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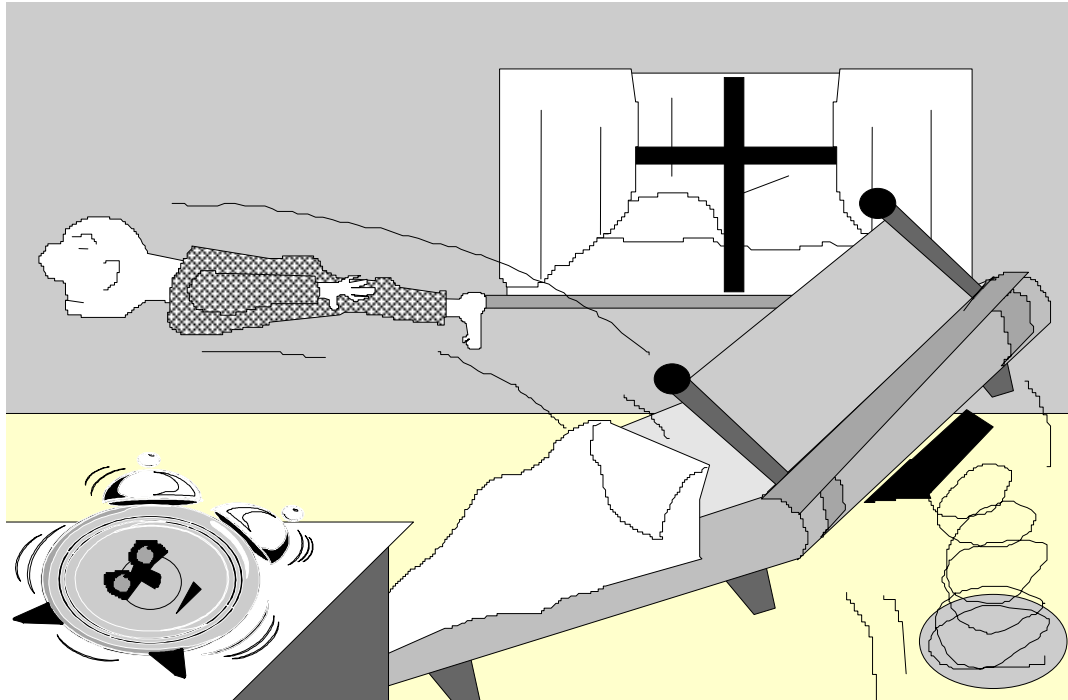
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# PERSONAL PLANNING

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## ***DEVELOPING TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS***

**YOU** have only so many hours in a day, so many weeks in a month and so many years in your life. Make every second count, or ten years will pass by quicker than you ever thought possible, and most likely with little accomplished.

In fact, life is fundamentally a matter of how you spend your time. It is a never-ending stream of activities, constantly being replenished by family, friends, colleagues, as well as by your dreams, hopes, desires, and needs for survival.

## ***FIVE STEPS TO BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT***

THE CONCEPT of time management cannot be effectively dealt with unless strategies for setting goals are included in its framework. The following time management program thus consists of goal setting; taking actions everyday to reach those goals; making sure each action is focused, relevant and results orientated; prioritizing which actions need to be done first or are the most important; and rethinking your goals when productivity suffers. These basic principles have been arranged into the following five steps:

**STEP 1: Write down your seven most important goals.** Start by listing as many goals, values, dreams, focuses, needs,

*Effort means nothing without results.*

**JOSEPH E. COSSMAN**

wants and strategies for happiness as you can.

Second, select your ten most important and arrange them from most important to least important. Once you have your top ten, cut out the last three because you probably won't remember them anyway. Now change each goal into a specific result. Don't write, "I want to be rich." Say, "I want one million dollars in mutual funds by the time I'm 42." Don't say, "I want to be a musician," say, "I want to compose 20 songs and play them on my guitar from memory in one year."

Thirdly, now that you have a list of seven action orientated goals or rather focuses, write down as number eight your ultimate dream. Number eight may be the

same as any one of your top seven but most likely it will be a summary statement of ALL your goals. Number eight is your meaning in life and is your ultimate strategy for happiness and success (see chart on following page).

**1<sup>ST</sup> NOTE** – To help brainstorm about your most important goals, begin by fantasizing about what type of environment would allow your best self to emerge. Imagine what your ideal day would be like if you had no financial or time restraints. Also, imagine if you had seven lives to live what would they be? Pull from each life the one thing you value the most, and blend those vital parts into the design.

