# INTRODUCTION

## Why Time Management?

Why indeed? Time is given to each of us without prejudice, in other words we each get exactly the same amount of time per day, 24 hours each and every day. All we have to do with it is spend it. How we spend it will determine how successful we are in reaching our goals as well as those of our managers/superiors/bosses.

Considering that each of us gets the same 24 hours per day to spend, have you noticed how some people seem to get more done than other people in the same 24 hour period? What is it that enables them to do more than others during the same time period? Do they have more stamina? Do they have a magical formula? Are they merely hyperactive? What is their secret?

Well, I suppose you could call it a magical formula if you wish: these people usually complete a **written plan** for all the tasks they hope to accomplish for the day. Then they set out **doing every task on that list** until every job on the list has been ticked off, no matter how unpleasant the task involved. This is their magical formula, **careful planning and sticking to their plan.**

Have you ever tried it?

It is important that you know your job: what to do and how to do it. Then it is also equally important that you know how to organise your daily activities, set your priorities and plan the effective use of your time.

**BLAME**: Do you also blame outside sources, unforeseen circumstances, factors beyond your control and other people for your own lack of time management? Those meetings where nothing is decided, unscheduled phone calls, unexpected visitors, unnecessary paper work and so on?

**THIS IS NOT TRUE! YOU ARE MORE IN CONTROL OF YOUR TIME THAN YOU WOULD BELIEVE!** This will become evident as we work through the Time Management presentation. Would you like to be in control of your time AND feel that you are in control of your time? Good, because you can be and we are going to show you how!

## Prioritising Your Work

Make a list of all the duties you have to perform at work tomorrow. Yes, you have to do tomorrow’s list today, either this afternoon after work but before leaving for home, or tonight at home, or tomorrow morning before leaving for work. If you leave until you reach work, it will be too late! **This is not really part of your work, this is something you are doing for yourself and therefore the best time to do it is in your own time.**

Try to align the list with the most suitable time of the day. In other words, if early morning is the best time for the phone calls to other departments, that activity will be at or near the top of your list,

If you work with a typing pool and they are not so busy early in the morning, put that near the top of your list. If afternoons are best for filing, put that at or near the bottom of your list.

If your day is sometimes interrupted by unexpected happenings, note this in your list.

### How much time should you spend on this activity?

Not much, only about five to ten minutes each day. At first it may take longer, don’t worry. With time and practice you will do it faster.

When you get into the office tomorrow morning, at least you will have planned your day according to the activities that you know you have to perform.

**The unexpected happenings are not going to confuse you, because you are going to add them in according to your priority list.**

**Having said that, certain things will always have to be done out of schedule**: if your manager wants something urgently, you had better give it to him/her when he/she wants it. This will not be a serious problem, as you will easily be able to reschedule your work – after all, you have your plan and you can adjust it easily! In the process you are now learning resourcefulness as well as managing your time!

Can you already see how much better organised your life is going to be and how much easier to achieve your goals?

## Organising Your Diary

This is a very important aspect of your time planning.

It is not a good idea to have more than one diary as it becomes very difficult to keep track of both diaries. If you are a secretary and your boss keeps two diaries, you will understand the problems this causes.

Having two diaries can cause serious slip-ups, which is exactly what you are trying to avoid. You want to work smarter and faster and more effectively by using your time better. You definitely don’t need the added problems that a second diary brings.

So, one diary and then preferably one that has a page a day. Depending on how many meetings you have to attend, it is possible that you would have to get at least an A4 size diary.

Together with the diary, you are going to need a year planner and at least 5 different coloured pencils in addition to your normal blue and black pens.

## The Year Planner

At the end of each year or the beginning of the next one, draw a rough plan of your duties, appointments and commitments for the new year.

You may not know all the details yet, but you probably have a rough idea: for example, on the first Tuesday of every month you have this meeting; every Monday at that time you have that meeting; and so on.

You also know roughly which weekends you are going away, when the children have school activities, do you see what I mean? You already have the basics of what your year is going to look like.

