TIME MANAGEMENT
By Dr. P. Moudgill

This is a "how to do it" article for those who are serious about time management--for those who are looking for practical guidelines to help them become more effective.

The article contains a series of questions which the reader is encouraged to answer about himself as he goes along. The first time round you may want to read the entire article; but when you read it the second time, please answer the questions as and when they arise before proceeding further.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

We will begin with some basic questions:

1. What are your official hours of work per week?
2. How many hours do you put in on the average per week? (This should include any telephoning, file work or work related study that you do at home.)
3. How tired are you when you come back from work? Are you able to give the quality of time to your family which you know they deserve, or are you too fatigued to be of much use? (Some people are "good for nothing" for the first half hour or so—they must have their tea and be left alone before they "become themselves", can play with the children, or generally contribute to family life.)
4. Are you satisfied with your work? Do you feel that what you are doing is meaningful, that you get a sense of accomplishment or achievement from your work?
5. Are you working towards a specific life goal?

Please answer the above questions before you proceed.

You have a problem if the number of hours you put in are significantly more than the official hours, if you come home tired, if you do not get a sense of achievement from your work, or if you have no long term goals for your life.

If the above do not hold, then you do not have a time management problem in the sense that it is generally understood. You will still do well however if you read the entire article and answer the various questions.

DEFINITION. OF SUCCESS

Each of us desires some things in life. Some desire fame, some riches, some position and some desire nothing better than just being left alone. Each person has his own desires in life, and the desires and values of one may differ from those of another.

So far so good.

But there are many--a very large majority in fact--who don't know what they want in life or from life. They just drift from one event to another like a twig floating down a river. Their priorities are defined by their jobs, their circumstances or by the values of society--rather than by a conscious decision to order their life towards a particular goal.

Do you know what you want from life? What are your goals? What is your definition of success?

Please answer the following questions and let the answers to the questions be—as far as it is possible—independent of each other. (This is best done if these questions are answered after
days gap each—without reference to the previous answers.)

6. What would you be doing if you knew that you had only .6 months more to live?

7. What would be your priorities if you knew that you had only 5 years more to live?

8. What would be your goals in life if you knew that you would die on the day you retire from service?

9. What would be your priorities if you knew that you would live to be a 100 years and that you would enjoy reasonably good health till the day you die?

Remember, your answers are your answers. No one else can sit in judgement over them. As far as you are concerned they are the right answers.

Now go over your answers to see if a central theme emerges. This central theme is what you want in life. There are likely to be other secondary, albeit important, desires, values or needs also. Take note of them too.

Now write down your definition of success, your definition of effectiveness:

10. What is your definition of success as a person?

11. Which is your definition of success as a manager?

You may find that there is a lack of harmony between the two. The demands of one may conflict with the demands of the other. Resolve to the extent possible the conflict by answering the following questions:

12. What are my values as a person which conflict with what I think I should do in order to be successful as a manager? Identify not more than three conflicting values.

13. How important are these values to me?

14. What is the price that I am willing to pay for success as a manager—for professional achievement?

15. Supposing I did not compromise my personal values and priorities, what would be their consequence for my career?

16. Is this "lower level" of achievement acceptable to me?

You will have to work out some trade-offs: the extent to which you are willing to sacrifice your personal needs and values on the one hand and a willingness to accept a "lower level" of success in your career on the other hand.

Please remember, it is rarely that one is able to completely harmonise the two goals. There will always be pulls and counter-pulls. You will be in two minds—some time or the other. Ambivalence is normal.

The foregoing is the most difficult part of the exercise. First developing your definitions of success as a person and as a careerist and then harmonising the two.

Now please write below your definition of success—the integrated definition.

17. My definition of success:

Your definition must be specific, not general. It is not enough to say, for example, that I want to become a famous musician. You will have to specify your goals in any one or more of the following ways: be accepted for singing on AIR by the year 1995; receive a national award by 2000 AD; a Padma Shree by 2005 AD; open a school of music in USA by 2010 AD and so on. Your definition must be
specific enough to give direction to your behaviour.

It is more than likely that your definition of success will change as you grow. These definitions tend to "evolve", become sharper and sometimes change as one matures or as events leave their mark. It will be necessary therefore to review your definitions from time to time. If you have never done any introspection of this type before you will need to review your definitions every six months for the first year, every year for the next two years and then every two to three years subsequently.

DEFINITION OF TIME MANAGEMENT

We are now ready to introduce our definition of time management: Time management is how to manage yourself and others so that you make constant progress towards your goals.

Please note that the above definition makes no reference to either time or work. The definition focusses rather on managing people: self and others.

Let us summarise the foregoing:

You have done some introspection and have concluded that you do or do not have a time management problem in the conventional sense (answers to questions 1 to 5).

You have also developed your personal definition of effectiveness or success--i.e., specific goals to be achieved by specific dates (item 17).

A definition of time management has also been introduced. Before we go into details of time management however it is necessary to do some more introspection--to decide what is the money value of your time.

MONEY VALUE OF YOUR TIME

Please answer the following questions:

18. What is the value of my time per hour at work?
19. What is the value of my time per hour outside office hours?

Your answer to question 18 will depend on your perception of your worth as a manager. It may be based on one or more of the following criteria:

Your salary
The money spent by your organisation on you
The assets, or expenditure or revenue controlled by you
The "value added" to the business by you
Any other criterion

The answer to question 19 will flow from the value you ascribe to your personal time, your family time or your social time. Do try to ascribe a rupee value to your time--no matter how difficult it is, or how approximate your assessment is. (To say that my time is "invaluable" or "priceless" will be begging the point: anyone whose personal time has infinite value should not be working at all!)

