



Time management

Learning guide

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Introduction

"There was a woodsman who had a new axe. The first day he was able to chop down twenty trees. With each passing day he worked longer and harder, while chopping down fewer trees. A friend wandered by and suggested "why don't you sharpen your axe?" The woodsman replied: "I'm too busy. I've got to chop down more trees!"

From "If you haven't got time to do it right, when have you got time to do it over?" by Jeffrey J. Mayer

What is the personal cost to you of poor quality? What proportion of your time do you spend searching for things, chasing, checking and apologising, handling complaints, problems and crises - and doing anything that would not have been necessary if everyone produced total quality all the time? This is a frightening question for many managers, because it describes much of their traditional work. It is easy to blame these problems on the rest of the organisation, but many of them are created by the managers themselves through lack of self-discipline and poor time management.

The formulae for effective time management have been known for many years; there are dozens of books on the subject, almost as many as on dieting, and yet it is still one of the most frequently expressed needs amongst managers. This learning guide is designed to help you get started and think of ways you can improve in this area.

Where to start?

If you have less than an hour, read the overview of this learning guide and watch one of the recommended videos listed in the resources section.

If you have longer than this, the recommended books are short, easy to read and full of useful tips.

The practical development activities will help you to start thinking about and improving your time management skills.

Resources

Videos

Watching videos can be a little passive. Hence, active note taking whilst viewing is recommended. Relevant titles include:

The Unorganised Manager, (1997), 3 x 25 mins (approx), Video Arts.

A Video Arts production with John Cleese in fine form, so an amusing approach is assured. The first two tapes provide an introduction to essential time management skills, the first illustrating common problems and the second focusing on possible solutions. The tapes in this collection also cover elements of managing others, including delegation and delineation of responsibilities. If you can spare the time (!) all three are educational and entertaining. (An accompanying booklet can be found in the LRC under the same title).

Thirty Ways to Make More Time, (1989), 30 mins, Melrose.

A useful introduction to time management techniques, and targeted particularly at those newly appointed to managerial roles or struggling to cope with conflicting management responsibilities.

Time Management (1992), Video 1: 20 mins, Video 2: 55 mins, Sunday Times /Taylor-Made Films.

This video accompanies the book of the same title by Martin Scott. The first video features a fictional company and illustrates the importance of becoming more organised, creating time to think and be in control. The second video contains case studies showing how three individuals have developed effective and efficient time management systems to enable them to reach their own goals.

Audio cassettes

A Guide to Better Management: using Time Effectively (1997), 56 mins, Soundfx Publishing.

The series of audio cassettes 'A Guide to Better Management' is based on Neuro Linguistic Programming, an approach which can be applied to all business issues. 'Using Time Effectively' explores how taking time to plan can save you time overall. It explains how being ready for whatever you have to do allows you to use your time more effectively and shows how to make time management techniques fit your personal preferences. It also deals with the problem of time wasters and offers strategies for reducing their effect so that you have control of your time.

How to Manage Your Time (1998), 40 mins, Talbor Adair.

Side one of this audio cassette is a basic introduction to time management including a 10 step checklist to better time management. Side two looks in more detail at delegation.

Time Management (1999), 30 mins, Audio Briefings.

This briefing covers: how to tackle large, long-term jobs; deciding what should be done first; managing interruptions; getting round to doing the things we don't want to do; dealing with low-importance jobs; how to achieve what you set out to in a day.

Journal articles

Branch, Shelly (1997), *So Much Work, So Little Time*, Fortune, February 3, p73-75.

Potter, John (1994), *Making Time Management Work*, Training Officer Vol. 30 (1), p120-122.

Whitten, Neal (1995), *Boosting Your Own Performance*, Training & Development, July, p45-48.

Anon (1997), *The Tests of Time*, Management Skills & Development, Vol. 1(4) June, p36-42.

Information files

There are Information files, in the Learning Resource Centre at Ashridge, containing a number of newspaper and journal articles on the following subject areas:

- Time management
- Delegation
- Meetings

Books

** Books marked with asterisks are on sale in the LRC Bookshop. Mail order service available. Tel: +44(0)1442 841159. Fax: +44(0)1442 841211. Email: celia.tucker@ashridge.org.uk

Fleming, Ian (1990), *The Time Management Pocketbook*, Management Pocketbooks.

Ashridge shelf reference: **JMHS (FLE) ****

Effective use of time is not just about making better use of one's diary. This pocketbook examines time management techniques, including objective setting, decision making, problem solving, managing relationships, effective communications and handling paperwork.

Lehmkuhl, Dorothy & Lamping, Dolores Cotter (1995), *Organizing for the Creative Person*, Kogan Page.

Ashridge shelf reference: **JMHS (LEH)**.

This book is the first book on organisation and time management to draw on the startling discoveries made in recent years about right brain and left brain dominance.

Scott, Martin (1999), *More Time, Less Stress*, Century Business

Ashridge shelf reference: JMHS (SCO) **

"*More Time, Less Stress*" is a new fully revised edition of a proven best seller on managing your time. The book demonstrates how to rebalance your life to get the most out of your job and live life to the full - to achieve more, in less time, without suffering stress. The author shows you why such advice is often hard to follow. It explores in depth the reasons why people have time problems and offers clear solutions on how to maximise your most valuable resource. In four parts the book explores the nature of the problems, people issues, why we do it, and planning for success.

Woodhull, Angela V (1997), *The New Time Manager*, Gower.

Ashridge shelf reference: JMHS (WOO).

The New Time Manager explains the key principles of modern time management and shows how to apply them in our day-to-day activities. Traditional time management revolved mainly around to-do lists and delegating.

Overview

Time is a most valuable resource. Time passes inexorably in a fixed rhythm: sixty seconds every minute, sixty minutes every hour, and time which has passed can never come back. Time is a democratically shared resource: everybody has twenty four hours each day and seven days each week. No matter how wealthy you are, you can't buy more time. You can't hoard time, borrow time, steal time or change it in any way. All you can do is to make the best use of the time that you have. Of all our resources time is the least understood and the most mismanaged. Many people say they don't have enough time, but everyone has all the time that there is.

Time can be experienced differently under different circumstances. It seems to move slowly when you are bored or unoccupied; it seems to move fast when you are busy, interested, or having a good time. Time seems to accelerate. The second half of a holiday goes much faster than the first. The same is true of a management course, and of a lifetime; as we get older, time seems to pass ever faster.

With this seeming acceleration of time you might like to think of yourself in a 'time' perspective, looking five years back and ten years on. Here are some questions to help you get a mental picture of yourself in a time context.

Think of yourself five years ago

How old were you?

Where did you live?

Were you married?

How old were your children?

How did you spend your leisure time?

What job were you doing?

What have you done or not in the past five years?

How fast have they passed?

Think of yourself ten years on

How old will you be?

How old will your children be?

What job will you be doing?

What would you like to do before then?

When they reflect in this way, most people say that they want to make better use of their time. If you are saying that, try drawing up a list:

What would you like to achieve in the next two years?

Now consider this scenario? When you get back to work, the boss calls you in. Not your boss, but The Boss, The Big Chief.

“How did your course go? Did you learn a lot? I have a request to put to you. There is a project I would like you to undertake. It is of vital importance to the future of this organisation. It will take about a year, working approximately one day a week. It will involve some overseas travel, and because it is so important, I want you to report directly to me for your work on this project. Unfortunately there is one snag; I cannot release you from your present responsibilities. Is there any chance you could take this on in addition to your present job?

Would you accept?

Those who accept are saying that they **do** have time, if something is important enough. How important are the things you listed as objectives on the previous page? If they are important enough, you **can** find the time.

