

# EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT

Time management does not mean working more hours or giving up your free time. It does mean **working smarter**. Someone who works smarter emphasizes **effectiveness** – i.e. getting the right things done vs. getting the most things done.

There are **four** necessities in effective time management/working smarter:

1. **Planning** - know what tasks you have to get done
2. **Prioritizing** – organize your tasks so you get the right ones done - on time
3. **Asserting** - you have to know when and how to say no
4. **Banking** – think of ways to save time and determine how to use it wisely

## 1. Planning:

Studies have demonstrated that for every minute a person spends planning, s/he saves 4 minutes in execution.

### *How do you plan?*

Many of us use the “**to-do list**” as our workplan. We sit down once a day (either at the beginning of the day or the end) and write down all requests, projects, phone calls, deliverables, etc. that have to be done. Steven Covey calls this method a “first generation” time management approach – one characterized by **notes and checklists**.<sup>1</sup>

Alan Lakein – the father of time management – suggests making this list before the inevitable distractions of the day occur.<sup>2</sup> The to-do list should not include routine daily activities (e.g. lunch) that will be done anyway. Items for the to-do list may be derived from those on your master list, the previous day's list, or your personal calendar. Lakein says this list should be used to prioritize daily activities and provide the foundation and direction for the day.

The problem with a daily to-do list is that people often equate accomplishment with the number of items/tasks they are able to check off their list. This is the **wrong measure of success**. It is not the number of tasks you accomplish in a day that matters (especially in the workplace) – it's the importance of the tasks you accomplished that matters. It really doesn't matter if you accomplished 10 tasks on your list if you missed a major deadline.

Another problem with using a daily to-do list as your workplan is that it is often the important but not urgent elements that usually get pushed aside to make way for the day's emergency or “top priority” task is put on your desk. How many times have we heard: “Drop what you're doing, this is a priority.”

Whether you're focusing on less important tasks or top priority tasks, managing your daily activities without a view to the future is an ineffective way to work. You are essentially reacting to events as they unfold instead of being proactive and thinking ahead.

### *How do you become proactive?*

Steven Covey notes that **calendars** and **appointment books** are often used. These “second generation” time management tools help you look ahead and plan for activities and events that are coming in the future. He argues that while these tools are useful, you need to include a way to prioritize, clarify values and clarify the worth of activities based on their relationship to those values. In other words, you need to set goals – specific long, intermediate and short term targets

<sup>1</sup> Steven Covey. *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. 1989 p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Lakein. *How to Control Your Time and Your Life*. 1973.