Developing well thought out answers to questions 18 and 19 will help in the following ways:

You will have an objective criterion for assessing whether you are spending your time effectively or not. E.g., does this meeting deserve more than -one hour? How much time does this visitor...
or file or problem deserve?

You will know to what extent you can allow one type of activity (personal versus official) to encroach upon the other.

We are now ready to go into time management. The first step in time management is to run a time log on yourself.

TIME LOG

A time log is simply a record of what you do--a record of your activities. Ask someone to note down everything you do for two weeks. This will cover all activity during your work day. A typical portion of the time log may, for example, be as follows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.05</td>
<td>10.08</td>
<td>Incoming phone--from colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.08</td>
<td>10.13</td>
<td>Correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.13</td>
<td>10.18</td>
<td>Outgoing phone call--giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>instructions to. . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.18</td>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>10.38</td>
<td>Visitor (Mr............)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.38</td>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>Idling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>Meeting with subordinate officers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and so on

Do this for two weeks. Then analyse the way you spent the time. Analysis will show that either

- you had little or no choice over how you spent some of your time, e.g., the boss called you in for a meeting; or
- the way you used some portions of your time were entirely within your discretion, e.g., you had an uninterrupted one hour, and you chose to clear some files and made phone calls.

Discretionary (time under your control) and non-discretionary time (where you have no control over your time) are discussed below.

DISCRETIONARY TIME

Analyse your time log on the basis of what you did and when you did it. Analysis will reveal the following types of what-when combinations:

You will find that sometimes you had no control over either the what or the when. E.g., your boss telephones to say that he wants a particular information (what) by lunch time (when).

- There may be cases where is no control over the what (the boss wants the information), but
the when is within your discretion (he wants it by Friday afternoon—therefore you can decide when you will work on it during the next three days).

(NOTE 1 - In the above instance the what-when is perhaps "non-negotiable". The boss wants the information—by lunch time, and you have no choice. There may be other types of what-when combinations however which, though prima-facie non-negotiable, may be, just may be negotiable. For example, a farewell party to a colleague at 4.30 p.m. (he is retiring, or going on a transfer); or an important visitor who drops in unannounced. It is now your choice whether you treat this as discretionary or non-discretionary, i.e., whether you will let these what-whens determine how you spend your time—or choose to set your own priorities.)

* In some cases you will find that you have complete discretion over both the what and the when. E.g., you want to investigate a particular case (what) and decide to complete it by tomorrow afternoon (when.)

The foregoing is presented below in diagrammatic form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non control</td>
<td>No control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No control</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please answer the following questions on the basis of your time log:

20. How much of my time is under my control?

21. How much of my non-discretionary time can I convert to discretionary time by refusing to meet the what-when situations of the type discussed in Note 1?

The key to time management now is

Use your discretionary time to do what is important—aim for effectiveness

Do the non-discretionary things in as little time as you can—aim for efficiency.

We will discuss effectiveness and efficiency in some detail.

EFFECTIVENESS

Things necessary for effectiveness will depend partly on the type of work you do, and partly on your own personal definition of effectiveness. Now answer the following questions:

22. What are the 10 things that I must do at work in order to become highly effective? List them in order of priority. (You may be surprised to find that you need to concentrate on only 4-5 things to become effective. If so, don’t let it perturb you; you are on the right track.

There is a law which is almost universally true—Pareto’s Law. According to this law 20% of what you do gets you 80% of the results, and the remaining 80% of your busy-ness fetches you only 20% returns.

Now focus on the 10 items identified in question 22. See if the top 2-3 items contribute almost
80% to your effectiveness. If you find that they do not, go down to the fourth item. The top four items, if performed satisfactorily should by themselves ensure effectiveness.

**EFFICIENCY**

Effectiveness was doing the right things. Efficiency is doing a thing right—in the context of time management it is doing a thing in minimum time Minimum time at its best is zero time not doing it at all! So try and eliminate as much as you can To repeat, try and eliminate as much as you can— and then some more A quotation from Peter Drucker's book *The Effective Executive* is appropriate here:

"But the best proof that the danger of over-pruning (eliminating more than you should) is a bugaboo (an invalid fear) is the extraordinary effectiveness so often attained by severely ill A good example was Harry Hopkins, President Roosevelt’s confidential adviser in World War II. A dying, indeed almost a dead man for whom every step was torment, he could only work a few hours every other day or so. This forced him to cut out everything but truly vital matters. He did not lose effectiveness thereby; on the contrary, he became as Churchill called him, 'Lord of the Heart of the Matter' and accomplished more than anyone else in wartime Washington.

This is an extreme, of course. But it illustrates both how much control one can exercise over one’s time if one really tries, and how much of the time-wasters one can cut out without loss of effectiveness.’ (p. 41)

Analyse your time log to see how you can reduce the time spent on the various activities. Answering the following questions will help:

23. What are the things that I believe I have to do (non discretionary items: no control over "what") which I can stop doing?

You will be surprised to find that in spite of your final analysis—as well as the analysis suggested by Note 1—many things which you think are inescapable are in fact avoidable. The following experiment will help:

For one month screen your incoming dak and process only those letters which you know are essential. (These should constitute only 5-10% of your mail and should not in any case exceed 20%.) File the rest of the mail in a drawer. (Don’t let it go out of your office.) If you get reminders, let them go into the drawer too. Review after a month. You may find that there are, no ill consequences of failing to respond to the majority of the letters.

The above was an experiment in the context of dak. The same is true however in all other contexts. (And if it is true for non-discretionary items it is certainly true for discretionary items.)