**2<sup>ND</sup> NOTE** – Each major focus can be bro-

*In the absence of clearly defined goals, we are forced to concentrate on activity and ultimately become enslaved by it.*

**CHUCK  
COONRADT**

ken down into seven additional mini-strategies or goals giving you 49 mini-strategies to your 7 major goals. For example, if living your life in good health is one of your seven most important goals, list seven actions you can do to reach that goal such as: cut down on refined sugar, eat more fiber, do 20 push-ups before you go to bed, jog two miles three times a week, reduce fat intake to 20% of calories, play with the kids more often, drink 6 glasses of water a day.

**3<sup>RD</sup> NOTE** – Big lists aren't better than small lists. Big lists are only unfocussed lists. If three of your top seven goals are significantly more important than your last four than maybe you don't need your last four.

**4<sup>TH</sup> NOTE** – It is very likely your eighth or summary focus will be difficult to pin down. However, don't worry about it. In order to program yourself for success and happiness realize that ultimately you want your eighth goal to be your mission statement (see Guidebook #21). Expressing the essence of your life in a few words – who you are, where you've come from and where you want to go – may be rewarding but none the less extremely challenging.

**STEP 2: Every day write down six or seven actions to be completed.** It has been documented that people who sit down and plan their day in writing have a far greater chance of succeeding than those who do not make any plans. Writing reflects commitment. Therefore, start each day by writing down what you want to accomplish on any scrap of paper. Later on,

## Writing Down Your Seven Most Important Goals

### GILLIGAN'S GOAL LIST

Goals	Specific Action
I. Get Rich	Save Mr. Howe's life and get big reward
II. Stay Healthy	Avoid eating Ginger's cooking
III. Have a Family	Propose to Mary-Ann after proving manhood
IV. Start a Business	Trade with nearby island – coconuts for ocean kayak
V. Become Musical	Play 20 songs on Ukulele without getting Skipper mad
VI. Become Athletic	Catch big snail off the coast like Dr. Dolittle did
VII. Improve Mind	Beat professor in a game of blindfold speed chess

### ULTIMATE FOCUS

**VIII. Get off this damn island!**

if you find it useful to be more systematic, use a day planner (see Guidebook #8, Form #1). Keep in mind that if you mentally program yourself early in the day, you tend to organize, focus and pace yourself better. Right away your brain starts looking for solutions and shortcuts before you actually do anything.

**1<sup>ST</sup> NOTE** – Six and seven are not magic numbers. In fact, concentrating on four, five or even eight actions a day will work nicely too. Six and seven are chosen because that's generally the most thoughts you can keep in your conscious mind at any one time. If you limit yourself to one or two, you are not taking advantage of your brains processing power. If you write more than seven, like ten or twelve, you will likely be unable to maintain

*Time is really the only capital that any human being has, and the only thing he can't afford to lose.*

**THOMAS EDISON**

this level of production for very long and will eventually burn out.

**2<sup>ND</sup> NOTE** – Some people find it more effective to write down their six or seven actions each morning and others at the end of the previous day. Writing them down in the morning is practical and immediate. Writing them down at the end of your day for the following day, gives your subconscious the whole evening and while you're sleeping, to work out solutions and strategies. This method also gives you a chance to review your daily accomplishments, giving you a greater sense of completion.

**STEP 3: Make sure each daily action is focused, relevant and results oriented.** When writing down your daily ac-

tions they should meet ALL or at least ONE of the following requirements.

*Your daily actions should be **FOCUSED**.* At least ONE of your six or seven daily actions should be related to your top seven goals. Many times **ALL** your daily actions will be focused on one or more of your top seven goals. However, if you establish a one goal-orientated-action per day as an absolute minimum, no matter how bad your day turns out, you will always be one step closer to realizing your dream.

**WARNING** Don't make the mistake of committing yourself to too many actions per day relating to your top seven focuses. Over an extended period of time, you will find it increasingly difficult to maintain this

*The best preparation for good work tomorrow is to do good work today.*  
**ELBERT G. HUBBARD,**  
*American Businessman*

level of commitment. Suddenly your dreams will become chores and everyday will become a battle of will power. Balancing between desired output and actual production capability is a better plan in the long run. Do as much that comes naturally and does not make you feel pressured or burdened. *Strategy Tip* For each day of the week concentrate on one item from your top seven list. If you are able to work on more than one, bonus!

*Your daily actions should be **RELEVANT**.* Write down **ONLY** the most important tasks you need to accomplish. Cluttering up your list with unessential tasks like sorting your junk mail, taking out the garbage, or feeding your fish, may make you think your doing lots every day, but will quickly slow down the

progress of your real priorities. Consider menial unessential tasks as “breathers” or breaks from the real important ones. Use them to relax and regroup, not focus and fool yourself into thinking your doing something remarkable.

*Your daily actions should be*  
**RESULTS ORIENTATED.** Whenever you have a choice between an action that shows results at the end of the day, and one that does not, always pick the one that shows results. At the end of the day, like a carpenter when finished a cabinet, you must be able to look at what you’ve done and say; “hey that looks great!”

