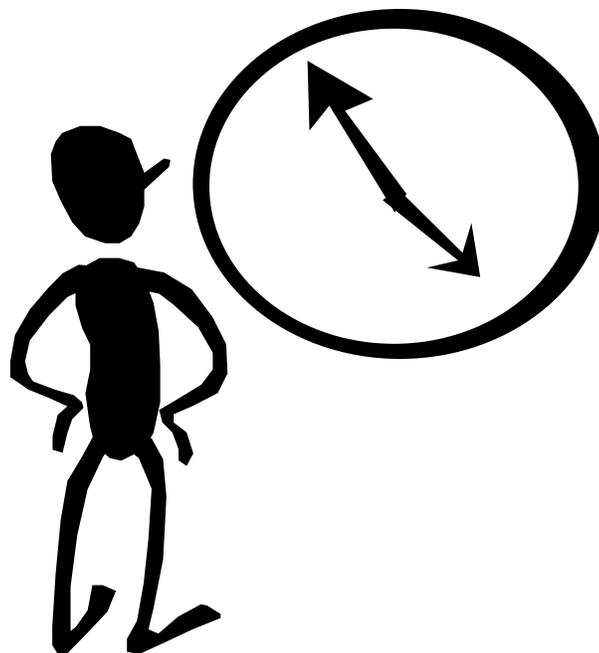


The Art and Craft of

MANAGING YOUR TIME



BY

FRED FISHER

REGIONAL PROGRAM “WORKING TOGETHER”

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Foreword

Time management is a concept that everyone can relate to. We all have problems managing our time, perhaps with one exception-you. But for the rest of us, there is never enough of it to do everything we want to do and yet, when we look around, it seems like everyone else has more time to do what **he or she** wants to do than we do. Frustrating, isn't it? To the rescue are a zillion how-to-manage-your-time books, articles, web sites, time management experts, consultants-you name it and they are there ready to add minutes, hours, even months to your days. Well, maybe not months but you get the picture.

Of course, your next question is: Who needs another document extolling the virtues on **Time Management?**

As a trainer-consultant-facilitator, **you do!** Why? Because I've just read at least 43 books on the subject and am prepared to boil all the wisdom these erudite authors have to share down into a few pages of brilliant prose which, of course, will **SAVE YOU TIME! Save you time**, of course, if you decide to read this rather than the 43 books or so that I read getting ready to write this thing. On the other hand, you would save even more time by not reading it but then reading it might not save you time in the long run. Or, at least, that's how I plan to convince you to continue reading.

Better yet, this *boiling-down-of-wisdom* summation is followed by a series of learning exercises that will enable you to go forth and train others in how to manage their time. I need not remind you, but of course I am, that these training exercises will also **SAVE YOU TIME** in preparing for these workshops. Well, all this verbal patter is wasting time so let's get on with the first of these two timesaving weapons, a few concepts and strategies about time management so you can dazzle your participants with your newly acquired wisdom.

I trust you have found this message *timely*.

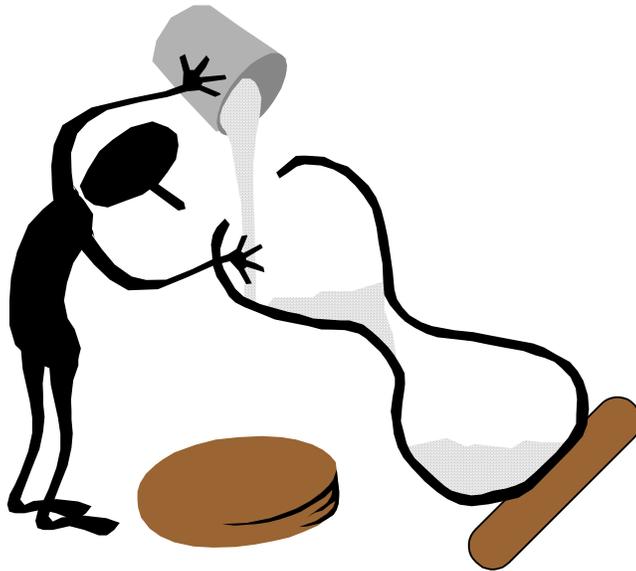
Fred Fisher

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PART I: READER

CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES



*THUS THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME
BRINGS IN HIS REVENGES*

William Shakespeare

TIME MANAGEMENT

Concepts, Strategies, Tools and a Little Common Sense

*Time is nature's way of keeping
everything from happening at once*

The concept of time has been a pre-occupation of the human species for centuries. Over two millenniums ago, St. Ignatius Theophorus, Bishop of Antioch, is credited with saying, “*Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend.*” The Bishop’s after thought was surely something like, “*Therefore, manage it wisely*”, making him among the world’s first recorded time management consultants. About three hundred years later, the Greek biographer Plutarch, in his musings of Pythagoras the mathematician, credits him with saying that “time is the soul of the world.” This certainly puts “time” into a category of rare commodities that cry out to be managed, if not revered. But, enough *timely* philosophical and historical musings for now, let’s see what our contemporary colleagues have to say about time and how to manage it.

Management is management is management.

The first thing that we discover when we enter into the world of Time Management is the similarity between managing time and managing just about any thing else. For example, most early attempts to describe what general management is all about cover such fundamental tasks as: planning, organizing, budgeting, coordinating, directing and decision making. Alec Mackenzie, one of the earlier gurus of time management, organizes his first book on the subject into the following topics:

- Managing yourself
- Planning your work
- Getting organized
- Blocking interruptions (a time *budgeting* process)
- Handling decisions
- Delegating
- Managing the time of subordinates, and finally one that has been largely overtaken by the computer and the internet,
- Working with your secretary.¹

Before he gets into any of these “managerial” tasks, Mackenzie, like most other time management specialists, has us look at *time wasters*. This is a favorite tool of those who provide training in time management and I will not stray far from this path.

¹ R. Alec Mackenzie, *The Time Trap: Managing your way out*, New York, AMACOM, 1972, pp. ix-xi.

After all, if we are going to manage our time, we need to know where it goes, at least those aspects of it that we can control.

The internal-external dichotomy

Mackenzie and others usually divide time wasters into internally generated, those we control; and external, those we might not be able to control but can often manage. Mackenzie has asked managers and professionals all over the world, individuals who manage very different types of organizations, about their time wasters and the answers are “always similar and often identical”. Invariably they list the external time wasters first; things like the telephone, meetings, paperwork, visitors, and delays. The more personal ones are, more often than not, revealed only after the “external” problems have been discussed. According to Mackenzie, they include lack of delegation, lack of planning and priorities, putting out metaphorical fires that could have been prevented, and procrastination.²

His internal-external dichotomy strikes me as being a bit difficult to defend since the categories tend to overlap and fuse on many aspects of time management. However, other authors also divide time wasters into two amorphous clumps, so maybe they are on to an important learning point. Perhaps some of the other time experts can help clarify this point.

Marion Haynes, one of the more recent time management specialists, uses the terms *self-generated* and *environmental* to describe these two major categories of time wasters. His breakdown of these categories is a bit less “managerial” in tone and rhetoric than the one offered by Mackenzie.

Self-generated Time Wasters

Haynes lists three in the self-generated category: disorganization, procrastination, and the inability to say no.

I. Disorganization: This is a big offender in wasting our time and most time management experts waste little time in jumping on *disorganization* with both feet. Many who offer training workshops in time management, as a prescription to overcoming this personal offence to killing time, advise us to keep a time log of every big and little thing we do for 24 hours. Some experts even like to punish us by suggesting we track our every move for a week! It’s a tool that I find hard to use. After all, it is such a waste of time to stop every hour or so to make all those notes. Don’t expect to see the daily log exercise in the Tool Kit that follows this discussion of Concepts and Strategies.

The opposite of disorganization is organization and we are advised to organize our desks, our filing systems, our approach to work, our sticky post-it notes, even our lives. Now, I happen to believe **a little** organization is useful when it comes to

² Ibid, p.4.

trimming time wasters, so be assured that we will return to the organization syndrome a bit later.

As Peter Drucker, the venerable management sage would remind us, *Organization is not an end in itself but a means to an end*. On the other hand extreme order, like extreme disorder, can be a vicious time waster. The effective time manager operates within a central band of acceptable tolerance between these two extremes. The message is-get organized but don't overdo it!

We will return, after we have looked at the conditions that waste our time, to actions we can take to overcome time wasters.