### The next step is to decide which colour pencil to use for which activity:

One colour for the monthly meetings

A different colour for the weekly meetings

Which colour to use for personal appointments such as the doctor and dentist

Which colour for important dates to do with your job e.g. project deadlines or, if you are maybe working in the Pension Department the last day of each month to complete the “run” as these things are called

A different colour for each important activity that occurs regularly and that would get you into trouble if you do not make the deadline or are not prepared for the meeting.

Normally there is not enough space in a year planner to write down what the occasion is about, so we mark the dates with different coloured dots or a check mark or whichever method you choose.

Now you can see your year at a glance, you can see when your deadlines and other important dates are going to be to be and you probably, if you belong to the human race, know when you are going on leave as well! This is fine, remember you have to make time for relaxation as well.

Of course, this Year Planner has to be updated every week without fail! If you neglect to do this, you will not know where you are or what your commitments are going to be and then you are going to run into problems.

By now, the possibility of unnecessary problems should be a definite no-no with you, because you are going to work towards your goals every day and you don’t want any black marks like this against your name. So, of course, every week you are going to update your Year Planner.

## Update Your Goals And Objectives Every Week

At the end of every week, review your goals as well the activities used by you to accomplish these goals.

Update your year planner.

**While reviewing your goals, cross out those that you have achieved**. This will give you an incredible feeling of being in control of your own destiny, this is self-motivation at its best. To know that you set out to achieve something and that you actually achieved it!

There will always be goals that you did not achieve, consider them and write down why you think you did not achieve these goals. Where was the problem? Sometimes you will have to change the activities you are using (your objectives) if they are not helping you to achieve your goals.

When you are evaluating this aspect, please **do not blame someone else**; you are responsible for your own work, your own goals, your own life and your own destiny.

Rather evaluate what you could or should have **done differently** or what you could do differently in the future to ensure that you achieve your goals and in the process do your job the way it should be done.

**Do you understand that, if you don’t make adjustments for these activities that did not give the results you wanted to achieve, the same thing will happen over and over again?**

Now you have to set new goals for the coming week. Make a list of all that you have to as well as everything you want to accomplish the following week.

## Write Down Your Longer-Term Goals : Montly Or Quarterly Or Yearly

These goals are like pit stops along the way, you’re just double checking your progress towards the realisation of your dreams.

Write them in your diary, at the beginning of the period, then make notes of the “dates By”, so that you can check how you are doing as the year progresses. For example, if you are studying part-time, you will have dates by which you have to hand in assignments. You should write these dates in your diary. You should also write a deadline for a week or two before the time as a date by which your assignment should be finished.

Are you starting to see how managing your time will definitely make your life easier?

**See how much simpler you are making your life. You are writing reminders to yourself, little tools to help you aim for your goal.**

# TIME WASTERS: PHONE CALLS, VISITORS

## Phone Calls

Always list phone calls that you have to make daily as part of your duties. At the back of your diary, you will find a phone index. Write all the important numbers that your dial regularly in this index, so that you have the numbers at hand. Running around looking for phone numbers is a waste of time and you have decided not to waste any more time by doing unnecessary things.

If you phone and you cannot reach that person immediately, find out when that person will be back, make a note in your diary and phone back at the right time. Phoning every fifteen minutes is also a waste – not only of time but money as well.

If possible, leave a message for that person to phone you back and then make a note in your diary to check whether the person has phoned or not.

You can also consider sending the person a fax first, so that he/she knows what the subject of discussion will be. This can also save a lot of time and money. You would have to evaluate every situation to determine whether sending a fax is justified.

## Personal Phone Calls And Other Time Wasters

What about personal phone calls? Well, you are no working towards building a career so you definitely are going to keep these to a minimum. This is a big waster of your time every day. If you don’t believe me, take notes of the time you start and end every personal phone call. Do this every day for a whole week and then multiply the time by four so that you get an approximate time spent on private phone calls for the whole month.