In other words, each of your completed actions should leave you with a sense of accomplishment. This is the key to main-

*Work is the greatest thing in the world. So we should save some of it for tomorrow.*

**DON HEROLD**

taining motivation. A meeting where everyone brainstorms on new products then chooses a product to be marketed is results oriented, keeps people pumped, and allows colleagues to give themselves and others a nice pat on the back. A meeting where everyone speaks his or her mind, doesn’t choose anything but gets it all out in the open, is really just group therapy. Remember that results don’t have to be big, but they do have to be tangible.

**NOTE** Small consistent results are better than big occasional results.

**STEP 4: Prioritize, which actions need to be done first or which actions are the most important.** One way to prioritize your six or seven most important daily actions is to simply number them from one

to seven, **one** being the action that needs to be done first at the beginning of the day, **two** being the next action, and so on. As you complete each action simply cross it out. This method is simple, no nonsense, and above all else foolproof. Another method is to give each action an **A**, **B** or **C** designation. **A** designates *must be done*. **B** designates *should be done*. **C** designates *doesn't have to be done unless you have enough time*.

Whichever method you use, remember that prioritizing your daily actions is only a tool not a way of life. If the tool stops working, takes too much time to implement, confuses more than it organizes, than throw it a way and try something else. Never let artificial structures become more important than common sense.

**NOTE** You will find that the 80/20 rule – used to describe the fact that a company typically gets eighty percent of its business from twenty percent of its customers – also applies to setting priorities: twenty percent

### *Five Step* Time Management Program

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>I</b>   | <b>Set goals.</b>   |
| <b>II</b>  | <b>Write down daily actions.</b>  |
| <b>III</b> | <b>Make sure actions are:</b><br>– <b>focused</b><br>– <b>relevant</b><br>– <b>results orientated</b> |
| <b>IV</b>  | <b>Prioritize Actions.</b>  |
| <b>V</b>   | <b>Rethink your goals if productivity begins to suffer.</b>   |

of the items on your list will give you eighty percent of your positive results. For this reason, prioritizing is critical.

**STEP5: Rethink your goals if productivity begins to suffer.**

If you end up doing the same thing day after day, eventually you will get bored, your actions will become meaningless, and your performance will suffer. At this point, it's time to rethink your top seven goals and your summarizing mission statement.

If there's no way you can change your goals, then change the way you look at them, the time period you work on them, or even the color of underwear you do them in. Human beings are vibrant creatures and don't function well in ruts. Being able to adapt and reframe, is essen-

tial to progress.



*I recommend you to take care of the minutes; for hours will take care of themselves.*

**LORD  
CHESTERFIELD**

## GETTING MORE OUT OF EACH BUSINESS DAY

TO GET more out of each business day, incorporate some of the following 49 time management strategies into your daily and weekly regimen. Remember that these strategies should do more than just help you reach your goals, they should also help you make time for what you really want to do, not just what you have to do.

### Organizing Your Time

Use the following **18** strategies to organize your time better and get more done each hour, day and week.

*The learning process is like jumping into a pool, swimming around a bit, and then quickly getting out to evaluate what just happened; only to jump right back in.*  
**POWERPOINT**

1. **Arrange for quiet time, breaks from extended activities, and times to simply do nothing.** Balance work and play and you'll get more done in the long run.
2. **Assess your strengths and weaknesses.** Spend eighty percent of your time building on your strengths and using resources you have. Spend twenty percent of your time getting new resources and working on skills that are weak.
3. **Become a Quadrant II person.** A popular form of time management classifies activities into four Quadrants:

## Prioritizing Activities

### Quadrant 3

Urgent but Not Important

### Quadrant 1

Urgent and Important

### Quadrant 4

Not Urgent and Not Important

### Quadrant 2

Not Urgent but Important

**QUADRANT I** activities include affairs that are urgent and important, such as crises, pressing problems, and deadline driven projects. The problem with spending too much time in this quadrant is your urgent list tends to get bigger and bigger and you end up going from one crisis to the next.

**QUADRANT III** activities are urgent but not important such as interruptions and meet-

ings. The problem with spending too much time in this quadrant is you end up spending too much time reacting to things that seem urgent, but really aren't that important, such as phone calls and hallway discussions.

**QUADRANT IV** activities are not urgent and not important, such as busy work and recreation. These activities can be thought of as the escape portions of your lives. The problem with being in this quadrant too much is obvious – you don't get anything done.

**QUADRANT II** activities are the heart of effective personal management, dealing with concerns that are important, but not urgent such as building relationships, long range planning and exercising. Quadrant II activities are activities we should do but seldom

get around to actually doing. They require more initiative. You can become a Quadrant II person by learning to say no, by defining your roles in life, by deciding what you want to accomplish in each of these roles, and by learning to seize opportunities and make things happen (see chart on previous page).