II. Procrastination: Harold Taylor has described procrastination, another self-generated time wasting favorite, as “giving up what you want most for what you want now.” Jan Jasper, in her book *Take Back Your Time*, says procrastination, while it is often seen as the underlying cause of wasting time, is usually a symptom of something else. She says people procrastinate for many different reasons.

- *Fear of success*: if we succeed, people will demand more of us so why succeed.
- *Fear of failure*, which frankly makes more sense to me than the “success” rationale.
- *Loss of interest in our goal*. Maybe our interests or priorities have changed.
- *Lack of a deadline*: (There's an old saying, “If I had eight hours to cut down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my axe.” Sound familiar?)
- *Too many agendas and over-commitment*: These can put us into a state of inaction as we fret that we won't be able to get everything done.
- *Perfectionism*: we don't want to start something until we can do it “right” which brings us back to the fear of failing.
- And, of course, there is *the status quo*, or just plain inertia. Procrastination is a great defender of the status quo.³

*Most people put off till tomorrow
that which they should have done
yesterday.*

Ed Howe

³ Jan Jasper, *Take Back Your Time*, New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999, pp.86-7

III. Inability to say no is the final self-generated time waster that Marion Haynes describes. I suspect it is one we can all relate to-and agree with. For whatever reason, and there are many, most of us find it hard to say “no”. We end up doing things we don’t want to do, don’t have time to do, sometimes don’t even have the personal or physical resources to do. Jules Renard, whoever he is, made this astute observation (the one in the little box) about the ability to say no.

The truly free person is one who can decline a dinner invitation without giving an excuse.

Environmental Time Wasters

Haynes and others are largely in agreement that there are a host of time wasters that are often beyond our control but can nevertheless be managed. Haynes calls these *environmental time wasters*. They include:

- Visitors.
- Telephone calls.
- Mail, and we would now include e-mails.
- Waiting for appointments, for meetings to begin, for someone else to complete something, airplanes, trolleys, the bathroom if your three grandkids are living with you, the list is endless.
- Meetings all those awful meetings, not only the ones we call but also those that other people organize, which I am convinced are all designed largely to waste each other’s time.
- Crises. (It is only partly true that crises can’t be avoided) For example, some of us hate Mondays because they are always crisis prone. That’s because we procrastinate, not doing what should have been done the week before, and the week before, and the week before. After about three weeks of procrastinating we find we have a crisis on our hands.

Core Management Tasks Masquerading as Time Wasters

Haynes has some good ideas about what to do when things go wrong, when crises erupt, and we will get to those in a moment, but first, a quick reminder that there are other time wasters that Mackenzie mentioned that are internal but somehow different from the ones just mentioned. I think of them as core managerial tasks, even strategies, that can benefit from better time management skills. They are lack of planning, lack of delegating, and need for better decision making and ways to determine priorities. These are the time wasters that cut across the organization and are best dealt with in organizational terms. Like the sign

IGNORE THIS SIGN

these time wasters are paradoxical. They are also at the heart of very personal approaches to time management, like making “to do” lists and putting priorities on tasks we need to do. I find these are among the more practical *planning* tools we can employ to manage our time.

Identifying Time Wasters

One of the first tasks most trainers have their participants do in a time management workshop is make a list of the time wasters they are experiencing in their personal lives and organizations. There are many ways to structure the exercise and I will suggest a few in the Tool Kit section so stay tuned! But first, here are the types of time wasters you might expect to see on these lists.

Interruptions > telephones > unclear objectives > lack of information > meetings > lack of priorities > procrastination > lack of procedures on routine matters > talking too much > pet projects > red tape > can't say no > responsibility without authority > junk mail > lack of planning > incomplete information > management by crisis > failure to listen > attempting too much at once > poor filing system > fatigue > lack of feedback > coffee breaks > staff meetings > disorganization > indecision > paperwork > over-commitment

Assume for a moment that this is a list of time wasters that you or workshop participants have just generated. Three key questions should come to mind immediately:

- 1) Which ones am I personally responsible for?
- 2) Which ones are generated by external events or by other people?
- 3) Of those generated by external events or other people, which ones could I possibly control, manage more effectively or simply eliminate?

When most people answer these questions, they come to the realization that they are both the problem and the potential solution to their time management problems. This is what Alec Mackenzie had in mind when he made *Managing Yourself* the first substantive chapter of his book, *The Time Trap*.

Reflection time: *It's time to stop and reflect on what has been said. Take a few moments and jot down those time wasters in your life that come immediately to mind.*

Return to the list and circle those that are self-inflicted. Underline those that are coming into your life from someplace else (generated by other events or people). Pick 2-3 from each of the categories that you think are important to do something about and list them below. After each time waster, write one or two actions you can take to better manage your time in relation to the waster.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

*For tyme ylost may
nought recovered be*

Chaucer

A Short Conceptual Journey

Two conceptual frameworks or principles are particularly important in forging a time management strategy that works effectively and delivers results that can be sustained over time. The first is the Pareto Principle and the second, Stephan Covey's Four Quadrant paradigm. Vilfredo Pareto, a 19th century Italian economist and sociologist, devised what has become known in management circles as the 80/20 rule. Pareto's Principle states that the *significant* items in any given group will normally constitute a relatively small portion of the total items in the group, for example 20%. Joseph Juran, who made his fortune as a Total Quality Management guru in Japan in the nineteen sixties, coined the terms *vital few* and *trivial many*, based on Pareto's Principle.

From a time management perspective, Pareto and many of his conceptual emulators, would say:

Spending 80% of our time on reversing the time wasting *trivial many* will produce only 20% of the results we are seeking. If, on the other hand, we spent 20% on a *vital few* time savers, they will reward us with 80% of the intended results.

In other words, optimize the use of your time by addressing those time wasters that are most time consuming. Or, to put a more positive spin on time management, maximize those time savers that save you the greatest amount of time for the least expended personal energy and aggravation.

Stephan Covey’s approach to sorting out the relationships between *urgent* and *not urgent*, and *important* and *unimportant*, are very useful tools in applying the Pareto 80/20 Principle.

[Quadrant 1] Urgent And Important	[Quadrant 2] Important But Not Urgent
[Quadrant 3] Urgent But Not Important	[Quadrant 4] Neither Urgent Nor Important

In managing our time, Covey says our priorities should be on those things that are located in Quadrant 1, the box in the Northwest Territory. These are the 20% items that deliver 80% of the goods. In my case, it was deciding to get open-heart surgery (what some would consider important and urgent) rather than going to India on an important but not urgent consulting assignment, given the circumstances and alternatives.

The NE Quadrant (# 2), where the important but not urgent stuff resides, is where procrastinators like to operate. If I might bore you again with my example, these are the exercise, good diet, and take-care-of-yourself type decisions I should have been making on how to use my time.

Did I feel guilty when I called the ambulance a few days before I was to leave for India? Absolutely! I've always felt the need to put priorities on the urgent but not particularly important stuff, which usually involves meeting the expectations of others. Responding to other people's expectations helps feed the need to be wanted.

All things considered, these Quadrant 3 decisions need to be put into perspective. While they have some value, and at times considerable value, it is often less than our egos want to admit. Phone calls, meetings, drop-in visitors, trips to India, taking on last minute assignments, answering e-mails before the other person's message is even complete, _____ (fill in the blank with your own pet *urgency* fetish).

You can, I suspect, relate to these seemingly *urgent* calls on our time. We all face them daily and are often not very good at **just saying no**. I find myself being particularly vulnerable to responding to urgent but not particularly important situations. As Jules Renard would remind us, we need to learn how to decline the "dinner invitations" in our lives without giving excuses.

Charles Hummel wrote a book many years ago called the *Tyranny of the Urgent*. It was all about the dilemmas that Covey covers in his second and third quadrants.

We live in constant tension between the urgent and the important. The problem is that the important task rarely must be done today, or even next week. The urgent task calls for immediate action—endless demands, pressure every hour and day.

A man's home is no longer his castle; it is no longer a place away from urgent tasks because the telephone breaches the walls with imperious demands. The momentary appeal of these tasks seems irresistible and important, and they devour our energy. But in the light of time's perspective their deceptive prominence fades; with a sense of loss we recall the important tasks pushed aside. We realize we've become slaves to the "tyranny of the urgent".⁴

As I read Hummel's description of the tyranny of the urgent, I immediately think of the obsession more and more people have to submit to the tyranny of the cell phone and Internet. New technology has given powerful credence to the tyranny of the urgent. For many there is no escape.

