

ORGANIZING YOUR LIFE THROUGH
TIME MANAGEMENT

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

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ORGANIZING YOUR LIFE THROUGH
TIME MANAGEMENT

William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania: "Time is what we want most, but what alas we use worse."

Proverb: "Every scrap of a wise person's time is worth saving."

Ben Franklin: "Time is money."

Time is a strange thing. We all have the same amount of it, but our resulting usage is varied. Since we each have all the time there is, the crucial factor is how we use it. It is necessary to decide what really matters, ignore everything else, and do it right the first time.

Time management is a very personal matter. Most people absorb all of the hints they hear and pick and choose whatever fits their situation. This technique of learning is named the gimmick approach. An alternative is the systematic approach. Persons develop effective work habits, learn how to say "no," and learn not to regret failures. This systematic technique is aimed at the root of the problem rather than the surface. All suggestions should be considered and modified, if necessary, to develop new ideas which apply in a particular situation.

After learning the basics of time management, a person should add his own touches using order, balance, contrast, unity, and/or harmony. These five ingredients are related

to time management as follows:

Order: a discernible pattern of life; a connection of the past, present, and future

Balance: a sense of stability; recurring activities at regularly scheduled times

Contrast: spark; a mix of high-productivity time with relaxation

Unity: belongingness; actions which contribute to a whole

Harmony: similarities in ways time is invested; groups of related activities¹

Even though a person has learned time management techniques and adopted his own style, his actions yet may be inconsistent with his objectives. Supervisors waste time each day because they do insignificant things right instead of doing the right things. They don't clarify their priorities and act decisively, and they do less important work when they could be working on vitally important tasks. Since nothing can be managed until time is managed, one must set goals and priorities and take action to insure that his most important goals are achieved. One doesn't have to work harder or longer, just smarter.

The first step is to identify time wasters. Then a person should classify tasks, set goals, plan work, determine priorities, and delegate responsibilities. Do it now!

IDENTIFY TIME WASTERS

Time is meant to be used effectively, not wasted. Routine events in a person's life may be necessary; but if they are handled improperly, no time will remain for the special events that occur sporadically. Visitors, telephone calls, mail and other paperwork, waiting time, shopping, and meetings are all essential parts of the active person's day. A person has two choices when one of these events occurs. He can either use the time effectively or he can let them rule his day. The basic idea behind effective time management is replacing the doing of something less important with something more important.

Visitors

Visitors are fine--but only if a person has time for them. The main problem seems to be that visitors tend to overstay their welcome. Since most people are too polite to physically remove an unwanted person from the office, the day's schedule can be ruined. There are other ways to rid oneself of a drop-in visitor and remain friends. One can suggest another meeting time or ask his secretary to schedule an appointment with the visitor. The visitor can also be prohibited from entering the office in the first place. The secretary can be instructed to schedule appointments with all drop-in visitors so that her employer will not be bothered. If the visitor's problem is relatively insignificant, perhaps a subordinate can handle it. A slightly more

abrupt method is to continue doing whatever it was he was doing at the time of the intrusion. When the intruder sees that he is interrupting, hopefully he will be considerate enough to initiate the departure. If the visitor is not considerate, however, he deserves harsher treatment--he should be told that he is intruding and should be asked to leave.²

Telephone Calls

Both incoming and outgoing calls can be a problem. Outgoing calls should be assigned a special time during the day so that all of the calls can be made at once and not remain a source of concern during the remainder of the day. The calls should be as brief as possible. If the person being called cannot be reached, the person should be instructed to return the call. It is better to place the responsibility on the other person's shoulders so that one may go about his own work.

Incoming calls can also be controlled. The first step is to have someone screen all calls. If necessary, this person may be given a list of acceptable and not acceptable callers. The caller can be discouraged by telling him that his call will be returned later--and call him near the time he will be leaving his office. He can also be asked how long his call will last, then the busy executive can be prepared to spend a certain amount of time on that telephone call. Another useful method is to have someone announce loudly that one is needed in a conference

Another method may be to eliminate all reading and do research when it is needed. With this method, one may sacrifice the knowledge of up-to-date material, however.