Use the following checklist to help you save time

Dump
Delay
Discipline
Delegate
Do

In question 23 above you identified non discretionary items that could be "dumped". Now answer the following questions -

24. What are the discretionary items that I can dump?
It is necessary here to understand the distinction between dump and delay on the one hand and discipline and delegate on the other hand:

To dump means that it will not be done at all—not by me and not by any one else under me.

To delay means that it will be done by me—not now, but later. Both dump and delay mean that the work will not be loaded on to my subordinates.

To discipline means that work which my subordinates should be doing as their legitimate job—which in the course of time has been pushed upwards—should be given back to them. They should begin to do what they are paid to do.

It may also be noted that the word delegate—the word that is the first to come to mind in time management—has not been used so far. To delegate means to push down to subordinates what is legitimately your job. If you are managing your time effectively, i.e., concentrating on priority tasks only, judiciously pruning and delaying the non-essentials, and insisting that your subordinates do what they are supposed to do—there will be no need for delegation.

Delegation may become necessary only in the following circumstances:

Your boss pushes that which is legitimately his job down to you, or

Because of poor organisational design and structure your job really has too much work content.

If the foregoing are true then you may have to push down some of that which is legitimately your job on to your subordinates, i.e., to delegate.

Now please answer the following questions:

25. What are jobs that I have been doing which should legitimately be done by my subordinates?

26. What are the jobs that I should be doing which I can delay? (You will do them—but at leisure. They are neither important nor urgent.)

27. Which are the jobs, if any, which my boss should be doing which I am being asked to do?

28. What are the jobs, if any, which because of 27 above I am forced to delegate?

After going through the check list of dump, delay, discipline and delegate there will be a residual list of items that you have to do. (This will include items previously deliberately delayed.) Do them.

"DO"

Before you start doing something however please first decide what is an acceptable standard of performance. The following illustrations will help:

One very senior officer called back one of his letters from despatch, made a correction, and returned it later in the evening. He recalled it the next day, made another change, and then returned it. When questioned he said "The first day I added a comma. The second day I deleted it."

We used to receive two types of letters signed by a senior officer (who later rose to the top of the organisation): one would be a polished draft, and the other not too well written, and may even have corrections made by hand. We soon learnt that the not so well written letters were his own dictation—things that he wanted done—and started complying promptly. The polished letters on the other hand had been put up to him for signature and could therefore await our convenience.
To reiterate, before you start doing, decide what is an acceptable level of performance. While perfection is always admirable, the extra effort and time involved in improvement beyond a certain level may not justify the incremental return.

So much for doing. Let us now think of the timing—of **when**, to do: when to work, when to rest, what work to be slotted when.

**WHEN TO DO WHAT**

In this scheme we will discuss scheduling of work as well as breaks for rest. Before we do that however please answer the following questions.

29. What are my peak efficiency periods during the day? When am I at my best? (Say e.g., between 9.45-10.45 in morning; 3.00-4.00 in the afternoon.)
30. What are my low efficiency periods during the day?
31. How many minutes/hours can I work non-stop before I begin to experience loss of concentration or fatigue?
32. What are my best days in the week? When am I most fresh?
33. What are my worst days in the week?

Some guidelines for scheduling are:

**GUIDELINES 1**

- Do the most creative, important, distasteful or mentally arduous work when you are fresh. Save the not so important and/or relatively easy or routine work for your low periods. Similarly schedule your creative and important work for the good days and the other for the not so good days.

  Take a break before you get tired, and not wait till you are too tired to work. Taking short judicious breaks will result in your accomplishing more during the day than by working non-stop but with progressively lower efficiency. Also, you will be fresh when you go home, and will be well equipped to enjoy yourself and your family.

- Learn to catnap at will. You must lie down and rest, preferably sleep, for 15-20 minutes after lunch. Learn to relax even while sitting in your chair or while travelling. If you don’t have a couch or an easy chair in your office, lie down on the floor on a mat.

- Changing the type of work itself provides some relaxation.

  You are now ready to schedule your work. (We will introduce some more concepts later in the article which will cause you to revise your schedule but the foregoing is enough for starters.)

**1ST SCHEDULE**

Answering the following questions will help you to develop your schedule for the week:

34. What are the things that I want done during the week? Prepare a list.

Now use the dump, delay, discipline and delegate checklist to prune this list and answer the next question.

35. What are things that I must do during the week? (This may include supervision of some jobs that I plan to give to my subordinates under discipline and delegation.)
List these in order of the time they are expected to take—activities which are expected to take the maximum time to be put on top of the list.

Now answer the following questions with respect to only the top 20% items on the list in question 35.

36. What is the purpose of these activities?

37. What is the standard of performance I am looking for? Set standards for the top 20% activities.

Now schedule the activities for the week under question 35 on the basis of Guidelines 1

(NOTE 2 - Please remember that some time will always be wasted. Your best laid plans will go awry. So schedule all that you want to do so that you can do them in only half the official working hours. If you think that this is impractical, try it at least for one week.)

Now implement your schedule.

Towards the middle of the week (say, Wednesday afternoon) answer the following question.

38. Am I able to exercise self-control and stick to the schedule?

The following true story is relevant here:

'Someone in England invited a management consultant—a personal friend—for advice. This man spent the whole day at the works, observed what was happening, and gave the following advice in the evening:

"List all that you want to do. Arrange them in order of priority. Start with item 1. Finish it. Then pick up item 2. Finish it. And so on to the bottom of the list.

"After you have gone through the list send me a cheque for whatever you think my advice was worth",

Three weeks later he received a cheque for 10,000 pounds sterling.'

At the end of the week do some introspection to find out what you have learnt about yourself and your ability to manage time. Jot these down. Also note down on paper anything that occurs to you that will help you in developing and implementing your next schedule.

