

# Guidelines for 'Time Bandit Busting'

## Your Time Is Your Life

Last week's blog, we identified who and what is stealing your time as well as documenting everything that you are doing throughout the day. We provided strategies on tabulating your time as well as prioritising your time.

This week's blog focuses on eliminating your Time Bandits! To help with this, try the 'Bandit Busters' listed below.



### **Prioritise and Stay Focused**

Evaluate your list and prioritise items on the Daily Prioritiser (template in last week's blog)

### **Ask yourself.....**

If nothing else gets done today, what are the one or two items that absolutely must be done?

### **Hold Five-Minute Priority Meetings**

Hold a five-minute priority-setting meeting early in the day with yourself and your key people.

### **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!

### **Delegate**

Delegate whatever items you can to your people.

### **Routines**

Set up a fixed Daily Routine wherever possible. Schedule definite times for routine matters such as meetings, going through mail and communicating with your educators.

### **Share Time-Saving Ideas**

Use ten minutes of your staff meetings each month to exchange time-saving ideas.

### **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.

### **Set Deadlines**

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

### **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.

### **Take Natural Breaks**

Take your breaks at times when your workflow is broken. For instance, when the people you have to talk with are not available, when the material you need is not ready, etc.



## 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.

## Institute a Quiet

Institute a quiet period in your office, preferably in the morning.



## 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.)

## 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.

## 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.

## Maximise “Idle” Time

Get the most out of your already committed time. For example, use travel time to listen to important material or carry reading material with you at all times. Use waiting time to read.

## 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.

## Don’t Be a Perfectionist

Let go of your need to be a perfectionist. For some things, “good enough” really is enough.

## Use Prime Time for Prime Tasks

Capitalise 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.

## Capture Great Ideas

Collect all your ideas in one place (e.g., on your Daily Diary 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.

## Think. Then Act

Avoid the “Fire, Ready, Aim” phenomenon. Think first, and 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 are obvious, do something NOW. Effective people have one thing in common: The ability to shorten the distance between thought and action.



## Don't Over Commit

Beware of over commitment, remembering that you are the only one who can protect your time. Learn the art of the polite "No." To what can you rightfully say "No"?

## Teach Time Management

Take the time to teach your team to use the time management techniques. Never underestimate the impact your good time management can have on those around you; so lead by example.

## Audit Time Management

Check your calendar and Daily Diary weekly for an overview of how effectively you are spending your time. Reinstigate the Daily Time Log whenever you find you or your team falling into old habits of poor time management.



## 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 are typical, you will find that many, if not most, of the Bandit Busters are applicable to you. It's virtually impossible to internalise 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 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 internalise them as new

habits, and make them second nature.

## 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?



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