

Prioritization and Time Management

Lesson Objective: This lesson seeks to develop the knowledge and skills of leaders related to setting priorities and managing time so that they can be effective.

Desired Learning Outcomes (DLO):

1. Understand how to prioritize tasks.
2. Employ practical time management skills.
3. Explore how we spend our time.
4. Identify opportunities to spend more time on self-care and others.

Reading: Student Guide and linked articles and videos

Scheduled Lesson Time: 60 minutes

Introduction

Prioritizing and time management are linked. When you prioritize, you are using good time management. There will always be more work that needs done than there is time to do it. Prioritization allows us to accomplish the most important tasks first. If you develop a habit of time management, it can reduce your stress and improve your productivity. As you move up in the organization and you take on more responsibility, the ability to prioritize and manage time efficiently are important skills.

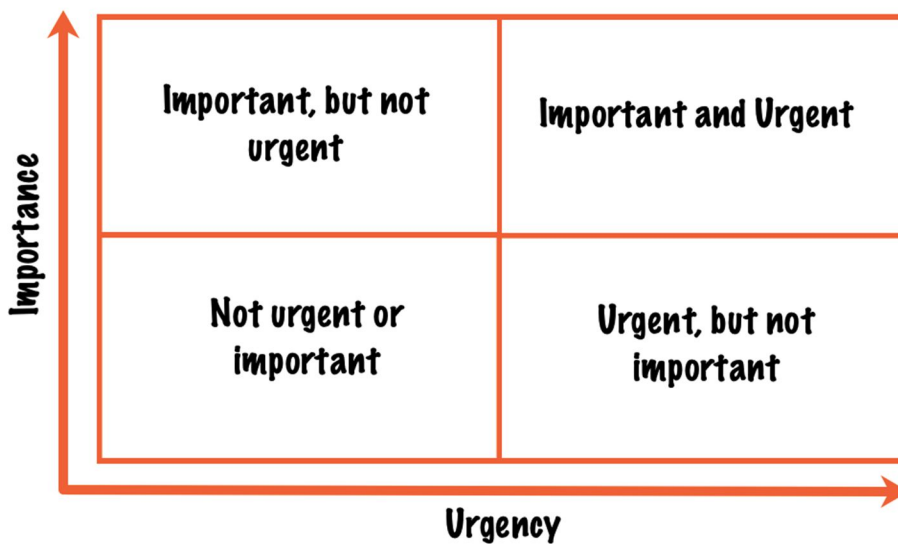
1. Understand how to prioritize tasks.

As stated in the introduction, there is never enough time to do all the things you need or want to accomplish. Prioritization helps you evaluate the tasks on your to do list and rank them by importance. This is a way to make an informed decision about where to spend your time. Sometimes when we are busy, it seems like our email or our to do list manages us. Everything on the list seems urgent. A prioritization technique will allow you to take control of your inbox and your to do list. There are many ways to prioritize tasks. We will cover some of them in this student guide.

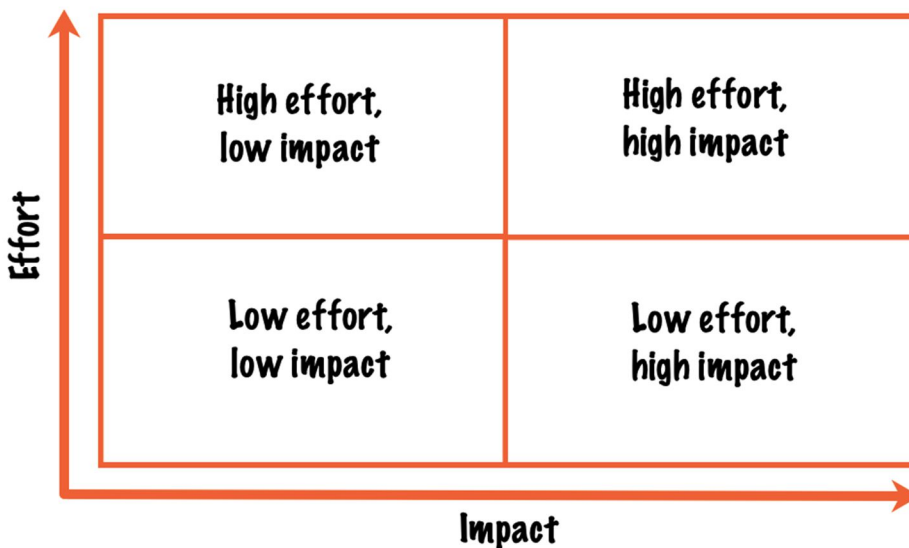
Priority Matrix:

This is a four-box matrix. It is sometimes called an Eisenhower Matrix. You plot importance on the y-axis and urgency on the x-axis. Your highest priority tasks are those that are urgent and important. The important tasks that are not urgent are the next priority. Urgent but not important tasks may be things you can delegate to competent followers. Tasks that are neither urgent nor important are things that we may want to cross off the list entirely. Why spend time on them? A key to this method is that urgent issues are not always important. Often, we react to the urgent things in our life and they consume us. There are many of them that tug at our time every day. Urgency tends to translate into action even when those activities are less important. Don't let tasks manage you. Work on the most important things first.

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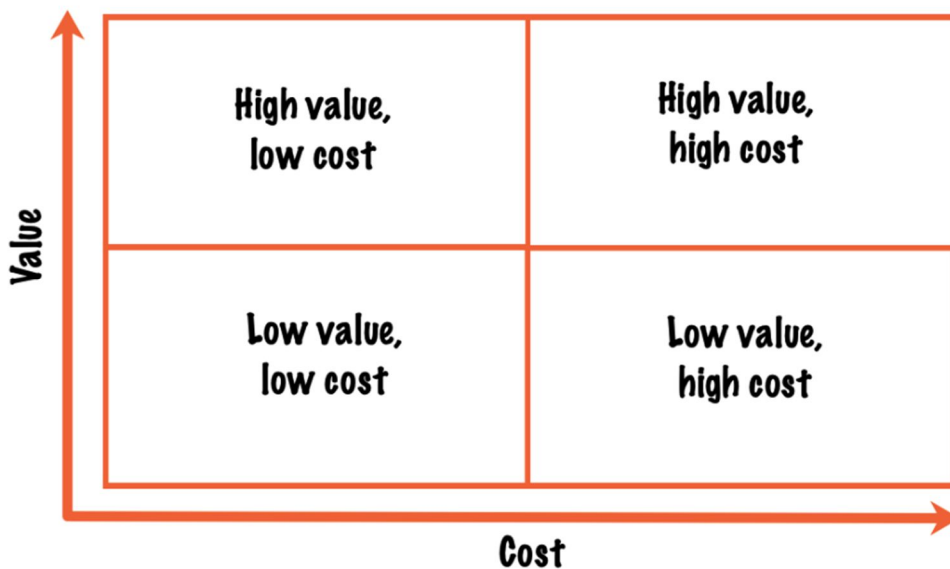
A second way to look at the priority matrix is by effort and impact.



In this model, you focus on the tasks that are low effort and high impact then high effort and high impact. The low effort and low impact items may be things you can do quickly that add up. The lowest priority are those that take high effort and have a low impact.

Another way of looking at this is the Value-Cost Matrix.

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The top two quadrants are the priorities in this model. You can get a quick win by taking care of a high value, low cost item. You should avoid items that are high cost and low value. The return on the investment of time is not worth the effort it takes to complete these items.

MoSCoW Method

The MoSCoW Method is another prioritization technique. If you do not have a team to support your efforts, this method may work well. For this technique the user divides the items on his or her list into four categories:

- M-Must Do. These are things that must be completed.
- S-Should Do. These are things we should do but they have a lower priority than items with an M.
- C-Could Do. We might also call these items nice to do. If you do them, it might be nice but if you do not it is probably not going to be the end of the world.
- W-Won't Do. These are tasks that are not worth completing.