To help eliminate paper piles on one's desk, it is helpful to use a special paper, special place, and special time arrangement. This consists of having a particular location for the special papers that contribute to the person's most important areas of responsibility. This location should be permanent, and the papers should always be in their place when they are not being worked on or used for discussions or meetings. A special time is needed to concentrate on recurring paperwork in order to make the best use of time and thus complete the project.⁵

Waiting Time

One of the biggest time wasters is the time spent waiting--waiting for the doctor, waiting at the bank, even waiting for the pot roast to get done. One should anticipate waiting times and be prepared to deal with them. Since most of a person's time spent waiting is uncontrollable, one should use this time to work on something that is important to him. The time should not be wasted by working on an insignificant task.

If one usually has to wait for a certain executive, he should telephone ahead to the executive's secretary to determine if the executive is on schedule. The secretary can then

call him when the executive is almost ready. If this is inconvenient, one may take portable work with him when waiting in the executive's office. If one is continuously kept waiting for the barber, doctor, or dentist, it would be wise to simply change to someone else. If this is not possible, one can simply call ahead to see if he is on schedule. To aid in the fight against wasted time spent waiting, one should simply make it a habit to have some type of work with him.

Shopping

There are three basic types of shopping. The first is functional shopping for essentials. The best and, unfortunately, most expensive method of shopping for essentials, such as clothing and furniture, is to hire a professional shopper. They will research the items one wishes to purchase and present him with the available alternatives. This is especially convenient for the busy executive/homemaker. Another convenience is to use stores that provide free delivery service for alterations or stores that pick up articles to be dry-cleaned.

The second type of shopping is for household items. One should group related items to speed shopping. A useful method is to make a list of the standard items needed each week, along with how much is used each week. One should place that amount on the standard weekly shopping list. One can add or subtract items as needed. Other tips for routine shopping include:

1. Shop **during** the week since weekends tend to be very busy.

2. Do Christmas shopping throughout the year.

3. Never shop without a list or when hungry.

Shopping for special items, such as light bulbs, heating pads, and tablecloths, can be unproductive unless one sheet of paper is specially designated for a list of these items. When a special need occurs, one can simply write it on the list. One should keep this list with him at all times. Once a week, for 15 minutes, review the sheet and group the items by the stores at which they can be purchased.⁶

Meetings

A person has certain rights concerning meetings. They include the right to know the meeting's objective in advance, what each participant is expected to contribute, that the meeting will start promptly, and that the meeting will be effectively and efficiently conducted. One does not have to attend every meeting personally. Meetings can be categorized using the star method:

*ask to have the minutes sent

**send another person

***attend in person

A person should ask himself: Is this meeting necessary? Would I be attending only because I like meetings (not

necessarily the subject matter)? Can I delegate the meeting? Has the original need for the meeting changed? These questions should help one decide in which category a meeting falls.

After a meeting, the person who presided should ask himself: How much could have been handled with a memorandum? Was I talking to the whole group? How much was problem solving, and how much was waste? Did the participants come prepared?⁷ These questions should help him see where the improvements should be made for the next meeting.

SET GOALS

Goals are necessary because no work can be planned without goals. One must have both daily and lifetime goals. Both types should be written to insure that one doesn't lose sight of his goals. It also makes one's commitment more solid. The goals, short term or long term, should be challenging but attainable. A person needs to push himself and grow; therefore, goals that are too easy have no purpose. Goals should be specific. It is much easier to attain a goal of studying 4 hours a night than a goal of attaining a 4.0 grade point average. One should be sure that all of his goals are compatible. Achieving one goal which prevents the attainment of another is self-defeating.

