

# **TIME MANAGEMENT: AS A TOOL TO EFFICIENT LIBRARY SERVICES**

by

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## INTRODUCTION

**Time management** can be defined as a range of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing specific tasks, projects and goals

Generally, time management refers to the development of processes and tools that increase efficiency and productivity.

Therefore, time management is often thought of or presented as a set of time management skills; the theory is that once we master the time management skills, we'll be more organized, efficient, and happier.

## WHAT TIME MANAGEMENT ENTAILS

Time management entails a wide scope of activities, which include planning, allocating, setting goals, delegation, analysis of time spent, monitoring, organizing, scheduling and prioritizing. Initially time management referred to just business or work activities, but eventually the term broadened to include personal activities also.

Many people find that time management tools, such as PIM software and PDAs, help them manage their time more effectively. For instance, a PDA can make it easier to schedule and keep track of events and appointments.

Whether you use technological time management tools or plain old pen and paper, however, the first step in effective time management is analyzing how you currently spend your time and deciding how you want to change how you spend your time.

## WHY TIME MANAGEMENT?

*"Time is the scarcest resource of the manager, if it's not managed, nothing else can be managed", says Management Guru and author Peter Drucker.*

Time management is thus defined as the process of making every second of the day count by truly being focused and positively boosting one's personal daily output and productivity. It is an essential trigger to advance career success.

Professionals with effective time management skills tend to have better access to career opportunities, more accomplishments and a more balanced, stress-free lifestyle. Their skills enable them to prioritize tasks and get more things done efficiently on a daily basis. On the other hand, people with poor time management skills find themselves, more often than not, dragging their tasks longer than is advisable, efficient or permissible, thereby stressing themselves out and in the process sabotaging their chances of personal and professional advancement.

No matter what type of work you do, you can have a hand in making your workday more satisfying when you learn and use time management skills and techniques. Time management has several advantages including the following:

- **Reduced Stress and Work Pressure:** Effective organizational techniques and efficient forecasting can drastically reduce one's levels of frustration, both at work and at home, thereby liberating ample reserves of productivity and creativity.
- **Sense of Accomplishment:** When one firmly commits to better manage their time and starts to break down large goals into smaller, attainable and measurable ones, it becomes much easier to identify and assess exactly where one stands, where one is going, and to set smart and achievable milestones to actually get there.
- **Elevated Energy Levels:** Defeating procrastination, prioritizing tasks, eschewing inefficient habits and being aware that one's efforts are being invested in the optimal manner every day is a definite formula for increased self-confidence and motivation.
- **More Individual/Family/Friends Quality Time:** An efficient "time manager" can actually achieve that most precious of all commodities, the much touted "Work- Life Balance". Spending more relaxed, satisfying and meaningful 'quality' time with oneself, one's family and/or friends becomes an absolute possibility with the mastering of successful time management skills.

## EXERCISE

How do we use our time in a normal working day?

## TIME MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A time management system is a designed combination of processes, tools and techniques. There are several time management approaches. Some authors such as Stephen R. Covey offered a categorization scheme for the hundreds of time management approaches that they reviewed as follows:

- First generation: reminders based on clocks and watches, but with computer implementation possible; can be used to alert a person when a task is to be done.
- Second generation: planning and preparation based on calendar and appointment books; includes setting goals.
- Third generation: planning, prioritizing, controlling (using a personal organizer, other paper-based objects, or computer or PDA-based systems) activities on a daily basis. This approach implies spending some time in clarifying values and priorities.
- Fourth generation: being efficient and proactive using any of the above tools; places goals and roles as the controlling element of the system and favors importance over urgency.



The term "time management" may be in a layman's language be used to imply "the management of our own activities, to make sure that they are accomplished within the available or allocated time.

## **TIME MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Plan**

Spend time planning what to do. Using time to think and plan is time well-spent. In fact, if you fail to take time for planning, you are, in effect, planning to fail. Some things are beyond our control, but many things are not. Therefore get in control by planning. Don't go by the flow; be in control of your time and life.

### **2. Be Organized**

Have a place for everything and put things away as soon as you are done using them. Put items that are often-used in a more accessible location and file everything else away. Throw things away if they are no longer needed. Clutter is a big time-waster. Organize in a way that makes sense to you. Remember we are all different. Some people need to have papers filed away; others get their creative energy from their piles of papers on their desks. So forget the "shoulds" and organize your way.

### **4. Follow a Routine**

- Make a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual routine and follow it.
- Routines help you make sure you don't forget to do things.
- Be proactive - stagger periodic tasks so they don't overwhelm you all at once.
- Make checklists of often-repeated tasks, so you don't have to think about them.

### **5. Set Goals**

Goals give your life, and the way you spend your time, direction. Set goals which are specific, measurable, realistic and achievable. Your optimum goals are those which cause you to "stretch" but not "break" as you strive for achievement. Goals can give creative people a much-needed sense of direction. Write down your goals and refer to them frequently to keep them fresh in your mind. This will help you to avoid distractions and later regret.

### **6. Prioritize**

Identify and isolate tasks according to importance and urgency. Once identified, prioritize time to concentrate your work on those items with the greatest reward. Prioritize by color, number or letter — whichever method makes the most sense to you. Flagging items with a deadline is another idea for helping you stick to your priorities. Sometimes it may make sense to do a bunch of small tasks first, to clear your mind for a bigger task. Other times you may have to just ignore the small stuff to get the big projects done.

## **7. Use a To do list.**

Use a daily To Do list which you can construct either the last thing the previous day or first thing in the morning. You may combine a To Do list with a calendar or schedule or use a "running" To Do list which is continuously being updated. Whatever method works is best for you. Don't be afraid to try a new system — you just might find one that works even better than your present one!

