

Value of time: A deep analysis

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Abstract

Time is Free but Time is Priceless. We cannot own it but we can use it. We cannot keep it but we can spend it. Once we've lost it we can never get it back. 'Our Time is Our Life' and much like 'ice' its constantly melting away, so it's our primary duty to know the 'value of time' and do not let it to go to waste. The more we value time the more value it brings to our lives. Procrastination, wavering and irresolute time structure are the enemies of Time management, People procrastinate mostly because they hate what they are doing and would rather do something else. The present research paper throws light on the importance of Time and its basic lessons from philosophy, science and literature.

Keywords: time management, overcoming procrastination, goal setting, decision making, motivation, discipline

Introduction

Like many entrepreneurs, creative's and doers, we struggle with time management. There is always so much to do and our biggest hurdle has been creating a system around what we do and delegating it to the proper resources, so that we can fully maximize our time. There are many applications today such as 'Rescue Time', 'Time Tracker', 'Time logger', 'To-do-list' etc., these apps and software's shows us how exactly we spend time on certain specified tasks. And for us being digital nomads, it's quite daunting to come to terms with the way we use our time in such an 'in-our-face' way. On a deeper level, many of us had spent almost fifteen years in the education system where motivation is essentially coming from an external source such as teachers, friends or deadlines. We aren't taught how to shape our life and control our time, as we solely depend on the instructions or guidelines given to us. So when we graduate and venture on our own for a bit after having gone through the system, we end up lost. All of a sudden, after graduating, we had "ample of time" but we had no idea how to use it, mold it or shape it for a fruitful result. And if you are reading this, you've probably been in the same boat. People often search for motivation. We forget that we are placed with hidden motivators inside us, this internal motivator is easy to lose momentum and need constant reinforcement. When we discover our purpose of Life and when we set goals to achieve them with a 'steadfast attitude', time starts working for us instead of against us. When what you do engages you, the question of time management stops being a question of management and rather a question of balance. But on a more philosophical level, the question of time is an interesting one.

What is time? Why does it exist?

The question of how we measure time can be answered by asking the question: how do we measure our life? In the world we live in, we normally organize our time according to the question of capital. Your world will start to change when you measure your time against something other than money such as your legacy, your own self-mastery, helping others etc.

According to *Imam Ghazali* Islamic philosopher. A successful life solely depends on successful use of time. i.e. "What we sow, so as we reap" His core message is accountability. One should be sure that every moment should be accounted for. His suggestion to every individual for successful time management is 'Create a routine'. That's how you get productivity.

For contemporary productivity or personal development research, these finding are in line with the main thoughts of the day. Many peak performance gurus will talk about creating a morning routine, the importance of meditation, starting your day early, and accounting for your time at the end of each day as key components of having a successful life. These ideas were espoused in Islamic thought centuries ago but it has taken Muslims quite some time to start realizing this and contributing to the field of personal development.

Here are some time management tips from Imam Ghazali

1. Time should not be without structure.
2. Order your day and night.
3. Organize routine of worship (5 daily prayers) and assign activity to each period.
4. Start your day at dawn and as soon as you wake and remember God(or meditate)
5. Until sunrise, you should occupy your time with 4 types of remembrance: (a) Supplication (b) Recitation (c) Glorification (d) Reflection—Plan you day with the long-term
6. By day, use your time to do the following: (a) seeking useful knowledge. Best use of time and highest form of worship. Useful knowledge helps increase God-consciousness which brings peace to the broken hearts (b) if you are unable to, remembrance and worship. Do good acts. Bring happiness to other people and make it easier for righteous to do good work like visiting sick, helping others etc. (c) Spending your time and earning a living. Beware of world greed because it ruins faith and inner spiritual contentment.
7. Before you go to bed, take an account for what you did during the day. Actions are according to the last of them.

Don't spend your time in entertainment but reviewing what you've learned during the day.