Now, down in the SE corner of Covey's decision-making map is what he calls the Quadrant of Waste. These are all those things we do when we are totally wiped out from trying to cope with those things in Quadrant 1, that are important and urgent, and Quadrant 3, the urgent but not important. These are the escapes into mind numbing experiences like watching really bad movies and reading trash novels at any cost!

⁴ Charles E. Hummel, *Tyranny of the Urgent*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967.

Strategies And Tactics For Managing Time

I want to shift the discussion to strategies and tactics you can employ to manage your time more effectively. We will undertake this part of the journey by looking at a number of principles Jan Yager, author of *Creative Time Management for the New Millennium*, believes should form the foundation of any time management efforts you plan to undertake.

- 1) **Be active, not reactive:** In other words, take charge of your time and decisions. *You decide what is important to you, and say “no” to anything that interferes.* This works better if you happen to live on an island with a population of one. Otherwise, I suggest you temper Ms. Yager’s mandate with a bit of humanistic realism.
- 2) **Set goals:** The Fisher corollary to this is: *If you don’t know where you’re going, it will be difficult to know whether you wasted time getting there.*
- 3) **Prioritize actions:** Think like Vilfredo Pareto. Apply his 80/20 principle and then call on Covey to run your priorities through his *quad* machine.
- 4) **Keep your focus:** This means not trying to carry out several top priority actions at the same time to achieve your number one goal. One could also consider tucking Hummel’s *tyranny of the urgent* under this principle as well.
- 5) **Create realistic timeframes:** And, put completion dates on the items on your to-do list.
- 6) **Do it now:** don’t procrastinate.
- 7) **Balance your life:** Time management is not only about making every minute a work minute.⁶

*The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago.
The second best time is now.*

Chinese Proverb

How to Manage Your Procrastination Tendencies

I covered earlier some reasons why many of us procrastinate. Procrastinate, in case you forgot, is the art of not doing today what you should have been done last week. Fortunately, there are some tools we can use to take the *pro* out of *procrastination*.

- Try to understand why you procrastinate and the consequences you endured as a result. When does this happen? What situations seem to evoke this non-activity burst of negative enthusiasm? When you finally got going on the task you were avoiding, what motivated you? What have been the costs of putting things off?
- Pick a situation you know drives you to procrastinate and just do it!
- Set priorities and focus on those tasks and actions that top your to-do list.

⁶ Jan Yager, *Creative Time Management for a New Millennium*. Stanford, CT Hanacroix Books, 1999. Pp.10-3.

- Set deadlines, post them where you can't help but see them-- on your computer screen, the toilet seat, a scrap of paper wrapped around your car keys.
- Start! Sometimes I have a mental block when I sit down to write. This is the cerebral message that tells me I'm operating on *procrastinate*. In these cases, it helps to start writing anything that is connected with the topic. On projects, this might be doing step # 22 even though the task schedule has you back on # 1. Obviously, this doesn't work very well when everything is sequential and dependent on past actions. In this case, think about taking out the garbage.
- Confront your tendency to engage in perfectionism. After all, this is merely a sophisticated form of procrastination. Trying to be perfect before you leave the starting block feels like you're doing the task without doing it. Engaging in endless research or preparation are clues that your sphincter muscles have been put in charge. I just heard that an old friend is still working on his doctoral dissertation - twenty-five years after he got his research proposal approved! Everyone on his original committee has either died or retired. Now, that's a sterling effort in procrastination.
- Think how great it will feel to have the task behind you. And, even set yourself some tangible rewards for completing the task. It works even better if you commit openly to sharing the reward with a good friend.

There is another side to this business of procrastination. As Samuel Johnson wrote, *Depend on it, Sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.* But, Eugene Griessman reminds us that people who live on the edge of a cliff sometimes fall off. Nevertheless, there can be pent-up energy and potential creativity in deadlines. Living close to the edge often provides spectacular views. Given these counterpoints to the downside of procrastinating:

- Try to recognize the difference between procrastinating and not being quite ready to tackle a tough assignment. There are times when our sub-conscious is working overtime to put the pieces together while even we fail to recognize it. We may not be procrastinating but rather warming up the engine for a productive race to the finish line.

*The day will happen
whether or not you get up.*
John Ciardi, poet

The Inability to Say No

You wouldn't think that such a small word would be such a big time waster, but it is. And, it figures prominently in just about every book on time management. It's also a time waster I can relate to since I have constantly been unable to say "no". But there is a positive side to this dilemma. In defense of all those who suffer from this apparent time wasting malady let me say that not all "nos" that look like time wasters are really time wasters.

It is certainly true that the inability to say “no” creates situations where our time would be better spent doing something other than what we obligated ourselves to by not saying that magic word. On the other hand, the doing-too-many-things-at-once syndrome the time management experts claim is a result of not being able to say “NO!” has a positive side. For those individuals who have a high energy level or a commitment to many worthy things, at least from their perspective, not saying “no” is more a mark of being engaged than wasting time. So we need to be aware of what the consequences are of saying “no”, or not. Nevertheless, it’s a potential time waster of note so let’s take a look at what the experts have to say about making *no* a more prominent part of our vocabulary.

Getting Behind the Inability to Say No

The first step in getting our “nos” in perspective is to understand what is driving our need to say “Yes” when we should be saying “No”. Some people get their self-esteem recharged from being needed by others. Or, by valuing the opinion of others about them more than they value their own wellbeing. By never saying “no”, these individuals can then claim they are overwhelmed with doing other people’s business, which in one way or another makes them feel important. In a weird way, this time waster feeds right into the one we just discussed-PROCRASTINATION! Sometimes the demands of others, resulting from our inability to say “no”, gives us an excuse for putting off those *important* things we should be doing. The *tyranny of the urgent* lives in the same verbal box where we keep our “nos” stored. (As I write this, I am actually surprised at how all these interesting concepts and ideas about managing our time more effectively are interwoven.)

Putting our inability to say “no” into perspective is the most important thing we can do regarding this potential time waster. We can gain perspective and understanding about what drives us to never say no by taking some recent episodes where we wish we would have said “no” and analyzing them under our WHY microscope. Why did I not say “no”? This answer will probably need to be followed by a series of other Why inquiries until you get down to the root causes that keep you from uttering “no”. As Jan Jasper says, “Whose life is it, anyway?”

The next important thing to do regarding the need to say “no” is to understand what’s driving the other person to get us to say “yes”. There’s an old saying, *Don’t put that monkey on my back*, and it’s a good one to remember if you are the type of person who hates to say “no”. Eugene Griessman reminds us that taking care of other people’s monkeys can be very time consuming.

Don’t take on every problem or responsibility (i.e., monkey) that other people want to give you. If you accept every problem that’s proffered you, your life can become a nightmare. Many a manager has spent days, months, even years dealing with monkeys that have jumped from their rightful owners onto their own back.⁷

⁷ B. Eugene Griessman, *Time Tactics of Very Successful People*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1994. P. 109.

In a book entitled *The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey*, the authors offer some sage advice for those who have too many monkeys on their back from not being able to say “no”.

- Remember that the world is full of monkeys, so pick only monkeys you really care about.
- Make people care for their own monkeys. You shouldn't try to solve other people's problems if they aren't willing to do anything about it themselves. There's nothing wrong with giving them a hand with their monkeys now and then, just as long as you make sure that they keep their monkeys after you've finished helping.⁸

Taking on other people's monkeys may mean your own will not get the attention they need. Another person's monkey on your back may be in response to one of those urgent but not important calls for help when your best option would have been a polite but firm “no”.

Learning to say “No” with class

Jan Yager provides us with a few clues about saying “no”. First, she says, we need to decide what our needs and limits are and to say “no” to whatever interferes. Knowing our needs and limits results from being clear about our goals. Saying “no” therefore has to do with the best use of your time based on your goals, needs and limits, not the person or organization that would like a “yes” response. Once we are clear about these fundamental concerns, she offers a four-part lesson in saying “no” with class.