Many people claim that lack of time is a big problem, until they come to the nasty realisation that it is not a problem, it is a **symptom**; a symptom of unclear objectives, of a poor allocation of priorities and of poor planning.

Maybe the title of this learning guide ought to be 'setting objectives and deciding priorities', but that would sound boring. 'Time management' is much more glamorous. It is also nonsense. You cannot manage time. Time passes inexorably in a fixed rhythm..... The only thing you can manage is yourself. 'Self management' might be the real title of this learning guide.

If that is so, then devices and gimmicks to save minutes will not solve anything. Time management is not about speed, but effectiveness.

Self management

So how do you manage yourself? What is it that stops you being more effective at work? What are your time wasters? I have asked that question to many thousands of managers, and the answers tend to follow a pattern. They usually include the following:

Meetings (always in the top five), interruptions, phone calls, crises, faulty equipment, lack of resources, the boss, chasing people, checking others' work, junk mail, reading, administration, open plan offices, travel, etc.

The pattern that emerges as people produce these answers is one of external constraints and pressures. Most of the problems listed are things that happen to people. Very few are problems people cause to themselves. Is that a balanced view? Is that an accurate picture? I wonder.

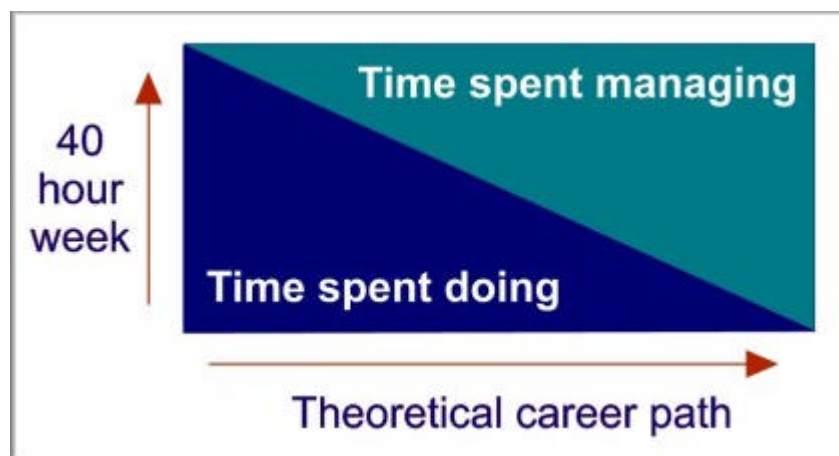
In this guide I have tried to suggest solutions to some of these problems, and to search for some of the other more personal problems which can also reduce our effectiveness.

Nobody suffers from all of the problems, so please treat the guide as an à la carte menu. Concentrate on the areas that are of concern to you.

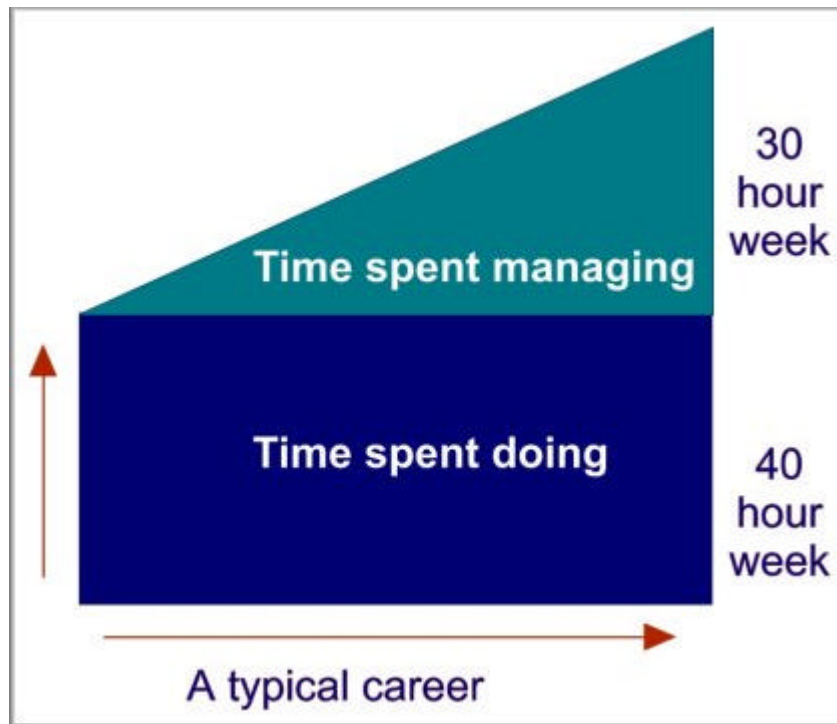
Priorities

Before looking at more effective use of management time we ought to define the term. Let us start with the traditional definition of management: 'Management is getting things done through others'. This makes management time the time spent getting things done through others, which can be contrasted with time spent doing things ourselves.

As a manager progresses through a career, the amount of time spent managing can be expected to increase and, correspondingly, the amount of time spent doing things to decrease. This can be shown diagrammatically.



What actually happens, as a career progresses, is that the manager gains increasing responsibility and a geometric increase in incoming paperwork. Many people deal with this by extending the length of the working week, and the result tends to look like this:



Unfortunately, at around a 65 or 70 hour week a limit is reached and the manager is no longer promotable because there are no more hours in the week. That can be a tragedy. Many people are unwilling to reduce the time spent **doing**, and rationalise this by saying:

"If you want it done properly, you have to do it yourself"

"I want my subordinates to see that I can do what I ask of them"

"I do it to keep my hand in"

"Anyway, I can do it so much faster than they can."

The real reasons for clinging to old tasks are usually that they are comfortable and familiar, that you are using your traditional personal skill to design, programme, check numbers, or write reports, and you know that you are where it is happening, when it is happening, making it happen, which gives an exhilarating sense of control.

Unfortunately managing is less immediately rewarding. The manager operates at some distance from the doing and is never the first to know when things are going wrong, which can be worrying. I offer the following as a simple but fundamental principle of management:

"There is no correlation between the weight of organisational responsibility you carry and the amount of personal time needed to discharge that responsibility. The answer to increased responsibility is to increase the value of each hour put in proportionately to the increased responsibility."