4. **Do the most creative, most important, and most difficult work during the most productive part of your day.** For some people, this is seven o'clock in the morning, for others, midnight.
5. **Focus on what is important.** Imagine that you have just been told that you have three years to live. Would you start building a dream home? Or
- Better three hours too soon than a minute too late.*  
**SHAKESPEARE**

would you rather spend time with your family and friends? There is nothing wrong with either of these choices.

6. **Group appointments for services and repairs.** This way you can be there if your staff needs you to make decisions. Service and repair workers won't have to come back.
7. **Keep track of how you spend your time so you don't concentrate too much in one area.** When starting your company it is important that you break up the quantity of time you spend on each area of your business so that one area is not neglected. For example, you may find it best to spend 10% of your time on packaging, 30% on advertising, 20%

on product design and 40% cutting expenses and increasing efficiency. This will of course change as your business develops.

### 8. **Make appointments for yourself.**

If you are having difficulty completing an activity. Make an appointment for yourself. Then honor the appointment with yourself as you would appointments with others.

**9. Make idle time count.** While waiting, standing in line, or riding to work, do something useful like planning your day or updating your address book.

### 10. **Never forget that time is money.**

Keeping track of chargeable time, when you are a consultant for example,

*Graciously guard your business hours from talkers by saying, "I really don't want to take any more of your time, so I'll say good-bye."*  
**SUPERTIP**

is similar to doing inventory control. Knowing what to do, when and for whom, and charging accordingly, can be the difference between survival and bankruptcy.

### 11. **Never underestimate the importance of little choices.**

Small, everyday choices are the agents that ultimately shape the big decisions of our lives. So, seize control of your little choices – How will you spend your day? What will you do first? Second? Next? And, finally, what will you do when you don't have anything to do.

**12. Organize your time using a planning wall.** Any full-view wall space or bulletin board can be used to help you

map-out plans and chart progress. Your planning wall should include several of the other planning tools listed below as well as perhaps a picture of your personal saint who epitomizes your goal, whether it be a business person, movie star, or singer, to help inspire and cheer you on.

**NOTE** It's just as easy to have a plan as it is not to have a plan.

*Monthly Goal Calendar* – A large felt market monthly calendar hung up on your

## The Joy of an 8.5 by 11 Inch Daytimer

IF YOU dislike carrying around bulky things, preferring smaller more portable things, don't buy an expensive mini day-timer or even a small notebook. Consider instead folding in half three times a standard 8.5 by 11 inch sheet of blank or lined paper to reduce it to 2.75 by 4.25 inches (experiment with different kinds of folds). When finished, you will have a miniature organizer a little larger than a credit card that will fit easily into the cash portion of your wallet or purse. Carry this organizer and a small writing tool with you at all times, and you will always have something to keep track of your ideas.

**NOTE** All innovators, at one time or another, have scrawled ideas on scraps of paper, napkins, or even cigarette jackets, when inspiration struck in the oddest of circumstances.

planning wall can be very functional. Your whole month can be seen at a glance without any shuffling of papers. A goal calendar can be used to assign each week's activities, appointments, and phone calls to specific days and times.

*Weekly Calendar* – A weekly calendar is a large sheet of paper divided into boxes, one box for each day between you and your target date. It can be used to elaborate on special projects.

*Tonight / Tomorrow Sheet* – This sheet can be used to plan exactly what you have scheduled for tomorrow. Especially useful for important dates, such as a grand opening sale or a corporate presentation.

*Five-year Goal Scheme Calendar* – A five-

year goal scheme calendar can be used to wrap up your long-term plans into a real, year-by-year time frame. This is a good place to state your company mission statement.

*Flow Chart* – A flow chart can be used to highlight key objectives and specific activities of an important project.

*Gold is valuable.  
But time is more  
valuable*

### 13. Resolve potential conflicts before they occur.

During the first part of any undertaking, anticipate potential conflicts and circumstances, which could lead to wasted efforts. Come up with a solution or alternate plan.

**14. Spend your time like gold.** Gold is valuable. But time is more valuable.

**15. Take advantage of you own inter-**

## nal clock by learning what time of the day you tend to be creative and what time of the day you tend to be analytical.

Everyone has different periods during the day when they are less or more creative or analytical. Generally speaking, scientists are early risers and do most of their analytical work in the morning. They save their theorizing till the evening. Artists on the other hand, like to sleep-in after burning the midnight oil, and usually don't become active until after lunch. When you create, you need to be relaxed with as little time constraints as possible. When you analyze you need

to be intense, directed and brief.

