Managing Your Time
Maximizing your most precious resource

"Time is just another word for life."
—Michael Gerber

Purpose
Time is an irreplaceable resource. Effective use of your time, more than any other habit, will increase your productivity and your effectiveness as a leader. Managing Your Time provides you with the tools you need to make the best possible use of your time.

Key Points
Effective time management is a matter of establishing habits that make the best use of your time and minimize the effect of Time Bandits in your life.

It’s important to understand how much of your time is spent on productive activities that directly contribute to the results you want, and how much of your time is spent unproductively.

Tracking and analyzing the way you spend your time—objectively looking at your habits and deliberately choosing more productive habits—enables you to create an ideal daily routine.

The ideal daily routine is a daily objective—the way you want your day to unfold. It’s a guideline, not an inflexible template.

Don’t feel that time management will make you distant or restrict your people’s access to you. Their access to you will actually increase, and your personal and professional impact on them will improve.

Benchmarks
1. Track the actual flow of your days for two weeks. Use the Daily Time Log. Categorize your time by type of activity.
2. Analyze your time management using the Time Log Summary and by reviewing your Daily Time Logs.
3. Set up your "ideal" daily routine and establish the habit of daily priority setting.
4. Identify your "Time Bandits" and adopt the "Bandit Buster" practices that eliminate your Time Bandits.
5. Periodically monitor and improve your time management.

Time Bandit Busters
- Break down large projects, take "one bite at a time."
- Prioritize and stay focused.
- Hold 5-minute daily priority meetings.
- Don’t overbook yourself.
- Delegate as much as you can.
- Set up a fixed daily routine for yourself.
- Share time-saving ideas with others.
- Avoid getting bogged down in "quicksand" issues.
- Set and meet deadlines for yourself and your people.
- Divide large projects into tasks distributed to others.
- Don’t fragment your time. Finish what you start.
- Use natural interruptions of your work for break times.
- Institute a daily quiet time for yourself.
- Set "do not disturb" times for uninterrupted work.
- Use "gatekeepers" to screen out Time Bandits.
- Consolidate telephone time.
- Plan telephone calls.
- Set a "closed-door, open-calendar" policy.
- Don’t postpone unpleasant tasks.
- Use "idle" time productively (reading, listening to tapes).
- Eat lunch, but eat "lite," and no alcohol.
- Don’t work at home.
- Don’t be a perfectionist (don’t overdo it).
- Use your "prime" time for important tasks.
- Capture your great ideas, and save them.
- Think, then act. No more, "Fire, Ready, Aim."
- Don’t overcommit. Say "no."
- Teach time management to your people.
- Audit your time management. Improve it.
- Focus on results, not work.

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Your Time Is Your Life

Everyone gets 24 hours in a day, yet some people accomplish a great deal more in that day than others. Although most people rarely think of it this way, "time" is simply another word for "life." It's easy to see why good time management is critical. After all, you wouldn't let your employees, clients, vendors, and friends shorten the days of your life, so why are you letting them steal your time? Time is your single most precious resource, and it's one that only you can protect.

The good news, however, is that learning to manage your time is like any other skill. All it takes is a little practice and a willingness to develop some new habits.

An Overview of the Process

This Business Development Process is designed to help you:

- Analyze how you use your time by tracking the flow of your day
- Eliminate your Time Bandits
- Learn dozens of proven techniques for getting the most from your time
- Create your own tools for organizing and planning your time
- Build skills to better manage yourself and your employees

Tracking the Flow of Your Day

The first step is to understand how you currently spend your time. Using the Daily Time Log found at the end of this booklet, you are going to track the flow of your time by logging everything you do throughout every day for two weeks. Don’t be surprised if you find this tool so valuable you’ll want to continue using it as part of your ongoing time management system.