Before you prepare the schedule for the next week however it will help if you answer the following question.

39. For how long can I work on any one activity before I need a change or a break?

Let me explain this.

Most of us can concentrate on a particular job for short periods only, say 30 minutes to one hour. After that you begin to get tired, and need a break, or at least a change of activity. If you are writing a report, for example, you may be able to concentrate on it for say, 45 minutes. After that you need a break. This may also be true for dictation, or any other activity which requires sustained mental effort.

You can certainly continue beyond 45 minutes (to continue with the above example). But your efficiency will diminish and your fatigue level will rise. As long as the fatigue level remains below a certain threshold—the threshold varies with individuals, depending on their constitution and state of health—recovery is rapid. But if the fatigue level goes beyond the threshold recovery is slow, and affects your overall level of performance.
So please decide what is your "span of attention"; after how much time should you take a break, or seek a change of activity.

We are now ready to introduce some fresh guidelines.

GUIDELINES 2

Break up activities which exceed your "span of attention" and take a break at the end of the span. The break may simply be getting up from your chair, and stretching and walking around the room; or some deep breathing or relaxation exercises; or even a cup of tea in the middle of a meeting—with no business being discussed during the 5-7 minute tea break. Alternately, switch over to a different type of activity.

Activities which take less time but are similar in nature should be grouped together so that the total time taken adds up to your span of attention. To continue with the 45 minute example, schedule your interviews so that you meet staff for 45 minutes; or do files only for 45 minutes. (Activities which do not add up to 45 minutes, e.g. outgoing telephone calls, should also be clubbed together.)

To summarise the foregoing:

- Break up long activities, and
- Club together similar short activities.

We are now ready to develop the schedule for the 2nd week.

2ND SCHEDULE

Please answer questions 34-37 for the second week. Draw 4 your experience of the 1st week, Note-2 and Guidelines 1 and 2.

Implement it.

Do some introspection during and at the end of the week.

If you find that all is smooth sailing, please pat yourself on the back. You have earned it. This is now a good time to introduce some rewards.

REWARDS

When you develop a schedule for the third week identify your "20% activities" (activities which lead directly to your 80% results) and answer the following questions

40. In what way can I celebrate completion of these activities?

Celebration may mean going to a show, buying a tie, buying your wife some flowers, or anything else that is meaningful.

You decide what is meaningful for you. Promise yourself these rewards. Build them into your schedule.

If for some reason you want to limit the tangible rewards (you must introduce them—-at least to begin with) there is a powerful intangible reward which you can give yourself at the completion of your 20% activity. This is how it goes:

Say out loud to yourself:

"I had planned to complete...," (describe the activity)
"I have completed it according to schedule"
"I am pleased with myself for having completed it."

"I am a good manager."

You must already be experiencing a sense of satisfaction because you have completed the activity. By the time you finish speaking the above four sentences you will be definitely feeling good. Hold that good feeling for 2-3 minutes. Allow yourself to experience it, to enjoy it. This will be a powerful reinforcer. You will want to reexperience this good feeling. It will therefore provide additional motivation for you to complete your important activities as per schedule.

These were rewards for being able to complete your important activities. But suppose that you are not able to work your schedule, that things are taking so much longer than they should, or the workload is really so much that you can't possibly complete all you want to during the week, what then?

Let us examine possible reasons why you may still be working "overtime".

**REASONS FOR WORKING OVERTIME**

There can be many reasons for a person working overtime. Some of these are discussed below. You may be new to the job and still in the process of getting to know the ropes. The need to work long hours in such circumstances is understandable.

Some people work long hours because they are disorganised. Please ask yourself: "Is it possible that I have not organised my work as well as I should?" (After all that is what this article is all about.)

- Some people are compulsive, workers. They work long hours because of an inner compulsion. They can't relax. They must be doing something all the time.
- Some are perfectionists. They set very high standards. As a consequence they take much more time than practical considerations require. (Remember the story of the two commas!)
- Some are insecure. They cannot afford failure, or even a lower level of performance. As a consequence they do everything themselves. (They don't let the subordinate do the job because they can do it better. And because the subordinate is not entrusted with the job, he does not learn. And so they end up having to do the job themselves. A vicious circle.)
- Some are indecisive. They can't take decisions. Some are procrastinators. They won't take decisions. So issues remain unresolved—and work piles up. One reason for indecision and procrastination can be fear: fear of consequences. Another reason may be incompetence.
- Some have not learnt to say "no". And are therefore paying the price. (If you know your priorities, if you are clear about your definition of success, you will have no difficulty deciding whether you should accept or reject a particular piece of work. It is now only a matter of learning to say no.)
- Some have not learnt to manage unscheduled visitors—specially representatives of organised labour. The following illustration is relevant here.

Some years ago when a particular union had a very heavy political clout with the minister, its office bearers had become particularly indisciplined. A particular official barged into the office of a rather senior officer. The latter remarked "You know that nowadays you can get anything done. But the way you get things done causes so much tension that many other items of work in which you are interested get held up." The message went home.
It helps if you lay down guidelines for visitors right in the beginning. It may take a few days or weeks for the staff to get the message that you mean business--but get it they will--if you remain firm.

- Some cannot manage meetings. This will be discussed in some detail in a section by itself.
- Some work long hours because they have not taken the time and trouble to develop their subordinates. (You may want to keep this aspect in mind when you review your definition of success. All truly successful men were so partly because they chose able assistants--or if they had little choice--spent time developing the assistants they had. Would you like to consider including this in your list of "20% activities"?)
- Some sit long hours simply because the boss sits (or works) long hours. They don't work long hours. They simply sit long hours. (Your decision to sit long hours must follow from your definition of success as well as the money value you ascribe to your official and personal time. You are the best judge.)