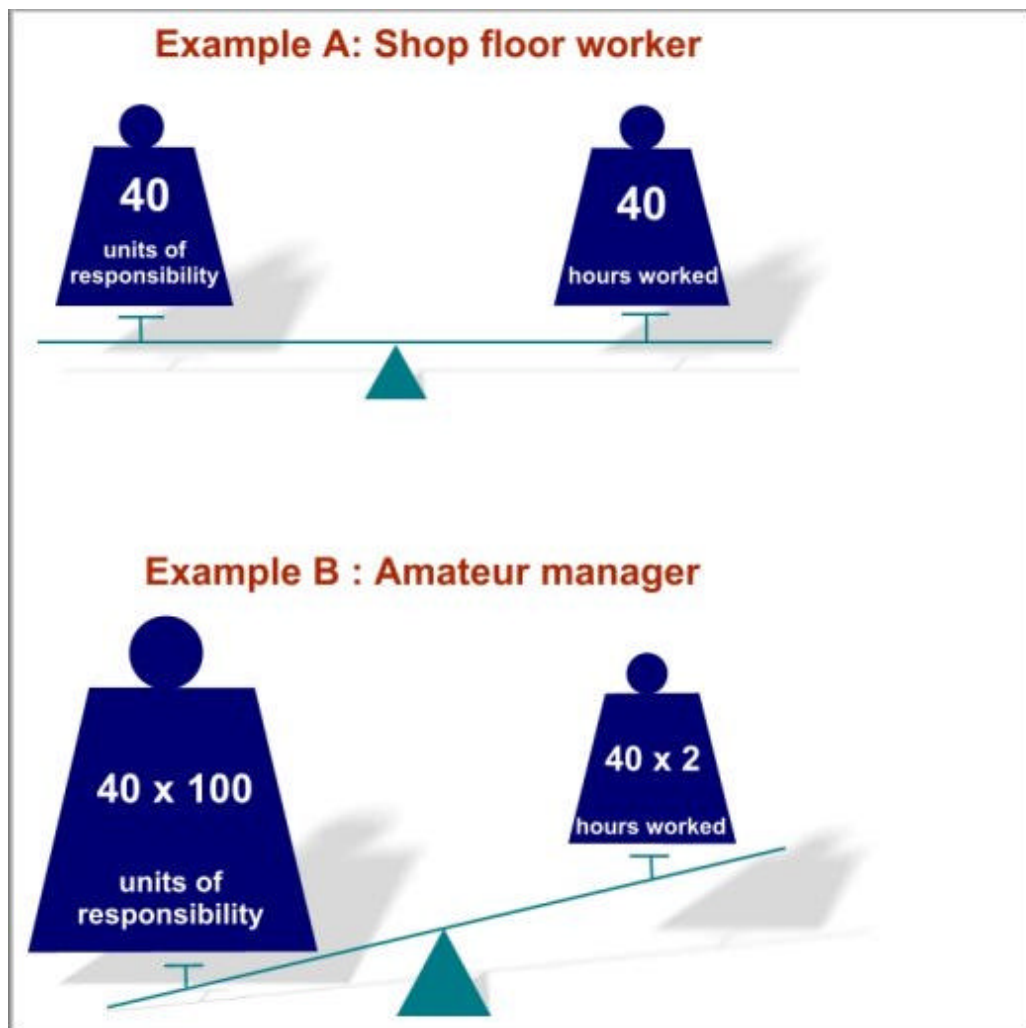
There cannot be any correlation. If there were, how could anyone be chief executive of Shell, President of France, or hold any other top job?

The key to effective management must be to increase the **value** of each hour worked or, in one word, **LEVERAGE**.

Leverage is at the heart of the concept of management.

The principle of leverage

Archimedes enunciated the principles of leverage. If the engineers will excuse an unscientific use of the principle, example A shows someone in a front line job achieving 40 units of output in a 40 hour week. Example B shows an amateur manager, in charge of a work force of 100, and trying to achieve 100 x 40 units of output by working an 80 hour week.



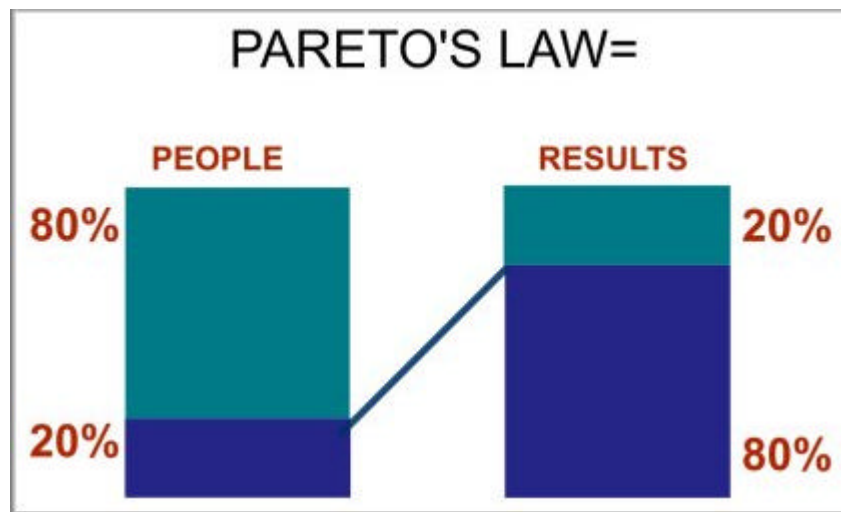
The factor of two is so small in relation to the scale of the problem that it must be irrelevant to the solution. The only way this scale will balance is to move the fulcrum, to acquire leverage.

If you are spending time doing low-level tasks; proof reading, stock taking, checking figures, etc. and neglecting managerial tasks, you are limiting your effectiveness as a manager and putting a limit on your promotion prospects.

Pareto's law

You have probably heard of the 80/20 rule, originally propounded by Vilfredo Pareto. When applied to time at work it would state that:

“Twenty per cent of your time at work is spent doing things which account for eighty per cent of your results and eighty per cent of your time is spent doing things which account for twenty per cent of your results”.



If that is so, it suggests three elements to the problem of prioritising:

- What are the high leverage tasks which account for 80% of your results?
- How could you spend more time on those high leverage tasks?
- How could you get all the other tasks done in less time?

What are your high leverage tasks?

High leverage tasks are those bits of your job where a little bit of time spent now can make a big difference in the long run. Don't include negative elements like 'avoiding mistakes', important though that may be. The list will vary from job to job, but may well include the following:

- planning: thinking about your job and your objectives, planning the month, the day, the meeting etc.
- learning some new skill or acquiring knowledge that will help in your job
- delegating: setting objectives for others, gaining their commitment, coaching and motivating them
- building relationships with customers, suppliers and colleagues, including motivating people

- setting up systems, from complex computer based systems to simple personal ones, like organising your desk.

High leverage activities tend to be to do with the long term; low leverage tend to be short term. So a classic example of a high leverage activity would be fire prevention and a classic example of a low leverage activity would be fire fighting, which brings us close to the heart of the problem.

Each of these activities is discussed in detail elsewhere, but take a moment to access the proportion of a typical week that you spend physically doing these high leverage tasks. Can you honestly claim 20%, or is it rather less?

These high leverage activities can make a real difference in the long run. These ought to be the focus of our energy and our time.

Top performers are ruthless about their priorities: they are crystal clear what they are and, somehow or other, they manage to give them a lot more time, The vast majority of worthy, average managers spend their time rushing around, coping, patching, solving the same problem over and over and just getting by.

If you lose sight of your priorities you cannot be effective.

Giving more time to high leverage tasks

How could you spend more time on your high leverage activities? My recommendation is to head for work each day with ONE single priority task in mind. Not five, or ten - you cannot have ten priorities. In fact, more than two priorities is no priorities. Sure, you've got your reminder list/check list/ to-be-done list, but that is not a list of priorities and must not be confused with that. Most managers have too many priorities, and therefore have none.

Take one priority - task of the day - and fight hard to make sure that whatever crises occur, you at least make some significant progress on that task that day. At the end of the week you should find that you have been more effective.

That isn't going to change your life. In fact, you've heard that before. It's too obvious. So, why do most managers still suffer from poor prioritising? This is where the subject of time management can become more interesting.

In the next section, six common traps are described, six reasons why people lose sight of priorities. Please explore your own subconscious motivations and add to the list. If we understand why we believe as we do, we might find it easier to adopt the obvious and simple solution.

Why do managers lose sight of priorities?

First, it is important for managers to realise that their job is never done - as a manager you can never be completely up to date. Your conscience will remind you of additional checks you might have made and your imagination will suggest possibilities you could have developed. If at the end of the week you were to make two piles - one a pile of all the things you've done that week; the other a pile of all the things you might have done, but haven't done - in which pile would the high leverage tasks be? All too often they'd be sitting there waiting for next week.....because they weren't urgent. **WE ARE TYRANNISED BY URGENCY.** We do the urgent, and neglect the important. Now this is the nub of the problem. If the building is on fire you know what you must do - but firefighting is low leverage. If all you ever do is firefighting, you are not being effective. Surely the real job is fire prevention. That is high leverage activity. The first trap is urgency, crises and panics.

