

## **Effective Time Management**

Ever wonder how some people are able to fit so many activities into their schedules, while other barely seem to have the time to attend classes? Are they smarter? Doubtful. More organized? You're getting warm. Better at managing their time? BINGO!

Time management is important to any person, but particularly to student organization members and leaders. Involvement in co-curricular activities means that in addition to classes, homework, meals, jobs, and socializing, another significant chunk of time is taken up with organizational obligations.

Time management is self management. While this handout will give you some pointers on how to better manage your time, it is important to realize that only you know your peak work hours, your attention span, and your eating and sleeping needs. Time management is a highly personalized skill, and whatever method works for you is the right one.

### **How do I time manage?**

- **Start Your Day With a Plan of Action:** Outline your day and set your priorities. If your goal is to accomplish more, then you will get more done if you plan for greater accomplishments.
- **Keep Your Life In Balance:** Health, Family, Financial, Intellectual, Social, Professional, and Spiritual are the seven key areas. Do not spend too much time in any one of them, otherwise the others will suffer.
- **Work in a Clean Area:** Instead of wasting much of your day looking for what you need to do, be organized! You will get so much more accomplished when you know exactly where things are and what needs to be done.
- **Sleep:** Getting the right quantity and quality of sleep is critical in time management. Most people do not get quality sleep because they are stressed. When we are more organized, we get more done each day, which leads to a higher sense of accomplishment, giving you greater self esteem, so that you experience less stress, which in turn, will give you a more restful night.

### **Three steps to effective time management are:**

1. Organizing
2. Prioritizing
3. Scheduling

### **Organizing**

The more organized you are, the more effectively you will be able to use the 24 hours in each day. Ideally, each morning you should make a list of everything you want or need to get done that day (if it works better for you, you can also do this at night before you go to bed and then organize the next day's activities). Don't think about which tasks are most important at this point. Just write them all down. Once you get in the habit of doing this, you might want to organize yourself for a few days in advance; this can help you to plan longer projects.

### **Prioritizing**

The next step is to prioritize the items on your list. Assign an "A" to those things that you **HAVE** to do; "B" to the tasks that you **SHOULD** do; and "C" to those items that can be **DEFERRED** until the next day. Keep in mind the due dates for the projects and if the project is for a class. You might want to consider how much of the final grade that particular project is worth (5% or 50%). This can help you decide how high a priority should be assigned to the project. Don't procrastinate! Try not to leave projects for the last minute; it's the least effective way of getting things done. Sometimes late night cramming will be necessary, but try to keep it to a minimum.

### **Scheduling**

Now that you have your prioritized list of everything you need and want to do, you should look at your schedule to fit your projects around the "givens" (class, work, sleep, etc.) in your day. Your schedule should be flexible. Leave room for break, socializing, and those things that tend to pop up. Allow for the unexpected! Don't try to plan out every minute of your day. As you're scheduling, keep your personal needs and habits in mind. For example, don't schedule study time in the morning if you like to sleep late. Be realistic and make a schedule which you can be sure to stick to.

Following these three steps will help you use your time more effectively. One final hint: as you go through the day, ask yourself "What is the best use of my time right now?" An effective way of integrating Organizing, Prioritizing, and Scheduling into your life is by creating "things to do" lists. Here are some ideas to keep in mind when creating your lists:

- Make tasks "do-able". Make your list realistic (overestimating the amount of things you can accomplish can put you into greater time binds).
- Estimate time realistically. Be sure to schedule enough time for you to get your tasks done. Also be sure to allow extra time in case you might have problems; it's better to give yourself too much time than to cut yourself short.
- Don't put too many "shoulds" or "oughts" on your list. You need to maintain a healthy balance between the tasks you want to do, the tasks you feel you should do, and the tasks you have to do.
- Establish a daily routine. Determine for yourself what time of day is best for doing certain activities and get in the habit of doing them at that time.
- Integrate Lists. Have your lists include all aspects of your life. Having separate lists for class work, organizations, social activities, and work can be confusing.
- Make time for people and fun. Everyone needs time to recreate or their productivity will suffer. After taking time to recreate, people often feel revitalized and have more energy to get work done.
- Feel OK when you're finished. Spending lots of time regretting failures or feeling frustrated often wastes even more time. Feel good for accomplishing what you have, and then move on.