It may be worthwhile here to narrate a real life incident:

A senior official sent a file to his subordinate with a note: "Please discuss at 19.30 hours." The subordinate sent the file back with the following note: "I am available every day upto 17.30 hours. If you want to discuss the matter after working hours, please get some one else."

Some are overloaded because their boss overloads them and does not permit them to delegate.

The above were some reasons for a person working overtime. Now please answer the following questions.

41. Which of the above reasons apply to me?
42. What are some other reasons why I work long hours?
43. What are the steps I must take to overcome them?

(NOTE - 3: A note of caution here. Many of the reasons discussed above are behavioural (psychological). Don't try to tackle them more than one at a time. Given below are guidelines for bringing about behavioural changes:

Identify the behaviour you want to change. You may, for example, want to say "no" to a union official.

- Picture him walking into your room unannounced.
  Rehearse what you want to say to him. Rehearse, if necessary, a whole dialogue.
  Picture yourself saying it with confidence
- Picture him walking out of your room.

It will work.

Guidelines for bringing about behavioural changes are summarised below.

GUIDELINES - 3

Identify one behavioural problem. What is the behaviour you want to change? Decide upon the new behaviour with which you want to replace the old behaviour.
Picture the new behaviour. Rehearse it several times in your mind. Make the picture as vivid as possible.

Practise the new behaviour till you have unlearned the old behaviour and the new behaviour has been established. (Unlearning and learning normally takes about 90 days of practice.)

Then tackle the next behavioural problem.

The above were guidelines for bringing about behavioural changes. Let us now look at some attitudinal changes which are important for successful time management.

ATTITUUDINAL CHANGES

The following questions are designed to elicit your attitudes in the context of time management:

44. Do you feel stress because of too much work?
45. Do you feel guilty about not doing a better job?
46. Do you feel you must always be busy doing something "useful"?
47. Do you feel guilty if you have to leave office early once in a while?
48. Do you take holidays or long weekends as often as you would like?

These questions are discussed below.

Too much work is an objective reality. It is a fact which is "out there". Your reaction to it however is subjective. How you react to it is up to you. It's your choice. To take an illustration: Consider two people waiting at a bus stop. The bus is long overdue. One person is whistling with his hands in his pockets, while the other is sweating away. Why? The attitude of the two persons is different. The delay is an objective reality. Their reaction is partly their own choosing. You too, if you find that your subjective reaction is of stress, ask yourself why?

We have already discussed the need to set standards before you undertake a job as well as avoid perfectionism. If you feel guilty about not doing a better job, please ask yourself why. If your standard has been set objectively, i.e., on the basis of the advantages obtained on the one hand and the marginal cost of improvement in terms of time and effort on the other hand, then why do you feel guilty?

Please remember that sitting back and idling occasionally, taking breaks and resting, if done judiciously are all "useful". Busy-ness for the sake of being busy as an end in itself does not necessarily lead to effectiveness. It may instead be counterproductive: You may not be taking the time to think things through, and conserving your energy for the really important work.

Do you not "think" of your official problems at home? Do you not work at your office problems at home--both consciously and unconsciously? Do you not occasionally sit late in the office or take work home when the occasion so demands? Then why feel guilty if you have to leave office early once in a while?

Please review your definition of success--your life-goals. Please take holidays as often as you think that they are necessary for achieving these goals--without violating your requirements of success as a manager.

The above were meant to set you thinking about your attitude towards work. Guidelines for conducting meetings are presented below.
MEETINGS

The following guidelines will help you save time in the context of meetings:

- Don’t call a meeting unless there is a real need. Just because tradition requires a periodic meeting is no reason to hold one.

  First decide what is the purpose of the meeting. Then decide who are the people who need to be called for the meeting—who are expected to make a specific contribution to the objectives.

- Circulate the agenda well in advance. Make sure that the invitees have had adequate opportunity to do their homework.

- Be very specific about the time. Don’t say "There will be a meeting at 2.00 p.m." People will come in any time between 2.00 and 2.15. Say rather "Business will commence at 2.03 p.m."

- You do your homework. Decide how much time is to be given to each item, and how much time for any non-agenda issues.

- Announce this approximate time allocation at the beginning of the meeting. Be very harsh on any one who has had time to prepare but has not done his homework. Give him a severe reprimand. This will get the message across to others too—that you mean business. Keep the discussion to the point.

- Dictate the minutes in the hearing of the participants. The minutes should not be more than one or two sentences for each item discussed. There should normally be no reason to record who said what. Simply record "It was decided that..." In case detailed records are necessary they should be circulated later as an annexure.

- If possible distribute the minutes before the meeting disperses.

The above were some guidelines for saving time in meetings. Discussed below are some other time savers:

TIME SAVERS

The following tips will help you save time.

- Be consistent. Let your subordinates know your views on a subject early on. It will save a lot of time—theirs and yours.

- Let them know which days of the week or hours of the day you are available. They can then plan their consultations accordingly.

- Don’t overlook poor performance on the part of a subordinate. Insist that work be done according to the standards you have set. Ask your subordinate to repeat the job, if necessary—till you are satisfied. He will get the message.

- If any of your subordinates are not getting along with each other, don’t see them one at a time. Insist that they resolve matters among themselves. If they fail then ask them to see you together.

- If you have some important work which requires uninterrupted application of mind, and interruptions are unavoidable—get away. Go out on tour, or don’t come to work in the forenoon (keep your boss in the picture), or whatever.
• Don’t touch a paper unless you are ready to deal with it. A file should not ordinarily be touched more than twice: once to ask for any information that you need, and the second time to give a decision.

