

HOW TO BE MORE EFFICIENT



**TOP TEN TIPS TO MANAGE
YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY**

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Are you overworked? Feel stressed by a heavy workload?
Do you often have to stay late to achieve your deadlines?

Would you like to have more free time to spend with your family or dedicate to hobbies and interests?



If you answered yes to these questions, then it's time to sit down and get organised. Managing your time more effectively will not only make you more productive and less stressed but it will also enable you to enjoy other areas of life that are often ignored.

01 SET OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

Have you thought about what you want to be doing in five years' time?

Are you clear about what your main objective at work is at the moment?

Do you know what you want to have achieved by the end of today?

What would you do if you had more time?



Setting goals is essential for time management, because goals give you a destination and a vision to work towards.

When you know where you want to go, it's easier to get there. Goals can help you decide which actions are worth dedicating time to and which are just distractions.

Having goals will make you more focused and more efficient.

02 PLAN KEEP A TO-DO LIST

Do you ever have that annoying feeling that you've forgotten to do something? Do you often turn up late to meetings or forget about appointments? If so, you are probably not planning your time well or **using a To-Do List effectively to keep on top of things.**



Write down all the things you need to do, personally and professionally. If you have large projects on your list you may need to break these down into smaller more actionable tasks. This way you won't overlook something important.

Organize your tasks into similar areas e.g. phone calls, emails, things to buy, things to do when I'm at a computer, etc. Grouping related items together will increase the efficiency of your flow.

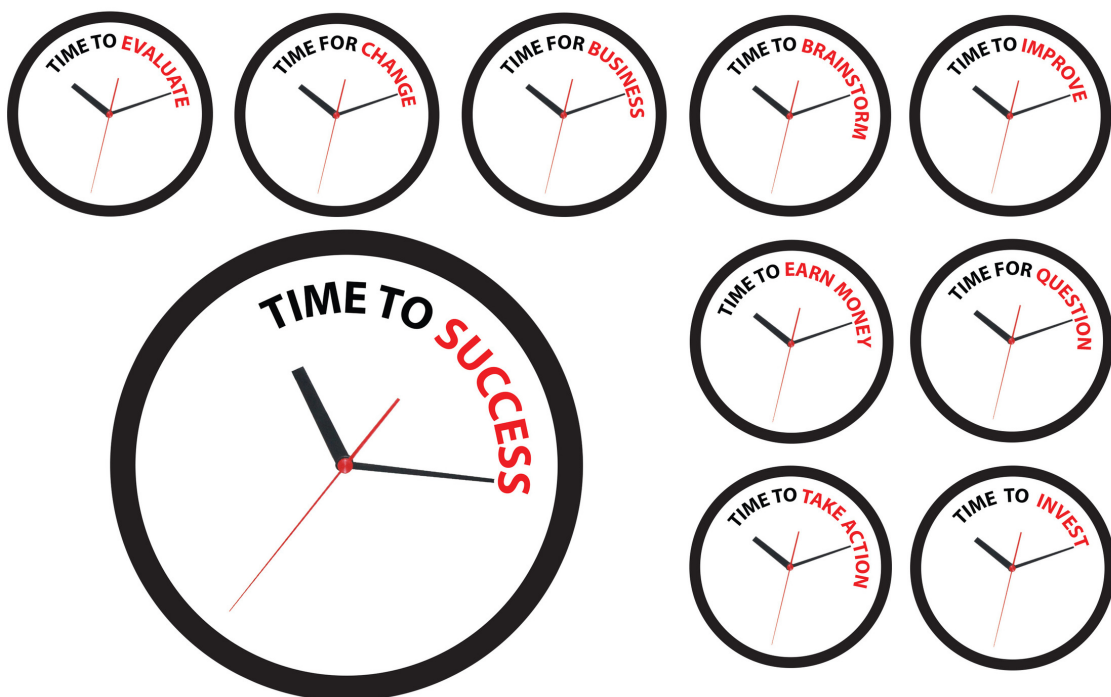
Keep your list near to you at all times so you can refer to it regularly, add actions as you think of them and tick off those actions you managed to complete.