Think about this for a minute: you have not even calculated the time you spend just chatting to your neighbour in the next office, around the photo copier and the coffee machine, the 5 minutes you come back late from lunch every day or come in late for work or leave early. If you keep track of this time that you waste every day and add it up over a month, you will find that you waste at least a week every month! No wonder you can’t get your job done in time!

If you don’t believe me, time yourself and add all the one, two and three minutes; the five and ten minutes that don’t seem to matter so much at that moment.

Let’s do a quick exercise to test my statement: You spend only 10 minutes each day on average on personal phone calls. Then you usually leave five minutes early or come late five minutes or lose five minutes of your working time over lunch and tea breaks. I mean, really, its only five minutes a day, right? Then, at the photo copier or some other place, you and one of your colleagues have an unscheduled meeting, only about once a week, of about fifteen minutes.

Now, add all these minutes, assuming that you are paid to work an average of 22 days per month:

10 minutes per phone call daily: 220 minutes per month

5 minutes late daily: 110 minutes per month

15 minutes weekly: 60 minutes

Total minutes wasted: 390 minutes per month

Equals 6 and a half hours every month!

These figures are very conservative, the average employee steals at least triple this time every month. The total hours lost per worker per month is probably more in the region of 3 to 5 days per month**! Shocking, isn’t it!**  Do you still wonder why some people cannot finish their work on time or are unable to achieve their goals?

Thank goodness that **you** are now working towards your own goals, so now you are not going to fall into these time wasting traps, are you?

## Visitors

You can plan almost everything in your life, so you definitely can plan when to receive visitors as well. You do this by incorporating visitors in your diary, in other words schedule an appointment.

What about unexpected visitors? You decide what is more important! Your career or your social life. Compromise, compromise. Set aside a time of day, when you are maybe doing the tail end of your job and interruptions will not affect you so badly, to receive unexpected visitors. Otherwise, they can schedule an appointment.

If your visitor is a colleague with a work-related question, you can accommodate them in your diary like outside visitors. They will get used to the times that you are available for them to benefit from your knowledge. Or you can schedule weekly training sessions and share your knowledge with the whole department. Can you see that you can even plan most of your interruptions so that they will become less and less?

Please, always remember that in an emergency, or if your boss wants to see you urgently, you have to adjust your schedule. What you have to determine is what constitutes an emergency. In any case, if more people were to plan properly, there would be fewer emergencies

## Appointments, Meetings And Lists

### Appointments And Meetings

Whenever you set up a couple of appointments for one day, please bear in mind that you need time to travel to the meeting and from there you again need time to travel to the next appointment.

It is usually possible to schedule your appointments in such a way that you make an effective route, in other words don’t charge through to Johannesburg, back to Pretoria and then on to Midrand on the same day. The sensible thing would be to: schedule the first appointment in Pretoria, then Midrand, then Johannesburg and then you could possibly fit in another appointment in Johannesburg or maybe Krugersdorp on your way back.

Once again, planning your day makes it less stressful for you and your colleagues. Remember to phone beforehand to confirm the appointment or the date and time of the meeting.

What do you do when the meeting you are attending deteriorates into rivalry between two people or a discussion of the weekend’s cricket or soccer match?

You excuse yourself by saying something like:” I don’t think I have anything further to contribute to this meeting. I have some urgent phone calls to make. Please excuse me.”

You are not allowed to be rude to your colleagues or your managers, so you will always do this in a polite manner. You will find that your manager will usually have no problem in excusing you.

### Lists

As you can see, making lists is a very important part of planning and therefore of time management.

Making lists and keeping to them can sometimes be hard and seem futile, but the reward is in drawing a line through every finished task. This is visible proof of what you have achieved today, this week, so far this year. This is your reward and it is marvellous!

How you draw up your lists is up to you. You can start off by making more than one, say a separate list for priorities, phone calls to make, meetings and appointments, personal and so on. Or you can try doing them all on one list. With time you will learn which method works best for you.

If you are not really a list-making person, remember that it will help you achieve your goals, so just do it and do it again and do it again until it’s so much a part of you that you just do it.