• There is no need to clear your dak daily.
  Save up not-so-important work to fill in ‘travelling or waiting time (you may, for example, be idling, waiting for a meeting called by the boss to commence).

• If you need to hold a meeting with a colleague—go to his room. Keep standing while you discuss.
  Then come back. (Sitting down introduces elements that may result in time being lost.) Record decisions taken if necessary and send them to him for confirmation.

• If your boss is coming on an inspection, decide what you want from him. Do your home work,
  collect all the information/papers necessary for him to be able to give you the decision you want, then ask him for a decision. If possible keep ready a draft for inclusion in his inspection note. (When your boss is with you he is in a sense “captive”. Make good use of him.)

Let us now summarise the additional material introduced subsequent to the 2nd Schedule. We have talked about Rewards, Time Wasters, Meetings and Time Savers. You are now ready to prepare and implement your schedule for the third week.

3RD SCHEDULE

Prepare your schedule on the basis of the foregoing plus experience gained over the first two schedules. Implement it. You should be sailing smooth—except for behavioural changes, which will take time to implement.

If you have mastered all of the foregoing you are well on your way to success—both as a person as well as a manager. You will rise high in the organisation.

This is a logical place to finish this article. But because you are on your way up, I have included some material here for top executives. So please keep reading.

FOR TOP EXECUTIVES

When you get to or near the top you will find that demands on your time will increase. Which means you will have to be an even better time manager than before.

You will find that demands on your time can be broadly classified as follows:

a) People asking for favours (the higher you go, the more of this)

b) Ceremonial matters

c) Meetings for coordination, meetings for control

d) Simply remaining abreast of what is going on and keeping things moving

e) Important decisions relating to setting of goals and formulation of policy
  Decisions relating to placement of personnel

g) Development of key personnel

h) Decisions leading to innovation and change

i) Implementation of key decisions.
Items a) to d) above are inescapable. You have to give time to these. What is likely to happen however is that due to the pressure of a) to d) the more important items like e) to l) are likely to be dealt with cursorily, or even ignored.

Please appreciate that success lies not in your getting to the top, but rather in your making the organisation under you more effective. You must therefore, to repeat, you must therefore give priority to items e) to i). Some of these are discussed below:

We all know that the man on the top makes a difference—for the better or the worse. It pays therefore to choose your top men carefully—and to develop key personnel. A significant proportion of your time must therefore go to personnel development and placement.

It is not enough to take good decisions. In order to be effective they have to be implemented. And they will be implemented only if you follow up. (Merely, giving an order does not result in a decision being implemented.) Your schedule must therefore include time for following up key decisions.

The foregoing were problems peculiar to top executives. They have the potential to make or mar the organisation, but unless they are extra careful the urgent inescapable issues end up swamping the important ones. And the organisation suffers.

It is time therefore for some more introspection. Please answer the following questions:

49. How much time are you spending in decisions regarding selection and placement of personnel? Is it sufficient?
50. Which of your key subordinates have you been consciously developing?
51. What are the criteria for assessing the success of your efforts at subordinate development?
52. How much time have you budgeted towards this end?
53. How many decisions which are expected to result in innovation and change have you taken in the last one year?
54. What are the areas in which you could now introduce innovation and change?
55. Which of your major decisions are you currently implementing?
56. How much time have you allocated for following and implementation of such decisions?
57. How much time do you spend with people when they come to you (on their own initiative) with their ‘problems’?
58. Do people come to you with personal problems? If not, why not?
59. Do people come to you with professional career-related problems? If not, why not?

The foregoing were—or at least should be—some of the important demands on the time of a senior executive. Given below are some additional items which deserve the attention of top executives. These are the matters of structuring of work and recurring crises.

WORK STRUCTURE

Work is not infinitely divisible. There are logical chunks of work which must be handled by only one person or within only one particular unit. A machine designed for operation by one man is, for example, best operated by one person. If certain information can be conveniently stored in and processed by one mind, it becomes inefficient to divide that information between two heads. Problems of coordination far exceed the advantages, if any, accrued by bringing in a second person.
Let us take some real-life examples: The more the number of clerks in a section, the more the confusion, and the less the work done. A riveting gang can employ at best four people. Additional persons will be redundant. A small R&D team working on a particular project is more effective than if the project is entrusted to say, the entire department. Two gangs cannot be allowed to work independently to rerail one vehicle.

Please analyse the working of the pyramid below you for faulty work-structuring. Some common symptoms are:

- Excessive time spent in getting information. If the information required to carry out routine work is not routinely available at the work-centre, and if considerable time is spent in simply getting the information, then there is something wrong with the work-structure. Please correct it.

- If the work structure cannot be corrected, i.e., the information required is not generated or available within the work centre, please ensure that it is made available at the right time in the right format.

- Too many meetings: If there are too many unavoidable meetings--meetings necessary for coordination--then again work has been allowed to be spread beyond its logical chunks.

- Too many people: If people are getting in each other's way, if excessive time is being spent in coordination, you are over-staffed. Overstaffing is just another way of saying that work has been allowed to be spread over too many people. (Overstaffing is about the most expensive mistake an organisation can make. You are paying more to get less.)

Would you now like to answer the following questions?

60. How much time do you think is wasted because of overstaffing?
61. Are there too many unavoidable meetings? Meetings which you see as necessary. Yet leave you with a sense that "there is something wrong--there are just too many meetings"?
62. How much time is spent in simply getting information?

Please develop your own solutions to the foregoing problems.