A second trap is that firefighting is fun. Rushing around with three phones ringing and people in and out of the office is exciting. Fire prevention is boring: It might mean shutting the door and thinking!

A third trap is that some companies promote people on the strength of their firefighting abilities, and expert macho firefighters need fires to fight and work best in an atmosphere of crisis. If things get a bit quiet they go round starting fires. Anyone who has a boss like that has my sympathy.

Fourthly, many of us are suckers for immediate reward. We do like the illusion of progress that comes from ticking things off of the list, so we tend to

start with the easy jobs.....and don't quite have time for the important ones.

Fifthly, we tend to prefer the familiar, easy, comfortable tasks. I don't think I have ever met a finance director who doesn't spend 15 minutes a day adding up numbers or checking the adding up of numbers. Suppose our finance director loses a debate at a board meeting and that someone is mildly rude to her, she comes out feeling rather low. She then spends 15 minutes adding numbers, which is something she is very good at, and it rebuilds her self-confidence and her ego, it helps her face the rest of the day. We all have our hobbies, our comfort zones, which we can retreat into. What do you do at about 2.30pm when you are feeling a bit low and there is no immediate crisis? The worst aspect of this is that many managers spend time doing the job they did before their last promotion (which is one they are very familiar with and good at) thereby failing to do their new job and frustrating their successor.

Finally, in my list of reasons for poor prioritising, is a physiological one: The post-adrenaline dip. After two or three hours of crisis, with the adrenaline pumping away, when the pressure eases and we get back to the desk, nothing happens. This is a recognised phenomenon. Adrenaline is part of the body's fight/flight mechanism, preparing us for violent physical activity. If our efforts are purely mental we need to disperse the adrenaline through physical exercise. Try taking a strenuous walk after a crisis.

How to get low leverage tasks done faster

I don't need tell you that. You know the answer. Cast your mind back to your last major holiday. What happened in your office the day before you left? My word you were ruthless then! You whistled through the list, doing things, delegating, throwing things away. Why not work like that normally and clear more time for the high leverage tasks?

When the pressure is really on, the true priorities become clear. Maybe the solution is to allocate significant amounts of time to the high leverage activities, thereby putting pressure on the other tasks.

A true story

Charles Schwarb, sometime president of Bethlehem Steel, was complaining to a consultant about his terrible time pressures and said: "If you can show me any way of making better use of my time, I'll pay you any fee within reason."

The consultant said "Time management is easy. I'll do that now. Sit down and list on this piece of paper everything you want to do tomorrow. Just brainstorm them in any order."

"Now go through that list and work out which is the most important item - not the most urgent, the most important. Put that at the head of another sheet, then find the next most important and so on. Rewrite the list in order of importance."

"Tomorrow, when you get to your office, start work on the job at the top of the list and work at it until you have finished it. Then go to the second and so on. Last task of the day - produce the list for the following day and prioritise it."

A month later the consultant received a letter from Charles Schwarb. He wrote to say "Thank you, that is the best advice I have ever received" and enclosed a cheque for \$20,000.

Now I am not expecting \$20,000 for this guide, and I do know that you cannot control your own time to that extent (nor can a company president) but the moral is clear - if you take your eye off your priorities you can never be effective.

Summary

The French cavalry is reputed to have had a motto in the last century: "If in doubt, gallop!" And I can't help feeling that it has been adopted by many managers in this century. Busy, busy, busy all day long, but at the end of the day, what have you done? It is easy to be busy, any fool can be busy, but surely you are not paid to be busy - you are paid to be effective, and being

effective means doing the right things. If you are not doing the right things it doesn't matter how hard you work.

The latter day American philosopher Ziggy Ziggler put it well:

"The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing at all times"

The road to salvation

There will always be panics, but every time a crisis arises you have two tasks: First, to deal with the immediate problem; and second to ask yourself what you can do to prevent such a crisis occurring again or, if it is completely outside your control, what can you do to mitigate its impact next time it occurs. There is no doubt which is the high leverage activity.

The Japanese call this "The five whys". Whenever there is a problem you ask "Why did that occur?" and when you have an answer you ask, "Why did that occur?" and so on to about five levels. You try to determine the real underlying problem on each occasion, and solve it so that it never occurs again.

Sixty hour weeks

How many hours do you work in a typical week? 40, 50, 60? Some managers habitually work very long hours.

For them, and particularly for those companies that expect managers to work long hours, I have a slogan:

'Fatigue is not a battle of honour, it is a crime.'

Managers must keep themselves fit for the job - both physically fit, which implies some time for exercise, and mentally fit, which requires time for relaxation and other interests.

There is no doubt that we are less effective when we are tired. We work more slowly, make more mistakes, listen less, behave in a more autocratic manner and become more irritable. Is this the effective executive you want to be?

Sometimes the hours worked can be a major barrier to effectiveness. As a senior manager, part of your job is to deal with crises, and there will always be the occasional week when you will have to work 70 or 80 hours. I accept that, but long hours can easily become a habit.

Parkinson's law states that 'Work expands to fill the time that is available' and that is very, very true. If you normally go home at 7.00 pm, there will always be work to keep you there till 7. If you normally take work home, there will always be work to take home. If you call in on Saturdays there will always be work to do. In fact if you were a workaholic insomniac and devoted 100 hours a week to your job, the work would expand to fill that time, but you still wouldn't have finished, because you can't finish.

When time is short we are forced to prioritise: When time seems to be unlimited we tend not to.

I have met some managers who reached breaking point after several years of 65 hour weeks, who decided it was not worthwhile. They cut their hours to 45 and found, within a few weeks they had become more effective.

Hours worked are a matter of personal choice. They depend on your character, your objectives and the nature of your job, but everyone should reflect on their hours from time to time: Are they really justified or have they become quite a habit? And stop feeling guilty at taking time off.

Similarly, I worry about organisations which impose a culture of long hours. That penalises the effective managers. Surely at the end of the day people must be judged on their results rather than their hours.

'WV Publications', a young magazine publisher in London, in an industry renowned for long hours, tells its staff that the office opens at 9.00am and closes at 6.00pm, that they should not take work home and that that are

supposed to take a break at lunchtime, but they are also expected to work very hard during the work hours. What a good idea!

This following panel is dedicated to any workaholics you know.

Six year old "Mummy, why does Daddy bring so much work home at night?"

"Because he hasn't got time to finish it in the office"

"Then why don't they put him in a slower group?"

The key to effective management is leverage, not long hours.

Handling interruptions

I am sitting at my desk trying to write a report. I have been at it for half an hour, the framework is now clear, the words are beginning to flow and I have written the first four paragraphs when I hear that dreaded knock at the door. It is Eddie: "Got a moment Martin?"

Suppose I managed to deal with Eddie's query in just five minutes. How much time will it cost me in the production of the report? Ten minutes? Fifteen minutes? It is worse than that.

Ten minutes ago internal post arrived and with great presence of mind I managed to persuade myself that I should ignore it because I was writing a report. But, now that I have been distracted, I had better have a look and see if there is anything urgent, and there is. So I deal with it. Then I remember the phone call I meant to make earlier on and I make that. By that time I am feeling so distracted I think I could do with a cup of coffee to settle me down. In the kitchen I meet Ian and we stop and chat for 10 minutes. One way and another I do not get back to that report today. How much time has it cost me?