03 PRIORITIZE

The next step is to prioritize the things on your list.

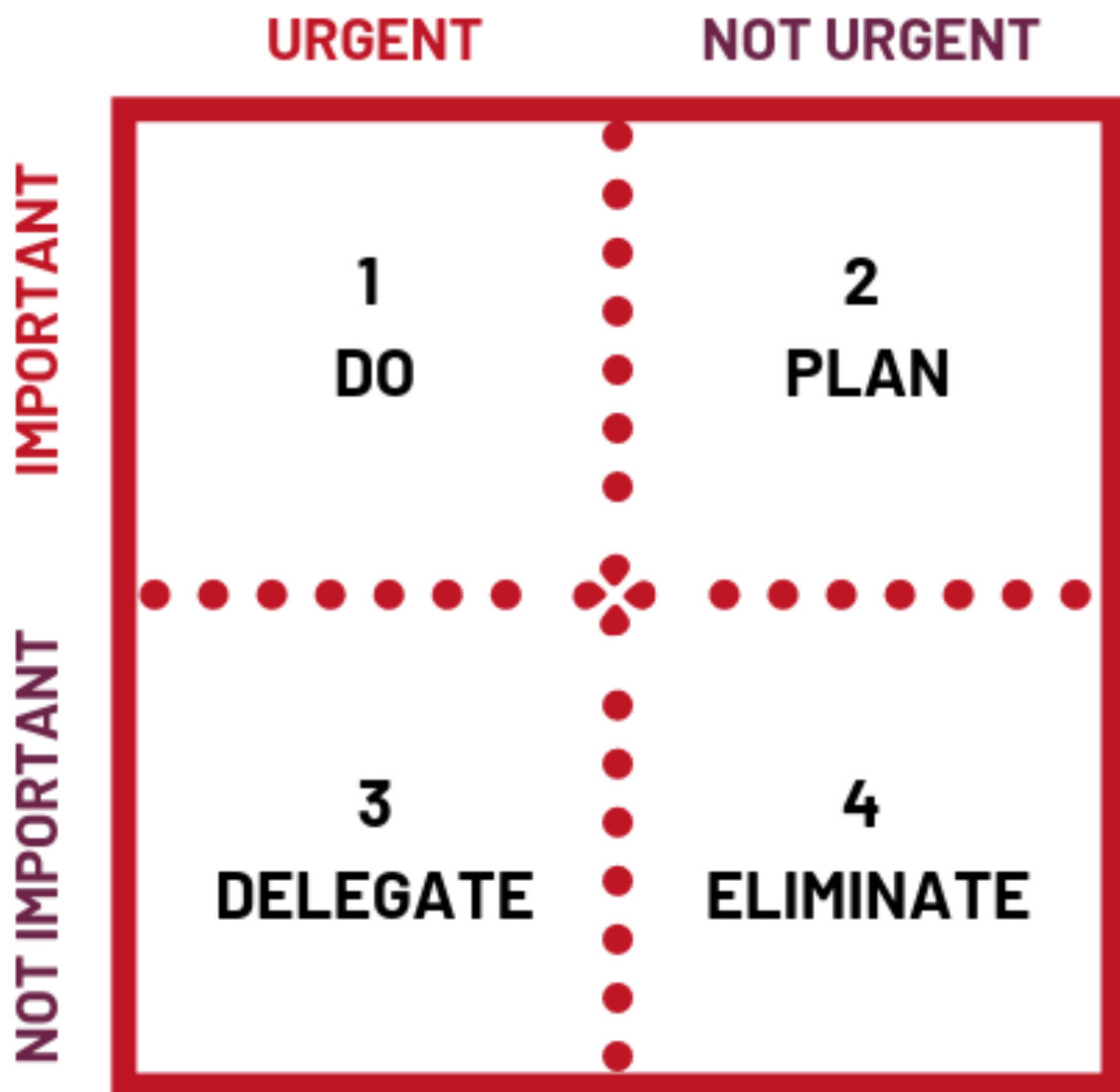
Prioritizing is the key to getting the most out of your day. Without it you can end up going from one activity to another not really completing anything. Often we just do what is easiest first, or the actions that we enjoy the most. Sometimes we focus too much on other people's priorities rather than our own, answering an urgent email, attending to a persistent caller.