For example, one may have a goal of losing weight while also having a goal of trying three types of new desserts each month. Goals also need to be updated frequently to accommodate changes because a person's situation, personal and employment, is altered often.⁸

A "wants inventory" is very useful in helping people realize what they really desire in life. This method uses what a person doesn't want to help him see what he does want. One should make two columns:

<u>What I Want More Of</u>	<u>What I Want Less of</u>
1.	1
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.
11.	11.
12.	12.
13.	13.
14.	14.
15.	15.

Then a person should list 15 items under each column and circle the items on each list about which he feels the strongest.⁹ He should make a new inventory each week without referring to previous lists. One should compare the lists each week to discover which items occur most often. With these ideas in mind, goal setting should be easy.

Other helpful lists include:

What I Most Want to Accomplish in my Lifetime

and

What I Want my Long-Term Lifestyle to Be.

These lists should be reviewed and rewritten periodically.

A person has two types of goals. The first is life, or personal, goals. They may be categorized into intellectual growth, family characteristics, and physical well-being. Goals relating to intellectual growth may be both short term and long term. Short-term goals are those one wishes to accomplish in less than six months, and long-term goals should be reached in more than six months.

If a person is encountering difficulty in deciding his goals concerning intellectual growth, it may be of help to start the list with:

1. read 6 books each month
2. subscribe to 3 new periodicals
3. attend 2 theatre productions each month
4. do crossword puzzles each evening

These types of activities are only the beginning of a list of possible mind-expanding ideas. If one is having trouble thinking of ideas, he should think about where he wants to be in 6 months. From that point, he can decide on the best way to get there.

Long-term intellectual growth goals can be decided on by asking oneself where one wants to be in one or two years. These goals must be compatible with the short-term goals. If he knows what he wants, one should have no problem linking these goals together.

Family goals are closer to the heart, and they should be discussed with one's spouse. Most are long-term, such as family size, home location, and family appearance. These goals usually take more than 6 months to accomplish; however, the time to get started on them is now. One should choose his target home, for example, and decide how much money he will need to buy it. He must search for every possible tactic that will bring him closer to his long-term goal. These tactics are his short-term goals.

Physical well-being starts with many short-term goals, such as 100 jumping jacks, a 1-mile-per-day jog, or losing one pound every two weeks. These goals will keep one headed straight for his long-term goals, such as lifting 200 pounds, running a 16-mile marathon, or losing at least 50 pounds this

year. In this case, the short-term goals need to be especially realistic since doing too much may set one back more than one week in his efforts.

Job goals include promotions/achievement, respect, and effectiveness/efficiency. Perhaps one has a goal of a particular job title in five years. He should discover how the present jobholder earned the job and set his short-term goals accordingly. If one has problems deciding on long-term goals, he should imagine that he is being interviewed on his 100th birthday, and he is asked for his most important accomplishments. Whatever he would like to be able to say should be considered, and the means to attain these accomplishments. Whatever he would like to be able to say should be considered, and the means to attain these accomplishments should be ascertained. Perhaps he wishes to be working at another company. He should be working on ways to get his name known in that company, as well as what qualifications are needed to enter the company. If a certain salary figure is desired, he should discover how high in the ranks he will have to reach. Then he can strive for the top in his everyday work. Awards and professional organizations may be on his list, so he should research these areas and do everything needed to achieve them.

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Respect is harder to gain, but it is very rewarding when finally received. Respect in itself is a long-term goal, so one should spend time deciding what ingredients go into the making of a respected person. Since one of the most important requirements is that one must respect others in order to be respected, goals related to liking and getting along with others should be set.

Efficiency and effectiveness can be aided with the use of a "What-I-Want-To-Happen" Memo. The memo can relate to a meeting, project, or any other upcoming event. Besides listing the facts and needed short-term goals, the memo relaxes the writer. When goals are written, one can simply glance at the paper and feel confident that the project is organized. One can also watch for actions and/or tasks that diminish effectiveness and efficiency and work on perfecting the completion of these tasks. One should be watching oneself, as well as others.