Activity Categories

Before you begin using the Daily Time Log, you’ll need to set up some categories to classify your activities (at least 6 categories, but not more than 12). You’ll use these activity categories to filter the details from your Daily Time Logs to help you see where you spend your time and lead you to new ideas for better time management.
What categories should you choose? Choose the ones that work for you.

For example, if you want to know in what areas of the business you generally spend your time, you might select categories such as “Sales,” “Administration,” “Management,” “Business Development,” “Finance,” “Operations,” etc. Or, you might wish to understand the interruptions that fill your day, so you might choose categories like “Telephone Calls,” “Meetings,” “Computer Problems,” “Employee Problems,” “Travel,” “Mail,” etc.

Your activity categories should be:

- **Meaningful**—To you (and others, if appropriate) and relevant to what you’re trying to quantify.

- **Self-defining**—Use words that clearly define the category.

- **Mutually exclusive**—Little or no overlap among different categories for the same activity.

- **Concise**—Just a word or two.

Now you can begin using the Daily Time Log.

**The Daily Time Log**

The Daily Time Log has five columns:

1. **Time**—Exact time you begin an activity.
2. **Duration**—Amount of time you spend on the activity.
3. **Activity Description**—A few words describing the activity.
4. **Category**—Classification for the activity, according to categories you determined earlier.
5. **Work Type**—Strategic Work versus Tactical Work (i.e., work “on” the business versus work “in” the business).

When you begin your day, pull out a blank Daily Time Log and fill in your name and the date. Next, jot down the time, a brief description of the activity you are performing, the category for that activity, and whether it is Strategic Work or Tactical Work. Every time you change activities, enter the time, activity description, category, and work type for the new activity.

Be sure to fill out your Daily Time Log as you go, rather than after the fact. You lose too much information if you wait. At the end of the day check your Daily Time Log to be sure it’s complete. Fill out the “Duration” column for every line-item, and add the column to determine Total Duration.
SAMPLE DAILY TIME LOG

Name:  Joe Doakes  Date:  June 5, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Work Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:06am</td>
<td>10 min.</td>
<td>Review work priorities and schedule day</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:16am</td>
<td>13 min.</td>
<td>Received phone call from Bill Smith re: status of project in Arizona</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Tactical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:29am</td>
<td>35 min.</td>
<td>Meet with Steve for update on banking project and to delegate business plan</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:04am</td>
<td>26 min.</td>
<td>Interruption by Marie for help troubleshooting the network</td>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>Tactical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>83 min.</td>
<td>Read The E-Myth materials/brainstorm ideas for system to improve customer service</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:53am</td>
<td>5 min.</td>
<td>Call from Johnson re: problems with new building</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Tactical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:58am</td>
<td></td>
<td>Leave for airport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Duration:  172 minutes

Here’s a hint. Neat Daily Time Logs with all activities conveniently grouped in 30-minute and 60-minute increments are dead give-aways that you’re not tracking the actual flow of your day (or your time management skills are so well developed that you don’t need this Business Development Process).

Understanding Your Time Management: Skim, Summarize, and Analyze

When you’ve completed Daily Time Logs for two weeks, you will have enough information to provide a reliable understanding of your time management patterns. The best way to go about the analysis is to “skim, summarize, and analyze.”

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First, skim through all your Daily Time Logs to get a feel for the flow of your days. These hints might help:

1. Notice the number of line-items you completed each day as well as the average duration of your activities.
2. Are there a lot of entries for less than 15 minutes?
3. How many activities were uninterrupted for more than one hour?
4. Are there any trends regarding mornings, lunchtime, afternoons, or certain days of the week?
5. How much time do you spend on Strategic versus Tactical Work?
6. How do your first Daily Time Logs compare to your last ones?

You should notice two immediate results from skimming through your Daily Time Logs:

First, you'll see specifically what you do during the day and how long everything takes. You can expect some surprises, such as: Random phone calls may be eating up your day. You might be spending too much time on work you could delegate. Your actual “productive” time is probably much less than you thought. Your day may be fragmented into tiny time segments with no long stretches for concentrated, efficient work.