- **Practice saying “no” in a way that is kind, polite and positive.** It's not saying “no” that gets us in trouble, its more often the way we say it.
- **Desensitize yourself to the word “no”.** For whatever reason, that word has a hard time making it past our lips and after we have made a commitment we wish we hadn't, we find ourselves biting our tongue. It reminds me of a program on Consulting Skills that counsels those who are establishing the social contract with their potential client to state their “wants” from the client as part of the contracting stage of the relationship. It was amazing to find many skillful trainers who found it difficult to state their “wants” in a forthright and positive way.
- **Be clear you are saying “no” to a request but not rejecting the person making the request.** Sometimes in our efforts to say “no”, we blame the messenger for bringing the request. Don't turn “no” into a personal attack.
- **Handle it as a “No, not this, but...”** A creative response that says “no” with kindness and understanding will help you overcome the inability to say “no” and keep your contacts and options open.⁹

⁸ Kenneth Blanchard, William Oncken, Jr., and Hal Burrows, *The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey*. New York: William Morrow, 1989.

⁹ Jan Yager, pp. 16-7.

Note: I'm going to stray a bit from a logical sequencing of topics. We've been looking at internal time wasters and have covered two of the three that seem to be an obsession with most of the time management experts. These are procrastination and the inability to say no. The other is disorganization. For me, disorganization fits more logically into a discussion of organizational management time wasters, although you might argue that organizations don't waste time, only people do. Good point but let's not waste time on it.

Reflection: *It's time to stop for a moment and reflect on the ideas we have been pursuing together. Let me suggest you focus on two: procrastination and the inability to say "no".*

I. Think about a situation that has you in a state of procrastination at the present time. (If you are free of such burdens, congratulations. Rather than doing the following task, call your priest or psychiatrist and set up a session to discuss your delusions of timely imperfections.)

- *Describe the procrastination in some detail: what is causing you to procrastinate? Why are you procrastinating? When did it start? What have you done to date to overcome the procrastination?*

- *Now that you understand a bit about why you are procrastinating over what, jot down at least three concrete action steps you plan to take within the next three days to make concrete progress on the object of your procrastinating fascinations.*

1.

2.

3.

II. Recall a time recently when you were unable to say “no” and regretted it immediately, but it was too late to turn the decision around.

- Describe the situation.

- Try to recollect what motivated you to say “yes” when you really wanted to say “no”. Jot down your thoughts.

- What might have been the consequences of saying “no”?

- If you could replay that conversation again what might you say to decline getting involved and yet keep the relationship on a positive and even keel?

*Time is a great teacher, but
unfortunately it kills all its students*
Hector Berlioz

I've just wasted 23 minutes trying to eliminate the line that presents itself just below this note. AND, I FAILED! Sometimes my computer is my worst time waster. When this @#&+! ~ line appeared and refused to leave—it was, for me, both **urgent and important**. I wanted to eliminate it and move on. After all, it was important to have a nice looking document. Then it became just urgent. At last, I decided to incorporate it into the text, relegating the task to Covey's Quadrant # 4, as an example of how we waste time on things that are **urgent but not important**.*

Time Management Issues That Manifest Themselves in Organizational Settings

In this final section I will look at time wasters I believe are more associated with organizations and the work setting. Specifically, we will explore together: disorganization, which I see partly as a lack of day-to-day planning; the lack of priorities; the need for delegation; and meetings. What I won't cover, which you will find in many time management books, are such time wasters as the telephone, visitors, paperwork, and delays. My rationale for not including these is admittedly weak but certainly in the spirit of the discussion. I simply don't want to waste my time writing about them

*Even if you are on the right track,
You'll get run over if you just sit there.
Old railroad saying*

If you really want to save time, get organized.

The **to-do list** reigns supreme with time management gurus. And, I must admit that I would be lost without my many lists of what needs to be done. Roy Alexander, in *Commonsense Time Management*, adds an aura of legitimacy to the *TO-DO List* and I want to pull him into the discussion for a few moments. He says:

Your To-Do List is the cornerstone of priority-powered time management. Try to get by without it and your time management will be a flop. It's as fundamental to managing your time as the carefully tailored business plan is in raising corporate capital.¹⁰

He also tells a story from the annals of early corporate management that is both interesting and insightful. Nearly a century ago, Charles Schwab, the President of Bethlehem Steel Corporation, asked one of his consultants, Ivy Lee, to "Show me a way to get more things done. If it works, I'll pay you anything within reason." Lee said to Schwab, "Write down everything you have to do tomorrow." After Schwab completed his list, Lee told him to number them in the order of their importance. He did and then Lee said, "Tomorrow morning before you do anything else, start working on number one and stay with it until you complete it. Then do the same with number two, three and so on until you finish. If you can't complete everything on schedule, don't worry. At least you will have done the important things before getting distracted by things that aren't that important." (Like the urgent things we talked about earlier!)

Lee told Schwab the important thing was to: work on the lists every day, evaluate the importance of everything you have to get done, establish priorities, develop a plan of action, and stick to it. "When you're convinced this system is working for you, then have

¹⁰ Roy Alexander, *Commonsense Time Management*. New York: American Management Association, 1992. p.23.

your employees try it. If it works for them send me a check for whatever you think the idea is worth.”

A few weeks later Schwab sent Lee a check for \$25,000 and a note saying it was the most profitable lesson of his career. I can't even imagine what that consulting fee Schwab paid to Lee for a few moments of sound advice would be worth in today's dollars. Probably millions! With that short interchange and Schwab's willingness to adopt Lee's ideas immediately, with no procrastinating, they initiated the process of time management that would ultimately grow into a major industry.

Author's note: If you read enough management books, you will come across different variations of this story. The amount of money may vary and the conversation that is quoted may be slightly different between the two men but the underlying messages are all the same. There is no doubt that it happened and that it left a profound impression on those who were present at the time. It has become an important episode in the annals of management folklore.

Certainly, many variations of this managerial approach to managing time and getting things done have been invented and reinvented over the past century but Lee's simple To-Do List has stood the test of time. It's an amazing story of a simple tool and its application. It is also reassurance that these to-do lists we create for our own use from day-to-day enjoy a rich heritage of success and utility.

*The fox that waited for the chickens
to fall off their perch died of hunger.*
Greek Proverb

While you may be using such lists to organize your days' work as well as your personal life, here are a few ideas to test the quality of your To-Do List mastery. Roy Alexander says:

- Get in the habit of writing a To-Do List every day.
- Be realistic and aware of the limitations of your timeframe.
- Don't over-schedule.
- Allow a time cushion.
- Review your list every morning.
- Add more items as you do them.
- Before doing each item, ask, "Why me?" Delegate when possible.
- Group related activities.

He also suggests analyzing your To-Do List particulars against the following criteria:

- **Necessity:** is it necessary? Sometimes we continue to do things after their utility has disappeared.
- **Appropriateness:** focuses on who should be performing the task, suggesting that it be pushed down to the lowest level in the organization where there is the competency and the resources to do it. With the responsibility should go the authority.

- **Effectiveness:** Does this task reinforce and support your organization’s mission and operating goals?
- **Efficiency:** After satisfied the task meets the first three criteria, ask yourself, “Is there a better way to do it?”¹¹

The President of a large international cosmetic firm has a habit of writing down at the end of each day the six most important things she will do tomorrow. This time management tool was so successful for her that she urged her sales associates to do the same. They each receive note pads, which are inscribed at the top of each page with the following task: *The Six Most Important Things I Must Do Tomorrow*. With over 200,000 sales associates worldwide, this could add up to over a million important tasks being addressed each workday. Knowing about the success of this corporation, one can only wonder how much credit should go to this simple but profound time management motivator?¹²

*Tomorrow is often
the busiest day of the week*
Spanish proverb

Reflection: *Disorganization is a powerful time waster and often we aren’t even aware of how much time we spend nurturing our disorganization habits. Take a moment and record some examples of how you waste time because of disorganization.*

As you reflect on these examples, jot down some action steps you might take to bring a bit more organization to the ways you use your time-and to drive those nasty time wasters out of your life!

¹¹ Roy Alexander, pp.24-5.

¹² B. Eugene Griessman, p. 14.

*If two people ride the same horse,
one must ride behind.*

Eritrean proverb

Priorities

Priorities have been mentioned frequently by all those I have quoted from in this discussion. Marion Haynes, a well-known time management consultant I mentioned earlier, likes to determine priorities using a simple three level assessment process.

A Priorities are MUST DO Tasks: These are the critical items like management directives, significant deadlines, unusual opportunities, and important client requirements.

B Priorities are SHOULD DO Tasks: items of medium value to the organization, tasks if completed that may contribute to improved performance but aren't essential and do not have critical deadlines.

