

# 21st Century Time Management for *Busy People*

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## 20 Tips to Manage Your Priorities at Work

1. **Get yourself organised.** Set up a system that works for you then make it work. The systems will be easy to set up, keeping it working is the challenge! Design a system that works for you.
2. **Have a giant clean out of the rubbish and unnecessary paper, books, stationery, collectibles, etc. in your work area.** If you have not looked at it or used it for 12 months, you probably don't need it. Almost every piece of information you need is now available elsewhere or on the net so you don't need to keep anywhere near as much as you used to.
3. **Make sure that you know the top 3 things you must get done today - work on them first!** If nothing else gets done, make sure these top 3 do get done. Work on them first.
4. **Write lists.** Keep a list of everything you need to do and then constantly prioritise and re-prioritise it. Use Outlook if you can - see the next point.
5. **Use technology to your advantage.** If you are using Microsoft Outlook (different from Outlook Express), then learn and use the "Task" tools. Outlook will increase your effectiveness more than you can imagine. Set Outlook to default to "Outlook Today" so that every day when you fire up your computer, you can see exactly what you have to do that day. If you put your tasks in, they will come up as well and there before you, is your day's work. If you are on the road and/or out of the office, investigate the PDA's (personal digital assistants) such as the Palm Pilot or the HP Ipaq. Most of these will now enable you to use your Word documents and Excel spreadsheets as well as your email.
6. **Set your email to check just twice a day, instead of continuously.** If you leave it continuous, then you are constantly distracted every time an email comes in.
7. **Be willing to close your door if you can.** Don't be afraid to put up the "Do Not Disturb" sign if your work allows it. Everyone needs undisturbed working time.
8. **Start using a diary.** Especially if you are appointment based. Even if you are not, use a diary to schedule things you need to do. Loose leaf diaries work best - get the pages that suit your work.
9. **Carry a notebook and pen with you everywhere.** A small spiral notebook costs 50¢ and will last you a long time. You also appear to others to be far more organised and reliable if you write things down and people see you writing things down.
10. **Stop talking time - talk priorities.** Time is finite - everyone has the same amount so there is no point in saying you don't have time - you do. What differs from one person to the next, is their priorities and how they allocate their time. **You cannot save time - you can only spend it!**

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David speaks at conferences, seminars and workshops throughout Australia and overseas.

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11. **Work on effectiveness first, then worry about efficiency.** Effectiveness is doing the right things. Efficiency is doing things right. It doesn't matter how efficient you are if you are working on the wrong thing! Be effective first, then worry about efficiency and you'll find that it will fall into place. Remember just because you are busy, doesn't make you effective or successful.
12. **Be punctual - always.** Have you noticed that the people who are late, are always late. People are either punctual or not. If you are a person who is always late, try this - work backwards calculating the time you need to get to where you need to with time to spare. Then leave at that time no matter what! Also be aware that people who are punctual, make very negative judgements about people who are not. **Being busy is no excuse - everyone is busy!**
13. **Don't blame anyone else for your lack of results!** No-one else is to blame for your own poor time management - take responsibility and get your act together!
14. **Be willing to say "no".** Put your own work priorities first. Say "yes" to the people who reciprocate and are willing to assist you when you need it, and to the people who have a role in you achieving your targets. Spread yourself sensibly among everyone and everything else. In spite of what you may think - you are not indispensable!
15. **Use the bowling ball principle.** Bowling balls are the most important things you have to do - your highest priorities. If you imagine a drum, (your time) you can only fit so many bowling balls into it. But you could fit lots of smaller balls. If you think of the smaller balls as your lower priorities then you must make sure you do your bowling balls first. Some people work on the tennis balls and golf balls first because they are often quicker, more enjoyable or easier. The problem is, if you fill your "drum of time" with smaller balls, there is no room for the big ones - your high priorities. Working on the bowling balls is making sure you are effective!
16. **Make difficult phone calls or do difficult tasks early in the day.** If you have a job where difficult phone calls or difficult tasks are necessary, do them early in the day. It gets them out of the way and out of your "mentality".
17. **Make sure you are driven by importance first, urgency second.** This is best described as Quadrant 2 Time Management. You need to spend time working on the important, but not urgent things. It is here, in Quadrant 2 that you do your anticipating, evaluating, planning, reviewing. It is here also that you avoid almost all of the crises which could occur. Read Stephen Covey's First Things First for more about Quadrant 2. This is a "must read"!
18. **Use your Peak Performance Period to your advantage.** The Peak Performance Period (PPP) is the time of day (usually not more than 2 hours) where you are at your peak - top performance level. Once you know when it is, deliberately use that time for your highest priorities, your most important bowling balls. You may find that you can lengthen your PPP by exercise and monitoring your nutrition. What you eat has a huge impact on your performance. Lack of water for instance, is the greatest cause of afternoon fatigue. Get to know what works for you.
19. **Set up a "Tickler File".** A tickler file is a file into which you put anything at all which needs to be done at a later time. You have a file for each month, and a file for each day in the current month. Then you put things into the file they belong in. Visit our website [www.davidprice.com](http://www.davidprice.com) for more information about how to set up and use a tickler file.
20. **Time management is 90% mentality and 10% strategy.** Remember, the most organised people tend to get the most done and achieve the most. The reverse is also the case. Get your act together and get organised, then work on **keeping** organised.. You can do it!

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