Second, logging every activity you undertake will make you more conscious of your time, and that alone will begin to improve your time management.

The Time Log Summary

Using the Time Log Summary found at the end of this booklet, tabulate the data from your Daily Time Logs into the activity categories you created earlier. This will help you see the big picture of how you spend your time and provide insights for better time management.
**SAMPLE TIME LOG SUMMARY**

Name: Joe Doakes  
Period: Week of 6/5/96

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>144 min.</td>
<td>193 min.</td>
<td>71 min.</td>
<td>155 min.</td>
<td>236 min.</td>
<td>160 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>66 min.</td>
<td>72 min.</td>
<td>110 min.</td>
<td>28 min.</td>
<td>144 min.</td>
<td>84 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Development</td>
<td>115 min.</td>
<td>43 min.</td>
<td>25 min.</td>
<td>36 min.</td>
<td>169 min.</td>
<td>78 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>58 min.</td>
<td>237 min.</td>
<td>255 min.</td>
<td>296 min.</td>
<td>133 min.</td>
<td>196 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>383 min.</td>
<td>545 min.</td>
<td>461 min.</td>
<td>515 min.</td>
<td>682 min.</td>
<td>518 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Time Log Summary has three types of columns:

1. **Category**—List the categories you used on your Daily Time Logs.
2. **Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, etc.**—Sort and enter by category the data from each Daily Time Log.
3. **Average**—Average of items in each row.

It's almost a sure bet that you'll find more surprises. For example, salespeople often find that very little time is spent selling, and the majority of their time is spent traveling, filling out paperwork, holding meetings, etc.

**Creating Your Daily Routine**

Let’s take what you’ve learned so far and create a tool to help you establish all these new habits—your Daily Routine. The Daily Routine is a pre-defined schedule for your typical workday that maximizes the time you spend on productive work by:

- Conforming to the natural flow of your day
- Corresponding with your natural rhythms
- Taking into consideration when you’re at your best for certain tasks
- Batching like tasks for greater efficiency
- Setting aside dedicated time for uninterrupted Business Development work “on” the business
SAMPLE DAILY ROUTINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Work Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30am</td>
<td>Arrive at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 - 8:30am</td>
<td>Work on Business Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 - 9:30am</td>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 - 9:45am</td>
<td>Priority-setting meeting with Sheri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 - 10:00am</td>
<td>Priority-setting meeting with Kelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 - 12:00pm</td>
<td>Out of office to call on customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 12:30pm</td>
<td>Lunch/positive readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 - 1:00pm</td>
<td>Sort through mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 - 4:00pm</td>
<td>Unscheduled time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 - 5:00pm</td>
<td>Prepare quotes/do accounting for the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 - 5:30pm</td>
<td>Prioritize/organize next day, setting tentative schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30pm</td>
<td>Go home to family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What if you’re one of those people whose business is so irregular that it’s impossible to stick to a daily routine? Create a Daily Routine anyway. It’s always possible to create routine in your day, if only for some fraction of the day. And it’s worth doing. For those completely unpredictable periods of the day, create an “ideal” routine, knowing that you’ll have to be flexible, but also knowing that keeping the “ideal” day in mind will bias you toward productive, rather than random, use of your time.

Prioritizing the Flow of Your Day

The Daily Prioritizer is a prioritization tool. It has five sections:

- **High Priorities**—Those items that absolutely must be done today.
- **Secondary Priorities**—Proceed with these items only when you have completed all of your high priorities.
- **People**—Any individuals you need to contact.
- **Telephone Calls**—Any calls you want to remember.
- **Schedule**—A place to plan how and when you will accomplish your priorities for the day.

You should start using this tool immediately as part of your Daily Routine. You may even want to integrate your Daily Routine into the layout of your Daily Prioritizer.
Monitoring Your Time Management

You should periodically re-evaluate how you are spending your time, especially in the early months when you're breaking old habits and establishing new ones.