Note on the last point: Before you go to bed, don't use your phone. The blue screen of your phone or computer reduces the level of melatonin in your body, which is a chemical that helps us to sleep.

Overcoming Procrastination

Definition: Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task that needs to be accomplished. It is the practice of doing more pleasurable things in place of less pleasurable ones, or carrying out less urgent tasks instead of more urgent ones, thus putting off impending tasks to a later time. Sometimes, procrastination takes place until the "last minute" before a deadline. Procrastination can take hold on any aspect of life — putting off cleaning the stove, repairing a leaky roof, seeing a doctor or dentist, submitting a job report or academic assignment or broaching a stressful issue with a partner. Procrastination can lead to feelings of guilt, inadequacy, depression and self-doubt. Perfectionism is a prime cause for procrastination, because demanding perfection usually results in failure. Unrealistic expectations destroy self-esteem and lead to self-repudiation, self-contempt, and widespread unhappiness. To overcome procrastination, it is essential to recognize and accept the power of failure without condemning, to stop focusing on faults and flaws and to set goals that are easier to achieve.

To overcome procrastination:

- Be aware of habits and thoughts that lead to procrastinating.
- Seek help for self-defeating problems such as fear, anxiety, difficulty in concentrating, poor time management, indecisiveness, and perfectionism.
- Evaluate your own goals, strengths, weaknesses, and priorities.
- Set realistic goals, and develop a personal positive link between the tasks and the concrete, meaningful goals.
- Restructure activities of daily life.
- Modify your environment for that newly gained perspective. For example, eliminate or minimize noise or distraction; put effort into relevant matters; reduce day-dreaming.
- Discipline yourself to the priorities you set.
- Motivate yourself with enjoyable activities, socializing and constructive hobbies.
- Tackle issues in small blocks of time, instead of trying to solve whole problems at once and then be intimidated.
- To prevent relapse, reinforce your pre-set goals based on needs and allow yourself to be rewarded in a balanced way for accomplished tasks.
- To prevent procrastination we use a simple little tool named "Pomodoro" "Pomodoro". It was invented by Francesco Cirillo, in the early 1980's. Pomodoro is Italian for tomato. Under this technique we may use a little timer which often looks like a tomato. All we need to do is set a timer to 25 minutes, turn off all interruptions, and then focus. That's it! Most anybody can focus for 25 minutes. The only last important thing is to give yourself a little reward when we are done. A few minutes of web surfing, a cup of coffee, or a bite of chocolate, even just stretching or chatting mindlessly, allowing your brain to enjoyably change its focus for a while or whatever we feel like a reward for ourselves.

Making a plan to complete tasks in a rigid schedule format might not work for everyone. There is no hard-and-fast rule to

follow such a process if it turns out to be counter-productive. Instead of scheduling, it may be better to execute tasks in a flexible, unstructured schedule which has time slots for only necessary activities.

Piers Steel suggests that better time management is a key to overcoming procrastination, including being aware of and using one's "power hours" (being a "morning person" or "night owl"). A good approach is to creatively tap one's internal circadian rhythms that are best suited for the most challenging and productive work. Steel says that it is essential to have realistic goals, to tackle one problem at a time and to cherish the "small successes". Ann McGee-Cooper says that "if we learn to balance excellence in work with excellence in play, fun, and relaxation, our lives become happier, healthier, and a great deal more creative.

John Perry, through his "Structured Procrastination" from a lived experience, proposes a "cheat" method as a safer approach for tackling procrastination: using a pyramid scheme to reinforce the unpleasant tasks needed to be completed, in a quasi-prioritized order. In other words, postponing tasks with a mental note that one feels to do while engaged in a work that requires their current attentional focus.

Evaluating Time Management

Personal time management skills include

- Goal Setting
- Planning
- Prioritising
- Decision-making
- Delegating
- Scheduling

The first step in effective time management is analyzing how you currently spend your time and deciding how you want to change how you spend your time. Unless time is managed properly, nothing worthwhile can be accomplished. Time is a unique resource. It is indispensable, intangible, irreplaceable, irretrievable and therefore invaluable. It is equitably and uniformly distributed. A day of every one consists of 24 hours only, no more and no less. Every piece of work requires time.

