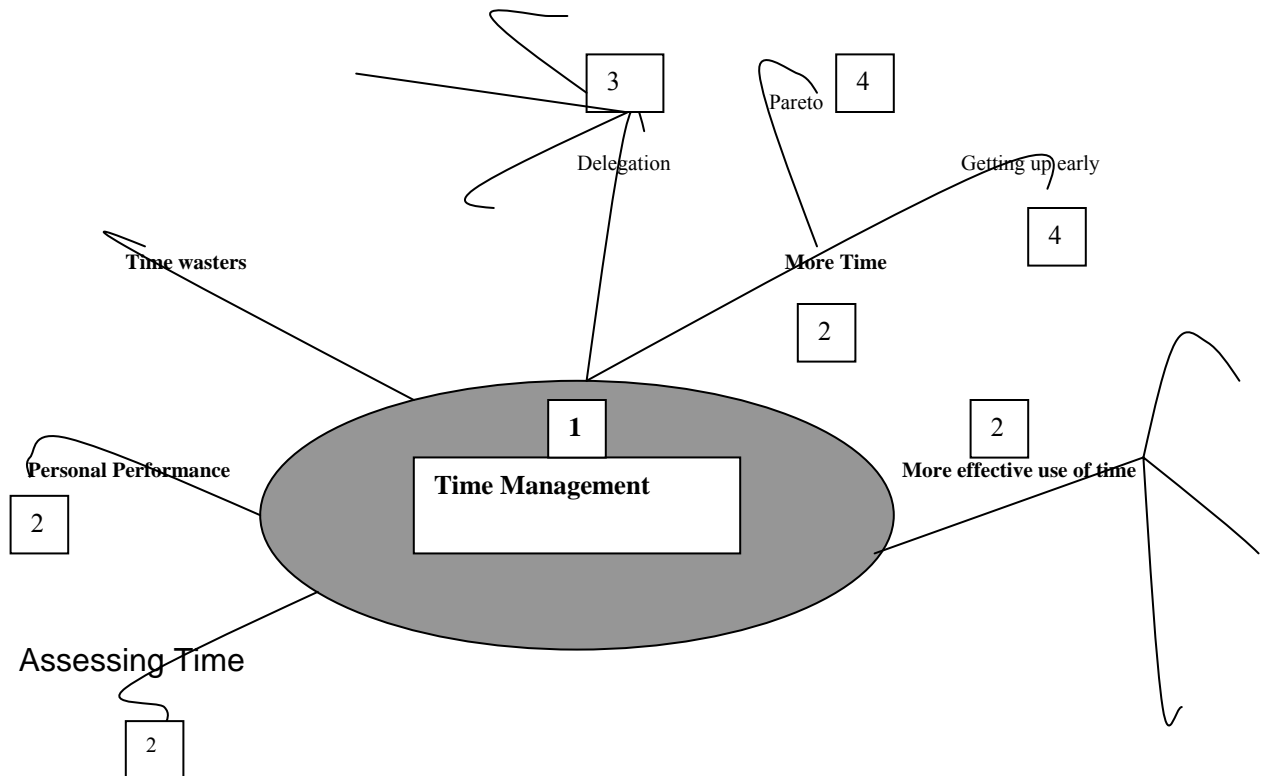
##### **a. Why Use Concept Maps?**

Concept Maps abandon the list structure of conventional not taking, completely in favor of a two dimensional structure. A good Concept Map shows the “shape” of the subject, the relative importance of information and ideas, and the way that information relates to other information.

Concept Maps can also be used well to summarize information, to consolidate information from different research sources, to think through complex problems, and as a way of presenting information that shows the overall structure of your subject. Concept maps are also very quick to review – it is easy to refresh information in your mind just by glancing at one. Thus, you create more time by using this methodology.

For people who have spatial memories that allows them to visualize shapes, Concept Maps provide effective memory enhancement (mnemonics) due to the cues contained in the shape and structure of the map. Concept Maps engage more of your brain in the process of assimilating and connecting facts than do conventional notes – the pay off is greater retention and greater ability to manipulate the data.

### Sample Concept Map



The numbers on the map show a progression by which new categories were added, and as you can see this is clearly a limited map of all that is involved in Time management.

A basic Concept Map is drawn in the following way:

1. Write the title of the subject in the center of the page, and draw a circle around it.
2. For the first main heading of the subject, draw a line out from the circle
3. For sub-headings of the main heading, draw lines out from the first line for each sub-heading, and label each one.