At a simple level, you can prioritize based on time constraints, on the potential profitability or benefit of the task you're facing, or on the pressure you're under to complete a job.



Another way to help you prioritize effectively is the

URGENT - IMPORTANT MATRIX



This helps you understand the difference between urgent activities, and important activities. You'll also learn how to overcome the tendency to focus on the urgent.

04 GET ORGANIZED

How much time do you spend every day looking for important files, old emails, documents, books or even your house keys? Imagine what you could do with that time if you could get it back?

To organize your life, you need to focus on two areas:

- 1. Organizing your work space and environment.**
- 2. Establishing a daily procedure to keep yourself organized.**

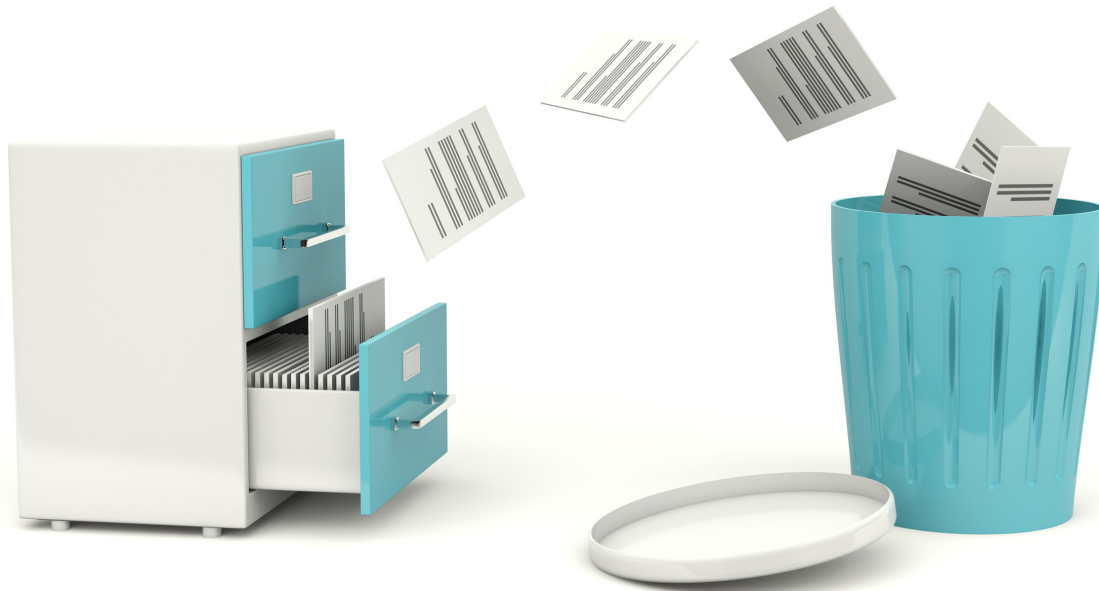
Develop an efficient filing system, one that works for you, and enables you to find documents easily.

You can label your files with the letters A to Z, use numbers or colours to code them, or if you prefer you can organize your files according to your clients.

Do the same with your computer files and emails.

Keep it simple by using the same coding system for all three.





Throw out the things you no longer need. Make space for new items.

Keep important items as near to your desk as possible for easy access.

Create an in-box tray for documents you are currently working on but make sure you file them as soon as you have finished with them.

The same goes for emails, if it only takes five minutes to answer, then do so immediately. If it takes longer, file it in your “things to do” folder. If there is no action to be taken, either delete the mail or file it in the appropriate folder for future reference.

Keeping your workspace and computer clean and tidy will save you time in the long run.

05 **MANAGE DISTRACTIONS**

Think back to your last workday, and consider for a minute the many interruptions that occurred. They may have been phone calls, emails, half way conversations, colleagues stopping by your office, or anything else that unexpectedly demanded your attention and, in doing so, distracted you from the task at-hand.

