



Time management

- [Time wasters](#)
- [Rush job or important?](#)
- [Tidying up](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [More information](#)

We usually have too much to do and not enough time to do it in. Perhaps you can hear yourself talking in remarks like: What have I actually done in the last couple of hours? I never get my work finished and have no idea why not. My list of things to do just grows longer and longer. I can never find anything. I feel guilty if I don't do anything for a moment. Everyone is busy, and being busy is good. Everything has to be done right away, preferably yesterday.

By reflecting more on how you work and applying a number of principles, you can change this situation. It is not a question of working harder, but of getting on more effectively and efficiently with the task in hand. It will produce less stress and eventually give you a feeling of satisfaction that will extend into your time off as well. You can find references to familiar methods on internet.

Time wasters

Time wasters come in all kinds of shapes and sizes: an unannounced visitor, phone calls, new messages on your social media, jobs which take longer than expected, constantly searching for information, lack of discipline, wanting to do everything yourself, an untidy desk, procrastination, inability to take decisions, avoidance behaviour. You probably cannot do so much about some time wasters, but you can about others.

Rush job or important?

First of all, you must ask yourself with regard to every task whether it is a rush job or whether it is important. That is not the same thing. A rush job means that it has to be done quickly for some reason. Important tasks are the ones that would have drastic consequences for you or somebody else if they were neglected. After you have decided whether the task is a rush job or not and whether it is important or not, there are four possible lines of action:

Don't do it

If it is not a rush job and is not important, you shouldn't do it. You do jobs like these because you already always do them or because they are nice and easy. Leave these jobs to one side for a while.

Delegate

Not important, but still a rush job? Then it's best to get somebody else to do it. That way you still have time for important matters. Of course, it sounds easier than it is, but you really must suppose that the other person has time to do it and you don't.

Delegating is the hardest thing there is. People who are poor at delegating say: I don't like asking other people to do my work, or My staff, colleagues or fellow students can't do that, or It takes more time to explain it than to do it myself, or My staff, colleagues or fellow students are already so busy, and, last but not least, People must think that I'm the one who works really hard. It may well be true that you can do a job a bit better, but if you don't show others how to do it, you will always be stuck with it when really have other things to do.

Do it yourself

Is it a rush job and an important one? Do it yourself. And now! Not the small, unimportant jobs first, but that big one. You may be reluctant to take it on because you can't see the whole picture. In that case you can do the following. Chop large-scale and important jobs into smaller slices of the pizza. Plan them and reward yourself when you have finished that part. And if things go faster than you



expected, don't just grab the next slice of pizza, but go and enjoy reading a book. Always do at least one important job a day.

Planning

All the important tasks that do not have to be done immediately should be incorporated in your planning and done later. There are lots of accessories to help you draw up a good planning on paper, on the computer, or on your smartphone. Programmes like Outlook have a standard list of tasks function that you can link to the diary.

The basis is always a general list of tasks. This list includes a description of the tasks, an indication of their importance, and the deadline. Each day you select your tasks from the general list of tasks for the coming day. Finished? It's a great feeling to remove or to delete them with a sense of satisfaction.

Tidying up

Archiving and throwing away are essential for your time management. Save documents and mails that you will need later. Any system (folders, boxes...) is good as long as you know how it works. A folder has an index at the front, a box is clearly labelled.

It is particularly important to tidy up mails. An inbox ought to be empty, it's as simple as that. A lot of time is wasted in looking at mails time and time again. Open a mail and decide immediately what you want to do with it: discard it (excellent!), forward it to be dealt with by someone else, answer it immediately, or put it in the archive. If there is a mail that you cannot deal with immediately, drag it into a mail folder and include dealing with it in your list of tasks for a later date with a reference to the right folder.

Make sure not to keep everything. The more you can throw away the better. In a few cases you may regret it later, but usually the damage is repairable and is nothing by comparison with the pleasure you can have if everything is under control.

Conclusion

The essence of time management is that you are motivated to work in a different way. Don't change everything at once, but fix priorities. Start at the basis and make sure you have good planning and archive systems. Ensure that you gain control of your work. Don't work harder, but more intelligently.

More information

- Doing business and skills on Beroepkunstenaar.nl