C Priorities are in the NICE TO DO Category of Tasks: They have the lowest value to the organization's mission. While they may be fun or interesting to do, they could be eliminated, postponed or rescheduled for less busy work periods.¹³

You may want to devise your own scheme for putting priorities on the tasks you enter in your To-Do List, based on the type of operation you manage or the context of your short term planning. Consider the Covey Four Quadrant model as another way to assign priorities to your activities. And, never underestimate the importance of making judgements about the importance of each task in relation to all others. Without priorities everything has value and no value. It's a verbal twist of the old English proverb *One of these days is none of these days*. As Jean-Paul Sartre, the French philosopher, dramatist and novelist said, "Three o'clock is always too late or too early for anything you want to do." Was he talking about his own inability to manage his time? Perhaps, since he punched no time clock and rarely answered to anyone for most of his distinguished career.

*To be good is noble, but to teach others how
to be good is also noble-and much less
trouble.*

Mark Twain

Delegation

If you have others working with you, either in a formal structured environment, or in an informal collegial network arrangement, and are not delegating or sharing tasks and responsibilities, you are probably wasting your time, and perhaps theirs. Since delegation is usually associated with formal organizations, and carries the connotation that

¹³ Marion Haynes. *Personal Time Management*. Menlo Park, CA: Chrisp Publications, 1994. P. 16.

delegation only occurs between hierarchical levels within the organization, let's look at this approach to delegation first.

The first thing to do is assess your current delegating practices. There are lots of clues that will tell you if you are successful in this managerial process of sharing tasks and responsibilities. For example, do you find yourself saying these kinds of things to the person in the mirror?

- When I delegate work, it never gets done the way I want it done.
- Why am I always working longer hours than my staff?
- Why can't I trust my staff to do quality work?
- If I delegate, I'm going to lose control of the operation and I can't afford to do this.
- I would never delegate important tasks to my subordinates.
- Nobody can do things to meet my standards so I might as well do them myself.
- When I do delegate, I often have to do the work over so what's the use.
- I don't have time to delegate.

The last statement may say it all in terms of delegation and how you manage your time.

The second thing to do is sit with your staff and talk about how work and responsibilities are shared in your work unit or organization. Be prepared to hear things you might not want to hear regarding your management style. And, be willing to change some work habits if there is a consensus that everyone in the organization would benefit if an enlightened approach to delegation were employed.

Enlightened approach? Just what does this mean? First and foremost, enlightened delegation is not dumping unwanted work on subordinates. Or, delegating pieces of some project where the person or persons being delegated to have no idea of how their contribution fits into the whole. Or, delegating responsibility but no authority to carry it out. Or, not providing the necessary directions, coaching, training, and other developmental support that may be needed to grow those who have been delegated tasks and responsibilities. Delegation is not just distributing work among those available; it is expanding the potential of the workforce to take on more and more responsibility with competence and confidence.

How to Delegate Effectively Without Wasting Time

Jan Yager says there are seven steps to delegating effectively. They are:

1. **Deciding what you will delegate.** This decision involves three considerations.
 - Determining what your priority tasks are and then delegating those tasks that will keep you from focusing on your top priority;
 - Recognizing that someone on your staff can perform certain tasks better than you can;
 - Identifying those tasks that are a waste of your time that are better done by someone else.

2. **Picking the right person to delegate to.** This requires you to know the skills, competencies, experience and interests of your staff. Interest might include learning new skills or taking on more responsibility.
3. **Trusting those you delegate to.** This also means trusting them when they decide to do it differently than you might have done it.
4. **Give clear assignments and instructions.** The more the staff person you are delegating to understands what needs to be done and how to do it, the less important this becomes.
5. **Have definite task completion parameters and a system for follow-up.**
6. **Give credit.**
7. **Delegate responsibility for the job, not just the task.**¹⁴

I would add three important additions to what Ms. Yager is recommending. The first two are in reference to her last step. Delegating responsibility without authority to act is never helpful although it happens all the time. Delegating tasks is not necessarily an undesirable action. Often projects are team oriented and certain tasks are expected to be implemented by certain individuals, perhaps because they have unique knowledge, skills or experience that is needed. Finally, I believe delegation should also include consultation between the person delegating and the person or persons being delegated to.

Managers are people who never put off until tomorrow that which they can get someone else to do today.

Marion Haynes suggests a slightly different set of guidelines to consider when delegating.

- **Communicate fully.** By this he means relevant information the person might need to carry out the assignment; the degree of freedom and judgement you expect the other person to exercise; and a conversation to assure that there is full understanding between the individuals involved. (I would add to this list an opportunity for the person on the receiving end of the delegation to express his or her wants and needs in relation to the assignment.)
- **Delegate authority as well as responsibility.** When authority is withheld it sends the signal that I, as the one delegating, either don't trust you, or don't want to give up control. In either case, the delegation is fraught with potential difficulty.
- **Set performance standards.** These are the expected outcomes and include such parameters as quality, quantity, timeliness and costs. When appropriate, those delegated the authority and responsibility should be given a full role in reaching agreement on what the standards are.
- **Establish controls.** Another way to say this is to establish a process of accountability. The process might include personal inspections, client feedback, status reports, etc.

¹⁴ Jan Yager, pp. 104-6.

- **Challenge your staff.** Haynes encourages the person doing the delegating to take some risks, thus enabling the staff opportunities to grow and develop through increased responsibility and freedom.
- **Provide appropriate training and development.** There are many options available to assure that this happens: coaching, an opportunity to collaborate with more experienced staff members on certain tasks, team building, and more formal learning opportunities.
- **Support your staff.** Don't undercut them on decisions they might take once the responsibility and authority has been passed to them.
- **Delegate: don't dump!** If you see delegation as an opportunity to unload all the unpleasant duties while you retain all the interesting ones, you may soon have a revolt on your hands.
- **Don't abdicate your responsibility as the supervisor.** Delegating responsibility and the authority associated with that responsibility does not relieve the person who delegates from their responsibility as the supervisor.

"These are good ideas", you say, "but none of it makes sense to me since I don't have any staff to delegate to." Good point. However, those who work alone, or have either no staff or very limited staff capacity, can still "delegate" certain responsibilities through such arrangements as sub-contracts, collaborative agreements, or by forming a task or project team that is temporary and dissolves once the task or project has been completed.

Delegation is a figment of the imagination when you work alone. So, imagine how you can delegate without delegating. As William Dillard said, "You can't sell from an empty wagon."

Reflection: *Stop for a moment and think about your workload over the past three or four months. What are some tasks or responsibilities that you could have either delegated to someone else, if you have those you can delegate to, or share with, if you work largely alone. Jot them down.*

Review them carefully and record the reasons why you didn't either delegate them or share them with a colleague.

Meetings

*Meetings are indispensable when
you don't want to do anything.*
John Kenneth Galbraith

Meetings are notorious time wasters but they don't have to be. Here is a checklist to increase the potential that **your** next meeting will be a time saver, not a time waster. As for participation in other people's meetings, make sure it will be productive, help the convener make it a time saver by being on time and keeping to the agenda, and attend to any follow-up responsibilities that you are committed to.

Why Hold Meetings? After All, They Can Be So Time Consuming!

Meetings can serve many functions, meet many needs. They can be used to:

- 1) **Communicate** new information, reinforce old but important messages;
- 2) **Solve problems** that can benefit from a diversity of input;
- 3) **Deal with crises** or perform damage control;
- 4) **Build teams**, particularly when members come from different work units;
- 5) **Provide emotional support** for any number of reasons;
- 6) **Recognize the importance of those who attend;**
- 7) **Keep employees connected.** Sometimes the only contact department directors have with each other is at the weekly staff meeting. (Yes, I know, staff meetings can be an awful waste of time so let's look at how to make them, and other kinds of meetings more productive and less time consuming.)

How to Increase the Potential for Success Before the Meeting Begins

- Know why you want to call a meeting. Ask this question every time you plan to have a meeting. It's the routine meetings that drag people down, making it even more important to ask this question.
- Prepare an agenda that reflects what you want to accomplish. Put suggested time limits on each item.
- Make sure it is communicated to all those who will participate in the meeting along with other details like time, date, location, etc.
- Send it in time for the participants to clear their calendars and read any attachments.
- Invite only those who can contribute to the agenda or benefit from the discussion.
- If certain people who will be attending have special roles and responsibilities, assure that they will be prepared. Provide assistance in helping them prepare if necessary.
- Make sure the venue is clean, available and set up in the configuration that will best meet your needs.

