

MYTHS ABOUT TIME AND TASK – THE MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Prabhat Kumar Pani

Department of Commerce,
Jamshedpur Workers' College, Jamshedpur, India.

Abstract— Everyone would agree that time is a resource and a unique one. No one can save it for a rainy day, or accumulate it like raw materials or money. Machines can be turned off and people can be replaced, but time continues its march at a fixed rate. Time unlike other resources, can never be replaced. Time is the scarcest resources. Unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed. In industry, there are many situations in which return on time provides a more useful criterion for action than return on capital invested. This article is based on the myths about time and work which is valuable for managers.

Keywords: Procrastination, Interruptions, Fatigue, Red tape, Time log.

Introduction

There cannot be enough hours in the day to handle all the tasks, problems, administrative details, routine work and crisis that occur. Most of us probably wish for a time extension each day, just to catch up on the other facets of life we are missing.

Since no one has any more time than anyone else, using it well is of utmost importance. Although, we all have different personalities, talents, and skills, there is one thing each of us have in exactly the same amount, is time. When we notice that a person seems to accomplish more in a day than three average people, we begin to realize that the problem does not lie with the actual number of hours we have available. Rather, the problem lies in how well we utilize the time we have.

Time management is the act or process of planning and exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency or productivity. Time management may be aided by a range of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing specific tasks, projects and goals complying with a due date. This set encompasses a wide scope of activities, and these include planning, allocating, setting goals, delegation, analysis of time spent, monitoring, organizing, scheduling, and prioritizing. Initially, time management referred to just business or work activities, but eventually the term broadened to include personal activities as well. A time management system is a designed combination of processes, tools, techniques, and methods. Usually time management is a necessity in any project development as it determines the project completion time and scope.

Materials and Methods

The main focus of this article is to ascertain the purpose of time management keeping in view of the various managerial situations. While preparing this article data were collected through 'primary' as well as through 'secondary' sources. Primary data were collected with the help of observation schedule. With a view to obtain the necessary data and knowledge, field visits were undertaken regularly. In order to equip with practical aspects, personal interview and discussions was held with the managers. The secondary data was collected from related books and journal. Some materials have also been drawn from the available website.

Review of Literature

Time management is about managing your time in an effective way. Claessens, Van Earde, Rutte and Roe (2007) describe time management as a set of behaviours exhibited while executing goal directed activities, such as work or academic duties, which are aimed at using time effectively.

There is popular belief that poor allocation of time increases stress and subsequently impairs performance (Macon, 1994). Time management research indicates that ineffective and poor time management can not only affect productivity in the work place (Duffin, 2009), but also have detrimental consequences on an individual's private life (Lefebvre, 2009). Time management is in fact thought to be very effective as a stress-coping strategy (Nonis, Hudson, Logan & Ford, 1998).

Parts of time management are art, and parts are science. Time management is multi- dimensional concept that can be dissected into many skills and behaviours (Macon, Shahani, Dipboye & Phillips, 1990).

Purpose of Time Management

The purpose of time management in the light of managers in a task trap or not may be summarised as below.

- ❖ To short treating time as a resource.
- ❖ To identify major time wasters and learn how to plug personal time leaks.
- ❖ To discover some myths about time and work.
- ❖ To solve time problems by building more efficient habits, using a time log, and keeping in touch with our personal concepts of time.

Time as a Resource

Everyone would agree that time is a resource and a unique one. No one can save it for a rainy day, or accumulate it like raw materials or money. Machines can be turned off and people can be replaced, but time continues its march at a fixed rate. Time unlike other resources, can never be replaced. Time is the scarcest resources. Unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed. In industry, there are many situations in which return on time provides a more useful criterion for action than return on capital invested.

“Scientific Management” began when persons like Frederick W. Taylor and Frank B. Gilbreth helped workers with time management. Time management has often been ignored as a skill to be developed in management training. Once we understand this principle, we are on our way to solving a wide variety of problems.

Major Time Wasters

How do you discover your major time wasters? Draw up your own list of major time wasters. When you have listed all, rank them in order of priority. Your own time wasters may include: handling crisis rather than problems, disorganisation, uncertain responsibilities, failure to motivate your employees, lack of coordination, waiting for decision to be handed down, failure to apply standards, lack of control or evaluation procedures, too much control, too much communication, and focusing on problems rather than on opportunities for improvement.

Which of the major time wasters are caused by us? Which are caused by other people or outside events? Of the last group, which time wasters could you avoid or control better? When we have answered these questions carefully, we would find that you are responsible for both our major time wasters and finding solutions to the problems? Examples of time wasters of four senior managers are:

Manager - I: Unclear objectives, poor information, Postponed decisions, Procrastination, lack of information, Lack of feedback, Routine work, too much reading, Interruptions, Telephone, No time planning, Meetings, Beautiful secretary, Lack of competent personnel, Lack of delegation, Lack of self-discipline, Visitors, Training new staff, Lack of Priorities, Management by crisis.

Manager - II: Unscheduled meetings, Lack of Priorities, Failure to delegate Interruptions, Non-availability of people, Junk mail, Lack of planning, Outside engagements, Poor filing system, Fatigue, Procrastination, Telephone, Lack of procedure for routine matters.

