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Organizing
MANAGING TIME AND CHANGE

"Never leave till tomorrow that which you can do today."

attributed to Benjamin Franklin

Time Management

A JROTC cadet in North Carolina wrote:

I REALLY THOUGHT that being the physical fitness monitor for my flight would be the best job in the JROTC program. I mean, who doesn't like to go outside and play sports? Because I am a member of the cross-country team, I felt I could contribute greatly to our physical fitness program.

It was fun leading my classmates in physical fitness. I was able to teach some of them new stretching moves and the best way to run, especially those who were not runners. When we played sports, I'd encourage those who weren't really into it, so by the end of the semester they were having fun. More importantly, they were feeling like they were a part of a team. And because I know I'm not good at volleyball, I picked a couple of other cadets who were, and had them help me teach everyone how to serve the ball properly. I even got better at it!

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- micromanaging
- time-sensitive activities

But what I didn't understand when I was put in charge as the physical fitness monitor was all the work it would take to do the job properly. Participating, teaching, motivating—that was easy for me. What I didn't realize was all the paperwork involved. I needed to have documentation for baseline and final assessments for the Presidential Fitness Program. I needed to input all the assessments into WINGS. I needed to have safety briefings prepared to brief the class every week. To encourage motivation, we had a Star Performer Program, which recognizes cadets excelling in push-ups, sit-ups, and the one-mile run. So I had to keep up with documentation for that, as well as posting the results in the classroom. I never really realized the time it takes to do all this. I still was involved with cross-country practices and meets, as well as getting homework done, studying for tests, and having time with my family and friends. So I had to learn to balance my JROTC responsibilities with school, family, and friends. I had to make some choices on what was more important to be done at that time and definitely not procrastinate.

But I sure have learned a lot from my experiences this past year, especially managing my time. I'm proud of what I've accomplished and did enjoy being the physical fitness monitor. I look forward to a new job in JROTC next year.

The Importance of Managing Your Time

In the previous lesson, you read about how to ensure you're spending your decision-making time wisely. Of course while making decisions is one of a manager's most important duties, managers do a lot more than that. They supervise, train, mentor, counsel, discipline, and study to be better at their jobs.

Sometimes they must pitch in and help out their employees on the front line. But as with decision making, the way a manager spends her or his time plays a very large part in how effective that manager is.

The feeling that there's never enough time is an important source of stress for managers. And as you read in your LE 100 course, stress can affect both your performance and your health. So learning to manage your time effectively is not only important for your job or your studies, but it's also important to your personal well-being.

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Time Management and the Eisenhower Principle

Obviously the Eisenhower Principle you read about in Chapter 4 Lesson 2 is not just a tool for prioritizing your decision making. It applies to all your activities—as a manager, as a student, as an individual. Examine each activity, and decide what is urgent and important, important but not urgent, urgent but not important, and not urgent and not important.

management TIP

Whether something is urgent or important can change. Review your priorities daily in case something that wasn't important or urgent yesterday has become so today.

Again, it's this last category that you want to eliminate. You're wasting time if you spend it on activities that are not urgent and not important when you should be doing something else. That's time you need to do the things that really count.

The Multitasking Trap and Fighting Off Distractors

Remember there's a difference between being efficient and being effective. You may work hard and be busy all day. But if you're spending time doing things that are not important, you may be efficient without being effective.

One trap many people fall into is the idea that they can multitask, or do more than one task at the same time. As you read in your LE 300 course, there's a useful way to multitask—reading an assignment while riding the bus, for example. But there's a popular and misguided idea that people can do several things at once and do them effectively. Examples would be talking on the phone while writing e-mails, reading social-media posts while talking to a coworker, or studying while watching TV.

When you multitask this way, you often end up spending more time on each task than you would have if you did them one after the other. It takes your brain time to refocus. You usually end up doing neither task well. So an important part of managing your time is to focus on doing one thing at a time.

In the LE 200 course, you read that a *distraction* is anything that takes you away from your planned activities. Any number of people, places, or things can be distractions. In order to focus, you must learn to weed out and eliminate as many distractions as you can. Many people find this quite challenging. You might be sitting at your desk trying to write a report for your JROTC class when your instructor comes in and requests updates on next week's color guard event. Or a junior cadet comes in to ask advice about a scheduling problem. Then your laptop pings to signal that an e-mail has arrived. Just about that time, you receive three social-media notifications on your smartphone.