You simply resume filling out the Daily Time Logs as before. After you've done this for a few days, tabulate your Daily Time Logs and compare them to your original results. It's an objective way to gauge your progress, and you should see significant, long-term improvements in your time management.

Eliminating Your Time Bandits

A Time Bandit is anything that steals your time—a new employee, a talkative vendor, the telephone, your mother-in-law, “curly” fax paper, broken office equipment, an older computer with too little memory, even yourself. The first step to managing your time better is understanding who or what is stealing it from you.

Take a moment now to identify your Time Bandits. You can use the Time Bandits Worksheet found at the end of this booklet. You should also find this worksheet helpful for documenting the time you lose to each Time Bandit, and for prioritizing your Time Bandits when the time comes for “Bandit Busting.”

30 Guidelines for “Bandit Busting”

To help you eliminate your Time Bandits try the “Bandit Busters” listed below. They are grouped into four categories:

- Organization & Planning
- Interruption Blockers
- Stress Reducers
- Miscellaneous

Organization & Planning

1. Take “One Bite at a Time”
   Identify work items that could possibly be done today. Break down long activities and projects into interim tasks. Remember the old adage, “The easiest way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time.”

2. Prioritize and Stay Focused
   Evaluate your list and prioritize items on the Daily Prioritizer found at the end of this Business Development Process.
Ask yourself:

If nothing else gets done today, what are the one or two items that absolutely must be done? (The most successful CEOs of Fortune 500 companies only focus on one or two priorities for a given day.)

3. **Hold Five-Minute Priority Meetings**
   Hold a five-minute priority-setting meeting early in the day with yourself and your key people.

4. **Don’t Overbook**
   Don’t overbook your time. Allow for interruptions. Basic rule: Leave two hours of time unscheduled every day. It will fill itself!

5. **Delegate**
   Delegate whatever items you can to your people.

6. **Routinize**
   Set up a fixed Daily Routine wherever possible. Schedule definite times for routine matters such as meetings, going through mail, communicating with your people, etc.

7. **Share Time-Saving Ideas**
   Use ten minutes of your staff meetings each month to exchange time-saving ideas.

8. **Avoid “Quicksand” Issues**
   Don’t get mired in issues that can’t be quickly resolved. Form ad hoc committees and hold meetings when topics come up that need more investigation. Do not take up people’s time talking about an item nobody can adequately address.

9. **Set Deadlines**
   Set reasonable deadlines for all jobs and stick to them. It’s true: Work expands to fill the available time.

10. **Divide and Conquer Big Jobs**
    To complete long-term projects, divide the activity into manageable tasks and distribute the tasks among others. Have them participate in setting deadlines to ensure greater commitment to completing the work in a timely manner.

11. **Stop Fragmentation**
    When you start a piece of work, finish it if possible. If you split it up too much, you lose your work rhythm and waste time warming up each time you start again.
12. **Take Natural Breaks**  
   Take your breaks at times when your workstream is broken. For instance, when the people you have to talk with are not available, when the material you need is not ready, etc.

**Interruption Blockers**

13. **Institute a Quiet Time**  
   Institute a quiet period in your office, preferably in the morning.

14. **Set “Do Not Disturb” Periods**  
   Plan a definite time each day when you can have a meeting with yourself. Put a “Please Do Not Disturb” sign on your door with a note showing when you are available. Ask someone else to take care of any visitors or telephone calls. (If you don’t have an office, use a high movable partition.)

15. **Use “Gatekeepers”**  
   When possible, have your telephone calls screened by a person or even voice mail. Use Gatekeepers for unexpected visitors, too.

16. **Consolidate Telephone Time**  
   Set aside certain periods each day to accept, initiate, and return calls. The best time to accept incoming calls is just prior to lunch or at the end of the work day. The best time to contact hard-to-reach people is early in the morning, just before/after lunch, or late in the day.