Now I am not suggesting that you ban all interruptions, because a large part of your job is being available to colleagues, to subordinates and to others. There was a time when managers were people who hid behind closed doors with secretaries guarding the way and nobody could get in without an appointment. I would not wish to go back to that for a moment. But these days we have gone too far the other way. Open door management has become a virility symbol, the door must be open at all times. Some managers are even asked to work in an environment without a door, in open plan offices.

In any job there are some tasks that need a high level of concentration. I am sure everyone has experienced that sense of deep involvement, a feeling of gentle euphoria that comes with total immersion in some problem, unaware of passing time.

But how often do you achieve that? It seems to take 10 - 15 minutes to reach that level of involvement, yet most managers are interrupted once every 10 minutes. What will the quality of your work be if it is written in 12 separate periods of 10 minutes each with a crisis in between, as compared with one straight hour of concentration? And what does it do to your motivation and commitment to be interrupted every time you get interested?

Every manager must have a barrier to keep out interruptions, ideally a permeable barrier which will let through the real crisis but keep out the rubbish.

The ideal is a personal assistant or secretary, that is part of what they are there for.

Failing that, you can close the door and divert your phone. It is legitimate to do this for meetings and interviews: it must be legitimate to do it when you are tackling a task which requires a high level of concentration. Failing that, do a deal with a colleague. You answer my phone for half an hour today and I will do the same for you some other day.

Failing that, many managers in desperation go and hide in the training room and do not tell anyone where they have gone. That is dangerous, because the real crisis arises and you can't be found.

In desperation many managers end up taking the work home. If taking work home means coming in late in the morning or going home early in the afternoon, then that is fine. I agree that it might be a good way of doing the job. But if it means taking it home and doing it at 9.00pm in the evening, I have severe doubts.

Open plan offices

My favourite story is of a senior software engineer in an open-plan environment at Hewlett Packard. He was being destroyed by interruptions. One day, in desperation, he went out and brought the largest teddy bear he could find. He sat it on the filing cabinet beside his desk and sent a note round to everyone in the department: "When the teddy bear is sitting there smiling at you, please feel free to come and talk to me, but when it is standing on it's head facing the wall, I do not want to know, even if the building is burning down." For the next two days there were endless jokes about this person and his teddy bear, but everybody recognised it was serious attempt to tackle a genuine problem, and after a few days he could get virtual total privacy, at least from the trivia, simply by turning his teddy bear round.

There is a lesson here. I think what we need is a visible signal that says "I do not want to know." Some managers have a sign on the door saying, '**DO NOT DISTURB**', which is a bit crude. In some parts of BT managers have a traffic-light system, red, amber and green. I do not like that either. This signal can be very simple, something like sitting round the opposite side of your desk with your back to the door.

Having devised a signal you must train people to respect it. This is sometimes a tough job, but the pay-off could be considerable. Don't let people get away with ignoring your signal (even bosses).

Advice for all

Whatever your strategy for protecting yourself from interruptions, and I do think you must have one, there are several tips which may help it to work better:

Do not abuse your strategy. I have no patience with the person whose door is closed for seven hours per day and open for one. They are solving their own problems at the expense of inconveniencing everybody else. We should be available to our customers, colleagues, boss and others as much of the time as possible, but it must be OK to put up the barriers occasionally.

If I wish to get hold of you and your barriers are up I would like to find out when you will be available, I would also like the facility to leave a message, confident that you will receive it and deal with it. Some of the people I deal with are very good at that and I will respect their privacy. For others their secretaries never know where they are or when they will be back, and if I leave a message it disappears into a great black hole. Under those circumstances I shall batter away until I get through the barrier. Many of those who complain about interruptions are their own worst enemies, they are not fair with other people.

Biological rhythms play a part in our effectiveness. For each of us there are times of day when we are relatively more effective and times when we are less effective. It is sensible to plan the high concentration tasks for the time when you are most effective.

It is sometimes sensible to have a regular time for high concentration tasks. This is particularly true in open plan offices if the entire office can agree that, say 10-11 am is the time when we keep quiet and try to do our concentration tasks.

Another aid to concentration is the pre-emptive strike. Immediately before doing the high concentration tasks walk the job and pick up any simmering problems. This will often give you a clearer start.

If this still does not work, analyse your interruptions. Find out who is interrupting you most often, go and talk to them, discuss the problem, arrange a daily meeting or whatever the best solution may seem.

Personal failings

It is all too easy to blame our interruptions on the interrupters. But at some level interruptions are nice. When I was writing my report, at the beginning of this section, the brain was aching, it was lonely work. When Eddie came along I was delighted to see him, especially since he was coming to ask my advice, which makes me feel important. I moan like anything about Eddie interrupting me, but actually I do not like to close the door because I prefer the interruptions. Do you become more interruption prone when you are doing a really boring job? Just watch yourself and see. If so, then the real problem is not 'interruptions', it is 'allowing interruptions'.

Disorganisation and untidiness

Some managers surround themselves with piles of rubbish. Difficult and boring jobs accumulate, along with unread reports and journals all over the desk. The manager spends time shuffling these piles, sometimes rifling through them for documents that are needed urgently, sometimes glancing through them to see if anything is becoming urgent, and sometimes sorting them out, throwing parts away and straightening up the remainder. The very existence of these piles creates stress. At the end of the day, some managers put a selection from the piles into a conscience bag and take it home. This makes sure they don't relax properly at home. Some documents can make the round trip between the office and the home several hundred times without even being read once. This drama is enacted daily in thousands of offices up and down the country. If it is happening to someone else it is a comedy. If it is happening to you it is a tragedy.

One third of the managers I meet seem to have some problem of personal organisation, one of the symptoms of which is a cluttered desk. I was one. I became interested in time management because I was bad at it. The more I taught the subject, the better I became at it, except in this one area. I knew

that I had been able to help other people organise themselves and clear up their own cluttered desks, but I couldn't do it myself. One day a member of a course, who had been totally taken in by the brilliance of what I had said, subsequently caught sight of my office and was so horrified that he borrowed a polaroid camera, took a photograph of my desk and circulated it round the group. I thought that was a bit below the belt, but it did make me think again.

So I re-read everything that I could find on the subject of personal organisation, desperately searching for help, but found it all quite useless: it said things like "handle each piece of paper only once" which may be a good objective but isn't very helpful to people who are drowning in it. I suddenly realised that most of the books had been written by people who were highly organised, who didn't face the same problems that I face. I decided that I, as a sufferer, must find my own answer, so that I could help fellow sufferers.

Since this problem is very prevalent amongst the sort of people who teach at Ashridge, I circulated a note to all my colleagues announcing that I was forming a support group for people with a chronic untidy desk problem. The response was fascinating. Normally notes like that are ignored, but on this occasion no less than six people took the trouble to write and say "What a good idea - I wholeheartedly support it - please tell me what the outcome is, but I'm too busy to come to your meeting." I think that is another symptom. Organised people can always find the time for something that is interesting, disorganised people are under too much pressure. Two people announced that they would come to the meeting, and then forgot about it - that's clearly another symptom. The ultimate prize went to another colleague, who'd better remain nameless, who approached me six months later brandishing my note and said "I've found this, I wish I'd known!"

The support group did meet, and spent an hour discussing personal organisation. We discovered that each of us, no matter how untidy our desks, could identify some area of our lives which was highly organised. For me, it was my finances. I know what I've got in the bank, I have a cash flow projection for the next twelve months, I know what I owe the tax man, it's all thoroughly organised. Several of my colleagues were amazed at this. How

have I done that? Well, many years ago I set up a system, and it's quite easy to keep it up to date.

