Managing Time Efficiently

Time is arguably our greatest resource. Wasting it has a "domino effect" that often rolls through all aspects of work and life. Managing time, like any skill, takes practice. Here are some suggestions to make the most of your time.

1) **Plan and prioritize:** Decide what methods are most manageable to plan and track tasks and priorities. What must be done by when, and what can wait another day? Choose your most important tasks each day, and do them first.

2) **Keep it real:** Set achievable deadlines. If possible, give yourself a cushion to offset potential unforeseen delays. If less occurs, then use the opportunity to under-promise and over-deliver.

3) **Use tools:** Technology has fast become one of our greatest time-savers (as well as wasters at times). Integrate tools and resources however possible to support your efforts. Calendar and scheduling systems will help organize and reduce confusion. A host of resources via the Internet can help too.

4) **Set limits:** Decide in advance how much time you will commit to a task or event. A common example is managing meeting time by sticking to the agenda and concluding when expected. Respect others. Be on time. Do not waste theirs.

5) **Finish what you start:** Doing tasks in fragments is a surefire way to diminish a sense of accomplishment. It will likely take extra time to reacquaint yourself with a task that you revisit after days away instead of simply completing it in the first place.

6) **Manage interruptions:** Do not be a slave to your phone, voicemail, e-mail, and people who disrupt your day. Find ways to keep interruptions at bay and minimize those that do occur.

7) **Make it count:** Determine whether your efforts are part of an unnecessary process or whether they directly contribute to the targeted outcomes.

8) **Take straight paths:** Think through tasks before diving straight in. Can anything be done in one step instead of two? Is there a better resource you can seek out to achieve a task? Do it right the first time.

9) **Identify waste:** Take inventory of the things you do. Among these things, find your personal 'time wasters' and determine how you can avoid them.

10) **Play to your strengths:** Pinpoint your hours of peak performance and schedule your work accordingly. Conversely, schedule your routine, low-level tasks for times of the day when you have less energy and/or find it harder to concentrate.

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