

Do you manage your time effectively?

Sometimes knowing which task to focus on at any particular time can be a real challenge so let's take a closer look at this.

Now tasks can be looked at in two ways. How urgent the task is and how important each task is.

**In terms of urgency** this is when the task has the appearance of needing immediate attention.

**And in terms of its importance** this is the barometer of how the task contributes to the effective performance of your job.

Now we know that we need to spend time on the urgent, important tasks – we normally have to do these immediately. And we know that we shouldn't waste time on the non-urgent, unimportant tasks – which are basically nice to have.

But the question is how much of our time is currently spent reacting to urgent, unimportant tasks and how much should be spent on the pro-active, important tasks?

## **What Are The Important Tasks?**

Well, important tasks are those that help you to achieve your Key Result Areas - those areas of the job against which your performance is measured, and which contribute to the overall effectiveness of your company.

Here's a quick ready reckoner of what you should do and should not do as far as managing your time is concerned.

### **When a task is urgent and important you should DO IT NOW**

These tasks can include emergencies, complaints, crisis issues, demands from superiors or customers, planned tasks or project work now due, meetings and appointments, reports and other submissions, staffing issues or needs, problem resolution, fire-fighting and fixes

Subject to confirming the importance and the urgency of these tasks, do these tasks now and prioritise them according to their relative urgency.

### **When a task is important but not urgent you should PLAN TO DO IT!**

These tasks can include planning, preparation, scheduling, research, investigation, designing, testing, networking relationship building, thinking, creating, modelling, designing systems and process development, anticipation and prevention, developing change, direction and strategy

These tasks are critical to your success so plan time-slots around these and get them booked into the diary.

## **When a task is not important but urgent you should REJECT AND EXPLAIN!**

These tasks can include trivial requests from others, apparent emergencies, ad-hoc interruptions and distractions, misunderstandings appearing as complaints, pointless routines or activities and accumulated unresolved trivia.

You need to scrutinise and probe these demands and help the originator to re-assess them. Wherever possible you should reject and avoid these tasks sensitively and immediately

## **When the task is not important & not urgent you should RESIST AND CEASE!**

These tasks can include 'comfort' activities, computer games, surfing the net, excessive cigarette breaks, chat, gossip, social communications, daydreaming, doodling, over-long breaks, reading nonsense or irrelevant material, unnecessary adjusting of equipment and so on.

These are examples of habitual 'comforters' and are not true tasks. So just don't do them!

Take a look at how you currently spend your time. Take an audit for a week or so and jot down how and where you are spending most of your time. You might find the results illuminating and you'll be surprised at how much productivity you can actually gain by taking the advice from this session.