4. For individual facts, draw lines out from the appropriate heading.

A complete Concept Map may have main topic lines radiating in all Directions, with sub-topics and facts branching off from these, like branches and twigs from the trunk of a tree. You do not need to worry about the structure produced – this will evolve on its own accord.

#### b. Improving your Concept Maps

Your Concept Maps are your own property. Once you understand how to assemble the basic structure you can develop your own coding and conventions to take things, for example to show linkages between facts.

- ◆ *Use single words or simple phrases for information:*  
The majority of words in normal texts are padding – they ensure that facts conveyed in the correct context to another person in a format that is pleasant to read. In your own Mind Maps single strong words and evocative phrases can convey the same meaning. Excess words just clutter the Concept Map, and take time to write down.
- ◆ *Print Words*  
Indistinct writing can be more difficult to read your need to be the judge of your own handwriting skills.
- ◆ *Use Color to Separate Different Ideas:*  
This will help your mind to separate ideas where necessary, and helps visualization of the Concept Map for recall. Color also helps to show organization.
- ◆ *Use of symbols & Images*  
Where a symbol means something to you, and conveys more information than words, use it. Pictures help you to remember information.
- ◆ *Use Shapes, Circles, and Boundaries to Connect Information:*  
These are additional tools to help show the grouping of information.
- ◆ *Use Arrows to Show Cause and Effect*

## 6. Getting the Most Out of Meetings

Meetings can be effective ways of sharing information or reaching a decision. They can, however, be ineffectively run in a way that swallows up your time without giving sufficient benefit.

Just as jobs that you have a cost, the meetings you attend have a cost, not only of your time but also that of other attendees. You should ask yourself whether the benefit of the meeting has been worth the time invested in both and the preparation for it. Was your contribution worth your investment?

This section explains how to run a meeting in the most effective way possible, and then how to get the most out of the meetings you attend.

### Running Meetings

This section gives a series of recommendations that should help you run effective meetings. *Some of the ideas presented do not correspond with Air Force policy, as for example, there are requirements in the Air Force for periodic meetings that are calendar driven. They also tend to be agenda driven.*

#### 1. Hold Meetings Only When Trigger Events Occur

Regular meetings are often little more than a security blanket, where the initiator feels vaguely that 'it is a thing to communicate' with only vague ideas what to communicate about. Time is routinely made available for discussion, so discussion will expand to fill it whether it is effective or not.

In many cases it is much more effective to hold meetings only when specific *trigger* events show them to be necessary. As an example, a may project a meeting when he or she believes that resource difficulties may be encountered, and needs a decision on how to handle this.

By scheduling meetings to occur on trigger events, you can ensure time is invested in a solution to a problem only when it is needed.

#### 2. Use Agenda Effectively

The agenda of the meeting shows the *aim* the meeting, and points of discussion in priority order – effectively it is a To Do List for the meeting.

Using an agenda helps focus the meeting, stopping it from drifting off-topic.

If you circulate it sufficiently far in advance, it allows people to prepare fully for the meeting so the meeting does not stall for lack of information. Where many people are to attend the meeting, it may be beneficial for a small expert sub-committee to meet to prepare the agenda. Alternatively, email is an excellent tool for obtaining input.

### 3. Setting the Time for the Meeting

You can usefully change the timing of the meeting depending on the habits of the attendees:

- Where people tend to waffle excessively, you can schedule the meeting just before lunch or going home. This gives people an incentive to be brief.
- Alternatively where other people are time conscious, writing the cost per minute of the meeting on a flip chart can have a focusing effect.
- Where people tend to turn up late, start a meeting at an unusual time, e.g. 19 minutes past the hour. This seems to improve punctuality.
- If possible, ensure that the meeting starts on time - where it starts late, time of all the attendees is being wasted waiting for the start. If latecomers are not critically needed, start without them.

### 4. Other Useful Techniques

These points can also improve the effectiveness of a meeting:

- You should only bring the minimum number of attendees to the Meeting – the more people who are present – the more that will want to share their views.
- Ensure that decisions taken at previous meetings have been acted upon. This ensures that the meeting will not just be seen as a hot air session.
- At the end of the meeting, summarize the points discussed, and make an action plan out of decisions taken. This ensures that everyone understands what has been decided, and who will do what.