While it may not seem like it at first, each of these is a distraction you can control. (That won't always be the case, of course.) You can ask your instructor to let you brief on the event later. You can make an appointment with the junior cadet to meet at a more convenient time. And you can turn off e-mail notifications on your laptop and the social-media notifications on your smartphone. Go back and review them at a time you have set aside for those activities.

In order to focus, you must weed out and eliminate as many distractions as you can.
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Make sure also that you aren't distracting yourself. The Internet is a great thing, but it's filled with endless distractions and time-wasters. Don't get caught up watching cat videos, playing games, or texting needlessly with others when you have important work to do.

Another common distractor for managers is ==micromanaging==—*trying to control or do all the work without delegating.* Learn to let go and allow your competent subordinates to do their work. If they can't do it, it's your job to see that they are trained to do so, not to do it yourself.

Finally, learn to say No to people who ask you to take on responsibilities you don't have time for. You can do this politely but firmly by explaining why you must say No and making it clear you are only refusing this particular request. That way you don't come off as unhelpful and uncooperative.

What Time Management Can and Cannot Do

When you're thinking about time management, it's important to realize what it can and cannot accomplish. Time management is a tool, but it's up to you to use it wisely.

Time management can help you think through your tasks, organize yourself, and use your time more effectively *and* efficiently. It can help you identify where you're not spending time wisely. In doing so, it can help reduce stress.

But time management is not a cure-all. It cannot set your goals and priorities for you. It cannot decide what is important or essential. It cannot change bad habits. It cannot force you to work on important tasks instead of wasting time on the Internet. You have to make those choices yourself. You must decide what your values, goals, and priorities are and stick to them.
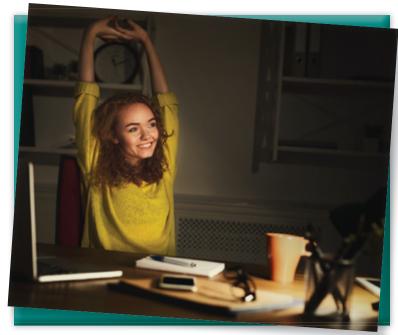
How to Be Effective, Not Just Busy

So it's not enough to just be busy. You want to be busy doing the right things—the *important* things. You want to be effective. This section looks at some ways to help you do that—knowing your natural schedule, deciding what's important, and implementing time-management steps.

The Natural Schedule

Everybody has their own natural schedule—the time of day when they have the most energy, focus best, and get the most done. Perhaps you're a morning person—you like to get up with the sun and get going. Or you may find you start slow and are at your best later in the day.

It's helpful to understand your natural rhythms and schedule yourself accordingly. You want to work on your most important tasks when you are at your peak. Getting enough sleep, eating healthy foods, and exercising regularly can help you achieve peak performance.

You can't stay at your best if you're chained to the desk, sitting and staring at a computer screen for hours on end. Every hour or two, you should take a short break, stand up, walk around a bit, and stretch. Doing so is not of itself wasting time—it's good for your health and helps you clear your mind and refocus.

Every hour or two you should take a short break, stand up, walk around a bit, and stretch.
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Deciding What's Important

In deciding what's important, you start by thinking about your values, goals, and priorities, and those of your organization—say, your JROTC unit. What is your purpose at school? What do you want to accomplish with your life? What's the purpose of the JROTC program? What motivated you to participate in it? Such questions lift you out of the day-to-day routine and help you see the bigger picture.

Next, think about the different roles you fulfill in your life— as a family member, a student, a JROTC cadet, and a good citizen. What roles does your JROTC unit play in the school, the community, the country? How do these roles interconnect and overlap? Are you giving each role the attention it deserves? Are you focusing on what's important for that role? Likewise, is the unit devoting itself to activities central to its roles?

When you keep your values, goals, and priorities in mind, it becomes easier to see what is really important, what is merely urgent, and what is neither.

ethical compass

Your roles outside the workplace are just as important as those where you work. Be sure to schedule time for those priorities as well.

Time-Management Steps

Once you're clear on your values, goals, and priorities, you're ready to implement your time-management system. The next sections of this lesson will discuss different tools and methods for doing that. The following are some other useful steps:

1. **Keep a log of your time for a week.** Break your time into quarter hours, and write down what you did. At the end of the week, add up the amount of time you spent doing things that were urgent and important, important but not urgent, urgent but not important, and not urgent and not important. How much time did you spend on each? What adjustments should you make?

