
TTI DNA[®]

**Time and Priority
Management**

*A session from
Rx Online*

Time and Priority Management

Prioritizing and completing tasks in order to deliver desired outcomes within allotted time frames.

Why is this skill important?

If you feel energized and enthusiastic about your job, and yet you still have plenty of time and energy to manage and enjoy your personal life, chances are you are good at Time and Priority Management. On the other hand, if you feel overwhelmed by work, incapable of meeting deadlines, and/or unable to meet personal and professional commitments satisfactorily, you may need to practice your Time and Priority Management skills.

People who are good at Time and Priority Management don't just react to events around them, but they plan to meet their own needs and schedule their participation in the events that happen. This does not mean that you must itemize and "calendarize" every thought and action because that would be impossible! However, you must feel that you are usually in control of your behaviors and responses to events around you.

How many times each week do you find yourself saying things like, "I could have finished that project, but he didn't give me the information in time," or "Nobody at work is organized, and everything falls between the cracks?" If you look at those statements, you will notice that they place blame on someone or something other than you. While the statements may be accurate, you often have more power than you think to resolve problems like those on your own or by using alternate channels. When someone doesn't give you the information in time, you can have another solution or source for data; and when you feel that things fall between the cracks, you can do your best to ensure that they don't.

People who are great at Time and Priority Management recognize that they have a choice in everything they do. No matter what you do, you always have the ability to decide what to do with the situations you face. No matter how a supervisor or co-worker reacts in a situation, you have control over how you react to the situation. Individuals with integrity refrain from making excuses or blaming other people. Instead, they conduct their business in the best possible way they know and try to learn from mistakes when they make them.

If you are in a position of responsibility or are seeking to be promoted to one, it is essential that you are perceived as taking initiative. While it is normal to feel uncomfortable when you have a lack of direction from managers, don't let that stop you from making positive strides toward achieving personal and corporate goals. Ambiguous direction can provide an opportunity for you to apply your most creative solution to the problem at hand.

Managing your time and priorities is a critical step in managing your daily schedule and reducing stress. If you think clearly about what your unique role in a complex project is and determine realistically in what areas you need assistance from external resources, you will become a much better manager of your own time, and you will be more effective at sharing your expectations with others.

What skills are associated with Time and Priority Management?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Time and Priority Management (Time and Priorities):

- Effectively manages emotions and impulses.
- Effectively manages time and priorities to meet deadlines.
- Presents themselves assertively.
- Demonstrates an ability to maintain composure in the midst of crisis.
- Strives for continuous improvement.
- Balances personal and professional life.
- Takes initiative and acts without waiting for direction.
- Accepts responsibility for actions and results.

How do you develop your own skills in Time and Priority Management?

- Prioritize your task list, grouping tasks by importance or due dates. Then, do the most critical tasks first each day.
- Don't procrastinate. Tasks usually become harder or more stressful the longer you wait to do them.
- Schedule time in your day to respond to e-mails, voice messages, etc. Only complete correspondence during the hours you have chosen to handle these tasks. This will help you from becoming overwhelmed by responding to less important tasks while you try to accomplish major goals.
- Prioritize items you receive in your inbox. After you have prioritized them, work steadily to make progress. If you pick up a piece of paper, don't put it down unless you have done something about it: read it, file it, throw it away or take action on it.
- Establish set office hours when your door is open to visitors. Try to monitor the number of interruptions you have throughout the day.
- Delegate responsibility and authority to others to manage reasonable tasks.
- Communicate clearly in departmental staff meetings so you won't be interrupted later to clarify your comments or assignments given.
- Ask for better or clearer direction from relevant individuals if you get stuck on a confusing project.
- If better direction is not available, learn to take charge. Determine what you think needs to be done and start doing it.
- Try to take charge of ambiguous situations by defining the tasks you see. Ask others for confirmation that you understand the relevant issues.
- Define clear expectations and deadlines for any project you take charge of.
- Keep promises you make.
- Get, or stay, physically fit. Exercise is a great stress reliever, and a fit and relaxed body is more ready to handle the rush of stress hormones that start when you get into challenging situations.
- Stand up for what you believe is right.
- Set a good example for others by modeling professional and compassionate behaviors.
- Represent your organization honestly and positively.
- If unexpected crisis events occur, keep calm and gather facts to evaluate the situation carefully before reacting too quickly.

Time and Priority Management

Activities

Activity 1: Planning

Invest in a planning tool. There are many excellent planning calendars and software tools that can help you schedule your days, weeks and months better. Use the planning tool effectively by recording not only all important meetings or events, but by writing a prioritized task list for each day.

Look at your position/job description and write down the major tasks or task groups you find there. For a week, keep a careful record of how you fill your time at work by writing down the tasks you perform and keeping a log of how much time you spend on each. At the end of the week, compare the log to your job description.

If your time is spent on a lot of tasks unrelated to goals you found in your position description, look for ways to bring them back into alignment by completing the following table each morning:

Major Job Responsibility	Today's Related Tasks
1.	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
2.	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
3.	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
4.	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

5.	1. _____
	2. _____
	3. _____
	4. _____

Activity 2: Looking Ahead

Look at your calendar every few days to evaluate upcoming projects. For each upcoming project you are involved in, make a firm, realistic commitment to complete your tasks by a certain deadline. Don't forget to prioritize! Share your commitment to that deadline with your manager, employees and/or customers, as appropriate. Use the space below to get started.

Project Title: _____

Task 1: _____ **Deadline:** _____

Task 2: _____ **Deadline:** _____

Task 3: _____ **Deadline:** _____

Task 4: _____ **Deadline:** _____

Don't let a day pass without spending at least 30 minutes working to accomplish each of the important tasks you have committed to. Break large tasks into smaller ones and vow to accomplish each of the smaller tasks one at a time.

Activity 3: Promises

For the next week, carry a notepad or planner with you at all times. Keep track of the promises you make to people by writing them down in one place. At the end of the week, look at your complete list as a whole. Try to answer the following questions:

1. Am I making realistic promises? If not, try to make more effective promises by being more realistic or refrain from making a specific deliberate promise.
2. When did I promise to have each task done?
3. Have I done anything to follow through on what I promised?
4. What can I do to complete the promised activity?

Activity 4: Managing Stress

Monitor your use of phrases like “I should have.” and “I ought to have.” For one week, keep track of those statements as you make them by writing them down in your planner or notepad. At the end of the week, look at statements you have compiled. See if you can convert those statements into less judgmental assessments of your performance. Think about what you did do well and allow yourself to be less than perfect.