- Schedule the meeting in accordance with local tradition, people’s expectations and your needs. One meeting specialist suggests convening all meetings at either 11 AM or 4PM under the assumption that those attending will be more focused and efficient in their use of time. Bad advice if you need more than an hour to accomplish your goals.
 - Based on the time of day, arrange for appropriate refreshments.
 - (Fill in the blanks with other details I have forgotten.)
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How to Increase the Potential for Success During the Meeting

Assuming all the pre-meeting details were handled in accordance with the guidelines just suggested, here are some things to increase your odds for having a successful meeting once everyone has convened.

- Start on time. Don’t punish those who are on time by making them wait for others who aren’t. One author suggests removing all the empty chairs so latecomers have to stand, or to lock the door after the meeting begins. Both measures sound a bit drastic.
- Get agreement on the agenda, time allocations, adjournment and other details before diving into substantive matters. If this is a group that hasn’t been meeting routinely, you might want to discuss any ground rules that might be useful.
- Set a positive tone. Meetings should be enjoyable and productive. These are not mutually exclusive qualities.
- Experts don’t agree on the order of items to be discussed. Some say start with the easy items; others say begin with those that are most important to assure that they will be discussed. Sometimes it is helpful to cover the items that take the least amount of time to show progress. Use your judgement and past experience with the group to decide how to proceed.
- Try to stick to your agenda but don’t be dogmatic. Unforeseen issues might intervene.
- Based on the reason for your meeting, encourage participation. Draw those out that aren’t participating, particularly if you know they have contributions to make to the agenda and purpose.
- When the discussion goes off on a tangent, pull it back within a reasonable time. Otherwise, you might lose your focus and the attention and engagement of others.
- Keep track of time but try not to come across like a human stopwatch. If it’s a long meeting take a short break.
- Make sure that someone is taking notes of decisions and other important events.
- Stop when you’re finished. Some meetings seem to dribble out until most people have left out of frustration.
- Close with a summary of major points or decisions, mention of any follow-up actions and words of appreciation for their involvement.
- Unless you have a live-in maid, clean up any mess that might have accumulated, i.e., dirty glasses, miscellaneous papers, trash, etc.

How to Increase the Potential for Success after the Meeting

- Send out the minutes as soon as possible. Summary notes are a good reminder of what took place during the meeting as well as decisions that may require follow-up. Include the names and contact data of those who attended. Who knows, someone might want to network with others.
- Follow-up on decisions made, commitments, status of things in progress as a result of the meeting.
- If follow-up meetings are planned, this is a good time to remind the meeting goers to check their calendars.
- On occasion, include a short survey questionnaire to get feedback on the quality of the meeting. Ask about the process, content and results. Act on the results if they suggest changes in your meeting habits.

Meetings are potentially one of your greatest time wasters and a time waster for others. Don't hesitate to challenge the purpose of meetings, their worth and their need to continue in any routine format and frequency. Break the mold if necessary and start anew.

Reflection: Recall your worst experience, during the past few weeks, with either chairing a meeting or attending a meeting organized by someone else. What made it such a bad experience? And, how much time did it waste for you and others? (You might add up the accumulative hours and even put a price tag on them.)

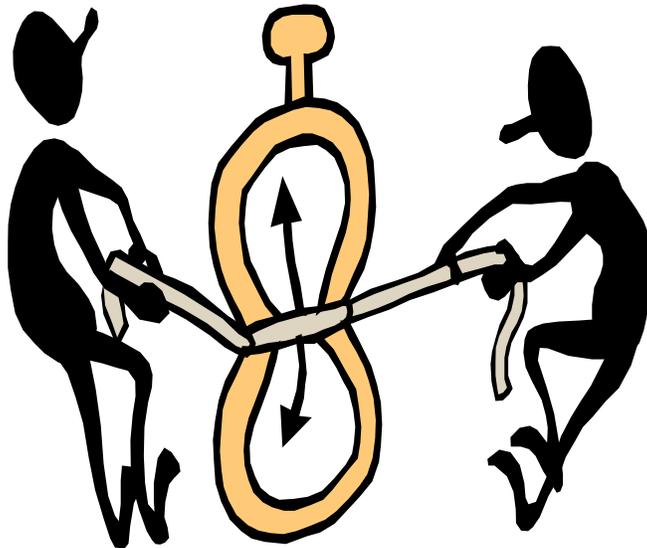
What could you or others done to have increased the productivity of the meeting, saved time and even had more fun doing it?

Key Points

- Time, and how to use it wisely, have plagued philosophers, kings, and just about everyone else for centuries and we still continue the grand tradition of worrying and wasting.
- Time wasters are self-generated and environmental.
- Among the worst of the self-generated kind are disorganization, procrastination and the inability to say “no”.
- Core management tasks also masquerade as time wasters, or is it the other way around?
- These include the lack of planning, delegating, effective decision making and priority setting.
- Remember the 80/20 rule and put it to use.
- Dropping everything else to do what is urgent but unimportant is not only a great time waster, its terrible management!
- The *Tyranny of the Urgent* is alive and well and living in your watch pocket.
- Understanding why you procrastinate is the first step in curing this malady, but if I were you, I think I’d put it off until next week.
- Learn how to say “no”, politely, firmly and with class. Try it the next time you get invited out to dinner by a “friend” you can’t stand, and can’t stand up to when she puts demands on your time.
- If you really want to save time, get organized.
- Do a to-do list, and to do a to-do list properly, read how to do it in the section on how to do To-Do Lists. Do it today.
- Set priorities on your To-Do List items and stick to them.
- Delegate!
- Outlay terrible, time wasting meetings-and rejoice. Rejoicing might waste a bit of your time but it’s worth it

PART II: TOOLS

To Help Others Learn



The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious

John Sculley

Some thoughts on helping others learn about managing their time

Time management can be a meat-and-potatoes-type-training endeavor. What does this mean? Simply, that your training organization, or you as a trainer, can make money by doing short training workshops on Time Management. It's a topic that everyone can relate to, everyone has problems managing their time and you don't have to waste a lot of time preparing to do a short workshop on Time Management. In other words, it doesn't have to be a *time-waster*.

Think of your potential audience as diverse. Your next venture could be:

- an in-house workshop for the management team of a local government or NGO;
- an open enrollment workshop advertised in the local press and radio; or
- a special event sponsored by a service or social club.

The opportunities are somewhat endless. So, use your imagination.

It is also a topic you can shoehorn into other types of training. For example, make *time management* a part of your series of workshops for elected leaders. Or, as a session or two during a Public Service Management seminar where you will be using the UN (Habitat) TQMn series of workshop materials, or during a team building session when it's obvious the team members don't know how to manage their time.

Time Management workshops can become an oxymoron if they last too long. Trying to make Time Management the object of a five day, or even three-day workshop, sends the wrong message. In other words, it quickly becomes a time waster. Time management workshops should be fun. They should also be seen as a boost to the morale of those who are trying to get a hold on a part of their lives that is often frustrating. In many ways, an effective time management learning experience can be regarded as an opportunity for the participants to do a bit of self-esteem building.

Regarding the following training exercise tools, don't hesitate to make changes in them, to experiment and to look for new material in each workshop you conduct on time management. The participants will provide you with great insights and additional training tool kit ideas if you provide them with opportunities to think outside the box of their experiences and mental barriers to managing time. If you do a Training of Trainers workshop, spend some time developing new exercises so everyone goes away with an expanded portfolio of tools to work with.

By the way, the **Reflection** exercises in Part I can also be used to create learning opportunities in workshop situations. Now is a good time to review them for their possibilities.

Good luck, have fun and save a little time to smell the flowers along the way.

TOOL # 1: SORTING OUT THE MORNING, AFTERNOON AND EVENING PEOPLE

Learning Objective: This exercise can be used as an opener or as a part of an exercise on identifying time wasters (Tool # 2). The objective is to introduce the idea of our body time cycle and how it may be a factor in the way we use our time.

Time required: Depending on whether you tie this exercise into # 2, plan on about 75-90 minutes. If you use it as the opening task, then it may take a bit longer. As we say, “Play it by ear”.