2. **Eliminate clutter.** Whether it's in your room, the classroom, or your workspace, clutter is both distracting and a motivation killer. It's a lot easier to stay focused and motivated when your environment is tidy. For one thing, you don't waste time looking through piles of clothes or files for what you need. The same principle works for your calendar or sticky notes—get rid of items you don't need or have already dealt with.

3. **Take time for yourself.** Spend some time at the beginning or end of each day to think about what you've done and what's coming up. Think about the big picture, not the details. Be sure to exercise as well—go for a walk, hit the gym, or go for a swim.

Clutter is both distracting and a motivation killer.
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Different Time-Management Tools

There's a whole industry of people and products to help you manage your time. Some of the tools managers have found most useful are calendars, to-do lists, e-mail aids, and workflow software.

Calendars

A calendar is one of the most useful time-management tools, and one of the easiest to find. You can buy wall calendars at almost any store that sells paper products or books, but you can also download free calendar templates from the Internet. Just enter *calendar (year) template* in your favorite search engine. You can write in dates and times of events and appointments on the day in question, and see the whole month at once.

A calendar is one of the most useful time-management tools.
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Many people find pocket calendars useful. These come in both weekly and monthly versions, and allow you to enter more events in more detail. They're also more convenient to carry around in a pocket, purse, or backpack than a larger wall calendar.

Even more convenient are the calendar apps you can find on your laptop, tablet, or smartphone. The app allows you to toggle between monthly, weekly, and daily versions of your schedule. This eliminates having to write down appointments, meetings, and other dates more than once. You can also set it up to work across multiple compatible devices. This allows you to enter an appointment on your smartphone calendar and have it also appear on your tablet and laptop calendars. You can also set up notifications to remind you of important events.

You can find convenient calendar apps on your laptop, tablet, or smartphone.
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tech TIP

Most online Web-mail sites also feature calendars that you can access from any device.

To-Do Lists

A to-do list is an essential tool for managing time. No matter how good your memory is, you can't keep track in your head of everything you need to remember. You must write it down. This goes for dates, names, phone numbers, URLs, and so on.

A good to-do list helps in several ways. By helping you remember important tasks, it reduces stress. It also helps you focus on values, goals, and priorities. At a glance, it can give you the bigger picture. And it gives you a record of what you've accomplished.

You can keep your to-do list on something as simple as a legal pad or piece of notebook paper you carry around with you. A spiral notebook that fits in your pocket or purse is a handy and convenient place to keep your to-do list. Stationary and office supply stores also sell sophisticated organizers that combine a to-do list, calendar, and place to keep notes and other information.

Technology is helpful here, too. Software for keeping a to-do list is available for every type of device. Again, you can sync your list across your devices so that when you update it on one device, it updates on the others. Some software lets you sync your to-do list with your calendar, contacts, and map software. This gives you easy access to the time and place of the event, the address and phone number, and directions for how to get there.

E-mail Aids

Handling e-mail has become a significant issue for managers. It can pile up in your inbox faster than you can respond to it. As noted earlier, it can become a major distraction when you're trying to work on important tasks.

And yet e-mail is not something you can ignore. It often contains both important and urgent matters. It's the other messages that clog up the works and slow you down. The good news is that there are procedures you can implement and tools inside your e-mail programs or Web mail to help you deal with the never-ending flow.

First, turn off your e-mail notifications and set specific times in your schedule to check and respond to e-mail. How often you do this depends on your schedule and responsibilities, but it can reduce the number of distractions you deal with as you try to focus on more important tasks.

Second, have your e-mail sort itself as it comes in. Some e-mail programs will automatically direct e-mail from certain senders into special folders. (Some programs call these *filters*.) This allows you to direct e-mails from, say, your boss or your subordinates into a folder you always check first. You can also set up a spam folder, where you can send those pesky junk e-mails you don't even want to look at. You can also sort your inbox manually by sender if you want to find an e-mail fast.

Third, create folders in your e-mail by subject or by person, and move messages out of your inbox as you deal with them. This keeps your inbox uncluttered and easier to manage, and it makes it easier to find an older message when you need it.

Fourth, sort your e-mails by importance as you go through them. Most programs allow you to tag a message with a colored flag or a star. You can use these to indicate how important the message is and when you will respond to it. You can also sort e-mail into folders that you handle in order of importance. If you're not going to deal with an e-mail, delete it altogether.