PLAN WORK

Most projects would never be completed if planning was not a component. Planning is vital, but managers tend to place the process in the back of their minds. Schwartz and MacKenzie have stated that managers hate to plan because planning takes time. Also, they never seem to have

time to plan their department's use of time. Managers tend to respond to urgent tasks, not necessarily important tasks.¹⁰ Since departmental control and economical use of resources depend on good planning, executives and managers need to view planning in a positive light. The formulation of a course of action, the methods to be used, and the results that are expected may be time consuming, but the methods must not be forgotten in the flurry of activity.

The nature of the situation determines the formality and details which should be included in the plans. Short-term plans need to be concise but flexible, while long-term plans should be brief statements of goals. To aid in planning, a person should be sure to include the following points:

What--objective

Where--most efficient workplace

When--time estimate for completion

How--methods, procedures, strategies

Who--specific authority and the extent of his control¹¹

Employees often question plans which are made by executives. To help satisfy employees, one should keep these points in mind:

- a. consider the goals and capabilities of the department
- b. supply specific numbers and facts
- c. provide progress reports and a follow-up study¹²

The utilization of these three ideas should aid in creating and maintaining good employee relations and morale in the firm.

Planning Areas

Naturally, some planning is needed for all tasks. The most important jobs, however, are ones needing the most precise and complete plans. These planning areas are:

1. frequently recurring or critical jobs, such as plant shutdowns or power failures
2. equipment and material use
3. employee management
4. productivity and quality
5. cost reduction
6. utility conservation
7. scheduling¹³

Executives and managers must devote a sufficient amount of time to the planning of these seven major areas in order to be productive persons.

Internal Prime Time

According to Alan Lakein, each person has a certain time during the day when his energy is at a peak.¹⁴ This particular time, the internal prime time, can be determined by keeping a record of one's feelings and activities during a typical week.

From this log, one can readily ascertain at what time of day he has the most energy. Using this information, one can schedule his most strenuous work for his internal prime time.

Douglass System

Merrill Douglass feels that planning must become a habit in order to be effective. Fifteen minutes per day should be spent on planning activities for that day, in addition to 30 extra minutes per week to plan long-term projects. When planning has been used for 3 to 6 weeks, it has become a habit, according to Douglass. Douglass also suggests that one write the objectives for the next week on a weekly plan sheet. Whenever one thinks of another item, he can simply add it to the list.¹⁵

Time Log

A time log, or audit, is kept by an executive. It is a written account of how time is spent, and the facts should be entered while they are occurring. The suggested format for the log is as follows:

DAILY LOG

Name: _____ Date: _____

Department: _____ Day: (circle one) M T W TH

Position or title: _____ F S S

TIME LOG	Starting Time of Activity	Location a. Off. b. Oth.	Type of Action a. Int. b. Ph. c. Con. d. Wr. e. An.	Individual or Subject Involved	Purpose of Activity	Termination Time of Activity

CODE: "Location" column:

- a. Off.--office
- b. Oth.--other

"Type of Action" column:

- a. Int.--interruption
- b. Ph.--phone
- c. Con.--conference
- d. Wr.--write
- e. An.--analyze

INSTRUCTIONS:

Each day review each sheet. Analyze each activity as:

- A. Productive time, profit related
- B. Nonproductive time, not avoidable
- C. Nonproductive time, avoidable. Should be eliminated.¹⁶

One should also consider whether the interruptions are initiated by oneself or someone else. To analyze the time, determine the flow of activities and divide into creative, preparatory, productive, and overhead.