PROCESS

1. Introduce the concept of our body’s biological rhythms and the fact that each of us has within us a personal time clock that ticks off the minutes and hours differently than it does for others. It is the internal rheostat that tells us how many hours of sleep we need each night, when we are at our best for doing creative and high energy consuming activities, when our slump hits and we just seem “to run out of steam”. This last bodily event is something the psychologists call the *postprandial dip*, in case you want to impress your participants. Sounds very complicated and scientific but it simply means “Following a meal” and is a word dredged up in 1820 by someone who probably suffered from indigestion. Just one more irrelevant note about the postprandial dip. The researchers, when they looked into these phenomena, found that it doesn’t have anything to do with lunch as many suspected, including the person obviously who gave it the scientific nomenclature. It, meaning the run-out-of-steam-syndrome, can happen any time of the day **but for most of us it does happen!**

As part of your presentation draw a typical energy cycle on the white board or flip chart. It can be as simple as a time line across the bottom from midnight until midnight with the vertical line representing LO to HI energy flows. On this simple two-dimensional chart, draw two or three energy cycles that show the high-energy peak (Prime Time!) at some where around early morning on one, and late afternoon on another. Or, a better idea is to ask two or three participants to come forward and quickly draw their own body rhythms as examples, illustrating when they reach their high “prime time” and when they “run out of steam”.

2. After this brilliant lecturette on the biological postprandial syndrome, ask the participants to sort themselves out by whether they are *morning, afternoon or evening people*. In case someone doesn’t understand the labels, this is when they are at their best: writing brilliant novel passages; being at their romantic best; or running the 100 meter dash between important work assignments. Ask them to congregate in different parts of the meeting room, as far apart as possible.

3. Give each of the three sub-groups a sheet of newsprint and ask them to draw a composite time line showing each of their members’ energy flow over a typical 24 hour period with their high points and lows. Ask them to: 1) brainstorm the consequences,

both positive and negative, of this energy cycle phenomenon on their ability to manage time; and, 2) to develop a short list of things they can do to optimize their time management, given these daily time cycles of energy. Finally, ask each group to be prepared to share their findings with the other two groups.

4. Reconvene the sub-groups and ask for reports on what they have learned. Close the exercise by emphasizing the importance of getting in touch with our body's time clock in any overall plan we might put together to manage our time more effectively.

TOOL # 2: IDENTIFYING TIME WASTERS

Learning Objective: To increase participant awareness and understanding of the many ways we waste time.

Time required: About one and one half-hours.

PROCESS

1. Introduce the exercise by providing a definition of a “time waster”. For example: A time waster is when you spend time doing something less important than what you could otherwise be doing.
2. Give each participant 10 large index cards and ask them to record, in large letters, the ten things that waste their time the most or ways they personally waste their time the most. In other words, their personal biggest time wasters! Ask them to put only one time waster on each card because they will be using the cards to create categories later in the exercise. (Note: this recording of *time wasters* can be done in many different ways based on your preference as a trainer. Use your imagination.)
3. Ask the participants to form small groups of 4-6 persons. Their first task will be to share their 10 time wasters with each other and the second task to cluster them into two broad categories: those that are **self generated**, i.e., through procrastination, disorganization or other self imposed time devour-ation activities, and **environmental**, things like meetings, telephone calls, visitors, etc. They can do this by creating new lists on newsprint paper or by clustering their cards on the wall.
4. Convene the small groups and have them report out their lists. Ask them to make comparisons and perhaps come up with a composite list in the two major types of time wasters.
5. Complete the session with a short guided discussion based on the descriptive materials of time wasters found in Part I of the manual. Ask the participants if they would like to further differentiate the time wasters into sub-categories like meetings, disorganization, the inability to say “no”, etc. Remind them that these time wasters become the raw material for determining later how best to use their time more efficiently and productively.
6. An optional event might be to give them balloons filled with helium and long strings attached. Have each participant write record on separate balloons, with a magic marker, their three biggest time wasters. At the end of the workshop, they would be asked to retrieve their individual balloons and burst those they believe represent the time wasters they will conquer when they get home, based on their action plan.

TOOL # 3: TRANSFORMING TIME WASTERS INTO TIME SAVERS

Learning Objective: To increase participant skills in determining ways to turn time wasters into time savers.

Time required: This exercise is designed to “take on” several different types of time wasters at the same time, having small self-selected work teams developing strategies for addressing the more common time wasters. The estimated time the exercise might take is directly related to the number of different time wasting categories you and your participants decide to take on as a part of this exercise. Figure 45 minutes to develop the strategy in small groups and 10 minutes for each team to report out and get feedback from others on their strategy.

PROCESS

1. Some of the following Tools describe training designs based on addressing specific time wasters such as procrastination and meetings. This one takes some of the most frequently identified time wasters and has the participants address a number of them at the same time, working in smaller task groups. So, your first task is to identify 4-6 different time wasting categories. This can be done by stating what they are, or by getting the participants to identify a small number of categories. Here’s my list of potential categories for teams to address: disorganization; procrastination; the big “No” which rarely gets uttered; (each of these self-imposed); meetings, telephone calls; and lack of delegation. The last three are more environmental in character.
2. Get agreement on the categories and ask participants to self select into small task groups to work on strategies to address their assigned or selected time waster. Ask them to be prepared to report back in about 30 minutes with their recommendations for turning their time waster around.
3. Have the teams report out and follow each report by a short discussion to add to the recommendations.

TOOL # 4: WHEN I GET AROUND TO IT, I PLAN TO STOP PROCRASTINATING

Learning Objective: **To increase participant understanding of their personal reasons for procrastinating and ways to cope effectively with this time wasting botheration.**

Time required: Probably some where between 90 and 120 minutes.

PROCESS

1. Provide a short guided discussion about procrastination, based on your own experience and the materials from Part I.
2. Ask each participant to complete the short questionnaire and worksheet. (Located on the following pages.) Give them about 15-20 minutes for these tasks.
3. After they have completed this task, have them meet in pairs to discuss their scores and responses. Suggest that each person spend 15-20 minutes on their responses to the questionnaire and planning tasks.
4. Reconvene participants to report briefly on their discussions and any key thoughts they might have about this common time wasting dilemma. Wrap up the session with any final comments or questions.

Finding your Roots: Procrastination Roots, That is.

Chances are you have never really sat down and pondered the reasons why you, at times, procrastinate. Or maybe you are a real professional at procrastinating. Even more reason to find the roots of your procrastination tendencies. This probing questionnaire is designed to help you unearth why you put off until tomorrow what you should have done yesterday.

The following are reasons why we tend to procrastinate. Take a few moments and assess your use of each of these reasons by circling the number that best reflects your use of this excuse, sorry I meant to say *reason*.

1 = No way!

3 = On occasion

5 = One of my favorites

In the last column, rank order your use of these opportunities to procrastinate, # 1 being your most favorite, #2 your next, until you've used up the seven numbers. Unless, of course, you lose interest in the exercise. In that case, stop and give number three the top ranking.

Excuses I like to use when procrastinating.	Frequency of use	Priority
1. Fear of success. If I succeed, people will demand more from me.	1 3 5	
2. Fear of failure. Oh, how I hate to fail!	1 3 5	
3. Loss of interest in whatever I'm doing.	1 3 5	
4. Lack of a deadline.	1 3 5	
5. Too many balls in the air. Let's face it, I'm over-committed and have too many things on my plate.	1 3 5	
6. Perfectionist. If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right as soon as I have time to get around to it.	1 3 5	
7. The Status Quo. Things are going okay so it won't hurt to put this one on the back burner.	1 3 5	

Task 2: Make a list of at least three current projects, tasks, or activities you currently have on hold; in other words, ones you are procrastinating on instead of completing at this point in time. After each, list your reasons, using the seven just listed, the consequences of your procrastination and what you plan to do about it. (Remember that procrastinating is not always bad. Sometimes the timing is not right. Other times, you might need more time to "stew" about it. Or, it just might not be important enough to rush into. So, don't necessarily feel guilty about it. On the other hand, there are things you've been "putting off" that you really ought to be doing, so now's the time to get with it!

My “It’s about time to To Do It” List.

1.

- My excuse:

- The

consequences: _____

- My plan of attack:

2.

- My

excuse: _____

- The consequences:

- My plan of attack:

3.

My excuse:

- The consequences:

- My plan of attack:

TOOL # 5: OH, HOW I HATE TO SAY “NO”
(And why I hate myself for not.)