For this technique, you can use Excel to make your list. In the column next to each item, give it a priority of M, S, C, or W. Then sort by that column. Your list is now prioritized! An instructional designer might use this method with a Kanban app. This method works best when you build a habit of putting everything on your list.

ABCDE:

A third method is ABCDE. This method works well for CAP because it includes items you can delegate to others.

- A tasks are those you must do.
- B tasks are those you should do.
- C tasks are those that would be nice-to-do.

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- D tasks are things you should delegate or automate.
- E tasks are those you should eliminate.

You go through your list and label the tasks. Then sort the tasks by the label. Cross off the E tasks.

Agile:

In the Agile method, we order tasks. This is sometimes called scrum prioritization. Order is assigned by priority and sequence. This tool is helpful when order of events or tasks matters. We use three criteria to evaluate tasks in this method. How important is it? How important is it compared to other tasks? Is there another task dependent on this one? Every task on your list is assigned a unique number and they are completed in order.

Ivy Lee:

This method is named for a consultant who helped Charles Schwab improve productivity at the steel company. Lee asked for no compensation until after three months. He told Schwab to pay him based on the results he achieved. After three months, Schwab paid Lee \$25,000. What method did Lee use?

At the end of each day, Lee chose six items to work on the next day. The six items were prioritized. Lee worked on the top priority task until it was complete and then proceeded to the next time on the list.

Every prioritization technique works to help you identify tasks that need your attention first and what can wait. Find the technique that works best for you and use it to manage your work, so your work does not manage you!

2. Employ practical time management skills.

Sometimes we need to learn to prioritize our work and other times we need to manage our time wisely. A variety of things can impact time management and productivity. If you feel stressed and never get to the bottom of your workload, you risk burnout. That's not good for you or for CAP. Balance in all things helps the member and the organization prosper. Time management skills take time to develop and what works for one person may not work for another. Explore the world of time management. Determine where you can do a better job managing your time. Make a plan to improve. Here are ten ways to increase productivity:

- Delegate: Yes, that's right! Delegating tasks spreads the workload.
- Prioritization: Use your time where it is needed most.
- Schedule Tasks: Keep a planner or notebook to list and prioritize tasks.
- Set up deadlines. Identify when a task needs to be done and fit it into your schedule. You can learn more about setting deadlines at <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/featured/22-tips-for-effective-deadlines.html>
- Don't procrastinate. Procrastination wastes time and energy. None of us have enough of either. This guide can tell you more about procrastination: <https://www.lifehack.org/669901/how-to-stop-procrastinating>
- Avoid stress. Stress impacts us negatively. This article shares 5 ways to reduce stress. <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/5-ways-turn-stress-into-productivity.html>

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- Start Early. While some of us may think we are night owls, starting the day early is a habit of successful people. https://www.lifehack.org/810855/how-to-get-motivated?itm_source=www.lifehack.org&itm_medium=seo-article&itm_campaign=cold-to-warm&itm_content=text-link&itm_term=101-article
- Don't multi-task. Most people cannot effectively multi-task. It's a myth. Multi-tasking actually hinders your productivity. <https://www.lifehack.org/819317/multitasking-management>
- Take breaks. We all need a break. Time can get away from us when we are focused on getting a project done or behind on our to do list. Don't let it wear you out. Take a short break of 10-15 minutes to restore your energy. Move around. Hydrate. Do some stretches.
- Say no. One of the hardest things we have to do is say no. Many people want to please and help others. It is not always possible. It is better to say no and let a team find someone to do the work than it is to take a spot on the team and fail to carry your part of the load. <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/the-gentle-art-of-saying-no.html> . One way to think about this is that saying yes to something today means saying no to something tomorrow that may compete with it for your time.

Laura Vanderkam has a good Ted Talk on "How to Gain Control of Your Free Time." You can watch it at <http://bit.ly/2INoZeE> . Vanderkam gives us several strategies to look at how we use our time and prioritize including the holiday letter to identify top priorities, a three category list of priorities, a time diary, and maximizing time by putting down our phone. Do any of her strategies work for you? Why or why not? Let's look at how you spend your time.