17. **Plan Phone Calls**  
   Plan your telephone calls. Make a brief note of what you want to say and what you want to find out. It saves time for everybody and makes for better communication. Remember: “chit-chat” costs.

   You can also use the technique of saying at the beginning of the call, “I have 10 minutes to spend with you now. If we don’t finish, we can schedule another time.”

18. **Institute “Closed-Door, Open-Calendar” Policy**  
   Institute a Closed-Door, Open-Calendar Policy, working through an appointment system as much as possible. Put a time limit on visits. When someone calls for an appointment, ask how long it will take. Meet visitors outside your office and talk with them standing if you wish the consultation to be brief.

   Another way to reduce interruptions is to establish “office hours,” which is the same as “open door,” but only for limited, scheduled times of your choosing.
Stress Reducers

19. Don’t Postpone “Bitter Pills”
   Take care of important matters that are unpleasant immediately. If you keep postponing them, they will haunt you and waste precious time reminding you they’re still around.

20. Maximize “Idle” Time
   Get the most out of your already-committed time. For example, use travel time to listen to important material contained on tapes, or carry reading material with you at all times. Use waiting time to read.

21. Eat Lunch, but Eat “Lite”
   Take time for lunch whenever possible. When a day’s work is taxing, get out of the office for lunch. But eat a light one with no alcohol. This prevents the usual “sleepy” time in the afternoon.

22. Don’t Work at Home
   Don’t take work home unless you are certain you will get to it. It is much better to work longer at the office until you are finished. Setting time limits will help keep you on track. Then you can enjoy your leisure time more.

23. Don’t Be a Perfectionist
   Let go of your need to be a perfectionist. For some things, “good enough” really is enough.

Miscellaneous

24. Use Prime Time for Prime Tasks
   Capitalize on your “prime time.” When are you at your best? Do important things that require lots of brain energy at that time. When your brain is frazzled, attend to minor things that don’t take a lot of thought.

25. Capture Great Ideas
   Collect all your ideas in one place (e.g., on your Daily Prioritizer as you carry it around with you). Record your inspirations as you go through your day. That way you won’t lose any great ideas.

26. Think, Then Act
   Avoid the “Fire, Ready, Aim” phenomenon. Think first, then act. Nothing is so urgent that there is no time to consider the decision-making process. But when the goal is clear and the means obvious, do something NOW. Effective people have one thing in common: The ability to shorten the distance between thought and action.
27. **Don’t Overcommit**
   Beware of overcommitment, remembering that you’re the only one who can protect your time. Learn the art of polite “NO-pership.” To what can you rightfully say “NO”?

28. **Teach Time Management**
   Take the time to teach your people to use the time management techniques found in this Business Development Process. Never underestimate the impact your good time management can have on those around you, so lead by example. Remember, the more effective you make those around you, the easier it makes your job.

29. **Audit Time Management**
   Check your calendar and Daily Prioritizers weekly for an overview of how effectively you are spending your time. Reinstitute the Daily Time Log whenever you find you or your people falling into old habits of poor time management.

30. **Focus on Results, Not Work**
   The heart of good time management is setting goals and priorities that enable us to get results, not just stay busy.

If you’re typical, you’ve found that many, if not most, of the Bandit Busters are applicable to you. It’s virtually impossible to internalize and implement that many ideas all at once, so you should select only a couple of guidelines at first. Choose the most impactful ones and post them someplace where you’ll see them every day. Actively work to replace your unproductive old habits with productive new ones. As you master each Bandit Buster, select another one and repeat the process. The trick is to internalize them as new habits, and make them second nature.

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**More Time Is Really More Life**

The bottom line comes down to your willingness and commitment to establish the habits that will give you more control over both the expected and the unexpected things that happen every day. This time management system works, but the degree to which it works depends on you.

It’s a lot to learn. A lot to think about. A lot of new habits to form. But if time is life, then isn’t time management a way to, literally, get more life?

Where else could you find a better payoff for your efforts?