The following is suggested as a temporary solution to the problem of overstaffing: Identify the excess. Separate them, physically if possible, from the minimum required to do the job effectively and efficiently. Let the "lean" core get on with the job. Insulate them from the "fat". Make work for the latter if necessary, or just pay them without getting anything in return from them. You will be better off on the whole.

The following experiment conducted by one of the Directors General of Supplies & Disposals many many years ago is relevant. The organisation was suffering from too many clerks. He attached one clerk and one steno to two officers each. This group of four were required to do all the work, including filing of papers. All other clerical staff were made to sit in a hall and do nothing. The efficiency of the organisation improved tremendously. Some of the reasons for improvement were:

- All the "working" people knew what information was stored where
  They developed a sense of ownership of the work they were doing

- Delay due to physical movement of papers was minimised

- It was easy to fix responsibility for delays, faulty decisions, or papers getting "lost".
Some ways in which faulty work structure results in wasting time were discussed above. Let us now examine recurring crises in the context of time management.

RECURRING CRISSES

A crisis is that which requires you to divert attention from other work. Such diversion is by definition inefficient. Crises are however part of life. While an occasional crisis can be accepted, a crisis which occurs over and over again is not acceptable. A good executive identifies crises which tend to recur, anticipates them, develops solutions for them and implements these solutions. A crisis is thus converted to a routine.

Now some questions.

63. Which crises tend to recur in your organisation?

• on a weekly basis
• at the end of the month
• quarterly
  at the end of the year
  other than those above.

64. Which crises tend to recur at home?

Please develop your own solutions.

Let us summarise the foregoing. We have examined some items which deserve the attention of top executives. These are: changes in the type of time demands, need to examine work structure, and defusing of recurring crises. Given below are some additional miscellaneous tips and suggestions for success.

MISCELLANEOUS

• Develop a regular exercise program. It will keep your body and mind fit, reduce stress levels and increase your "span of attention".
• Combine activities where possible, e.g., dictating into a dictaphone while travelling, listening to music or a learning cassette while jogging or driving, etc.

Keep your desk uncluttered. Develop a personal filing system so that all the information you would normally require is available at your, finger tips. Alternately have your Personal Computer plugged into the Central Information System. Identify some skill you want to develop, e.g., public speaking, computers, speed-reading, negotiation, etc. Set yourself a performance standard and a time limit. Start working on it. Identify some key requirements for the next higher job. Begin to train yourself for it.

List some books or other technical literature you want to read during working hours. Start reading.

List some places you want to visit, some people you want to meet. Plan for it, and then go ahead.

Please, please pay attention to development of subordinates.
CLOSING WORDS

We have now come to the end of the article. The final closing words are 'Keep reviewing your definitions of success--your life-goals. Do this as frequently as you think necessary--till they crystallise. Answer the various questions all over again at least once in 3-4 months. See if anything new emerges. Run a time log on yourself every 6-8 weeks. Correct your work habits and time allocation on the basis of the log. Develop annual, quarterly, monthly and weekly plans. Work them. Above all, relax and enjoy yourself. You will go up. May God bless you.
KNOW THY TIME
Abridged by Dr. P. Moudgill
from Chapter 2 of The Effective Executive
by Peter Drucker*

Time is a unique resource: the supply of time cannot be increased; it is totally irreplacable; and everything--no matter what you do--everything requires time. While planning therefore effective executives do not focus first on their tasks, but rather on their time. They seek to manage time rather than tasks.

I. THE TIME DEMANDS ON THE EXECUTIVE

All executives have to spend a lot of time on things which do not contribute to effectiveness in any way. Ceremonial functions are one example. Ironically, the higher the position the more the unproductive demands on time. This is a truth that needs to be realised and accepted by anyone who desires to become effective.

It is also true that not only does a senior executive have more unproductive demands on his time, but also more demands per se. Some of these are time required for
- decisions, and for
- people and people problems.

It helps if one distinguishes between knowledge workers and manual workers. While dealing with people always requires time, interaction with knowledge workers requires much more time than with the other category. Effective executives therefore spend more time with people, specially knowledge workers; and convey an impression that "we have all the time in the world" while interacting with them.

Also, decisions regarding knowledge workers require more time simply because they are more important to the organisation. Effective executives therefore spend a lot of time on every single personnel decision. This latter is illustrated below.

"Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., former head of General Motors, the world's largest manufacturing company, was reported never to make a personnel decision the first time it came up. He made a tentative judgement, and even that took several hours as a rule. Then, a few days or weeks later, he tackled the question again, as if he had never worked on it before. Only when he came up with the same name two or three times in a row was he willing to go ahead. Sloan had a deserved reputation for the 'winners' he picked. But when asked about his secret, he is reported to have said 'No secret--I have simply accepted that the first name I come up with is likely to be the wrong name--and I therefore retrace the whole process of thought and analysis a few times before I act.' Yet Sloan was far from a patient man." (p. 33).

Other decisions too, if they have to be effective, require a lot of time.. specially those related to innovation and change.

The one important element in people interactions and other vital decisions is that they a lot of uninterrupted time. Spending 15 minutes each day or even thrice a day for a week on a given problem may achieve nothing; the issue would probably require a solid chunk of time, say an uninterrupted two hours.

Peter Drucker, The Effective Executive, Pan, 1970.
To summarise, the effective executive must learn first to manage time. This is because

- People and people problems require time, specially knowledge workers. They need a patient “I have all the time in the world” approach.
- Personnel decisions require time.
- Decisions relating to change and innovation require time.

In order to be effective this time has to be spent in solid uninterrupted chunks. And

There will be unproductive demands on time.

And, the higher you go up, the greater the demands on your time, both productive and unproductive.

