



*Reach your potential*

## **The Power of Effective Time Management**

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Do you feel the struggle of not having enough time to do everything you would like to do? Most of us feel the squeeze and struggle of running out of time when there is still much to do. This feeling creates so much pressure within us and we find ourselves frustrated, whether it is work related or personal. The reason we don't have enough time is because we never adequately clarify how much time we should be devoting to the different things we value. If we find ourselves running out of time, it is typically because we spread ourselves too thin. Many studies show that time pressure is often an illusion. In other words, the problem is not the clock moving too fast or we simply run out of time. It is the way we view and use our time. Kira Newman says, *"We feel pressed for time due to our own psychology, not just the tyranny of the clock."* The problem is not the clock or even the myriad of responsibilities we have. It is the way we think of time and how we manage it. Many of us do not track and budget our time. Time is a resource just like our finances. Good money managers budget their financial resources, and we must look at time as a resource. Since it is a resource, we have to budget our time. This means setting priorities, organizing our lives and staying focused. We often don't accomplish everything within a timeframe because we are easily distracted.

Stephen Covey wrote a popular best seller entitled, ***"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People"*** and discusses the four quadrants of time management. Quadrant 1 is the quadrant of necessity. These are the things that are urgent and important. Quadrant 2 is the quadrant of quality. These are things that are not urgent but are very important. Quadrant 3 is what Covey calls the quadrant of deception. In this quadrant, we find ourselves focusing on things that are urgent but not important. Quadrant 4 is the quadrant of waste. It is here that many people struggle because we engage in time-wasters. This quadrant is characterized by doing things that are neither urgent or important. Quadrant 2 is where we should be spending most of our time. It is here where we can plan, do the things that are consistent with our values, and engage in things that are both important and meaningful to us. There will always be distractions, interruptions and urgent matters that will occur during our day. Having a Quadrant 2 mentality will allow you to get back on track after tending to urgent matters and interruptions. The problem is many people do not know how to get back on track after having to deviate from their important priorities.

Another great resource is a book written by Alec MacKenzie entitled, “***The Time Trap***”. He breaks down the activities of our lives into two categories: big rocks and small rocks. The big rocks are the most important things we should be doing. These are our priorities and things that align with our values and passions. These activities should be the first things we place on our calendars and ‘to do’ lists. What normally goes on our calendars and task lists are the necessary and urgent things. Consequently, we never get to our priorities, things that align with our passions and values and things that are most important to us such as family time, time with friends, exercise or hobbies. Identify the big rocks both in your professional and personal life and make it a priority to accomplish those in your day. Remember, if something is not on your calendar and on your task list, you will probably not do them. The small rocks or gravel are the urgent things that get our attention. They are not necessarily important or priority things; they are simply things we have to do. Sometimes the gravel are time wasters. As you clarify your use of time, it is also important to identify the ways you waste time. All of us waste time, and some more than others. Eliminate as many of those time-wasters as possible. Don’t get stuck in the gravel.

Here are five take-aways for calculating, clarifying and setting your time management strategy:

1. Determine your priorities.
2. Make a master list.
3. Transfer your master list to a daily task list.
4. Place quadrant 2 activities on your calendar first.
5. Establish boundaries for protecting your time.

All of us have the same amount of time each day. It is not a matter of needing more time, but being more intentional about how you manage your time. Change your thinking about time. Make yourself and what is important to you a priority in your schedule each day. Remember, effective time management is not about the clock. It is about psychology or how you view your use of time.