Manager - III: Trash mail, Socializing, Unnecessary meetings, Lack of concentration, Lack of managerial tools, Peer demand on time, Incompetent subordinates, Tea breaks, Crisis management, Communications, Procrastination, Lack of clerical Staff, Poor physical fitness, Red tape, Lack of priorities.

Manager- IV: Attempting too much at once, Lack of delegation, Talking too much, Inconsistent actions, No priorities, Span of control, Cannot say no, Lack of planning, Snap decisions, Procrastination, Low morale, Mistakes, Poor clerical support, Responsibility without authority.

Myths about Time and Work

As a manager, we may work long hours. We may recognise that many of our jobs could be done or handled by an assistant. Do we ever take time to think and plan? Being a manager, we have closest contact with many aspects of the company, which could be improved, remodeled, redesigned or restructured to operate more efficiently and effectively. Therefore, time spent in creative thinking can result in saving valuable hours later on.

If managers talk about how hard they work, how they have not taken a vacation in last few years, and how seldom they spent their weekends with their family, it is almost certain that such persons will not succeed in the industry. Over dedication, compulsive task completion and pushing oneself to the limit are error not confined to some managers only. These are common to housewives, students, employees and other categories. This variety of manager (Working smart) rarely keeps his desk in order, carries files to house, never takes a vacation, constantly running here and there, rarely delegates tasks to subordinates and can rarely meet a deadline. If he can see himself in this profile, perhaps he should reconsider the number of hours he has in a day, determine which tasks must be done and how he can best plan by time.

What are some of the dangers in working long hours? Personal efficiency usually drops rapidly after eight hours of work. Long hours also encourage managers to put off doing what should be done in normal working hours. They feel “I can always do that tonight”. From this it can be observed that how eight hours of work can stretch into twelve hours. The subordinates may learn from boss's time-wasting method by saying "I can do that job tomorrow".

Working long hours can also have serious effects on the manager's family life. If he is willing to neglect family for jobs, he must also be willing to pay the price.

“The harder I work, the more I get done” is another popular myth about time and work. Some people think and believe that their results are directly proportionate to the sweat they drop. In fact, there is no direct relationship between hard work and positive results.

Solve Your Time Problems

Habits of man are difficult to change. Our use of time is no different. Therefore, before one begins to use time more effectively, one must know how it is being used now. Keeping a time log or inventory is a useful device for cataloging your activities and discovering what is wasting time. When you begin to log your time, you may have some surprises.

- Use Time Log: Time log can be a simple but valuable tool. Following steps may be helpful in using time log.

- List time categories - Identify general categories of time consuming activities. For example, job assignment, paperwork, problem solving, correspondence, telephoning, inspection, etc. and the inevitable wasted time. Now decide what percentage of the day you wish to devote to each of these activities.
- Set target for each day - before leaving work in the afternoon, list the targets you wish to achieve the following day and arrange them in order of priority. Write your targets down, making sure they are in order of importance.
- Keep a record of your time - Spend fifteen minutes a day to record your time, preferably at the end of day's work.
- Keep records for at least a week and summarise-This record will give a more accurate indication of time usage. For example, whether there exists a gap between the estimated times per activity vis-à-vis actual time spent per activity. If the actual time is more or less, then one can correct time estimates per activity or a particular activity for the next week.
- Evaluate your time - Where are you most effective in use of time? Where are you least effective? Decide which areas need improvement in time management and draw up a strategy for using time in these areas more effectively. Put your strategy into operation from today.

After monitoring your time for a number of weeks, you might find that much of your time was spent in routine work which could be delegated to your subordinates.

Conclusion

Therefore, in order to rescue you from the task trap, identify the time wasters, recognize the possible causes and develop solutions. While time wasters are universal, causes and solutions are personal and situation specific. Causes must be identified within one's situation, and solutions must spring from his or her own abilities and task boundaries. Since, many of our time wasters are the result of bad habits, do not wait until tomorrow or next week to begin restructuring time. If you have identified your major time leaks and have decided to plug them, begin to do so right now.

References

1. Basu C.R., *Business Organization and Management*, Tata McGraw Hill, New Delhi, 2000.
2. Prasad L.M., *Strategic Management*, Sultan Chand and Sons, New Delhi, 2008.
3. Allen David, *Getting things done: The art of Stress Free Productivity*, Viking, New York, ISBN 978-0-670-88906-8, 2001.
4. Fiore Neil A, *The New Habit: A Strategic Program for Overcoming Procrastination and Enjoying Guilt- Free Play*, Penguin Group, New York, ISBN 978-1-58542-552-5, 2006.
5. Secunda Al, *The 15 Second Principle: Short, Simple Steps to Achieving Long Term Goals*, Berkley Books, New York, ISBN 0-425-16505-1, 1999.
6. Le Blanc Raymond, *Achieving Objectives made Easy: Practical Goal Setting Tools & Proven Time Management Techniques*, ISBN 90-79397-03-02, 2008.
7. Davidson Jeff, *Managing Your Time*, Achieve Max, Inc., 2008.
8. Mackenzie Alec, *The Time Trap: The Classic Book on Time Management*, Achieve Max, Inc., 2007.

IJRTI