



Effective Scheduling

Plan your time. Make time for yourself

Scheduling is the process by which you look at the time available to you, and plan how you will use it to achieve the goals you have identified. By using a schedule properly, you can:

- Understand what you can realistically achieve with your time
- Plan to make the best use of the time available
- Leave enough time to things you absolutely must do
- Preserve contingency time to handle “the unexpected”
- Minimize stress by avoiding over-commitment to yourself and others

How to Use the Tool

Scheduling is best done on a regular basis, for example at the start of every week or month. Go through the following steps in preparing your schedule:

- 1) Identify the time you have available. This will depend on the design of your job and on your personal goals in life.
- 2) Block the essential tasks you must carry out to succeed in your job that means the actions you absolutely must take to do a good job: these will often be the things you are assessed against. For example, if you manage people, then you must make time available for dealing with issues that arise, coaching and supervision. Similarly, you must allow time to communicate with your boss and key people around you.
- 3) Review your To-Do List and schedule in the high-priority urgent activities, as well as the essential maintenance tasks that cannot be delegated and cannot be avoided.
- 4) Block in appropriate contingency time to handle unpredictable interruptions. You will learn how much of this you need by experience. Normally, the more unpredictable your job, the more contingency time you need. By leaving space in your schedule, you give yourself the flexibility to rearrange your schedule to react effectively to issues as they arise.
- 5) In the time that remains, schedule the activities that address your priorities and personal goals.



By the time you reach step 4, you may find that you have little or no discretionary time available. If this is the case, then revisit the assumptions you used in the first three steps. Question whether things are

absolutely necessary, whether they can be delegated, or whether they can be done in an abbreviated way.

Remember that one of the most important ways people learn to achieve success is by maximizing the "leverage" they can achieve with their time. They increase the amount of work they can manage by delegating work to other people, spending money outsourcing key tasks, or using technology to automate as much of their work as possible. This frees them up to achieve their goals.

Also, use this as an opportunity to review your To-Do List and Personal Goals. Have you set goals that just aren't achievable with the time you have available? Are you taking on too many additional duties? Or are you treating things as being more important than they really are?

If your discretionary time is still limited, then you may need to renegotiate your workload. With a well thought through schedule as evidence, you may find this surprisingly easy.