Another colleague said that he had a collection of CDs, records and tapes, all immaculately labelled and organised, and kept in a cabinet. I find that quite amazing. I've got some CDs and tapes all jumbled up in the corner, most of them in the wrong sleeves. I can never find anything. His collection is his pride and joy - he's devoted time to setting up a system. That is, I think, the first part of the answer. Those who are disorganised have to devote time to setting up systems. The second part of the answer is to look at your goods inward procedure.

When a piece of paper, or the electronic equivalent, lands on your desk there are three stages to go through.

- First, am I ever going to do anything with this? Unless you are absolutely certain that the answer is yes, throw it away now! If it's important it will come back again..... That might be a bit dangerous, but have you ever noticed, when you go through the spring cleaning ritual at your desk, how much paper you throw away without reading it? And much of the paper you don't throw away you only keep because it isn't old enough yet, it will get thrown out next time. What rubbish! Throw it away now!
- Am I ever going to do anything with this? Yes, definitely. Then the second question is; can I do it now? It is the original time management principle, and a very sound one - do it now! I don't think it conflicts with prioritising. If it's a five minute job or less, do it immediately, it's much more efficient for the organisation, much more helpful for your colleagues, but above all, it saves you having to remember it, having to keep it on the desk, having to shuffle it and having to write it on lists. Do it now!
- Am I ever going to do anything with this? Yes, definitely. Can I do it now? No. Then file it! But we don't, do we? We put it on a pile on the desk. The third part of the answer, especially for chronic sufferers,

is to undertake some research. Go and sit at your desk one day when it's in a particular mess (right now maybe?). Do not tidy it, just sit there. Take a clip board or pad and analyse the situation. Work your way across the desk and ask of every single thing that is sitting on your desk: why is that sitting there? Why did I put that there? Why have I not filed that? And write down the answers to these questions. What will emerge is a series of problems, interlocking problems, that's why many people find it so hard to crack. When I ask people why they put things on their desks, one of the most common answers I get is: "Because I haven't read it." Many of us have a deep-down, psychological feeling that files are for things which have been finished with. It took me many years to discover that files can be used for things that I haven't read yet.

Another common reason is "If I file it, I might forget it" - out of sight is out of mind. It's true too, but it's when you're struggling with that difficult report that your eyes wander across to the pending file, and you think, "Oh! I'll just do that now." Get it out of sight - but in order to ensure that you don't forget it, you need a reliable system of lists. Write the item on a list and file the document. Use the list to trigger the action and not the document.

Another common reason is: "There isn't a file with the right name on." Maybe half an hour spent thinking about your filing systems, setting up some new files, bring-forward files, meeting files, etc could help. Whilst on the subject, if you're setting up a filing system, a good filing system has relatively few files, but the files are fairly fat. Some managers end up with one hundred and fifty files, many of them with one piece of paper in.

When I applied this research technique to myself, I found myself saying, "Why haven't I filed that? Because I haven't finished it. Because I haven't finished that, because I haven't finished....." When I found 12 things on my desk which I hadn't finished, some of them which hadn't been finished for six months, and clearly no longer needed finishing, they needed starting again, it became apparent to me that I had a chronic problem of not finishing things.

So, do the research, analyse what your problems are, and then set up systems. It's probably unrealistic to do everything at once, so when your desk is in a bad way, do the research, pick one problem and set up a system which will eliminate that problem for ever. Then the following week do the exercise again for something else - and gradually over a period of weeks, set up a number of systems which will enable you to keep it clear. That is the secret of personal organisation. Spring cleaning is a complete waste of time, we need systems to enable us to keep ourselves organised. The next step is to set clear standards, to write your own job objectives. One of the standards which I think is useful is to clear the desk each night. If you clear the desk each night it will never be more than ten minutes work; if you leave it for a couple of weeks, it can be an impossible job. Clearing the desk each night does not mean sweeping everything into a pile in the cupboard. That doesn't count.

People with cluttered desks are full of sayings "*A clear desk is a sign of a sick mind.*" "*A cluttered desk is a sign of a genius.*" I still believe the former to be true, but the latter certainly isn't. A cluttered desk does cause stress, waste of time and is embarrassing, but the illness is curable.

Goal setting

The value of clear goals

What do you want to do with your life? Few people ever get round to answering that question in any but the vaguest of terms, but if you don't know where you want to go, you will probably end up somewhere else.

Successful organisations have clear objectives. They find time to determine these objectives and occasionally to review and revise them. The corporate objectives are then transmitted around the organisation so that everybody knows what it stands for and what they should be trying to achieve. This gives the successful organisation a coherent value system which steers the decisions and actions of its managers. It is difficult to see how an organisation could succeed without clear objectives, indeed it would be difficult to assess **whether** it had succeeded without knowing what it was trying to achieve.

Successful people also tend to know what they want, and to plan accordingly. The existence of clear objectives seems to motivate them and the process of planning to facilitate achievement.

If you are 37 years old, statistically you are already past halfway. Do you have some clear objectives? What do you want to do with the rest of your life? We cannot succeed without effort, life rarely gives something for nothing, and the first effort should be devoted to setting some clear objectives. You might like to pause for a few moments and reflect on your life in recent years. What occasions have provided greatest satisfaction and motivation for you?

- Recall a specific work-related occasion in the last couple of years when you felt very happy, proud, important, content, motivated, etc.
- Who were you with? Who was associated with those feelings?
- What was it that made you feel so good?
- When did you last experience those sort of feelings?
- What can you do to create such situations more often in the future?
- You might like to repeat that process with a specific non-work situation which gave you particular satisfaction.
- What do you want to do with the rest of your life? You could consider setting yourself objectives in four areas: personal objectives, career objectives, family objectives and community objectives.

Personal objectives

Do you want to be thinner or fitter, to read faster, speak a second language or play better squash? Do you have a hobby you would like to take up one day? Many of us dream of such things, but do not set them as clear objectives, partly because we fear failure and partly because we haven't got time at the moment. If you were to set yourself some clear personal objectives, and then plan accordingly, it might be much easier to achieve them. Many people have successfully given up smoking in this way. What personal objectives do you wish to achieve?

Family objectives

Many people are so busy making a living that they fail to make a life. In this context a 'family' could be defined as those joined by a bond of love. Do you have the right balance between work and family? Do you give them enough of your time and of your energy? If not, then don't let this remain a dream.

Some people devote themselves to their work and career, thinking they are doing it for their family, and one day they discover that work is urgent and family is important. It is sometimes too late by the time they realise that.

- What could you do to strengthen that bond?
- Could you do more to build the self esteem of every member of your family?
- You cannot do a kindness too soon, because you never know how soon it will be too late. What more could **you** do to help those who love you?

Career objectives

How do you spend your time at work? Pareto's law would suggest that 80% of your time is spent on relatively unimportant tasks which, at the end of the day, only influence 20% of your results, while 20% of your time is spent on the key tasks which influence 80% of your results. Can you find ways of delegating more of the trivia, or saving time in these areas, and increasing significantly the time you spend on the key tasks, particularly on finding creative ways of developing the business and improving its systems, and on building your relationships with key people?

Where will you be in 10 years time? Every race has a winner and somebody must be first. Do you want to win? The rewards for the winners are colossal. As Mark Twain said:

*"The law of work does seem utterly unfair, but there it is and nothing can change it.
The greater the reward in enjoyment, the higher is also the pay."*

You may have doubts about your own ability to go much further, but look around at your colleagues - the competition isn't that hot is it? Besides, success in business has very little to do with intelligence. It has much more to do with drive, determination, energy and the motivation that comes from clarity of purpose, all focussed on key tasks and high leverage activities. Good managers are not born. They learn.