There are two modes of time for every person

- (a) Either you have a very 'busy mind, effectively employing human resources, like working, thinking, remembering, reading, writing, watching, discussing, listening etc., in short, fully utilizing your senses. Here you are very busy and involved.
- (b) Or at the other extreme, you have an 'empty mind – for example, whilst waiting for a bus or train, waiting for a doctor or friend, when you do not get sleep or listening to a boring speech or attending meetings – activities in which you are not interested or mentally involved but perforce have to be physically present.

Time can be divided into three aspects for applying techniques of managing it:

- (a) **Biological:** Pertaining to bodily functions.
- (b) **Social:** Pertaining to self, family and society.
- (c) **Professional:** Pertaining to professional activities/time spent at work.

It is essential to maintain equilibrium between these three aspects. Any imbalance may prove to be detrimental to one's physical and mental health and can adversely affect the individual in the long run.

It is essential, therefore, to allocate one's time in balanced manner to the extent feasible to all these three aspects.

(a) Biological Time

Adopt the golden mean of moderation among:

- (i) Sleep
- (ii) Food
- (iii) Ablutions / Calls of nature
- (iv) Recreation
- (v) Physical Exercise

It is advantageous to establish regularity for all the above activities.

(b) Social Time

It is desirable to give time to yourself, your family and for society and the general guide lines are:

i) Self-development/self-time

At least one hour per day should be kept for oneself for thinking, introspection, reading and other hobbies.

ii) Family time

Strong family ties and a happy domestic life are the foundations of success in both personal and professional life. One must spend some time with one's family everyday and to co-ordinate activities of family members.

iii) Social time

In order to live in society, one has to attend various social events, like weddings, religious functions etc., where one is not the master of one's own time. Social obligations may entail a substantial portion of time.

(c) Professional Time

In this aspect, if one is working, one does not really have a choice as working hours are generally fixed. The aim here is to optimally utilise the available time for maximum output/productivity and self-satisfaction.

It is, therefore, essential to plan one's work and that of the subordinates in an efficient manner and also identify 'Time Wasters' and make efforts to eliminate/reduce them. Examples of Time Wasters are

- (i) In fructuous meetings
- (ii) Poor communication
- (iii) Unwanted visitors
- (iv) Disorganized work

The basic cause of time wastage at work can be classified as follows:

- (a) Over-staffing is common cause of wastage of time. Since most of the people do not have clearly defined work for the whole day, they often obstruct each other and create unnecessary problems.
- (b) Time is wasted on account of faulty organization of work. Work is not planned sufficiently in advance.
- (c) There is enormous wastage of time and effort due to various meetings often at various locations, which are not properly directed and drag on endlessly.
- (d) Time is often wasted because the relevant information is not readily available or the information available is inaccurate. Similarly collection, storage and distribution of unnecessary information is wasteful.

Though one has to evolve one's own technique of time management depending on the circumstances, the three cardinal principles are:

a) Span of Attention

There is a natural limit to how long one can concentrate on a particular activity or task. This is called span of attention.

b) Provisions of time in adequate chunks

If any important work is to be done, time must be made available in sufficiently large chunks. For example – If a job takes 20 minutes, it is of no use to allocate time at the rate of 5 minutes a day for 4 days. Time used in such dribbles is utterly wasted. For important work, one requires sufficient time at a stretch.

c) Concentration

Concentration is essential for effective utilisation of time. This as a matter of practice is necessary to avoid all interruptions. It is also necessary to focus attention on one task at a time.

Time Management is essentially a matter of self-discipline, though it is affected by external factors. One has to cultivate the art of enjoying essential both work and leisure. It is essential to maintain equilibrium between biological, social and professional time for improving one's effectiveness.

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