Creative--planning future activities

Preparatory--setting up activities

Productive--doing the job

Overhead--corresponding and writing reports

These categories can help one see where his time is being spent.¹⁷

Task Classification

Managers and executives prefer concrete, simple tasks, rather than ambiguous assignments. Tasks may be classified by:

- a. degree of difficulty (simple or complex)
- b. duration of effort (short term or long term)

The two-dimensional view of tasks to be completed can be illustrated by this diagram:

Cell 1: simple short-term	Cell 3: complex short-term
Cell 2: simple long-term	Cell 4: complex long-term

Cell 1: routine, little ambiguity, habits

Cell 2: intermediate ambiguity

Cell 3: intermediate ambiguity

Cell 4: highly ambiguous--should be planned especially well¹⁸

After tasks are classified, one can decide which approach should be used. Simple and short-term tasks are relatively easy to plan, but complex and long-term jobs require special actions.

The methodical approach for complex tasks is:

- a. Use a 5-minute brainstorm to divide the project into smaller tasks. These tasks should be written.
- b. Work on high-payoff activities. Identify the critical elements which will help one complete the task fast and most effective.
- c. Pay attention to the smaller activities so that they do not accumulate.

- d. Work during one's internal prime time.
- e. Start with easier tasks, then advance to more involved activities.
- f. Control interruptions. Go to another location if necessary.¹⁹

Long-term tasks should be treated as follows:

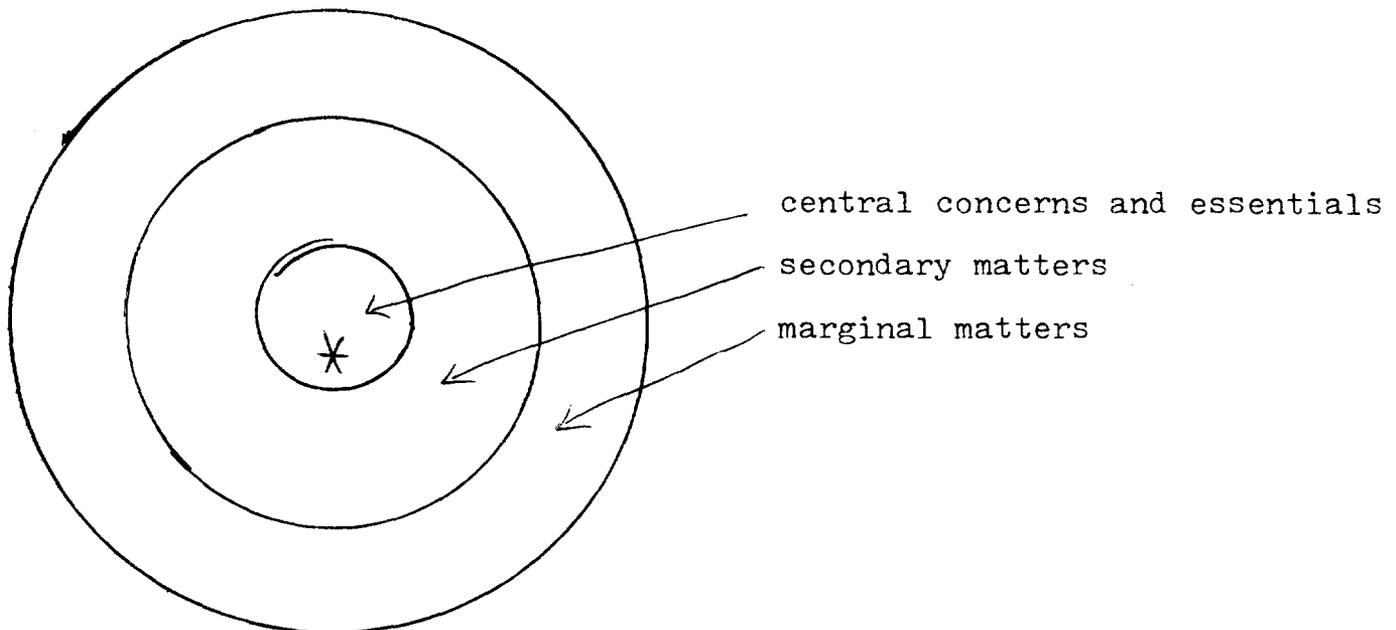
- a. Allot a realistic amount of time per week. Be generous with the allotment of time at the beginning.
- b. Know the specific tasks before starting work, so that one can undertake the task with greater confidence.
- c. Be sure to work on the project at a regular time each day.
- d. Set deadlines for intermediate progress points.
- e. Switch aspects occasionally to ease frustration.
- f. Avoid the activities trap. Sometimes people get so involved in the activities that they forget their purpose.
- g. Record the progress that is made each week.²⁰