Because your day only has so many hours in it, a handful of small interruptions can take away the time you need to achieve your goals and be successful in your work and life.

More than this, they can break your focus, meaning that you have to spend time re-engaging with the thought processes needed to successfully complete complex work.

The key to minimising these distractions is to know when they are necessary and when they are not, and to plan for them in your daily schedule. Whenever possible designate certain times of the day for interruptions. Let people know when you are available and when you are not. Make sure that people know that during your "unavailable time", they should only interrupt you if it's really urgent.

06

AVOID PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination occurs when you put off doing things that you should be focusing on now, usually in favour of doing something that is more enjoyable or that you're more comfortable with.



When you procrastinate, you often feel guilty that you haven't started the task and you end up dreading the thought of doing it. Eventually, everything catches up with you and you fail to complete the work on time.

The first step is to recognize when you are doing it.

Do you often:

- Fill your day with low priority tasks from your To Do List.
- Read e-mails several times without starting work on them or deciding what you're going to do with them.
- Leave an item on your To Do list for a long time, even though you know it's important.
- Wait for the “right mood” or the “right time” to tackle the important task at hand.

If this sounds like you, then you need to look at ways to overcome procrastination.

10
minutes



One useful strategy is to tell yourself that you're only going to work on the dreaded task for ten minutes. Often, procrastinators feel that if they start a task they have to complete it, which can make the task seem even more overwhelming and complex. Devoting a small amount of time to just starting it can take away this anxiety. You may find that it is easier than you thought and end up finishing the task anyway!

