

Numark Core Leadership Module



Managing Conflicting Priorities

NUMARK+

a PHOENIX Pharmacy Partnership member

Session Objectives

By the end of this workshop you will be able to:

- analyse your daily/weekly activities to identify current use of time in the workplace
- determine your priorities in terms of urgency and importance to achieved defined goals
- schedule time effectively to enable sub goals and deadlines to be met
- apply techniques to overcome common mistakes or barriers experienced when managing time

“I don’t have enough time!”

There is no such thing as time management. Time cannot be controlled, or managed, it just passes. The only thing you can control is yourself and how you use your time and this means understanding your priorities. Those who accomplish most in a day know EXACTLY what they want to accomplish.

Have clear goals

Many of us think that the goals we are working towards are not daily considerations and this then results in us focusing on minor tasks and not on the things that are important to our work.

Planning and prioritising can be seen as a process. Knowing exactly what you need to do and finding ways to manage your time to achieve it.

Understanding how we spend our time

Once we are clear on what we want to achieve the next step in managing our priorities is be honest with ourselves and examine how we currently spend our time. There are two types of tasks that we tend to deal with as follows:

Active tasks: tasks that positively help you achieve your overall objectives, usually the important tasks that are planned in.

Reactive tasks: day to day tasks which you must do just to keep things running can also be the unexpected things, a customer complaint, missing delivery, phone calls etc.

Are there any tasks that you simply do out of habit?

We all develop habits in our working life and when we need more time we have to question all the things we do to see if they are absolutely necessary or could perhaps be managed differently.

Prioritising time

With your goals in mind you have to choose to spend time on your priorities and establish ways to achieve them, which may result in less time being spent on less important activities.

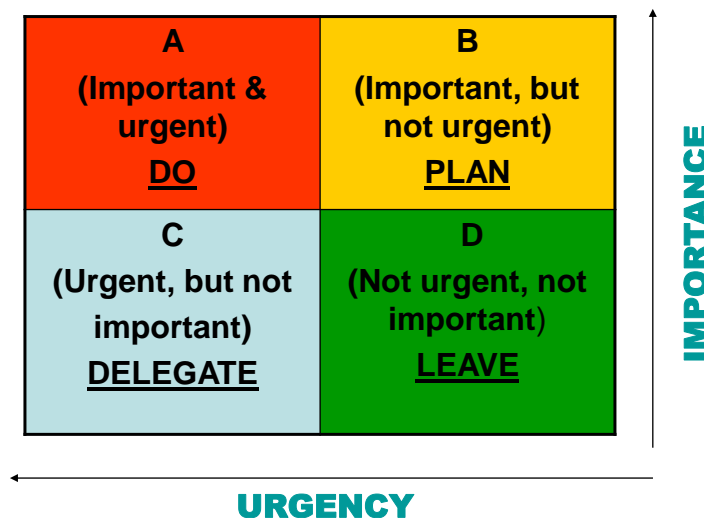
Urgent/important grid

A key simple planning tool which can help you is the 'urgent/important' grid. This tool will help you map out all your activities in terms of how urgent or important tasks are in relation to how you plan your time to achieve your business goals.

Urgent = tasks that have a schedule or a deadline, i.e. how soon you need to tackle the task.

Important = how valuable is this task? Is it working towards one of your goals? Is it a mandatory requirement? What will be the impact on your business of this task taking place or not taking place?

Prioritising time - Urgent/important grid



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Urgent and important - these are the things which need to be done ASAP. They can almost be seen as the 'crises' that need to be dealt with as priority.

Important but NOT urgent – these are usually the more active tasks, things that working towards your goals, with time taken to ensure that they are done to a high quality. These are the tasks that need to have time planned in, otherwise as they approach a deadline they then move into the

urgent/important grid, where you are unlikely to be able to spend as much time on them as you originally planned!

Urgent but NOT important – these are tasks that have arisen and usually distract you from working on your important goals. We tend to react to them because the consequences will be immediate if they are not dealt with. Often other people throw things into this quadrant for you, phone calls, emails, requests. Consider if they can be rescheduled or if you can delegate them to another team member.

NOT urgent and NOT important – these activities are very often a distraction so avoid them where possible. They might even be tasks that you ‘like’ to do and hence still do them. When your time is limited though you need be honest with yourself on what your priorities are.

Unless we take conscious control of our decision making, we will tend to react to the urgent, even if it is relatively unimportant and put off the important unless it carries a sense of urgency, i.e. everything becomes urgent!