## **7. Attending Meetings**

When you attend a meeting, ensure that you do not waste other people's time. In order to be supportive you should be:

- On time, and present only if needed
- Well prepared and aware of your contribution
- Attentive to the discussion so that your contribution does not repeat someone else's
- Involved in the discussion
- And be brief, relevant, and focused and courteous with your remarks.

## **8. Summary**

Meetings can be effective ways of reaching decisions, however they can be huge wastes of time. When you invest in a meeting, you should expect a sufficiently large payback to justify that investment.

If you are running a meeting, use an agenda to focus discussion. Use the time set for the meeting as a tool for getting around bad habits of attendees if necessary. Summarizing the meeting with an action plan ensures that everyone knows what has been decided.

If you are attending a meeting, ensure that you respect the time of other attendees by being well prepared, attentive and concise.

## **M. Creating More Time by Developing Personal Skills**

The following areas are skill sets that are pretty much in your control to develop and use in order to save time, at work and in your leisure time.

One of the first things that John F. Kennedy did upon assuming the Presidency was to boost his reading speed. He did this by taking a speed-reading course from the now famous Evelyn Wood School. Kennedy, despite his accomplishments in office and charisma, only scored bright normal on IQ Tests.

His highest recorded score was 119. The point is that he used his wisdom to correct shortfalls so he could do his job better as President.

We can all stand to develop skills that make us more effective on and off the job.

## **1. Improving Your Reading Techniques**

Improving your reading skills can greatly enhance your use of time reading documents, email, plans, etc. Improving your reading skills can significantly reduce the time you take to assimilate a document.

There are two main ways to do this, one is through speed reading, as alluded to before, which allows you to read quicker and more smoothly. The second approach shown below is the use of effective reading strategies, where you learn how to extract the information that you need from the documents in the most efficient way possible.

## **2. SQ3R – Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review**

SQ3R is a technique used to learn from a document by firstly understanding it, and building a mental framework into which facts can then be fitted. SQ3R stands for the stages in which information can be assimilated.

- Survey
- Question
- Read
- Recall
- Review

These stages are explained below:

### **a. Survey**

Survey the document: scan the contents, introduction, chapter summaries to pick up a shallow overview of the text and form an opinion of whether it will be any help.

### **b. Question**

Make a note of any questions that come to mind or particularly interest you about the subject matter as a result of your survey. Perhaps rescan the document to see if any



questions stand out. These questions can be considered almost as study goals – understanding the answers can help you structure the information in your own mind.

#### **c. Read**

Now read the document. Read it through for detail, taking care to understand all the points that are relevant. In the case of some texts this reading may be very slow, as there is a lot of dense and complicated information. Technical data, scientific materials, text that includes equations all require detailed reading.

#### **d. Recall**

Once you have read the document, or a section of it, run through it in your mind a number of times. Isolate out the core facts or the essential elements behind the subject, and then see how other information fits around them. Some things may require more reading than others for them to sink in.

#### **e. Review**

Once you have run through the exercise of *recalling* the information, you can move on to the stage of reviewing the information. This review can be by re-reading the document, by expanding your notes, or by discussing the information with somebody else. A particularly effective method of reviewing information is to have to teach it to someone else!

### **3. Speed Reading**

Speed reading is a method of improving a reader's reading ability, improving both the speed at which text can be assimilated, and the level of understanding the material.

#### **a. Why Speed Read?**

Applying speed-reading techniques gives the following benefits:

- Large volumes of information can be assimilated rapidly
- By reading faster and absorbing more information into short-term memory, the meaning and structure of a document is easier to see.
- Your eyes have to do less work, meaning that reading for long periods can be less tiring.

## **b. Background**

Think about the way in which you are reading this text. Many people think they read the way young children read, either letter-by-letter, or at best word-by-word.

If you notice the way your eye muscles actually move when reading a *printed* text, you will probably find that you are fixing your eyes on one block of words, then moving your eyes to the next block of words, and so on. Effectively, you are not reading words, but blocks of words at a time. The period of time during which the eye rests on one word is called a 'fixation'.

You may discover that you do not always proceed directly from one block of words to another. Sometimes you may move back to a preceding block of words, if you are unsure about something. These disruptions are called 'skip-backs'.

A skilled reader will read many words with each 'fixation' (typically from five to an entire line), will only fixate for a very short period of time (maybe a quarter of a second), and will move on with very few skip-backs. This minimizes the amount of work that the reader's eyes have to do, increases the volume of information that can be examined in a period of time, and maximizes the understanding of the material.