07 JUST SAY “NO”

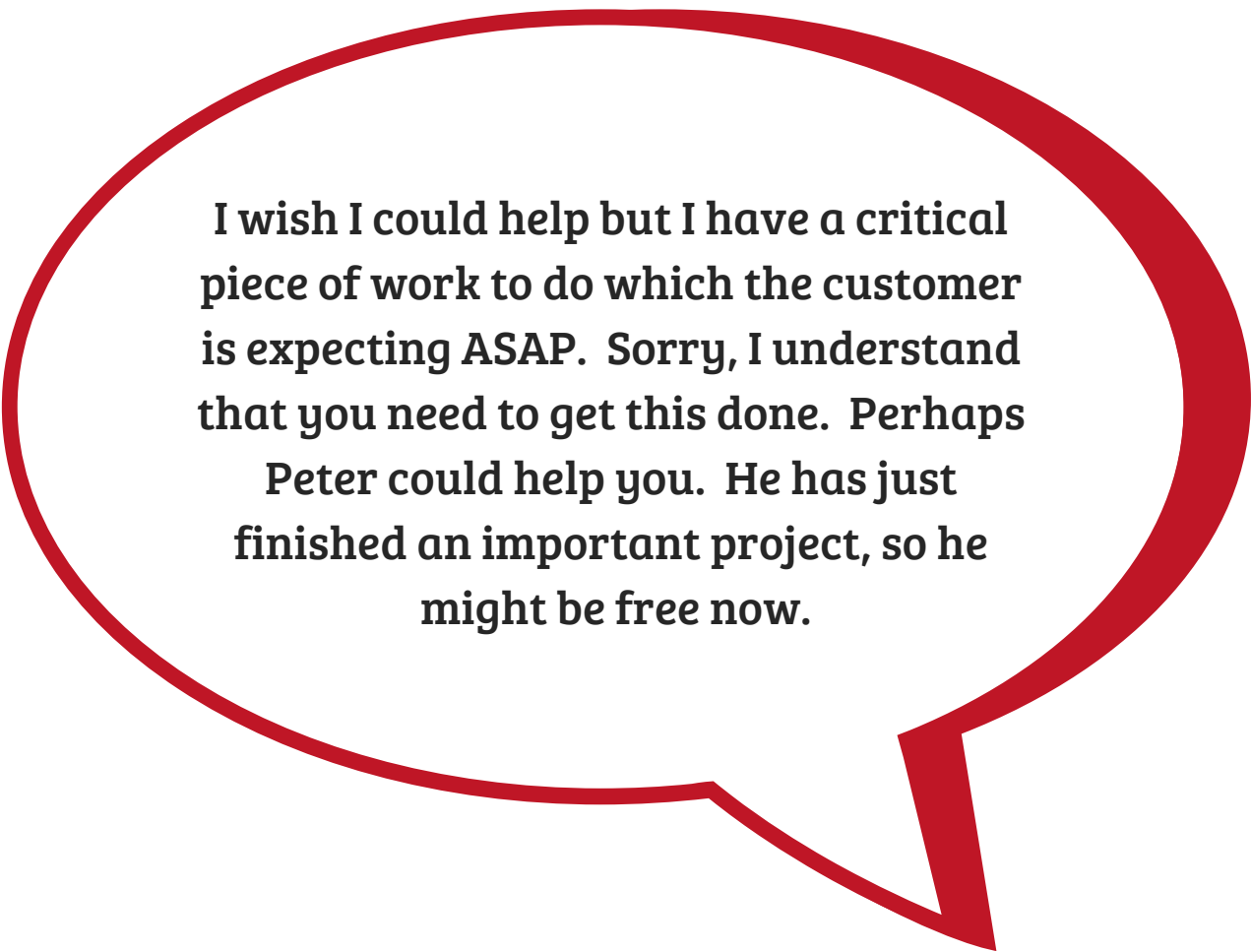


Saying “No” can be very difficult for a variety of reasons. We may feel under pressure to protect our reputation and relationships and don’t want to sacrifice these over doing a potentially simple task. However, taking on too many tasks can lead to low performance, stress and anxiety.

Sometimes you need to say “No” so you can get on with more important tasks.

Learn the subtle art of saying **"yes" to the person,** but **"no" to the task.**

Explain that you would love to help the person but unfortunately you have other important commitments, give the reasons why you can't help and offer an alternative.



I wish I could help but I have a critical piece of work to do which the customer is expecting ASAP. Sorry, I understand that you need to get this done. Perhaps Peter could help you. He has just finished an important project, so he might be free now.

This skill will help you become more assertive, while still maintaining good relationships with your colleagues.

08 FORGET ABOUT MULTITASKING

Many of us believe that multi-tasking – doing more than one job at a time – is beneficial and productive. The truth is that it can take 20-40 % longer to finish a list of jobs when you multitask, compared with completing the same list of tasks one by one.

Writing emails whilst attending a meeting or conference call, talking to a client on the phone whilst checking your agenda or looking for a specific document leads to less concentration, poor performance and lower quality of work.



Your emails are full of errors, you forget to attach documents, your clients become frustrated by your lack of attention or you miss key information at a meeting.

So, it's best to forget about multitasking and focus instead on one task at a time. That way, you'll produce higher quality work.

09 TAKE REGULAR BREAKS

You may think you can work solidly for 8-10 hours straight, especially when you're working on a deadline, but in reality it's impossible to be focused and productive for such a long time. Taking a break and walking away from your computer will give you time to reset your batteries and get your brain working to its full potential again.



Don't think of
breaks as
"wasting time."

They provide valuable down-time, which will enable you to think creatively and work effectively.

Go for a quick walk, grab a cup of coffee, or just sit and meditate at your desk. Try to take a five minute break every hour or two. And don't forget to eat lunch - you won't produce top quality work if you're hungry!

10 LEARN TO DELEGATE

If you want to get more done, sometimes it is necessary to offload some of your tasks to others. The art of delegation is a skill you need to master both in your professional and personal life.

There are many reasons why we chose not to delegate. You might be a micromanager - someone who likes to control or do all of the work themselves, because they can't trust anyone else to do it correctly. This can be a problem for everyone - not just managers!

You may feel it is quicker to just do the task yourself or that you don't know how to explain the task to another person.



Although delegating work to others can free up your time, it can be a recipe for disaster if you don't get it right.

Learning how to delegate effectively includes giving clear instructions, following up on progress and delivering constructive feedback.



**Follow these tips and discover just how
efficient you can be!**

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