Scheduling your time

“The key is not to prioritise what’s on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities”

Stephen Covey

Managing your priorities based on what you need to achieve requires you to be proactive as opposed to reactive with your time.

Productivity levels vs. business requirements

Some people are most productive early in the morning, others peak in the afternoon, schedule your important tasks where possible to take advantage of this.

Business levels of course also play a role, there is no point scheduling time for project work on a Monday morning if you know this is your busiest day operationally of the week.

Whenever possible plan your daily schedule to match both your own 'prime time' and the 'best time' for the business.

Steps to schedule your time

Step one - identify available time

How many hours do you have available in the working day?

Step two - schedule essential actions

What actions have to be done by you in the working day and when do they need to be done?

Step three - schedule high priority activities

Schedule in any urgent/important activities first and then the important not urgent.

Step four - schedule some contingency time

Your experience will tell you how much. This will allow you flexibility to rearrange tasks but still have time to work on them.

Step five - schedule discretionary time

This is the proactive time available to work on your goals.

Step six - analyse your activities

If you find you have little or no discretionary time available, then you need to question again if all the tasks are absolutely necessary that you are completing. Who could possibly help you? Can things be dealt with in a more time efficient way? Can you delegate things? Can technology help you in some way?

Avoiding the common mistakes!

Failing to manage distractions

If you find your scheduled in contingency time is mainly just filled with people distracting you, then you need to deal proactively with this.

- **Phone calls** – can someone screen these for you? Or can you use voicemail to screen?

- **Emails** – it is so tempting to look at an email when it flashes up – turn your email off when working on things and schedule in email time during the day.
- **Distractions** – make it clear when you are and when you aren't available and the reason why; make it clear you should only be interrupted if absolutely necessary. This can alleviate disruptions and avoid hurt feelings.

Procrastination

This simply means putting off what we need to do. Very often procrastination is simply down to the fact we don't know how to do something, don't want to do it or feel overwhelmed as to where to start.

A good way to deal with procrastination is to set yourself small amounts of scheduled time to deal with a task. Very often thinking about completing a task from start to finish can be overwhelming. Start with 10 minutes working on the task and build on it from there.

Taking on too much

You may be someone who can't say 'no' when someone asks you to do something **or you may be a micromanager** not trusting others to do things correctly.

Focus on delegating the tasks where the quality doesn't matter as much, does it really have to be exactly as you do it? This can help you let go.

When you can't say no - Learn the art of saying yes to the person, but no to a task as follows:

"I'm sorry I'd really like to help but I have a deadline to meet this week for XX project. Could I help next week, or have you asked xxx?"

Multitasking

Multitasking can often be seen as a better way of using time, for example you may be typing emails whilst having a meeting over the phone. However, multitasking can lead to you actually taking 20 – 40% more time to finish tasks, compared with completing the same list of tasks in sequence. It is difficult to fully concentrate and your work can also become prone to errors.

Keep yourself motivated when you are managing your priorities

- Sometimes it is nice to get some 'quick' tasks done as it will help you feel that you are achieving things.
- Give yourself rewards as you get things done, even a simple tea and biscuit!
- Break things down into smaller tasks to make them feel more achievable

I can't meet my original deadline!

If you reach a point when working on a task where you realise there is a strong possibility you won't achieve it, then consider if any changes can be made in terms of **Cost, Quality or Time** to make it achievable.

Cost:

Do you need to invest more money to pay for more resource? Could you pay for a locum to free up the required time?

Quality:

Does the quality not need to be quite the standard you originally planned? Do you not need to deliver everything you said you would straight away, could it be broken down into smaller elements?

Time:

Do you need longer to implement something? What was your original deadline based on? Can you talk to other stakeholders involved to see if more time can be allowed?

Looking at these three areas separately may help you identify if there is any flex anywhere to assist you in achieving the deadline.

Utilising technology

Consider moving forward if there are ways technology can save you time in any possible ways.

- Are you using your email in the most effective way, or do you spend time trawling through to find certain things? Some email programmes can be set up to automatically flag up important emails or remove spam.
- Do you have information saved on a shared online resource that others can access? This can save you always having to forward on or print off information for others?
- Instant messaging services. These can be useful to quickly contact someone as opposed to emailing which can take longer (Google/What's app).
- Using social media to make contacts, network, find information etc. – this is quicker than attending events, face-to face networking
- Do you need to have a face-to face meeting? Or can it be done over skype, facetime etc. Using these technologies can save a lot of wasted travel time in certain situations.