## **8. Be flexible**

Allow time for interruptions and distractions. Time management experts often suggest planning for just 50 percent or less of one's time. With only 50 percent of your time planned, you will have the flexibility to handle interruptions and the unplanned "emergency." When you expect to be interrupted, schedule routine tasks. Give yourself time to allow for unexpected

## **9. Consider your biological prime time**

Find out the time of day when you are at your best. Are you a "morning person," a "night owl," or a late afternoon "whiz?" Knowing when your best time is and planning to use that time of day for your priorities is effective time management. If you are more alert at certain time of the day, do harder tasks then and save the more menial jobs for another time.

## **10. Do the right thing right**

Noted management expert, Peter Drucker, says "doing the right thing is more important than doing things right." Doing the right thing is effectiveness; doing things right is efficiency. Focus first on effectiveness (identifying what is the right thing to do), then concentrate on efficiency (doing it right).

## **11. Eliminate the urgent**

Urgent tasks have short-term consequences while important tasks are those with long-term, goal-related implications. Work towards reducing the urgent things you must do so you'll have time for your important priorities. Flagging or highlighting items on your To Do list or attaching a deadline to each item may help keep important items from becoming urgent emergencies.

## **12. Practice the art of delegation**

Eliminate from your life trivial tasks or those tasks which do not have long-term consequences for you. Learn to delegate tasks where possible and delegate any of your tasks that someone else can do. Make sure however that you are delegating the right tasks to the right people. Then work on those tasks which you alone can do.

## **13. Avoid being a perfectionist**

Everything does not have to be perfect. Yes, some things need to be closer to perfect than others, but perfectionism, paying unnecessary attention to detail, can be a form of procrastination.



#### **14. Be selective & learn to say "no."**

Make a mental list of criteria for accepting a new task and if something doesn't fit your criteria, just say no? No is such a small word but so hard to say. Focusing on your goals may help say no. Don't try to please everyone or you may end up pleasing no one. Blocking time for important, but often not scheduled, priorities such as family and friends can also help. But first you must be convinced that you and your priorities are important — that seems to be the hardest part in learning to say "no." Once convinced of their importance, saying "no" to the unimportant in life gets easier.

#### **15. Track what you do**

Keep a detailed log of occasions to see how you are spending your time. Evaluate yourself on a regular basis to see to make sure that the way you are prioritizing tasks is in line with your goals.

#### **16. Find Short cuts**

**If you are super busy person,**

Learn to speed-read.

- Take notes in shorthand.
- Take reading materials or note cards with you everywhere - you can read them on the matatu, while waiting in line at the bank, etc.
- Batch related tasks? Pile up several errands that are in the same part of town and do them at the same time. Eg MPESA, bank, post office, supermarket, soko. etc

#### **17. Schedule down time**

You need to schedule time to relax. If you don't you may never get it, and end up sacrificing something you shouldn't because you are going crazy. If you sacrifice down time for work, your work will end up suffering in the long run due to fatigue. Schedule specific times to be with friends and family on regular basis.

#### **18. Reward yourself.**

Even for small successes, celebrate achievement of goals. Promise yourself a reward for completing each task, or finishing the total job in the scheduled time. Then keep your promise to yourself and indulge in your reward. Doing so will help you maintain the necessary balance in life between work and play. As Ann McGee-Cooper says, "If we learn to balance excellence in work with excellence in play, fun, and relaxation, our lives become happier, healthier, and a great deal more creative."

## **EXERCISE**

Q. What type of rewards can you give yourself?

## **THE PRINCIPAL BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL TIME MANAGEMENT**

There are generally several hurdles that block the way of people in pursuit of better time management practices. They include:

### **Procrastination**

Postponing things to do at a later date can spell doom for some careers. When you are inundated with projects, due dates and to-do lists, things can become overwhelming and hard to handle. Keep realistic to-do lists and reschedule tasks where needed.

### **Perfectionism**

In the case of excessive and compulsive perfectionism, productivity can be directly and negatively affected as persistently paying exaggerated attention to minute details can be incredibly inefficient and time consuming. At the end of the time period reasonably allotted to a certain task/project, remind yourself that you have done the best you can and dedicated a sufficient and optimal amount of time to the project.

### **Resisting Change:**

Learning the techniques of time management can be a futile endeavour if not accompanied with flexibility and a strong will and desire to change. Successful time management entails wanting to let go of inefficient, time wasting habits and committing to substitute them with more effective, flexible practices. Remind yourself that you can become much more proficient and regain absolute control of your time and your life, once you embrace the critical practices of time management.

### **Inefficient meetings**

Meetings that do not start as scheduled and drag on and on can be a stumbling block.

"An organization in which everybody meets all the time is an organization in which no one gets anything done", assures Peter Drucker.

### **Multitasking**

Multi tasking can lead to frustrations as no task seem to be finished when it should have. Its advisable to focus on finishing one task after the other within reasonable time frame.

## **TOP TIME MANAGEMENT MISTAKES**

- i. Keeping too many things in your head
- ii. Doing whatever grabs your attention next
- iii. Not spending enough time on your top priorities
- iv. Doing efficiently that which need not be done at all
- v. Poor planning
- vi. Working in a disorganized and distractive work environment
- vii. Attempting to do too much
- viii. Always saying yes
- ix. Not managing your inflows
- x. Confusing activity with productivity

## **CONCLUSION**

Time is a very scarce resource but critical in achieving personal, institutional, national and international goal.



## References

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