**TIP** Don't schedule important meetings shortly after creative sessions. This causes anxiety, and anxiety is one of the worst enemies of creativity.

### Inspirational QUOTE

#### Tasks

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

### Business Card Daytimer

## 16. Use a mini-business card sized day timer.

Turn an ordinary blank business card into a mini-daytimer. On one side of the business card have an inspirational picture or quote. On the other side, leave room to list your six or seven daily actions. At the end of each day, throw out the old business card out and

write up a new one (see FIG. at left).

## 17. Use routines only as long as they

**produce.** Once a routine stops producing, change it.

- 18. When you plan your time, examine all available 168 hours.** Don't just look at a 40 or 50 hour workweek. Plan time for sleep, exercise and relaxation as well as for work.

### Time Savers

Use the following **16** strategies to save yourself extra seconds, minutes and hours each day.

- 19. Experiment with reducing your sleep time.** Although it is not wise to reduce your sleep too much, saving half a hour might give you the extra time needed to exercise or finish an important project.
- 20. Find prime times during the day**

*... Time is money.*

**BENJAMIN  
FRANKLIN**

**when you characteristically do your best work.** Plan your time blocks accordingly.

- 21. Have suppliers ship items directly to customers when possible.** This saves money as well.
- 22. Keep meetings short.** Make sure your meetings have objectives that produce tangible results. Also, consider combining meetings with other activities like socializing, while walking or exercising, and so on.
- 23. Keep your desk or rather your mind clutter-free of correspondence or ideas.** Look at an idea only once with your full attention then, make a decision, pass it along for action, file it, or destroy it. Never handle the same

paper twice – avoid paper shuffling. Looking at the same idea over and over, not only fills your mind with loose ends, but wastes time. Save your rehashing of ideas for creative sessions.

**24. Know the difference between excellence, an achievable goal, and perfection, an un-**

**attainable frustration.** Don't beat a dead horse. Once you reach a certain level of performance know when to move on.

*If you can't say "no" say, "thanks for asking, but I have a prior commitment."*

**25. Learn to delegate.** Don't try to do everything: it inhibits the growth of others and your own leisure time.

**26. Learn to do two things at once.**

*While watching TV* soak your feet, do aerobics, lift weights, polish your shoes, work on an art project, or read.

*While holding the phone*, stretch out and flex, organize receipts, or make a to-do list. *While driving*, listen to motivation tapes, visualize your day, or use your cellular to make a phone call.

*While brushing your teeth*, check your clothing for lint, use the toilet, water a plant or pick up after yourself.

*While walking anywhere*, get into the habit of carrying something with you whenever you go.

**27. Learn to say no.** The best technique for avoiding time-thieves, is to be honest with them. If someone asks, "Do you have a minute?" tell them you don't, or indicate exactly how many minutes you have available and ask if their discussion can be accomplished in that amount of time. Also, if you don't have time for

that beer after work, don't go. Learn to say "no" tactfully and people won't even react negatively. Say "yes" only if the obligation helps you accomplish one of your key objectives. If you can't say "no" say, "thanks for asking, but I have a prior commitment."

**28. Organize available workspace so that no time is wasted trying to find or use things.**

If you use your phone constantly, keep it within arms reach. Keep supplies and manuals for

## Can Our Brains be Trained to Multi-task?

IN THE FUTURE, we may learn to multi-task our brains like computers and do two things at once. This means while writing words to a song we could also be solving a math problem. To some extent many people already do this. How many times has a long walk allowed your subconscious to find an answer to a difficult problem? Schizophrenia is considered a disease yet has also associated with genius (madness and original thinking go hand in hand). Perhaps, what we consider genius may actually be the result of individuals being able to utilize their brain more efficiently by multi-tasking? Presently, the only way to do this is by training your subconscious through repetition. Riding a bike while carrying on an intelligent conversation is easy to do if you've ridden a bike since you were a kid, but almost impossible if you've never ridden a bike before in your life.

your computer and printer all in one cupboard or drawer, so if something gets jammed, runs out or starts flickering funny, you don't waste time searching for it.

**29. Plan ahead to avoid delays, disappointments, and duplication of efforts – as in shipping, traveling and doing chores.** There is nothing worse than losing time because of bad planning.

**30. Shorten meeting times.** Rather than holding a formal meeting, meet in the hall for a few minutes, or instead circulate a memo.

**31. Sleep on a problem.** Train yourself to use your subconscious during sleep

to help you solve difficult problems. Listen to tapes.

**32. Stock up on standard and nonperishable items whenever they are on sale.** Buy pens in bulk and store them in one drawer so you can always find a pen right away when you need one. Buy stamps in large quantities so you don't have to send out a staff member or go yourself and waste time in line.

