**Time Management**

One of a manager’s most precious resources is time. Manage it well, and you’ll be able to pull off seemingly superhuman feats. Manage it poorly, and you’ll spend every evening and weekend getting caught up on unfinished business. The following seven strategies can help you regain control.

1. **Keep a log**

If it’s really true that “time is money,” why not handle your time as you do your spending and track how it is allocated? You can’t plug a leak if you don’t know where it is.

2. **Build in planning time**

People who struggle with time management often get stuck in a revolving door of demands and obligations because they’re too busy to take the time to plan. And the less they plan, the more their time slips away.

Escape this Catch 22 by setting aside a few minutes each week to budget your time. Yes, it’s hard to break away from so many pressing needs, but the payoff down the road will more than compensate for the sacrifice.

3. **Prioritize**

The world moves fast these days, and it’s easy to get sidetracked. The key to staying on track is to keep a written and prioritized list of what you need to accomplish.

Be flexible enough to rework your list when emergencies arise, but otherwise stick to the order you’ve created, and don’t let anyone drag you off task.

4. **Delegate**

Remember, you can’t do it all. Delegate anything that you can pass on and still be able to sleep at night with someone else doing it.

If those around you do not seem qualified or trustworthy to handle what’s on your plate, you may need to train them. Start small and build incrementally to handing off work that requires higher levels of responsibility.

5. **Set goals and action steps**

Broad, long-term goals aren’t enough. Effective time management involves breaking down larger tasks into a series of smaller ones.

Daily and weekly goals will help you keep you motivated by providing you with a series of personal accomplishments. It’s also an effective way to track progress and improve efficiency.

6. **Minimize Meetings**

Meetings can be black holes if the time is not spent in a productive and focused way. Here are some sure ways to minimize wasted time:

· Make promptness a clear expectation.
· Create an outline for each meeting and distribute it to participants before getting started. Limit the meeting to 3 or 4 major topics.
· Establish guidelines that participants should not surf their smartphones, take incoming calls, text or type emails while the meeting is in session.
· Commit to polite but firm gate keeping as needed when overly talkative coworkers meander off task.

7. **Know when to quit**

Sometimes maximizing efficiency requires knowing when to take a break. There’s no use pushing on when you’re out of energy. Give yourself permission to unwind periodically when you feel your productivity slipping. In the long run, you’ll be happier, healthier and able to accomplish more by recognizing when you require some leisure time.
Staying Disciplined with Devices, Screens and Social Media

Whether at home or on the job, major threats to our time management and efficiency lurk within our smartphones and other devices. The temptation to compulsively check emails, social media accounts, and continuous news streams has become a norm, and yet the toll on productivity is significant.

“Unplugging” completely may sound impossible, but experiment in order to learn where you may find gains in your effectiveness and focus at work.

Use of Email

It has become a reflex to check personal email, or access it from a smartphone, even while on the clock. Instead, set two times in the day to check your email when on a lunch break or at day’s end. Otherwise, the only email that should be active is the work email account.

Consider blocking times to be off your work email, too – setting an outgoing message to explain when you will be back online, and then actually logging out in order to reclaim distraction-free time to address other work priorities.

Use of Social Media

Work is not the place for personal social media. No matter if it’s all right there on the iPhone – it should be off limits unless you are on a break. And even then, recognize that you may become distracted and that a ‘quick check’ may open a proverbial Pandora’s Box. Challenge yourself to wait until the end of day.

Incoming Personal Calls

When your personal cell phone rings at work, avoid automatically picking up the phone. An unexpected call from a old friend is just one example of how personal matters distractingly flow into the work world and sink productivity. Let calls go to voice mail; retrieve them when appropriate, and make an arrangement to take a break if there is some critical need to return a call.

Program into your Contacts the key calls you would want to pick up – the name and phone number of your child’s school, or the name and number of a parent’s nursing facility for example.

Incoming work phone calls

Whether your work phone is a cell phone or a landline, consider turning the ringer off for limited periods. For some situations this may not be possible, but consider whether even 45 minutes of uninterrupted time to focus on a task could make a world of difference in your efficiency.

Use your Extended Absence Greeting to record a message that alerts callers you will be returning calls at a certain time that day, and provide an alternative option for callers who need to reach someone immediately. Once you know you have set expectations for your callers, you can work undisturbed and in good conscience.

Maintain discipline through awareness

So many electronic and online options have become essential to organization and efficiency, yet they also hold the potential for our overuse or mindless access. Stay aware of your patterns and reflect how some may not actually be serving you well. Periodically check in with those you supervise – as well as your loved ones at home – to remind them of your accessibility and to promote true one-to-one interactions as opposed to electronic ones.

Try keeping a log for one week of all the times you access information by phone or computer, including social media, news, or email, and question whether its reflex or necessity. You may find that you can regain some very precious time.

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