DETERMINE PRIORITIES

Tasks must be listed by priority so that one can effectively finish all of his scheduled tasks. At the time the tasks are listed, one should also estimate the time needed and make a realistic timetable. One must be flexible, however, because events may change priorities. One should always be asking, "What is the best use of my time now?" Low priority jobs must be completed regularly also because they can easily accumulate, needing a massive block of time in which they must be accomplished.²¹

Target Method

To aid one in setting priorities, the target method has been established. It is illustrated as follows:



Central concerns and essentials contribute to one's life goals, wants, and needs. These include actions which are necessary to do to stay alive and healthy. They may also be problems which cannot be left undone. Secondary matters are worthwhile, but they do not constitute the best use of one's time. Marginal matters are trivial and usually do not need to be completed.²²

One's essential actions should be aimed at the areas of central concern. One should assign a rating to each potential time investment and direct his energy toward the center.

Timeline Technique

One is often indecisive regarding important issues. It is difficult to decide on answers when a lot of money, or anything else, is at stake. The timeline technique is described below:

- a. Clarify the issue. Set a time and date. Collect all of the facts.
- b. Decide on three alternatives. Be firm about the deadline for this phase.
- c. Decide on an answer. Compare it with the objective. Ask for input from others.
- d. Act and implement the decision.
- e. Evaluate during a specific evaluation time. Invite everyone who has directly or indirectly come into contact with the decision.²³

Daily Schedule

A daily time schedule is used to slate committed or mandatory items first; then the rest of the activities are ranked by priority. High utility items are scheduled for one's prime time. One should find time for events that he merely wants to do, as opposed to necessary tasks. Some free time must be scheduled in case of an emergency. One must always remember to be realistic and flexible.

A useful format is as follows:

DAILY SCHEDULE

Name: _____

Department: _____

Position/Title: _____

Date: _____

Day: (circle one) M T W TH F S S

Appointments and Work Plan Priority Order Things To Do

7:00 a.m.

:30

8:00

:30



10:00 p.m.

INSTRUCTIONS: Assign each task a letter of priority (A,B,C) as well as a number (1,2,3) to indicate order.²⁴ Setting these priorities depends on how one likes to work and what one must do. The important thing is that priorities are set.

Equipment

The equipment needed for effective priorities scheduling includes a personal schedule, a daily action sheet, and a special place at home or work. Personal schedules are useful because one can see at a glance the events of a particular day. A daily action sheet can be created the day before it is pertinent; then the tasks may be entered on the schedule. The special place should include a flat writing surface, pens, pencils, paper, space for a calendar, and access to a phone.

Priorities Card

When one is traveling, a priorities card can be very helpful. A priorities card is simply a 3x5 card. "Do" and "Telephone" are listed on one side, and "Buy" and "Take" (to appointments) are listed on the other side. One should use a fine-point pen to write as small as possible. The card should be dated, and the items should be ranked for priority. In addition, a 3x5 card of a different color may be used to list long-range goals, which can be reviewed during travel.²⁵

DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers and executives are usually very reluctant to delegate responsibility. One should realize that it is his responsibility to save time, his own and everyone else in the department. He should want to involve others in the work process so that they may be challenged and feel a sense of accomplishment, too. One should also be certain that he is only doing work which is in his jurisdiction.