**33. Use your friends, employees and business colleagues to establish a knowledge network.** If you need information fast, it is easier to ask someone you know, than to phone people who put you on hold while they

*Einstein was notorious for not wearing socks. When asked why, he said by not wearing socks each and every day, he had more time to think.*

**FUNFACT**

go ask the boss if its okay to give you what you want.

- 34. When working with other people, in or out of an office or home, learn to motivate them to serve your business better, more efficiently and more economically.** As an employer you are only as productive as the people who work for you.

### Time Wasters

Use the following **15** strategies to reduce the amount of time you waste during each minute, hour and day of the week.

- 35. Cluster appointments and errands whenever possible.** For example, if

*One of the best ways of avoiding necessary and even urgent tasks is to seem to be busily employed on things that are already done.*

**JOHN  
KENNETH  
GALBRAITH**

you need to meet a client downtown, make an appointment to get your haircut after or before the meeting.

- 36. Don't procrastinate.** Either scratch-out the activity, delegate it or do it. Whatever you decide, always remember those that stand still too long in one spot get run over.

**NOTE** For the spare tie that needs fixing, the picking up the golf clubs left on the lawn, or the buying the birthday gift for your niece, don't put them off. Adopt the motto "do it now or don't do it at all."

- 37. Don't waste time driving to work.** Decide if time spent commuting to work is worth it for you. Realize you do have a choice about where you live,

work or, own a business. If you find that commuting is requisite, learn to make the time personally productive: listen to cassette tapes, plan your day, or practice your singing.

**38. Don't waste time on the telephone.** The telephone is a tool; it shouldn't control your life. Take hold of phone conversations from the start. State directly what you want. Develop tact and skill in closing a call, "Thanks for your help, I'll be in touch!"

**39. Don't waste time shopping.** Shopping and housework have to be done. However, both are time consuming. Therefore, consider

whether it's feasible to hire someone to do it for you.

**40. Don't waste time talking to time**

**stealers.** Do one-way conversations or unexpected drop-ins steal valuable minutes from you everyday? Tactfully yet firmly deal with a time stealer by saying, "I really don't want to take any more of your time, so I'd better say good-bye"; or "Excuse me, but I really must get back to work." These remarks are not rude or ruthless. They simply and gently signify your needs. They also set a tone about how you use your time.

*Besides the noble art of getting things done, there is the noble art of leaving things undone. The wisdom of life consists in the elimination of nonessentials.*

**LIN YUTANG**

**41. Don't waste your time responding to stimulus, such as the ringing of**

**a telephone, if you're busy or not prepared to respond.**

Your mind can be trained to ignore bells or signals that previously brought an automatic alarm reflex. A ringing telephone, for example, is a signal that someone wishes to speak with you, but you can choose not to answer it and just let it ring. In the same way, you should consciously understand that you are in control of deciding whether to react to an event immediately, to ignore it completely, or to delay response until you have rationally, creatively and peacefully assessed the situation.

*Get rid of 20 percent of everything you own and "set a limit on how many things in each category are optimum – say 20 ties. Then, before you buy a new one, get rid of an old one.*  
**SUPERTIP**

**42. Eliminate time wasted collecting things.** Do you compulsively collect or

buy things you don't need, things that demand time; time to store, dust, move, sort, find, sell replace and protect? What do you have too much of: clothes, garden tools, pencils?

Simplify your life and unclutter your home or office by devising a plan to rid yourself of unnecessary articles. Limit the number of pairs of shoes, ties, sweaters that make their way into your closet. And when you buy a new piece of clothing, make sure one of the old ones is eliminated. Follow the same procedure with your kitchen, bathroom, garage, and office collections.

Furthermore, handle mail, magazines, articles of clothing, and paperwork

only once. Don't stack things up, intending to get to them later. Put them away or throw them away, never pile them away. Remember, possessions and paperwork rob you of time.

**43. Eliminate time wasted making repetitive decisions.** For example, use a standard shopping list for common weekly purchases, and a special list for one-time purchases. Don't waste time writing down or thinking about decisions that occur over and over again.

**44. Eliminate time wasted waiting.** Do you regularly spend time in your normal day waiting for someone or something on the phone, in a line at the bank or grocery store, in a doctor's

*The first 90% of the project takes the first 90% of the time. The last 10% of the project takes the last 90% of the time.*

**ANON**

office, or for a friend to pick you? Anticipate moments when you will be waiting and be prepared to deal with them constructively. Confirm your appointments the day before. If someone you have an appointment with is habitually late, call just before you leave to see if they are running on time.

**45. Eliminate time wasted watching television.** Is your television on too many hours in the day, inviting you to collapse at any time for a mindless hour or two? Many people waste thousands of hours each year through unplanned TV watching. Choose programs worth watching. Look forward to watching TV not just passing time in front of it. Better yet, try to permanently

wean yourself from the “idiot box.”

