

# Time Management

Great time management is one of the most vital skills leaders can develop. All of us have the same number of hours in a day, and no amount of effort can change that. What we can influence is how we spend those hours. A quote from Stephen Covey sums up how we can best use our time: "I am personally persuaded that the best thinking in the area of time management can be captured in a single phrase: *Organize and execute around priorities.*"

We offer three tools to help leaders focus their time against their priorities:

## Time Management Grid

		Urgency	
Importance		<b>Quadrant 1</b> Urgent and Important "Firefighting"	<b>Quadrant 2</b> Important but Not Urgent "Quality Time"
		<b>Quadrant 3</b> Urgent but Not Important "Distraction"	<b>Quadrant 4</b> Neither Urgent nor Important. "Time wasting"

### TOOL #1: The Time Management Grid.

This grid focuses on the two key dimensions of Time Management Grid: the urgency and importance of tasks clamoring for our attention. Along the top is the urgency axis: left hand side is very urgent, right hand side is less urgent. The vertical axis is the importance axis. The top boxes contain more important activities, the bottom activities are less important.

This gives us four quadrants:

- ~ Quadrant 1 represents things which are both urgent and important. We've called this "firefighting". The activities need to be dealt with immediately, and they're important.
- ~ Quadrant 2 represents things which are important, but not urgent. We've termed this one "Quality Time". Although the activities here are important, and contribute to achieving the goals and priorities - they don't have to be done right now. As a result, they can be scheduled in when you can give quality thought to them. A good example would be the preparation of an important talk, or mentoring a key individual. Prayer time, family time and personal relaxation/recreation are also part of Quadrant 2.
- ~ Quadrant 3 represents distractions. They must be dealt with right now, but frankly, are not important. For example, when you answer an unwanted phone call, - you've had to interrupt whatever you were doing to answer it.
- ~ The final quadrant, Quadrant 4, includes things which are neither urgent nor important. Some meetings could fall into this category - they've been scheduled in advance, but if they achieve nothing, or you don't contribute to them, then they have simply wasted time. Other examples could include driving time and low quality relaxation or family time.

**Using the tool:** consciously strive to maximize Quadrant 2 time. Allocate time in your diary to carry out these tasks when you are at your best. Doing so can reduce the amount of time taken up by firefighting quadrant 1 activities, since many quadrant 1 activities could have been quadrant 2 if they had been done earlier. You can also seek to reduce time spent in Quadrant 3 by improving your systems and processes for dealing with distractions, and you can seek to eliminate as much as possible of quadrant 4 activities, by either not spending time on these things, or changing the nature of them to make them more productive. For example, driving can be quadrant 4 if the time is unproductive, but there are a number of ways of making this time more productive by listening to a praise tape or CD, praying, learning new skills with an audio course, planning, and so on.

## **TOOL #2 : Goal Planning**

Many people have a daily to-do list which they can prioritize and then work through. However, to focus your time on that which is truly important, i.e. in line with your goals, you will need to: Consciously become aware of (and write down!) what you are trying to achieve across the key roles and different parts of your life. Some leaders may feel strange to set goals for family life, but these goals may be more about finding quality time together than achieving specific objectives. However, if you only set goals for the parts of your life which are concerned with business or ministry, then these elements may squeeze out time for other parts of your life. ii. Write down three or four monthly plans of the progress you would like to achieve towards these goals. This can inform your daily and weekly planning. Don't be over ambitious, since that can lead to feelings of frustration, but equally set at least one or two stretching challenges for some of the most important goals.

## **TOOL #3: Eight Tips for Great Time Management**

- Know what is important - write down the key goals you are working towards. (This can apply to all parts of your life.)
- Consciously plan your time: using three or four monthly and weekly plans
- Choose how you communicate: phone, memo, meeting or e-mail.
- Write in your diary in pencil; then you won't feel bad about changing your plans.
- Avoid being driven by your diary. Just because something has already been entered, doesn't mean that you can't do something else with the time.
- Know when you are at your best, and schedule quadrant 2 activity for that time.
- Make the most of 10 minutes - many tasks can be done in a "spare" 10 minutes, including taking a relaxation break.
- Periodically review your time effectiveness against the quadrant map, and against your goals.