One should realize that it is time to delegate when he is unable to bring a task above the threshold level due to lack of time. He is only wasting time by not delegating the job to someone who can hopefully complete the project with little difficulty.

The delegate choice is very important, because in order for the task to be effectively accomplished, that task must be delegated to the best person. This person must be someone with the resources, time, and responsibility for the job. He should be intellectually capable of completing the task. The task should also enable him to grow professionally because he needs personal satisfaction to build self-confidence and to improve his morale.

Time management is essential for everyone. Since each person is unique, each person's style of time management is special. The same techniques will not be appropriate for everyone, so one must continue to strive for the most efficient, effective method.

There are ten myths concerning time management which hopefully have been dispelled through reading this paper.

They are:

1. "I'm Waiting Until I Have More Time" -- passive, waiting attitude which allows time to slip away.
2. "It Doesn't Work For Me" -- the best technique needs to be developed.
3. "I Always Lose My List" -- one should recognize that he is complex and busy. To help keep track of lists, he should use big bright sheets of paper.
4. "I've Already Taken The Course or Read The Book" -- time management is an ongoing program to bring order into one's life.
5. "You Just Can't Get Organized Around Here" -- one must help others improve, too.
6. "But There's Nothing I Can Do" -- one must take small preliminary steps to get started.
7. "People Keep Interrupting Me" -- one must learn to cope with interruptions.

8. "Time Management Is Boring"-- it can be as exciting as you want it to be.
9. "Can You Get So Organized You Can't Get Anything Done?"-- the techniques cannot control a person because he is in charge.
10. "I Need Someone To Motivate Me"-- only the person involved can control his feelings.

These myths are stumbling blocks which daunt a person from developing good time management techniques. In order to overcome these stumbling blocks, one must put his own spark and excitement into his methods. The basics one must remember are:

1. Identify time wasters
2. Set goals
3. Plan work
4. Determine priorities
5. Delegate responsibilities

With these steps as a starting point, one can add his own special techniques. Just remember the words of Roy Rogers: "Time is man's most valuable possession because one can never get it back."

ENDNOTES

¹Dru Scott, How To Put More Time In Your Life. (New York: Rawson, Wade Publishers, Inc., 1980), p. 49.

²Gary K. Himes, "Time Always Marches On...", Supervision, Volume 41 (February, 1979), p. 14.

³Sydney F. Love, Mastery and Management of Time. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), p. 47.

⁴Ibid., p. 99.

⁵Scott, op.cit., p. 177.

⁶Ibid., p. 161.

⁷Ibid., p. 203.

⁸Michael Le Boeuf, "Managing Time/Goals and Objectives," Cutty Sark Career Guide, Volume 2, p. 4.

⁹Scott, op.cit., p. 77.

¹⁰Lloyd Baird, "Managing Time: Positive Clock-Watching," Advanced Management Journal, Volume 46 (Summer, 1981), p. 46.

¹¹Gary K. Himes, "Better Planning, Fewer Crises," Supervision, Volume 43 (July, 1981), p. 6.

¹²S. C. Harper, "Time - Managing The Most Mismatched Resource," Managerial Planning, Volume 29 (July/August, 1980), p. 28.

¹³Himes, op.cit., p. 6.

¹⁴Scott, op.cit., p. 100.

¹⁵Merrill Douglass and Larry Baker, "Success In Your Own Good Time," Supervisory Management, Volume 26 (April, 1981), p. 32.

¹⁶Charles W. Schilling, "Time Planning: How To Divide Up Your Day," Supervision, Volume 42 (February, 1980), p. 13.

¹⁷Baird, op.cit., p. 47.

¹⁸Scott, op.cit., p. 155.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 167.

²⁰Ibid., p. 175.

²¹Himes, op.cit., p. 7.

²²Scott, op.cit., p. 182.

²³Ibid., p. 143.

²⁴Schilling, op.cit., p. 14.

²⁵Love, op.cit., p. 49.

²⁶Scott, op.cit., p. 79.

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