Set specific times in your schedule to check and respond to e-mail.
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Fifth, if you are receiving copies of e-mails you don't really need to see, you can always ask people to take you off their distribution list. Some subordinates send their supervisor a copy of every message they send out. That's really a waste of a supervisor's time. Likewise, many legitimate business e-mails allow you to unsubscribe from their distribution list. This can cut down significantly on the number of unwanted and unneeded e-mails coming in.

Workflow Software

Another time-management aid that organizations are beginning to use is workflow software. There are many variations of workflow software, but their main task is to monitor the progress of projects and documents. This allows the manager and everyone else involved to see the project or document's status. When a task is completed, the software automatically notifies the individual or group responsible for the next task. The software can also route tasks to subordinates who are not busy instead of letting tasks pile up on the desks of those who are swamped.

Such software can be a real time-saver for a manager, who can quickly determine the status of a project or document and which individual or group is currently dealing with it. The manager can also easily find out where bottlenecks are and take action to fix them without having to chase through the office looking for the problem.

Weekly and Daily Schedules

Once you are clear on your values, goals, and priorities, and have armed yourself with the appropriate time-management tools, you're ready to develop a weekly schedule. This schedule is one of the most powerful ways to ensure that you're eliminating distractions and time-wasters and focusing on important tasks. It works for individuals and organizations. Depending on your role and responsibilities, you might find it useful to keep a more-detailed daily schedule as well. With today's electronic calendars, you can have one document you can view both in a weekly and a daily format.

Set a Specific Time to Work on Each Priority

In drawing up your schedule, think about the most important and positive thing you could do in each of your different roles this week. In the same way, think about what your organization could accomplish during the week. Write down a goal or priority for each role. Then schedule these priorities *first*. These are the important tasks you want to devote time to this week. You should schedule specific times to deal with them.

Once you have scheduled your most important activities, you can fill in your schedule with other priorities. You'll want to set aside time to deal with the urgent and important, for example. And you'll need to schedule time for things like dealing with e-mail, phone calls, and those unexpected problems that invariably pop up. But you'll ensure that you're dealing each day with the important items you want to address.

Once you've scheduled your most important activities, you can fill in your schedule with other priorities.

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Preview Each Day

Now as you go through each day, it's essential you stick to your schedule, changing it only when you've carefully thought through the change. At the beginning of the day (or the night before), review your schedule to see if it still works.

Taking these moments to prepare for your day is key to managing your time. It helps you get back in touch with those values, goals, and priorities you're trying to serve. Review your activities and identify which are important but not urgent or urgent and important. Try to get rid of or reschedule anything that's not one or the other.

Planning Time-Sensitive Activities

Many managers find it useful to distinguish the time-sensitive activities on their calendar from those that can be done at any time. Time-sensitive activities are *those that occur at given times, such as meetings or appointments*. You can distinguish them by using special symbols on an electronic calendar or different-colored ink on a paper calendar. This helps you see where you have flexibility in your schedule and where you have solid time commitments.

It's also useful to keep a list of small tasks you can accomplish in the odd few minutes that might crop up between appointments. You might use that time to reply to an e-mail or look up a document you'll need later.

Your schedule is important, but don't become chained to it. It's there to help you think about what's important and set aside sufficient time to act on that. There's a saying that "Life is what happens to you while you're making other plans." Things will happen—those unexpected "urgent but important" decisions you have to deal with right now. You'll need to adjust your schedule, sometimes radically, as you go along. What's essential is to change it only after carefully considering what you're doing, while not losing sight of what's important.

At the end of each week, spend a few minutes reflecting on how things went. Did you achieve your goals? Did you spend enough time on the important, and not merely the urgent? If you got sidetracked, what happened, and can you prevent it in the future? Then you prepare for the next week, beginning the cycle again.

✔ CHECKPOINTS

Lesson 1 Review

Using complete sentences, answer the following questions on a sheet of paper.

1. What are some examples of misguided multitasking?
2. What are some things time management cannot do?
3. What are some things you can do to achieve your peak performance?
4. What helps you see what is really important, what is merely urgent, and what is neither?
5. What are some things you can do with a calendar app?
6. What is the main task of workflow software?
7. When should you schedule your most important and positive priorities?
8. What should you do at the end of each week?

APPLYING YOUR LEARNING

9. What are the most important things you should schedule this week, and when should you schedule them?