3. Recognize warning signs that you are not managing your time effectively.

How do you know if you are not spending your time effectively? Are you a good time manager? Try one of these quizzes to see:

- https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_88.htm
- <http://www.workingresources.com/timeselfmanagementsurvey/time-self-management-quiz.html>

Did the results surprise you? Why or why not?

We mentioned burnout earlier. There are other signs. Do you often think you could have done better on a task if you would have had more time? Do you miss deadlines? Do you ask for extra time to get work done? Do you pull all-nighters or rush to get things done? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you likely could improve your time management skills. You can work hard and get a lot done and still not reach your goals. We have to be sure that the tasks we are doing will help us reach our goals. Being busy is not the same as being productive!

Several things can impact our ability to use time wisely. A few of them include:

- Procrastination
- Interruptions
- Not setting limits
- Distractions

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- Failure to prioritize
- Failure to delegate

What can we do about these issues?

- Use a planner/calendar
- Learn to say no
- Finish what we start
- Prioritize
- Eliminate time wasters
- Do it right the first time
- Prune or unclutter
- Reward yourself
- Do hard tasks first to get them out of the way
- Break things into bite sized pieces
- Plan to work when your energy level is high
- Change your work environment
- Hold yourself accountable to someone else (wingman!)
- Try to make it fun

Every individual is different and the solution to time management is a personal one that involves priorities and goals. In the end, the individual must decide what is important and how to achieve it. Dedication to eliminating the factors that impact our ability to use time wisely is a positive step.

4. Explore how we spend our time and identify opportunities to spend more time on self-care.

Have you ever served on staff at an event or been to an event where staff almost wore their lack of sleep as a badge of honor? Some would go several days before giving in to a more normal sleep routine or becoming ill or ineffective. An all-night work session might be common at the end to get the graduation ready or something of that nature. Many leaders say, “sleep is optional.” In fact, sleep is not optional. Studies show that when we do not sleep, we are less effective leaders. Sleep is just one thing our bodies need to work efficiently.

We also need exercise and nutritious food. If you are always grabbing a fast bite of food from a convenience source, you may not be making healthy choices. Those choices (and your priorities) can come back to haunt you when you do not feel well. Your body will begin to let you know if you are not getting enough exercise. Weight gain as well as aches and pains can result.

Each week is 167 hours of time. Think about the most effective person you know and the least effective person you know. They have the same amount of time to spend on tasks. What is the difference? It is how they manage their time and prioritize. The effective people tend to avoid distractions and put their effort into priorities. How do you spend your week? Keep a log of how much time you spend on each task for a week. Look at the balance in your life. What needs to change to have better balance and take better care of yourself?

Lesson Summary and Closure

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Time management and prioritization skills can help you in CAP and in life. Learning to manage our workload in a healthy way is a valuable skill. Overcoming barriers to productivity can be done with a little analysis and problem solving!

NOTE: There are several exercises that accompany this lesson. Complete them and bring the results to class.

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EXERCISES: Keep a log of how much time you spend on various tasks in a week. Analyze your time.

Personal Time Log

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
12 am							
1 am							
2 am							
3 am							
4 am							
6 am							
7 am							
8 am							
9 am							
10 am							
11 am							
12 noon							
1 pm							
2 pm							
3 pm							
4 pm							
5 pm							
6 pm							
7 pm							
8 pm							
9 pm							
10 pm							
11 pm							

How many hours did you spend on . . .

- Eating
- Sleeping
- Working
- Doing CAP
- Spending time with family or friends
- Chores
- Exercise
- Necessities (showers, etc.)
- Social Media/Internet
- Other _____
- Other _____

Are there things you want to do you can't find time for? What? What can you change to free up time?

Time Management Barriers and Solutions

In the space provided, list common time management barriers that impact you and suggest solutions for overcoming those barriers.

Time Management Barrier	Solution

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Make a list of 10-15 things you need to get done. Bring the list to class.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.