H. TIME DIAGNOSIS

Before one can manage time one must know where it goes. It is necessary therefore to record how time is spent—maintain a time log. Once you know how you spend your time, analyse it for time-wasters. Identify and eliminate to the extent possible the following:

1. Things that need not be done at all.
2. Things which could be done by others so that you can do what you are supposed to do. (This is different from delegation—where you unload on others what you should be doing.)
3. Things which you do which waste the time of others: e.g., meetings held by you.

Cut out the three types of activities as drastically as you can. Very rarely will an executive cut back too much—we usually overrate rather than underrate our contribution. To repeat, be harsh in cutting back. You will rarely ever over-prune.

"... the best proof that the danger of over-pruning is a bugaboo is the extraordinary effectiveness so often attained by severely ill or severely handicapped people.

A good example was Harry Hopkins, President Roosevelt’s confidential adviser in World War II. A dying, indeed almost a dead man for whom every step was torment, he could only work a few hours every other day or so. This forced him to cut out everything but truly vital matters. He did not lose effectiveness thereby; on the contrary, he became as Churchill called him, 'Lord of the Heart of the Matter' and accomplished more than anyone else in wartime Washington.

This is an extreme, of course. But it illustrates both how much control one can exercise over one’s time if one really tries, and how much of the time-wasters one can cut out without loss of effectiveness." (p. 41)

To summarise, cut back. And after you have done so, cut back some more.

III. PRUNING THE TIME WASTERS

The foregoing dealt with activities which wasted your time as an executive. Discussed below are, symptoms which result in wasting everybody’s time.

1. The first symptom to look for is the recurrent “crisis” --a crisis which occurs over and over again. A recurrent crisis can either be foreseen and prevented or reduced to a routine which can be managed by relatively lower level staff. Recurrence—simply means managerial slovenliness and
"Years ago when I first started out as a consultant, I had to learn how to tell a well-managed industrial plant from a poorly managed one—without any pretence to production knowledge. A well-managed plant, I soon learned, is a quiet place. A factory that is 'dramatic', a factory in which the 'epic of industry' is unfolded before the visitor's eyes, is poorly managed. A well-managed factory is boring. Nothing exciting happens in it because the crises have been anticipated and have been converted into routine. Similarly, a well-managed organization is a 'dull' organization. The 'dramatic' things in such an organization are basic decisions that make the future, rather than heroics in mopping up yesterday." (p. 43, 44)

2. Time wasters often result from overstaffing.

"My first-grade arithmetic primer asked: 'If it takes two ditch-diggers two days to dig a ditch, how long would it take four ditch-diggers?' In first grade, the correct answer is, of course, 'one day'. In the kind of work, however, with which executives are concerned, the right answer is probably 'four days' if not 'for ever'.

"A work force may, indeed, be too small for the task. And the work then suffers, if it gets done at all. But this is not the rule. Much more common is the work force that is too big for effectiveness, the work force that spends, therefore, an increasing amount of its time 'interacting' rather than working." (p. 44)

When "coordination" takes up a major portion of your time, or people get into each other's way and become an impediment to performance rather than a means thereto—you are overstaffed.

3. Another symptom is an excess of meetings.

Meetings are unavoidable: "We meet because people holding different jobs have to cooperate to get a specific task done. We meet because the knowledge and experience needed in a specific situation are not available in one head, but have to be pieced together out of the experience and knowledge of several people." (p. 45)

Meetings should however never be allowed to become the main demand on an executive's time. Too many meetings signify that the work content of one job is spread over several jobs. responsibility is diffused. information is not available to those who need it.

Too many inescapable meetings simply mean a faulty organisational structure.

It may be necessary at times to have some people whose only job is to meet, to keep meeting all the time. These are the ones who formulate policy, e.g., a Board of Directors. But then the people who sit on these boards should not be permitted to do anything else.

4. The last major time-waster is information not being available—or not available in the form in which it can be used. If this is the case, everybody's work suffers. To summarise, the following waste everybody's time:

Recurrent crises: plan for and defuse them. and isolate the excess work or information content

Overstaffing: if you can't get rid of the fat, reorganize so that the remaining "lean" organization is effective.

Too many unavoidable meetings: Restructure and bring the under one head.
IV. CONSOLIDATING 'DISCRETIONARY' TIME

"Senior executives rarely have as much as one quarter of their time truly at their disposal and available for the important matters, the matters that contribute, the matters they are being paid for. This is true in any organization - except that in the government agency the unproductive time demands on the top people tend to be even higher than they are in other large organizations.

"The higher up an executive, the larger will be the proportion of time that is not under his control and yet not spent on contribution. The larger the organization, the more time will be needed just to keep the organization together and running, rather than to make it function and produce.

"The effective executive therefore knows that he has to consolidate his discretionary time. He knows that he needs large chunks of time, that small driblets are no time at all. Even one quarter of the working day, if consolidated in large time-units, is usually enough to get the important things done. But even three quarters of the working day are useless if they are only available as fifteen minutes here or half an hour there." (p.50, 51)

The final step in time management therefore is to consolidate the time that is under the executive's control. Some ways of doing this are

working at home (during working hours) for half a day or full day
schedule operating work for 2 to 3 days a week and set aside the mornings of the remaining days for uninterrupted work on major issues.

Working at home on weekends or early in the mornings are the this is not consolidating discretionary time; it is cutting into personal
most popular methods. But and/or family time.

To summarise:

"Time is the scarcest resource; and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed. The analysis of one's time, moreover, is the one easily accessible and to think through what really matters in it.

'Know Thyself', the old prescription for wisdom, is almost impossibly difficult for mortal men. But everyone can follow the injunction 'Know Thy Time' if he wants to, and be well on the road towards contribution and effectiveness." (p. 53)