A poor reader will become bogged down, spending a lot of time reading small fixations. He or she will skip back often, losing the flow and structure of the text and hence overall understanding of the subject. The increased amount of irregular eye movement will make the reading tiring. A poor reader may therefore find the text significantly less satisfying, and may find it harder to understand the text than a good reader.

## **c. Improving Reading Skills**

Speed reading aims to improve reading skills in three important ways:

- Reducing skip-back
- Reducing Fixation Time
- Expanding the Fixation Zone

These are explained below:

#### **d. Reducing Skip-back**

It can be useful to scan rapidly the line being read with a pointer, whether this is a finger, or a pen or pencil. Your eyes will follow the tip of your pointer, smoothing the flow of your reading.

If this seems unusual, the point can be illustrated by drawing a circle on a piece of paper in front of you. If you think about the way in which your eyes are moving when you look around the circumference of a circle, you will probably find that your eyes are moving in fixations: actually the track of the movement of your eyes is probably a series of lines, not a circle. If, however, you run a pointer around the outside of the circle you will find that your eyes are smoothly following the tip of a pointer.

To a large extent the speed at which read using this method is dependent upon the speed you move your pointer (finger).

#### **e. Reducing Fixation Time**

It is thought that the minimum length of time needed for a fixation is only a quarter of a second. By pushing yourself to minimize the time you take, you will get better at picking up information from a very brief fixation. This is a matter of practice and confidence.

#### **f. Expanding the Fixation Zone**

As with reducing the fixation time, try and expand the number of words that you read at a time. This may be improved by holding the material further from your eyes, and will be expanded by practice. The more words you can read in a single fixation, the faster you will read.

#### **g. Summary**

Speed-reading can make reading a much more enjoyable experience, by reducing eyestrain, increasing understanding of the flow of a document, and by reducing the time needed to assimilate

it. This will help a reader to hold attention on a long document, exacting information that would be otherwise be neglected.

#### **4. Writing Skills – how to communicate information quickly and Effectively**

This section explains how to target your writing, structure an outline and write your story effectively.

##### **a. Target Your Writing**

It is essential to have a clear idea who the reader is. You should know why he or she is going to be reading your correspondence, where and when they will be reading it, and what they will want to get out of it.

Knowing this, and knowing what information you want to convey allows you to decide an aim for your story. You should focus all decisions on content, structure, style and presentation on meeting this aim.

##### **b. Preparing an Outline**

Once you have decided the aim of the story, you are ready to prepare an outline. This allows you to start to organize the information in a story into a coherent structure. If you start writing without an outline, you are in danger of producing a disorganized, chaotic mess that confuses you're reader and fails to make the desired connections in his or her mind.

If you have researched material for a story by using a 'Mind Map' or though conventional note taking methods you can use those as the basis for your outline. Open up a word document and type in the facts or points you want to include. You can then cut and paste these notes into related groups in a way that supports your theme or argument.

Once you have selected the information and organized a structure, prepare an outline of the introduction and summary. The shape of these should be obvious from the structure you have given your

information. The introduction should help the reader to prepare and overall structure into which the story can be fitted. The summary should organize the facts in the middle of the story into a coherent whole.

### **c. Writing You're Story**

When you have prepared your outline it is time to start writing! The easiest way of doing this is just let the words and ideas flow. Move quickly through the story without editing it or reviewing it. This will help to keep your creativity flowing without it being crippled with self-criticism.

Only when you have completed a section should you review it. At this stage, you may decide to reorganize it, edit it, change it around, and add or delete information. As you review it, you should check that what you have written meets the aim you set and give the reader the information they want.

### **d. Style**

The style of the story should be completely focused on the reader's needs. Language should be at an appropriate level. A typical newspaper sticks to the eighth grade level, for example.

People generally prefer information presented in short sentences with little or no jargon. You may be tempted to write in a way that you will think will impress your readers, using long words and complex sentences. All this shows is that you are not able to communicate ideas clearly and simply. It is likely that material written like this will not be read at all.

If you need to use technical language that may not be understood, use a glossary.

Remember that you have the responsibility for clarity, effectiveness and focus of your communication. Beyond this, style will emerge on its own, without you needing to worry about it.

Ernest Hemmingway was schooled in his writing in a newspaper. His writing was the model of simplicity, yet the meaning in it was

profound. He is an excellent role model for those who want to write in simple and clear terms.