Learning Objective: **To increase participants’ ability to say “no” and to live happily with the consequences.**

Time required: Probably some where between 60 and 90 minutes.

PROCESS

1. This is one of those exercises that can benefit from a short guided discussion. You might put Jules Renard’s comment on newsprint or a white board for starters.

The truly free person is one who can decline a dinner invitation without giving an excuse.

The discussion in Part I, particularly about “Don’t put that monkey on my back”, provides some useful ideas about what we do to ourselves by our inability to say “no”.

2. Have participants complete the short questionnaire on the next page and then team up with one or two other participants to discuss their responses and to practice saying no. This part of the exercise should take about 30 minutes.
3. Reconvene the participants and ask several participants to comment on their discussions and the exercise.

This is an I- don't-say-no-but-I sure-would-like-to Questionnaire

The following are a few reasons why other people aren't able to say "NO!" Some of them might even apply to you. Take a few moments and check off those that apply to you.

I find myself not saying NO when I really want to because:

- I don't want to hurt the other person's feelings. _____
- I can't think of a way to say no at the time. _____
- I'm sure they expect me to say yes so how could I let them down. _____
- I'm flattered they asked so how could I say no. _____
- I don't have any reason not to say no. _____
- If I say no, they'll never ask me again. _____
- How could I say no to my boss, or my mother? _____
- It's important for them that I don't say no. _____
- Being asked makes my feel important so how could I say no. _____
- I don't want to look like I am selfish. _____
- I simply don't know how to say no nicely. _____

Add up your check marks.

- If your score is seven or more, shout "GOOD GRIEF!" and then start taking back your life.
- If your score is between four and seven, consider yourself a really responsive person but a bit too easy to order around.
- If your score is three or less, this may provide you with some insight about why nobody calls you any more.

Spend some time discussing these answers with a colleague and practice saying no to situations they pose that reflect situations where you now find it is difficult to say no.

TOOL # 6: PLANNING THE PERFECT MEETING
(One, of course, that doesn't become a time waster)

Learning objective: To increase participant knowledge in how to plan better meetings.

Time required: About 45 minutes

PROCESS

1. This one's simple. Divide the participants into teams of five or six and give them the following task: You have ten minutes to plan a perfect meeting, one that doesn't waste other people's time. How will you do it?
2. Stick to the 10 minutes-no more! Otherwise, it might be a waste of time.
3. Reconvene the task groups and have each report out their plan. Critique each and be sure to ask how they used their time in completing the task.
4. Consider asking the participants to vote on which plan they think is best. The winning team gets time off - but not during the workshop.

TOOL # 7: COPING WITH CELL PHONE HYSTERIA

(Or, my favorite excuse for answering my phone in the confessional at church, in a meeting with the President of the country, or while going to the bathroom.)

Learning objective: To increase participant appreciation that the cell phone is Alexander Bell's way of saying, **"This is urgent but probably not important"**.

Time required: 30-45 minutes

PROCESS

1. Make up several sets of small index cards with the following statements printed on them, but only one statement to a card. (That last instruction is important!) You can either put the sub-statement, the one in the ()s on the back of the card, or share the underlying rationale after Step 2 of the exercise is complete.
 - Why would they be calling if it weren't important? (Presumption of legitimacy)
 - I never like to disappoint someone who takes the time to call. (Fear of offending)
 - I feel indispensable when the phone rings. (Great ego booster)
 - I can't resist the opportunity to talk to a friend. (Time to socialize)
 - I need to know what's going on. (Information freak)
 - Thanks, my faithful phone, this was getting boring. (wonderful escape mechanism)
2. Hand each participant one card and distribute them so about the same number of people get cards with the same message on it. Ask them to exchange cards with each other until they have the card with the statement that describes best why they just got to answer the telephone when it rings. Some will find all of the statements apply but they need to trade until they get the one that describes their telephone behaviour the best. It will be more fun if you don't tell them beforehand what is on each card. Give them a set amount of time to complete these transactions, no more than 10 minutes.
3. At the end of the ten minutes, ask those who have cards with the same message on them to form a small work group. Give them 15 minutes to develop a list of ways to cope with the rationale listed on their card.
4. Reconvene the sub-groups and ask them to report.

TOOL # 8: SAVING TIME THROUGH DELEGATING

Learning objective: To increase knowledge about the use of delegation as a time saving strategy.

Time required: About 60 minutes

PROCESS

1. Say a few words about the importance of delegating as one of the key time management strategies.
2. Introduce the self-assessment instrument on the Art of Delegation. It can be found on the following pages. Ask participants to take about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.
3. After completing this task, ask the participants to form groups of four participants. Their tasks will be to: 1) tabulate a composite picture of the group's willingness to delegate by calculating the mean average of their individual question scores; and 2) discuss their scores for better comprehension about the importance of delegating, particularly as it relates to time management.
4. While they are meeting, draw a chart on newsprint of the questionnaire and provide space for each team to record their group scores.
5. After about 20-30 minutes, reconvene the small groups and ask for; 1) their mean average group scores on the questions; and, 2) their comments about the exercise.

SELF-ASSESSMENT IN THE ART OF DELEGATION

Instructions: Read the following statements and circle the number to the right that reflects the degree to which each statement describes you.

5 = Strongly Agree 1 = Strongly Disagree

1. The jobs I delegate never seem to get done the way I want them to be done.	5 4 3 2 1
2. I don't have the time to delegate properly.	5 4 3 2 1
3. I check on work without my staff knowing it so I can correct mistakes before they cause too many problems.	5 4 3 2 1
4. When I give clear instructions and work isn't done properly, I get upset.	5 4 3 2 1
5. My staff lack the commitment that I have, so work I delegate doesn't get done as well as I'd do it.	5 4 3 2 1
6. I can do the work of my section better than my staff can.	5 4 3 2 1
7. If the person I delegate work to doesn't do it well, I'll be severely criticized.	5 4 3 2 1
8. If I delegated everything I could, my job wouldn't be nearly as much fun.	5 4 3 2 1
9. When I delegate work, I often have to do it over.	5 4 3 2 1
10. I delegate clearly and concisely, explaining just how the job should be done.	5 4 3 2 1
11. When I delegate, I lose control.	5 4 3 2 1
12. I could delegate more if my staff had more experience.	5 4 3 2 1
13. I delegate routine tasks but keep the non-routine work myself.	5 4 3 2 1
14. My manager expects me to be very close to all details of the work.	5 4 3 2 1
15. I have not found that delegation saves me time.	5 4 3 2 1

Add up your total score in each column:

of 5s (____) X 5 = ____

of 4s (____) X 4 = ____

of 3s (____) X 3 = ____

of 2s (____) X 2 = ____

of 1s (____) X 1 = ____

Total score: all columns: ____.

Total Mean Average Score for team members: ____.

Scoring

Scores can range from 15 to 75. Compare your score to the following:

75-60 You are failing to fully utilize your staff.

59-45 You can substantially improve your use of delegation.

44-30 You have some room for improvement as a delegator.

29-15 You are an excellent delegator or you fudged your answers.¹⁵

¹⁵ Adapted from "How to Improve Delegation Habits" by Theodore J. Krein, *Management Review*, May 1982, p.59 by AMACON, a division of American Management Association, New York. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

TOOL # 9: PERSONAL TIME MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Learning Objective: To provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on how they plan to use what they learned in the workshop.

Time required: twenty minutes.

1. Ask participants to take a few minutes to complete the worksheet on the following page.
2. At the end of about 15 minutes ask if anyone would like to share what he or she plans to do when they get home to save time.
3. Wrap up the workshop.

MY PERSONAL PLAN TO WASTE LESS TIME FROM NOW ON

- The three or four most important things I learned during this workshop about myself and how I use my time are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

- Based on what I have learned about myself and how I use my time, I plan to do the following things to reduce the time I waste.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

- **To put what I learned into effect immediately, here is my To DO List of things to do as soon as I get home. And, just to prove I'm serious, they are prioritized in terms of their importance.**

- _____

Priority # _____

- _____

Priority # ____

Priority # ____

- _____

Priority # ____

- _____

Priority # ____

- _____

Priority # ____

Didn't that feel good? Well, it will feel even better when you actually do what you said you plan to do. The Native American Sioux have a wonderful proverb that is appropriate to your plan. *Flowers are for our souls to enjoy. Manage your time more effectively and you'll be able to enjoy the flowers more. And, your soul will rejoice!*