

Increased Productivity

Exercise

Use this exercise to help team members improve their time and resource management. Ask the group to discuss how they might go about doing all six of these steps every day.

Time and Resource Management

1. Determine if you are “overloaded” by asking yourself if you meet deadlines and accomplish what you say you will accomplish. Discuss this with your manager.

2. Try to use some of the following practices more often:

- Concentrate on your most important objectives.
- Delegate the less important tasks to others or let them go undone.
- Ask yourself if what you’re doing really needs to be done through a committee or if it can more appropriately and effectively be done alone.
- Look ahead and determine how your workload can be divided into time periods with completion dates and plan accordingly.
- Do not lose sight of the original goals, even when you must handle unforeseen tasks or projects—return to these goals, adjusting time frames for completion, if necessary.

3. Develop your priority-setting skills by periodically writing down those tasks that are pending and those your manager considers to be most critically important.

- Ask your manager for feedback about your priorities.
- Establish ongoing reporting relationships with direct reports, other departments, and peers to keep informed of major problems or unexpected results that could alter your priorities.
- Deliberately manage your in-tray and daily activities according to priority, not personal preference or expediency. Choose two top priority items to be managed in this way; periodically review your attention to these priorities with your manager.

4. Use a number of the following tips to routinely increase your own daily efficiency:

- Record completion dates for assignments on your calendar.
- Have your staff represent you at meetings when appropriate.
- Before leaving work each evening, list the things that need to be done the next day.
- Return phone calls early in the day or near the end of the day to increase your chances of getting through.
- Create a “to do” file and use it as a means of following up on delegated tasks and set aside time in your weekly calendar for follow-up procedures in your work.

5. Managers often allow day-to-day activities to monopolize their attention while planning, leaving long-term strategic projects low on the “to do” list. Use the following suggestions to ensure that you spend the time you need for planning and that you carry out your plans:

- Keep a log to determine how you are spending your time. Evaluate your time allocations to ensure that you are giving proper time and attention to the “big plan.” Consider delegating more.
- When you are faced with many demanding and competing priorities, ask yourself which are the most important ones and make them your first priority.
- When an urgent matter arises, determine how it fits into your daily plan (is it urgent and important, or simply urgent?) and act accordingly.
- Use the 80/20 rule, which states that 80 percent of the value of a group of items is generally concentrated in only 20 percent of the items. Simply put, the 80/20 rule means that you can be 80 percent effective by achieving 20 percent of your goals.

For example, if you have a daily “to do” list of ten items, this means that you can generally expect to be 80 percent effective by successfully completing only the two most important items on the list.