## **5. Phone Skills – cutting down the length of time on the phone**

In a professional or business environment, the first contact you ever have with a client or customer or client is often over the telephone. He or she will be forming an opinion of you from this first contact. It is very easy to give a poor impression by being disorganized and unprofessional in the way you use the phone. Conversely, by using it effectively, you can appear to be very sharp and competent.

The information provided below will help you present yourself in the most professional fashion possible.

### **a. How to be effective on the phone**

Remembering these points will help you to be sharp and professional in the way you talk on the phone.

- o *Have an Aim:*  
When making an outgoing call, always know what you are going to want to discuss. Always ensure that you have all of the documentation or notes to achieve your aim. This saves time for you and for the person you are calling.
- o *Tailor Your Style to that of the Other Person you are talking to:*  
Busy people often prefer a clean cut, direct approach with a bare minimum of social interaction. Others may prefer a more social approach. Tailor your approach to their style, unless they are rude, and negative.
- o *Limit Social Conversation:*  
Social conversation may be enjoyable, but taken to extremes it wastes time. It can be intensely frustrating if you have a lot of work to do.
- o *Give Concise Answers to Questions:*  
Long rambling answers are unprofessional, confusing and fail to inspire confidence.
- o *If you don't know an answer, say so:*  
If someone relies on you when you are guessing, and you guess wrong, they will never trust you again.

- *At the End of a Call, Summarize the Points Made:*  
This ensures that both people agree on what has been said, and know what action will be taken.
- *Don't talk to anyone else when on the phone:*  
This makes your organization look bad, instead place the person on hold, and then talk.

## **b. Making Phone Calls**

Bear in mind the following when a call has to be made:

- *Take the Initiative in Making Calls:*  
Where a call has to be made, make it. Leaving it waiting just builds up stress, if it is unpleasant or difficult.
- *Don't Make a Call Very Early or Very Late:*  
Give the person you are talking to a chance to get coffee and settle in before you call them. Don't take up people's time when they want to leave the office.
- *If Calls are Administrative, Delegate Them:*  
It may be possible to delegate calls arranging times for meetings, finding out addresses, etc. to staff members. You should, however, be careful not to give the impression that you are playing power games.
- *If you get and Answering Machine, Hang Up and Call Back*  
If you are not prepared for an answering machine, you can sound stilted, and off-balance talking into one. It is much better to hang up, prepare a message, and then deliver it smoothly.
- *Don't Harass People*  
If someone is doing a job for you, don't call him or her up every few hours to find out how it is going. This is irritating and stressful, and can be counter-productive.

## **c. Taking Incoming Calls**

These points are important in the way your organization handles incoming calls:

- o *The Phone Should **Not** Ring More Than 3 Times Before Being Answered*

This is the norm for efficient business organizations, you will appear seriously unprofessional if your phone rings many more times than this. In the military environment, you are expected to answer with the name of your organization, your name and your title, i.e. Sergeant, Mr., and Ms. Etc.

- o *Everyone Should Have Responsibility for Answering Phones:*  
You will seriously annoy anyone who has to hang on waiting for service. Not only are you wasting their time, but they are placed in a stressed situation where they are ready to talk at a moment's notice, this is particularly hard on people who have to carefully think out what they are going to say. Everyone in the organization should know they have responsibility to answer phone calls. This has a tendency to keep people on their toes, if they discover managers have to do their jobs.

- o *Don't Answer the Phone While Eating*  
Conversation is either indistinct or else you might think someone is trying to nibble on you ear.

- o *Always Call Back*  
There is nothing more frustrating than waiting for an important call that is not returned for many hours. By not returning a call you are slowing down the other person's achievement of their goals.

Many of these points are simple courtesies. Always bear in mind that the time of the person you talked to is limited, and that they formed an opinion of you and your organizations efficiency while you were on the phone.

## **N. Avoiding Time Wasters And Distractions**

### **1. Introduction**

Outside distractions can be a major time waster – if you let them.

The key is to physically block out disturbances as much as possible. Every job has different requirements, and obviously in a customer service related job, customers need to have priority and are **not** a work interruption, *they are your work*. But obviously, even in those instances, there are ways to work smart, and still meet people's needs.



