



Reprinted from the March 2013 issue of BIC

20 simple strategies for managing time

"It's how we spend our time here and now that really matters. If you are fed up with the way you have come to interact with time, change it." — Dream University® Founder and CEO Marcia Wieder

There's one priceless asset in the entire world to which each of us have equal access, and that is time. In any given week there are exactly (and only) 168 hours, no matter who we are or what we do for a living. It's how we use our time that determines how successful we are.

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Accordingly, it becomes necessary to actively manage our time to derive the greatest benefit. In fact, it is probably more important to manage time than any other resource. Not only is it perishable but if we aren't careful, our time can be taken away without our noticing it is being stolen.

I've always found it to be interesting that most people seem to need more time. Regrettably, that isn't possible. Time is quite a paradox. We never seem to have enough time, yet we have all the time there is. The issue, then, is not a shortage of time, but how we choose to use the time available.

On many occasions, because we do not have enough time to satisfy us, we soon are forced to begin to think about using it differently, hopefully

better. An old Chinese proverb provides excellent insight, "Besides the noble art of getting things done, there is the noble art of leaving things undone." Perhaps, then, we should consider the minimization of, or where possible the elimination of, nonessential activities.

Time is not adaptable, but people are. Managing time means adapting ourselves to its passage in some appropriate, satisfying manner. If time seems to be out of control, it means we are out of control. To bring ourselves back under control, we must learn new, more appropriate behaviors. We need to *change* if we are to improve.

Keeping in mind that managing time is different for everyone, that this skill takes *time* to master, here are 20 simple strategies for you to consider.

1. Use the 80/20 rule. Plan 80 percent of your time, leave 20 percent free for handling interruptions and crises.
2. Make a list, set priorities and handle them one at a time.
3. Begin as soon as possible when dealing with complex tasks.
4. Apply the "Is this the best use of my time?" technique.
5. Continually ask yourself: "What is the purpose of this activity, what is its worth and what is its significance?"
6. Place a large planning calendar on the wall so you are aware of key deadlines.
7. Concentrate on only one thing at a time to avoid fragmentation.
8. Get organized! Designate a place for everything and keep it there.
9. Stop shuffling through papers and avoiding decisions; try the "handle

it once" method.

10. Spend less time on the phone. Are you socializing too much?

11. Stop procrastinating. Follow the Nike motto — "Just do it."

12. Information continues to increase daily. Purge both your paper and electronic files periodically.

13. Develop trust in others so you can delegate effectively.

14. Be mindful that other people's goals are not pulling you off course.

15. Learn to say "no," giving options when possible.

16. Avoid negative people who zap your energy and who have a "can't do" approach to the world and their work.

17. Stay in touch with enthusiastic people who motivate you by their productivity and zest for life.

18. Check old habits. Are they helping or hindering you? Consider making changes where necessary.

19. Recognize your energy patterns and work with them to keep your strength up.

20. Finally, be sure to reserve time for yourself!

The overall essence here is that time management is self management. You control time; it does not control you. An analysis of how you use your time, your major problem areas in managing time and your time wasters will enable you to identify what changes you should make to better manage your time, work more productively and live life with less stress.

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