#### 46. Eliminate time wasted worrying.

Do minutes or even hours pass in a day with your mind centered on a problem? Do small worries grow into larger concerns? Most worries are groundless; they are merely perceived as problems. It takes great insight and self-control to avoid agonizing over past difficulties and future possibilities. Strive to live in the present.

*Time is life; by wasting your time you are wasting your life.*

**SUPERTIP**

**47. Minimize interruptions during the workday.** If possible avoid interruptions all together unless they are part of your business.

**NOTE** Customers are **never** interruptions.

#### 48. Perfection is a waste of time

**when completing lower priority tasks.** Accept the fact that some tasks are better left undone.

**49. Reorganize activities that can potentially waste time.** The following activities should be rethought or reorganized: reading mail, answering mail, sorting & paying bills, answering & screening calls, keeping accounts, doing errands, lunches & dinners, entertainment & meetings.

**EXAMPLE** To handle your mail more efficiently: **a)** develop a sorting system e.g., garbage, file, or answer; **b)** read the mail at a specific time; and **c)** if possible use it as a break to relax.



## THE NINE-MINUTE RULE

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HAVE YOU ever wondered why commercials come every ten to fifteen minutes, and business meetings get boring after twenty? Have you ever noticed that kids in grade one, no matter how good their teacher's are start shuffling in their seats, staring our windows, or shoving pencils up their noses, a few minutes after roll call? Could it be that the natural human attention span is most certainly less than half an hour and closer to a number you can count on your fingers?

*The "Nine-Minute Rule" is based on research that shows that effective managers don't regularly block out large chunks of time for planning, organizing and other management related tasks. Rather, their time is fragmented, the average interval devoted to any one issue being nine minutes.*

Attention span has nothing to do with a person's ability to concentrate or focus. Rather, it refers to the efficiency and design tendencies of our brains.

Think of your brain as a computer with a hard drive that stores information (the sub-conscious mind) and RAM memory, which processes information (the conscious mind). Your RAM memory is considerably less than your hard drive memory and fills up quickly. Once your RAM memory is full, if you don't clear your thoughts and refocus, you will quickly lose interest. You simply don't have any more room to process new information.

In support of this theory, researcher, Henry Mintzberg of Canada's McGill University, studied how effective managers use their time, and found out that they don't regularly block out large chunks of time for planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling, as most other authorities suggest. Rather, their time is fragmented, the average interval devoted to any one issue being nine minutes. In fact, study after study has shown that managers, in the real world, work at an unrelenting pace, that their work is characterized by brevity, variety and discontinuity, and that they are predisposed to action, and disinclined to engage in mere reflective activity.

If one considers this information closely, one begins to realize the wisdom of its im-

*A child's logic based upon the information they have is usually very sound and on occasion quite superior to those of adults.*  
**POWERPOINT**

plications. Effective managers fragment their time because it gives them the ability to look at the same problem in many different ways. And it is this ability, to constantly look at things in different ways, which allows them to make better decisions.

Effective managers also fragment their time because it allows them to make more and faster decisions without getting bogged down with unrelated ideas. They learn to quickly store recently processed information and then redirect their focus to take in new information. They know at least intuitively that a human's natural short attention span, which many consider a weakness, is actually what makes a human being so creative, ingenious, and potentially productive.

## Applying the “Nine-Minute Rule” to Everyday Life

**Avoid taking the “nine-minute rule” to extremes.** The “nine-minute rule” is only a guide based upon common sense and common practices. It is not applicable to every situation. Use your own judgment. Don’t for example take a one-minute break every ten while driving your motor home to Vegas.

**NOTE** Why 9 minutes, and not 6 or 12 or even 15? This is not important. What is important is that it’s not half an hour, one hour, and certainly not eight hours.

**Break up your day, tasks, brainstorming periods, writing sessions,**

**meetings, or whatever, into nine-minute chunks.** Try thinking about the same thing for longer than ten minutes without drifting. Difficult isn’t it? Why? Perhaps its because the body functions best on a ten minute clock, or perhaps because after ten minutes or so the brain has pretty much exhausted all its possibilities and only ends up looping ideas.

To avoid this problem, if you have to concentrate on one specific task for many hours, days or weeks, then break up that task into chunks. Refocus or step back and look at it from a distance (6 to 7 tasks per hour). This will keep your ideas fresh and flowing instead of repetitive and uninspired.