### **Slow Down!**

- Find a time during the weekend to take off your watch, don't rush!

- Choose a weekend to sleep late, read a book, have breakfast in bed, or enjoy an old movie on television; relax!
- Go for an unplanned drive on a back road and enjoy the scenery.
- Take a few minutes each day to dream or fantasize.
- Stay at the dinner table with family/friends; enjoy the conversation.
- Limit caffeine - it speeds up your nervous system.
- Make some time for spiritual renewal, solitude, and nature.

**Tips:**

1. **Plan** – consider your daily, weekly, and longer term goals. Based on these goals develop a “to do” list. Prioritize the items on your “to do” list according to importance and do the most important tasks first.
2. **Concentrate** – complete one thing at a time. The amount of time you spend on a task is insignificant, rather you should think about how effectively your time was spent.
3. **Relax** – be sure to pamper yourself, avoid the old adage, “all work and no play.”
4. **Avoid Unnecessary Clutter** – organize your work space, and you will FEEL organized. By removing clutter you can often avoid feeling rushed or unprepared.
5. **Don’t be afraid to say NO** – when you are asked to perform a task you aren’t committed to, or that does not benefit the objectives for your group, don’t waste your time, decline the request.
6. **Delegate responsibility** – delegating can increase productivity. By delegating tasks and utilizing other’s strengths you allow others in your group to invest themselves to the group’s objective.
7. **Avoid procrastination** – establish a habit which eliminates procrastination, by starting your day performing your most unpleasant tasks. As time goes on you will habitually perform your most unpleasant task, and will no longer have to avoid them.
8. **Develop a list of goals** – review, evaluate, and prioritize your short and long term goals on a regular basis.
9. **Spend time planning** – at the beginning or end of each day, spend some time preparing your “to do’s.”

**The following six steps integrate all of the time management tips into an action plan** (taken from *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*).

1. Establish your own mission statement, which clarifies your purpose and or personal values and principles. Once you’ve created this personal mission, you should have a better means of linking your actions to your purpose.
2. Consider your established roles (i.e. leader, student, friend, son/daughter), and ask yourself on a weekly basis if there are some roles in your life that have changed, if you prioritized tasks based on important roles, if you have neglected any roles, if your roles reflect your mission, etc.
3. Within each established role, identify goals that help you to achieve the things that are most important to you (in alignment with your mission).
4. Organize weekly. Considering your goals, establish a weekly “to do” list.
5. Exercise integrity in your choices. If delegating or saying no to a request is in the best interest of your group’s success, and is aligned with your personal mission, then don’t be afraid to do just that.

6. Evaluate what worked well and what needs to be changed to help you accomplish your goals.

### **Learn to say "no"**

Be sure to remember that there is not enough time each day to do everything for everybody. In order to keep from burning out, you need to take time for yourself and learn to say "no" to some of the requests for your time. Only you can realistically look at your commitments to see if you have the time to commit to other tasks. Say "no" when you don't want to, can't do, or don't have the time to do what is asked of you. If you over-commit yourself, everyone will come out behind. Openness and honesty is the key to saying "no". Your friends and co-workers will most likely understand your situation if you level with them.

### **Interesting Facts**

- 95% of divorces are caused by a "lack of communication."
- Less than two minutes per day are spent in meaningful conversation with one's significant other.
- The average American watches 28 hours of television per week.
- Good time managers allocate their time to those who "deserve it" and not to those who "demand it."
- One hour of planning saves ten hours of doing.
- Time management is doing the right things, not doing the wrong things faster.
- The most powerful word in our time management vocabulary is "no."
- The average person today receives more information on a daily basis than the average person received in his/her entire lifetime in the year 1900.

### **Find These Helpful Resources in the Leadership Library**

*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey