

How to leave work on time and get your weekend back!

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, families 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.

Who is stealing your time?

List below the top ten time consuming activities of your day:



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 article, 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). **There is an example of one at the end of this article.**

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 centre you generally

spend your time, you might select categories such as "With Parents," "Administration," "Management," "Fee Collection," "Rosters," "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," "Educator Problems," "Parent Problems", "Email," 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.



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.

Understanding Your Time Management: Skim, Summarise, and Analyse

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, summarise, and analyse."

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 article, 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.

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

travelling, filling out paperwork, holding meetings, etc.



Creating Your Daily Routine

The Daily Routine is a pre-defined schedule for your typical workday that maximises 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

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.

Prioritising the Flow of Your Day

The Daily Prioritiser is a prioritisation tool. It has five sections:

1. High Priorities: Those items that absolutely must be done today.

2. Secondary Priorities: Proceed with these items only when you have completed all of your high priorities.
3. People: Any individuals you need to contact.
4. Telephone Calls: Any calls you want to remember.
5. 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 Prioritiser. See template at the end of this article.



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, broken

office equipment, an older computer with too little memory, even yourself. The first step to managing your time better is to understand who or what is stealing it from you.

Tune in next Monday's Blog for guidelines on 'Time Bandit Busting.'

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Sample of a Daily Time Log

Time	Duration	Activity Description	Category	Work Type
7:00am	22 min	Finding staff replacement	Admin	Tactical
7:22am	17 min	Parent issue 'child went home dirty nappy'	Complaints	Tactical
7:39am	11 min	Child crying went to room to see why	Emergency	Tactical
7:50am	9 min	Chatting with parent	Parent	Tactical

Total Durations _____

Hint. Neat Daily Time Logs with all activities conveniently grouped in 30-minute and 60-minute increments are dead giveaways that you're not tracking the actual flow of your day.

The Time Log Summary

Category	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Average
Parent Issues	65	60	267	0	51	88.6
	12%	17%	55%	0%	9%	19%
Fees	179	60	124	0	199	112.4
	34%	17%	25%	0%	35%	24%
Admin	61	35	25	2	0	24.6
	12%	10%	5%	1%	0%	5%
Rosters	0	0	0	0	75	15
	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	3%
Directing	0	192	0	70	0	52.4
	0%	55%	0%	19%	0%	11%
Supporting Educators	217	0	72	0	0	57.8
	42%	0%	15%	0%	0%	13%
Emergency	0	0	0	297	251	109.6
	0%	0%	0%	80%	44%	24%
Total:	522	347	488	369	576	460.4
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Daily Priorities

Name:

Period:

High Priorities	Hours	Schedule
	7:00	
	7:30	
	8:00	
	8:30	
	9:00	
Secondary Priorities	9:30	
	10:00	
	10:30	
	11:00	
	11:30	
	12:00	
People	12:30	
	1:00	
	1:30	
	2:00	
	2:30	
	3:00	
Phone Calls	3:30	
	4:00	
	4:30	
	5:00	
	5:30	
	6:00	
	6:30	