

Time management.

Supporting you on your business journey.

By improving your time management skills you can increase your productivity and feel more in control of your work.

This guide will show you how to:

- Analyse how you're currently spending your time.
- Prioritise your work so you get the right things done.
- Be more productive by reducing distractions.
- Use tools to better manage your time.
- Get rid of common time-wasters.
- Avoid common time-management pitfalls.



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How are you currently spending your time?

Use your calendar to record how you're currently spending your time. After a few days you'll be able to identify a few important patterns:

- The time of day you're at your most productive, such as first thing in the morning or right after lunch. From now on, you may avoid scheduling meetings for those times so you can get more done.
- Meetings or commitments that keep you from more important work. Can you reschedule or reduce some of those so you have time to progress priority work?
- How much time you're spending on non-essential activities that aren't moving your business forward. Can you free up your schedule by eliminating or delegating some of these tasks?

Choosing what to work on.

An important aspect of time management for managers is choosing which activities require your time and attention, and which ones can be delegated:

- Identify your top priorities, for example, expanding the business, developing relationships with clients or managing your employees.
- Delegate work that's not one of your top priorities to a more appropriate person.
- Hire someone new or develop an existing employee if there is no one suitable to delegate to.

Reducing distractions.

Multi-tasking may help you feel productive but in reality, you'll accomplish more when you focus on one thing at a time. Here's how to get that all-important focus:

- Set aside distraction-free periods so you can focus on high-priority projects – turn off your email, close your office door and get someone to take a message when anyone phones.
- If an unrelated 'to-do' or idea for another project pops up, write it down in a notebook so you can come back to it after you've finished your current work.
- Turn off pop-up email notifications or set your email to check for new messages at longer intervals.

Tools that can help you better manage your time.

Start by improving a tool you're already very familiar with – your calendar. An up-to-date calendar not only keeps you on time for your commitments, it can also help with time management.

Your calendar can be particularly helpful in managing large projects. At the outset, break down the project into smaller steps, each with its own deadline. Record these deadlines on your calendar using the information about upcoming meetings and other commitments to see if you'll realistically have time to complete the work. This kind of strategy can keep you from missing important deadlines or staying late in the office to finish at the last minute.

You'll also want to find a tool that can help you manage your to-do list. This could be a personal digital assistant (PDA), Smartphone or a paper-based system – it's important you feel comfortable with it and are motivated to use it.

Get rid of common time-wasters.

Many people consider frequent meetings a necessary evil, but the time they take can often be spent doing more important work. You may want to send a colleague in your place or find a more efficient way to discuss what's on the agenda.

Searching for files is another common time waster – make sure you have a filing system that's easy to use so you're not tempted to let papers pile up on your desk.

Commit to clearing off your desk at the end of each day – this will help you save time in the long run. It takes time and mental effort to switch between tasks, so consider handling emails or phone calls in batches rather than as they come in.

Avoid common time-management pitfalls.

- Don't schedule out your entire day, as an unexpected email or phone call could derail the entire plan.
- Consider reducing open-door hours to just afternoons or only certain days of the week – an open-door policy encourages communication, but it can also interrupt your work day.
- Don't set realistic expectations for yourself – no one can work for 4 uninterrupted hours on a big project, but you can commit to 1-2 hours.

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