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Effective Time Management Skills for Today's Young Professionals:- A Brief Note

By Dr Tridib Chakraborti¹

For much of the working day most of us are unaware of how quickly the time goes by. We glance at our watches grown 'that can not possibly be the time' and when the day is over complain that we don't know where on earth it actually went. This can happen irrespective of whether or not we happen to enjoy what we are doing.

From management point of view time is the most valuable resource available to any manager. It does not matter what kind of job he does. It makes no difference whether he is a junior, middle or senior manager, he is responsible for managing himself and his time. Though most definitions of management state that 'it is getting things done through other people', yet 'effective manager' in real sense of the term can not organise other people until he can organize himself. "Time is the scarcest resource, and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed" reasons Peter Drucker, the great management guru of our time. In fact managing ourselves and our own responsibilities involves organising our time and what we use it for.

One of the most stressful things in our working lives is that dreadful, oppressive sensation that we are not on top of things, that there is never 'enough time' to get everything done, that we can only survive by working twelve hours a day. The reality is that everybody has got twenty four hours a day no less no more. We generally envy some of our colleagues and friends managing their office life and home front effectively. They are not 'superman' or 'superwoman'. What they possess is simply better time management skills.

To develop better time management skills we must have a definite system or plan which reduces the time we spend on minor or unimportant tasks, and so increase the time we spend on actions which are

really important to us both personally and professionally. The increasingly complex nature of managerial job in today's organisations demands more than ever that we consciously consider and plan how we can least use our time to produce maximum details.

Why is better time management so important? Experts suggest that poor time management causes:

- *missed deadlines*
- *unfinished projects*
- *disappointed employees*
- *cancelled appointment* and
- *postponed vacations.*

It has been found that mismanagement of time can also lead to

- *low self-esteem*
- *depressions*
- *unfulfilled career planning*
- *children growing up strangers to their parents and many other socio-psychological problems.*

A way of dealing with this is to learn the skills of time management. At the outset, managers must try to distinguish between the 'effective' and the 'efficient' use of time. To improve effective time usage' managers must decide what they personally ought to be doing and to improve the efficient time usage' They can learn to organise their time in a better way. Today's managers need therefore to carefully and systematically identify what is important to them at both personal and professional level.

Time management is actually common sense. We have been very much accustomed of hearing time related slogans since our childhood. such as:

- "Make everyday count". "Live each day as if it were your last"
- *Life is a process not an event* and the most popular one.

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● “*Time and tide wait for none*”

All these have philosophical connotations. They do not suggest anything how to manage our time more effectively.

The trick is therefore to identify and channel what we already know into some type of framework which will stand the best of time. Time management experts believe that we can manage our time effectively by using a scheme which is popularly known as The *Five A's* i.e.,

- **Awareness**
- **Analyse**
- **Attack**
- **Assign and**
- **Arrange)**

While the ‘awareness stage’ asks us to consider what is really important to us in both a personal and professional sense, encourages to set concrete goals which reflect these factors “the analysis stage one must delve into the details of how he presently spends his time or wasting it. It fact by analysing what we actually do we can simply identify what we need to alter to make better use of it.

An analysis of our time usage will undoubtedly compose many things that waste our time. These time wasters or so to speak time thieves need to be eliminated if we are to concentrate on the things that are really important to us. Many things steal our valuable time. A knowledge and awareness of such factors is a vital step in eliminating them. Time thieves may be hidden beneath the sterile tasks listed in our activity log.

There are two types of time thieves. The first we call outside thieves e.g., unwanted or long telephone calls and visitors, unstructured meetings, interpersonal conflicts and idle task. The second type comes from inside: an inability to say no, indecision, procrastination, guilt, inability to prioritise or plan and poor delegation skills. Most of us have probably encountered both types in our day to day work life

situation. When we identify these time thieves we must work towards eliminating time.

According to John Adair, a British expert on leadership skills, what could be very salutary is to keep a precise time diary for a while of what exactly we do in our working day. We may then realise that we are spending too long on phone calls chatting to colleagues and to people dropping in slowly reading (as opposed to scanning) routine reports and so on then we can cut down on time wasting and work out priorities.

Adair has some other pertinent points to suggest. Though directed mainly at managers, they are valid for most of us.:

Make the most of your best time .Programme important tasks for the time of day you function best .Hence planned quiet period for creative thinking..

Capitalize on marginal time . Squeeze activities into the minutes you spend waiting for a train or plane or between meetings.

Avoid clutter. Try to re organizing your desk for effectiveness. Sort papers into categories according to action priorities . Generate as little paper as possible yourself.

Do it now.. In fact procrastination is the thief of time.

Learn to say ‘No’ Do not let others misappropriate your time. Decline tactfully but firmly to avoid over-commitment.

Delegate Learn to delegate as much as possible.

Finally perhaps the most important advice boils down to: ***Don't be too much of a perfectionist.***

Arranging our time is vital for routinised efficient and effective time management . Nobody can simply start at this stage however. Unless he identifies what is really important to him and analyses his time usage in the light of his goals, the ‘arrange’ stage will have very little power. Some managers and management writers suggest us to put out goals in a prominent

position refer to them, and update them as circumstances change. We have to adjust our time usage accordingly.

Our goals also guide our assignment of priorities and focus our actions so we can eliminate activities that waste our time. The arrange stage then is the culmination of considerable 'lead-up' reflection and action. Time save through thoughtful time management can be used for reflecting on what is really important in the job as well as for increased leisure.

On the whole effective time management has some very persuasive claims to make. It can:

- ***Simplify our life***
- ***Reduce stress***
- ***Increase Effectiveness***
- ***Increase efficiency***
- ***Increase job satisfaction***
- ***Increase personal and organizational productivity.***
- ***Create more 'personal time' for us to use.***

Before managers can expect to run an organization effectively they must be able to manage themselves. Time is therefore considered as the most important resource to the manager. After all, we are the masters of our **Life** and **Time**.