

# Managing Priorities

## Part Two / Time wasters



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**Time** is the most valuable thing that any person has. The American writer Carl Sandburg once said, “Time is the coin of your life; it is the only coin that you have. Only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful not to let other people spend it for you”.

Learning and mastering how to manage time is a journey that starts with changing the existing habits and establishing brand new habits, including eliminating your time wasters. The more time wasters you have, the less time for work, personal activities, achievements, and results.

You and only you have to decide what your time wasters are, and how do you spend your time. Nevertheless, one cannot eliminate all of the time wasters. There are time wasters that beyond the person’s control. One can do nothing if he/she caught in unpredictable traffic condition, or waiting too long for the elevator.

In addition, one cannot predict how long he/she would look for a space to park his/her car; and worse still, how long you have to wait in a bank, an office, or to wait for someone to do some transactions or to settle some matters.

However, many time wasters are under the person’s control and he/she can eliminate them by applying some practices. These time wasters include being disorganized, trying

to do many things at the same time, reading and sending nonessential e-mails, and being obsessed with communication tools.

Being disorganized contributes largely to time wasting. Did you plan and write the things that you should do today? Have you spent time looking for something that you forgot where did you place it? Is your table, at home or at work neat, well arranged, and tidy, or looks like 'Pasar Malam'?

We, humans, are multi-purpose machines. We are able to do more than one thing at one time. However, trying to do many things at the same time would lead to failure or reduce the quality of the result. In addition, it will lead to a high level of stress, depression, and fatigue. It is hard to do everything you want at one time and achieve satisfactory results, but you can save time and effort by doing the thing that matters the most first.

Reading and sending nonessential e-mails is another time waster. How many emails you receive in your inbox that are irrelevant to anything you need or want, but you still read them? Do you have a colleague who showers you every morning with his/her (Good morning, it is a wonderful sunny day today) emails?

Be honest, how many times do you use the short message service (SMS) per day to send or reply to unnecessary messages (Hi, I am eating KFC)? Have I mentioned Uncle Yahoo and Mr. MSN (Microsoft Network)? Being obsessed with communication tools is another time waster that we can eliminate.

In the work place, wasting time can cause the organization to lose much effort and a lot of money. One of the major reasons for wasting time in organizations is the lack of objectives, priorities, and deadlines.

No one can hit a target he/she cannot see. Employees, all of them, should know the organization's main vision, mission, objectives, and the objective, the importance and the deadline of every single task they do. Have you received instructions to do few tasks and when you asked your manager, "Which one is important", speedily, he/she replied, "All"?

An ineffective meeting is another time waster. How many meetings have you attended to discuss certain matter or to solve a problem, yet the matter or the problem was unsolved and even getting worse?

Visitors without appointments and telephone interruptions contribute to your time wasting, and affect your productivity. Have you been extremely busy and someone just walked by your office, sat down, and started to talk? Have you been extremely busy and the phone rang, would you answer it or not? Most of us will answer even though we have no inkling whether or not that call is important, or just a 'wrong number'.

Nothing is more frustrating to those, who do not waste time, than unclear communication, unclear instructions, lack of standards and progress, and delayed or inaccurate information from others.

If your task depends on some information or reports, the time that you are waiting for that information or reports is wasted. Worse, still, if the information or the reports you receive are inaccurate or wrong; sorry for you, you have to repeat the same process again.