There are three sorts of people: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened. Which of these categories do you fit into?

What would you have to do to maximise your potential for upward mobility? What sacrifices would you have to make? Remember that people in senior jobs do not have to work 80 hours a week, many of them choose to do so because they enjoy it.

Community objectives

As managers we all have a tremendous opportunity to contribute to and influence the communities in which we live. If people like us opt out, we should not be surprised if these communities suffer, to our own ultimate disadvantage. Managers tend to set objectives in terms of material goals - 'bigger house, better car' - in terms of job titles and in terms of family life. This is particularly true in Northern Europe and the USA.

You may choose to devote yourself to private pleasure, but history will judge you, and as the years pass you may ultimately come to judge yourself, on the extent to which you have enriched the lives of others.

If you want to get more out of life More what? Could it be that you want a more **meaningful** life? Those people who have found some way to help others often report that it gives them enormous satisfaction.

Written objectives

Set down your objectives in writing, ideally stated in positive terms: "I will ..."
You can always change them if you want to. Set them down as simply as

possible, make sure they are your own objectives and that you really do want to achieve them, then go after them as though your life depended on them.

Dream about your objectives

There is a lot of hard research evidence which says that people who spend time imagining themselves doing something increase their chances of doing it in reality. Many top athletes spend time imagining themselves breaking the barriers, and it is excellent training for public speaking, for assertiveness and for many other skills.

So spend time imagining yourself doing whatever it is you want to do - and doing it well. To some extent we become what we think about. Many people do this the other way round. They spend their time imagining the disasters of the day and so programme themselves for failure.

Action planning

A goal without a plan is but a daydream. No organisation would agree its goals and fail to plan for their achievement.

The ideal plan

Imagine yourself walking by a canal. As you round a corner you see a child fall into the water, obviously in trouble. Nobody else is in sight.

I suggest you would have no hesitation in running to the child and doing everything you could to help it, if necessary jumping into the water yourself. You certainly wouldn't procrastinate.

Why?

Because: the objective is clear
 the action needed is obvious
 you know that you are accountable
 the outcome is predictable
 the feedback will be immediate.

This, then, is the recipe for action. You will maximise your chances of success if you can follow this formula in constructing your own plans. Every plan should consist of:

- i) a clear objective
- ii) a series of activities
 - each clearly identifiable
 - measurable
 - with a timescale
 - with milestones to check progress
 - with feedback loops.

We tend to neglect some of our major objectives, both at work and at home, because they are too large, we don't know where to begin, and we can always find reasons for postponing them. The action plan should make it easy to begin, breaking the task down into manageable chunks. Thus an action plan for losing weight might look something like this:

Lose 20lbs in weight within 6 months.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
1. Read three different books on diet, exercise and health.	By the end of this month.
2. Construct a diet and exercise plan.	By the end of this month.
3. Purchase some reliable bathroom scales.	By the end of this month.
4. Weigh myself and record the weight.	Daily.
5. On any day when my weight exceeds the target, stick rigidly to the diet and exercise plan.	-
6. In six months' time review progress and set new objectives.	-

Losing weight has been deliberately chosen as an example to show how planning can be applied to personal objectives. The same can be done with family objectives. The idea of analysing family relationships in this cold

blooded way does not suit everybody, but a significant number of men keep meaning to spend more time with their families, yet do little to make this dream a reality.

For some of them, the ideal of family life is very different from day by day experience - in fact, though it may be hard to admit this, work can be more fun, so the temptation is always to stay later in the office. If this makes you wince at all in self-recognition, what could you do to make the time you spend with your family more rewarding? Do you take work home and give the family only half your attention? Or, more subtly, take work home, not do the work, feel subconsciously guilty about this and thus become irritable? Could you devise more joint activities which you could enjoy?

Developing a skill - breaking old habits

A word of warning. With most skills, such as playing squash, public speaking, selling or reading, learning a new skill implies unlearning an old one. That is difficult.

The process of learning a new skill seems to have four stages:

- i) Unconscious - incompetence
- ii) Conscious - incompetence
- iii) Conscious - competence
- iv) Unconscious - competence.

I start from 'unconscious incompetence', or blissful ignorance. Perfectly happy, unaware of my faults.

Then along comes a helpful tutor who points out my faults. I now feel less happy and less confident, but nothing else has changed: 'conscious incompetence'.

The next step is for me to do what the expert is suggesting - to change my grip on the golf club, to bend my knees, to concentrate more on listening or whatever it may be. 'Conscious competence' is the most painful stage, it will feel very awkward and the initial results may well be worse than before. That is the point where many people give up (*'it doesn't work for me'*).

The only way to develop a skill is to push on and practise doing it right until this becomes second nature: 'unconscious competence', or doing it right without having to think about it. It is only at this stage that the mind is freed to tackle the next element of the skill.

By all means be ambitious in setting your objectives, but don't underestimate the time and work that will be involved in developing a skill, and don't expect quick results.

A sportsman would not practise a new technique in a match and it might be advisable for you to practise first of all in a safe environment, such as Ashridge.

Force field analysis

In the rarefied atmosphere of Ashridge some objectives seem so obvious that their attainment appears simple. Regrettably this is seldom the case. People and organisations tend to resist change, and the deathly forces of status quo can smother much fresh enthusiasm.

It is suggested that you take your most important objective and make a force field analysis as described below. If you find this helpful, you might try it with some of your other important objectives.

Set down the chosen objective, as clearly and concisely as you can, then think creatively about possible obstacles. Whatever your objective, there are likely to be a number of forces or factors which might hinder its achievement.

Brainstorm them, write them down in any order. They may include people who will resist you, people who might have to do more work as a result, lack of information on your part, lack of time and some aspects of your own personal character which might tempt you back into the comfortable old ways.

If, as part of your objective, you plan to change your behaviour in relation to another person, what could be their initial reaction? For example, if you have tended to be a bit autocratic and now intend to be more consultative and participative, the person may initially see this as being manipulative.

List all these possible obstacles - as many as you can. Then, quite separately, work your way down the list, deciding for each potential obstacle in turn 'How can I weaken that force, how can I avoid that obstacle, how can I make sure that factor does not prevent me reaching my objective.'

Then list all the forces which will support your intentions, again being creative. Who are the people who could be supportive, who will want you to succeed, what are the pay-offs for success, what aspect of your own character and motivation will help?

Again, go through the list, item by item, asking yourself 'How can I reinforce that factor, how can I make sure that factor brings maximum support to me when I need it?'

Force-field analysis is a laborious process, but if it is thoroughly conducted and the results built into an action plan, it is a very powerful method of increasing dramatically your chances of achieving your chosen objective. Try it, at least once.

Timescale

Organisations plan on various timescales – long-term plans, annual plans, and much shorter plans for individual activities. You might consider having a long-term plan, say five years, intermediate plans, maybe for four months, and short-term daily plans.

Reviewing progress

In business, progress is regularly measured against plans, expenditure is compared with budget and variances are analysed in a formal review procedure. The same should be done with personal plans.

Without planning and regular reviews, we learn more slowly - experience alone is a very poor teacher. Indeed, the main thing we learn from experience is the

type of mistakes we will go on making throughout our lives. As Oscar Wilde said,

'The best thing about making a mistake is that you recognise it when you make it again'.

Review procedure

Salesmen are taught to plan every call, and to spend a few moments after each call reviewing their performance:

- What did I do well?
- What did I do badly?
- How could I have handled it better?
- What can I do to make sure I do it better next time?