## 2. Know When to Hold Them & Know When to Fold Them

Kenny Rogers sang the above words, and wouldn't the world be a far better place if people would take that sage advice. We have the ability to conceive ideal circumstances we don't have the power to always achieve what we want. Wisdom is to know the difference and when we have low control over events we need to increase our adaptability. Survivors adapt well to events outside of their control, rigid thinking in the face of changing fortunes spells trouble. The following list of items can be **Time Wasters**, apply the 'know when to hold them and know when to fold them' rule to these:

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unclear Objectives</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Indecision</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Too Much Reading</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Lack of Procedures</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unnecessary Meetings</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Procrastination</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Poor Planning</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Poor Communication</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Understaffed</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Fatigue</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Failure to Listen</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Interruptions – Phone</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Lack of Authority</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Failure to Delegate</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Socializing</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Interruptions - Visitors</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Peer Demands</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Cluttered Workspace</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Anger/Arguing</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Untrained Staff</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Waiting For Answers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unwilling to Say No</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Slow Reader</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Equipment Failure</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Lack of Training</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Preoccupation</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unreal Time Estimates</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Mistakes of Others</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Shifting Priorities</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Lack of Motivation</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Mistakes – My Own</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Conflicting Priorities</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Low Priority Mail/Email Fails</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Negative Attitude</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Too Involved in Detail</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Low Organizational Morale</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Overlong Meetings</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Outside Activities</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Red Tape</b>

Rate the top ten of these items that currently affect your time management plans. Items that are totally in your control require you to change your habits. Other items may require the cooperation of others, or some training opportunities. Still others may just have to be adapted to. Usually solutions to problems emerge when you more fully define them.

## 3. Defining the Issue

Lets take a look at three items off the list and assign the level of responsibility that fits:

- a. **Mistakes of others:** Can you control other people. **Answer- No.** Do they work for you? If they don't you have no direct responsibility or authority to help them mend their ways. If they do work for you, you are responsible for their actions, even when you cannot always control them. Your plan would be to analyze why the error took place, determine the fix, and train people to avoid it. If the issue is a hidden agenda then you have another problem that needs to be worked. There was a saying in the Old Strategic Air Command, 'To err is to be human, to forgive is not SAC's way'. Obviously, when the mission involves nuclear weapons, the elimination of error is every bit as critical as any other task. Most job situations are not as critical and 'one mistake' should not result in failure, rather it can result in opportunity.
- b. **Failure to Listen:** Can you control not listening? **Answer- Yes.** Not only can you control this, it will be well worth your while to do so. There was a motivational speaker who talked about meeting a woman at a high powered Washington DC dinner who other than learning his name talked non-stop. At the end of the evening she told him he was the most interesting man she had ever met. Actively listening can make all the difference in the world on the job and socially. As Mark Twain once said, "There is nothing like a hanging to concentrate a man's mind". It should not take that for you to decide to listen.
- c. **Overlong Meetings:** Can you control this? **Answer- maybe?** If you are chairing the meeting, set time limits, use an agenda, and then end them on time. If you don't chair them then all you can do is be prepared and be courteous .

#### 4. Handling Distractions

##### a. Distraction by Casual Visitors

Visitors can waste a lot of time

Other people may not have as disciplined approach to work as you. You may find that you are wasting time dealing with colleagues who stop to chat and gossip. You may find that staff members needing help on a comparatively small issue interrupt your concentration. Sales people or telemarketing sales people may be eating into your work or leisure time.

### **b. You Do NOT Always Need to be Welcoming**

In these cases you may find that you are being too welcoming. You can protect yourself with barriers such as closed doors, tables or desks. Similarly in certain work environments you can have the luxury of removing chairs, so people will stand and then move on.

### **c. Letting People Know Not to Distract You**

You may have times when you do not mind being distracted, perhaps when you are tired or you are doing jobs that do not require sustained concentration. At other times you may prefer not to be interrupted, but are happy to take interruptions if they are important. Sometimes you may be concentrating on an important project and have the “flow” going and would not be distracted unless the building is on fire. It is in these latter situations where interruption can be costly to your goals.

You can ask your secretary to hold all calls unless it is the President, and to screen all visitors. You may want to block your email calendar off for administrative time during periods of the day where your concentration is the best. Turn off the volume on your phone, providing of course there is someone else to answer the phones. Take a light-hearted approach with colleagues. Some people might be hurt if you are abrupt with them. Be creative about how you tell people – a clock on the door, a green light, yellow light, red light may be appropriate.

In some instances you may be in a position in the military or business environment where you may have no direct power to halt interruptions. In those instances, you need to use your best human relations with coworkers and your boss.