*Adults, after years of schooling, learn to hide their natural lack of attention or more importantly, learn skills to turn this natural lack of attention into an asset.*

**POWERPOINT**

For example, if you were writing an ad you might spend the first ten minutes or so collecting ideas, the next ten organizing them into groups, the next ten brainstorming, the next ten writing your headline, the next ten writing your first paragraph, the next ten sketching out the final four paragraphs, and last ten editing. But don't say to yourself, I have exactly 1 hour and ten minutes, and then sit down and stare at a blank sheet of paper, waiting for inspiration.

**NOTE** A study of 160 British middle and top managers found that they worked for more than one-half hour without interrupting only about once every two days. Furthermore, a study of CEOs found that half of a manager's activities lasted less than nine minutes, and only

*Business plans should be well organized so that all relevant information can be pulled out of it within 10 minutes. Detailed information can be found later, when required.*

**SUPERTIP**

ten percent exceeded one hour.

**Business presentations should be no longer than 20 minutes.** Avoid prepar-

ing business presentations longer than twenty minutes, anything after that doesn't get listened to anyway.

**If you must stay focused on the same task for long periods of time, give yourself mini-one minute or even 15 second rests periodically.** Your ability to reason

will diminish, if you stay on task for longer than nine minutes and do not refocus. Taking a mini-rest will allow you to consolidate, relax, and reorganize. Use the mini-rest period to

say "good job, you're a genius," or to look out the window and scratch your head.

Then get back to work. Also, consider

breaking up all mental activities into nine-minute chunks, with progress checks at the end of each nine-minute chunk. That way you are getting constant feed back every nine minutes.

**Make sure during extended thinking sessions that you write down new ideas the instant they come to you.** It is difficult to process more than six or seven pieces of information at any one time, even though you can store billions of separate and distinct pieces of information in your sub-conscious.

After a certain amount of time working on the same task you will find it harder and harder to remember ideas that moments before were clear in your head. Your brain

has patterns, like the body. It has to breathe every few seconds. It needs to clear its memory banks, otherwise it begins to bog down, by repeating patterns over and over again.

*It's impossible to carry out goals. You can only select and carry out activities to work towards those goals.*  
**POWERPOINT**

In other words, like a computer, which has only so much RAM, your mind has only so much short-term memory – STM. After a period of time, you lose concentration because you have no more room for new information. The only way to add something new is to get rid of something old.

This is why you can have a brilliant thought, have the exact wording in your head, and then fifteen seconds later lose it completely back in the subconscious where it will take a great deal of prodding

to retrieve. You lose your train of thought because some thought in between the 15 seconds has bumped the other one out.

The lesson learned is that if you have a brilliant thought write it down immediately before redirecting your attention.

**NOTE** The brain hungers for new information, so much so, that if deprived of sensory stimulus, it will invent or create images. This has been observed in the form of mirages in deserts and strange visions people have after only a few minutes in a sensory deprivation chamber. Perhaps this brain pattern is a result of primeval instincts. When humans hunted and gathered food for survival, they reacted to situations rather than planned them, constantly taking in new information,

*The brain hungers for new information, so much so, that if deprived of sensory stimulus, it will invent or create images.*

processing it quickly, and then moving on.



## BAD TIME MANAGERS

THE FOLLOWING types of *bad time managers* tend to drive the others around them crazy. They should not be modeled.

**Always Try Hard Person** – The *always try hard person* needs to be recognized for trying hard, even when they fail. This type of bad time manager drains others around them because he or she is always needing and seeking approval. “*Is this okay? Are you sure it’s okay? Am I doing okay?*”

**Busy Bee** – The *busy bee* is always occupied doing something, but seldom takes the time to assess the value of what he or she is doing. Consequently, this type of

*The OVER-ORGANIZER is more interested in feeling organized than accomplishing anything.*

bad time manager tends to get only low priority projects completed.

**I Don’t Need Any Help Person** – The *I don’t need any help person* doesn’t believe in asking others for help even when needed. This type of bad time manager continually has to declare their independence to prove self-worth.

**Over-organizer** – The *over-organizer* is more interested in feeling organized than accomplishing anything. This type of bad time manager spends too much time planning and not enough time doing.

**Perfectionist** – The *perfectionist* wastes time on trivial, peripheral matters.

**Please Everybody Person** – The *please*

*everybody person* wants to satisfy everyone, and often over-commits.

**Time Nut** – The *time nut* never wastes a second. He or she is always preoccupied with time. Although, this type of bad time manager knows how to get everything done quickly, unfortunately, they often take shortcuts that end up wasting more time than saved.

**Wait to the Last Minute** – The *wait to the last minute person* is always putting things off to the last possible moment. Consequently, this type of bad time manager is either rushing around in a mad panic, or sitting around doing nothing.

*The success of a meeting often depends on having the right document – proofs, artwork, schedules, re-search charts, etc.--present at the start of the meeting. All too often we arrive like plumbers, leaving our tools behind.*

**DAVID OGILVY**