Every sales manager knows this is the way to learn. Every sales manager teaches it to their salesmen. Every salesman knows it. Few of them practise it regularly, but those that do happen to be the best salesmen.

It would be exceedingly difficult to become an expert at selling or at any other skill by attending a single course, however good the programme. What is needed is plenty of practice, combined with a systematic analysis of performance and a method of feeding this back into future objective setting and planning.

Could you discipline yourself to spend five minutes at the end of each day reviewing your performance against your plan? It would provide a powerful ratchet mechanism for improving your performance slowly and steadily over a period of time.

Personal honesty

Recall a specific occasion when you felt worried, sad, angry, useless, frustrated, etc.

- ◆ Who were you with?
- ◆ Who was associated with those feelings?
- ◆ What made you feel so bad?
- ◆ When did you last experience those sort of feelings?

Try to get in touch with those experiences. Do they include feelings such as:

- It's not my fault
 - This is a terrible company to work for
 - I didn't choose him as my boss
 - It's not my day today
 - The traffic was terrible
 - I was set up by somebody
 - I get too many interruptions
 - I can't supervise everything
- etc.

These are feelings of **losers**.

We are all happy to take the credit when we win, but inclined to blame others when we lose. When something goes wrong in a group exercise at Ashridge, the first reaction tends to be to blame the other members of the group; the second reaction is to band together as a group and blame the actions of the other groups; and if that doesn't work it is obviously the fault of the tutor or the artificiality of the environment.

This is a natural human reaction. We do not like to fail and we can avoid much of the pain of failure by blaming it on other people. Whilst this might make for a less uncomfortable life in the short term, it does have considerable disadvantages in the longer term.

The first step to solving a problem is to recognise what the problem is, and who owns it.

Picture yourself driving to work. The traffic is heavy and you are a bit late. Suddenly you notice a car overtaking you. It cuts into the traffic in front of you.

Do you mutter '*Stupid fool! What does he think he is playing at.*' Do you then drive too close to his bumper? Does your blood pressure rise as you accelerate too fast away from the next set of traffic lights? Whose problem is this?

*'O wad some Powre the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!'*

Rabbie Burns

You will not solve this problem until you recognise it and accept it as your problem. People are seldom angry for the reason they think they are angry. Try to be honest with yourself.

Try to analyse such situations.

Can you say to yourself, in your five minute review: '*I have a problem. I get very easily worked up about things which don't matter. I must do something about it.*' Even feelings can be managed to a considerable extent.

The more often we experience bad luck, the more likely we are to get into a loser mode and blame others, or the system. Every time you set a goal and fail, you diminish your self image and reduce your chances of success next time. If, when you miss a possible promotion, you say to yourself '*I didn't really want it anyway*', that will become a self-fulfilling prophesy.

Remember, when you are out of harmony with the world, it is probably easier to change yourself than to change everyone else.

What are your strengths? Think of a time when heavy demands were made on you. What enabled you to pull through? What are you good at? Can you play to your strengths?

Every time you set a goal and succeed, you raise your self image, you increase your chances of future success. This suggests that you should take great care in

setting goals. It also suggests that you should do your best in all situations, be good at something and take pride in it. Trying hard becomes a habit and success breeds success. Many high achievers have overcome considerable handicaps and hardships. It is often in overcoming these handicaps that they have become

winner. Recognise your opportunities and respond to them. Give luck a chance.

Whenever you hear yourself playing a loser tape (*'it's not my fault'*), stop and think how you can change it to a winner tape. You can decide, in every situation,

which tape to play. You can decide whether to be a winner or a loser. Just as the words of the loser tape make you a loser, simply saying the words of a winner tape will help.

'I am responsible for myself

I choose the feelings I experience, and their strength

I decide my goals, and how hard to chase them

I control my own time and my own life.'

It is very difficult to spot your mistakes in the heat of the action, especially when emotions are involved. That is why the five minute review at the end of each day can be so valuable.

Objective

Could you discipline yourself to spend five minutes at the end of each day reviewing your performance against your plan?

'What did I do well ?

What did I do badly ?

What could I have done differently to have achieved a better outcome for me ?

Could you be honest with yourself when you fail to follow the plan in analysing why? Should you set yourself an objective of finding five minutes, each day, to review your own performance?

Recognise the opportunity

Most people fall far short of their potential, in business and in life. Yet we all have the answers within, if we would only listen.

Time passed is history,
Time to come is just an assumption,
Time is here and now.
Now is the only time we have,
Live each day as if it were your last,
Making the most of every moment.

This does not mean working longer, it may not mean working harder but working more systematically. It means being cleverer and smarter at allocating time and effort more precisely. It means setting clear objectives and planning to achieve them.

You have probably not had an opportunity like this since you were a teenager. You may not get another such opportunity this side of retirement or redundancy. You could take time to stand back from the stifling pressures of day to day management, time off from the time-consuming pleasures of family life, time away from the forces which have shaped your previous behaviour.

Don't postpone that task.

This is the time.
This is the place.
This is your life.
This is your opportunity to influence your future.
Seize this day.
Use this moment.
Act now.

Development activities

- Talk to other people about how they manage their time both in and out of work. Ideas and tips gathered from others are often useful in helping you to work more efficiently.
- Get into the habit of having a “quiet time” each day for planning and review. During this time draw up plans or simple “to do” lists of the tasks you have to complete or the goals you still have to achieve. Some people find it useful to keep a log of these plans/lists as a record for future reference. This is easily done if you keep a notebook and develop your own techniques for recording and reviewing your plans and lists.
- Create a mind map of your job showing:
 - your job title and purpose
 - the key goals/success factors you have to achieve
 - for each goal or success factor note down the actual tasks you have to do.

Now annotate your mind map to show the following things:

- the parts of your job you like and dislike
- the parts of your job you are good at/ bad at
- indicate the levels of importance of each part of your job from your perspective and from your boss's perspective
- which part of your job could grow further
- which parts of your job could be delegated to others?

Now look at this picture. What messages are there for:

- how well you use your time?
- how you prioritise your goals/tasks ?
- how effective you are at meeting the overall purpose of your job?

Plan what you can do to be even more effective.

Time logs

Have you ever recorded what you do throughout a working day?

Do you know how you spend your working time?

How much time do you spend on the phone?

How often are you interrupted?

How much discretionary time do you have, when you can decide what to work on?

Why not have a look at the way you use time now?

- Set up a diary to log your use of time. Decide what things you wish to record and put the headings on a time sheet. Take it with you, throughout the day, to meetings etc. Make a habit of recording the start time of every activity. Don't be afraid to be seen, people will respect you for it. When you are in the office, log the interruptions and their cause.
- Don't try to record too much. Six or eight headings are quite enough. These headings should focus on things that happen quite frequently and for short periods, such as reading, interruptions and social chat. Activities such as formal meetings and travel, which occur less frequently, can be recorded under a "miscellaneous" heading.
- Some people suggest recording at the end of the day, or at each hour. Much better to record events as they happen for a more accurate picture.
- When planning your day, forecast the time you will need for all significant tasks, then review actual against forecast. Some jobs regularly take twice as long as expected. Would an accountant be happy with an item that regularly exceeded budget by 100%? Most people find that the process of recording their use of time helps them become more efficient before they have analysed the results.

- When you know what you are spending time on, you can compare that with the way you ought to be spending it. Most managers spend their time even less effectively than they think they do, so time logs can be a frightening experience. In fact they are sometimes the catalyst that persuades a manager to make some fundamental changes to working methods.

It might be an excellent place to start on the search for greater personal effectiveness.

This learning guide was written by Martin Scott, an Ashridge associate.