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TOPIC:

Manage your time and priorities - Trainee booklet

ESSA



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Disclaimer

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About ESSA

The European Software Skills Alliance (ESSA) is a four-year transnational project funded under the EU's Erasmus+ programme. It ensures the skills needs of the rapidly evolving Software sector can be met — today and tomorrow.

ESSA provides current and future software professionals, learning providers and organisations with software needs with the educational and training instruments they need to meet the demand for software skills in Europe.

ESSA will develop a European Software Skills Strategy and learning programmes for Europe. It will address skill mismatches and shortages by analysing the sector in depth and delivering future-proof curricula and mobility solutions; tailored to the European software sector's reality and needs.

Project partners

The ESSA consortium is led by DIGITALEUROPE. It is composed of academic and non-academic partners from the education, training, and software sectors.

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Introduction

Welcome to this module. In this module, you will learn how you can effectively manage your time. This is the trainee booklet. There is also a separate exercises booklet. The word **EXERCISE** in this booklet refers to the accompanying exercise in the exercises booklet..

Objective

At the end of this module, you will be able to:

1. Discover your relationship with time
2. Approach the principles of time management and priority management
3. Apply the principles to your day-to-day business
4. Identify your strengths and areas of effort



Rules and organisation of the group

- Respect the start and end time of the training
- Respect of the defined schedules for the morning, lunch and afternoon breaks
- Should we address each other informally
- For Visio training; Turn on the camera, mute the microphone and trigger the appropriate emoticon when you want to speak
- Don't cut off when someone is speaking
- Remain benevolent and non-judgmental.
- Apply the principle of confidentiality
- Right to experiment and make mistakes
- Say "stop" to an exercise you don't want to do
- Notify in case of absence
- Wait for breaks to make calls

DISCOVER

THE CONCEPT OF TIME

Larousse definition:

A fundamental notion conceived as an infinite medium in which events follow one another: Situating a story in time. An uninterrupted movement by which the present becomes the past, often considered as a force acting on the world, on beings: You'll forget over time.

WHAT IS TIME MANAGEMENT?

This practice involves managing one's work with the goal of devoting one's time to the tasks at hand. Effective work management will not only allow you to improve our productivity, but above all to better prioritize your activities throughout the day. This will give you more time to relax and take care of yourself.

THE BENEFITS OF TIME MANAGEMENT

Adopting good time management strategies can help you organize and prioritize your tasks, to:

1. **Feel like you have more time in the day:** By deliberately choosing to dedicate time to this or that activity, you will most likely be able to reduce the number of unnecessary tasks, reschedule those that are not due for today, and work faster. Of course, you won't have more time literally, but you will be able to do more in the same amount of time available.
2. **Establish boundaries between work and private life:** better time management doesn't mean chasing every ounce of productivity we can show at work. These strategies are intended to help us complete our important tasks and identify those that can be postponed until tomorrow. Distinguishing between work that needs to be done now and work that can be postponed will allow you to differentiate between your working hours and your rest time.
3. **Less stress:** Without effective time management, we often feel like we don't have enough time to work and waste it running around solving a thousand and one problems. The result? Unnecessary stress, or even burnout.
4. **Improve productivity:** There are many time management tips that can help us fight procrastination and therefore optimize our productivity. But that's not the only benefit, since by identifying your top priorities for the day, you'll also know exactly what to work on every day.
5. **Breaking bad habits:** Procrastination is a problem for everyone. Yet, as time goes on, we develop more and more bad habits that are detrimental to our value-added activities. Having time management strategies will help you spot these harmful habits and correct them.

STRATEGIES, ACTIONS, TIPS

EXERCISE 1 Self-diagnosis of your daily time management

SIX TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR BETTER PRODUCTIVITY

One of the best ways to develop your time management skills is to incorporate a proven strategy into your daily routine. These types of strategies help us set time limits, focus on one task at a time, and take back control of our day's planning.

1. "Time boxing" or management by blocks of time

Time boxing is a goal-oriented time management strategy that involves completing work within defined time frames. It's especially effective when you want to manage your to-do list proactively, but don't have a clear idea of how long each one will take.

With time block management, you can break down large tasks into smaller pieces, allowing you to process them in a reasonable amount of time. Each task corresponds to a block of time, which should not exceed three hours.

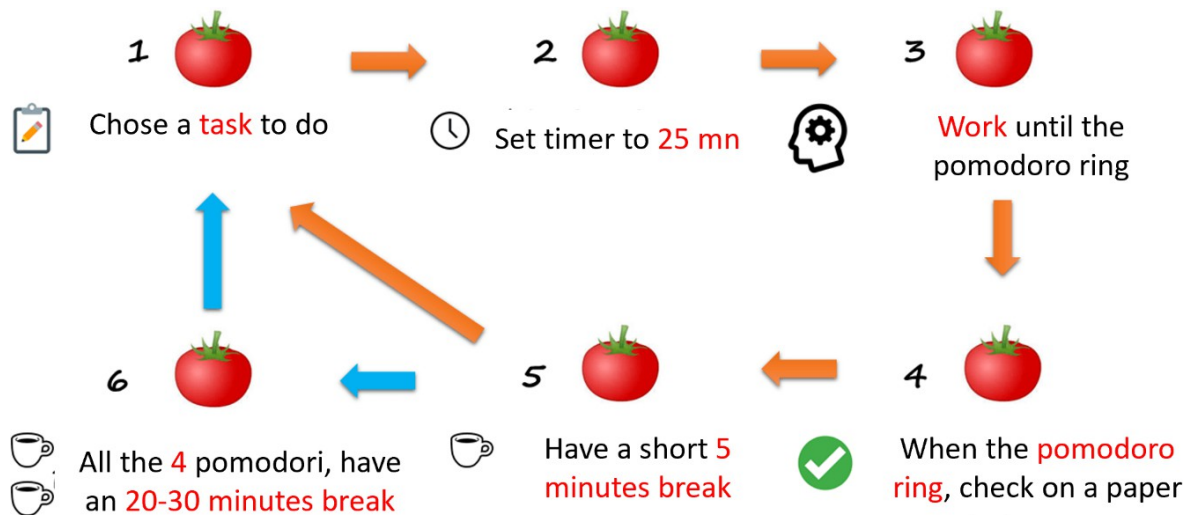
2. Time blocking

Time blocking is similar to timeboxing, except that instead of setting a certain amount of time for each individual task, you'll get into the habit of blocking off periods of your calendar to devote to related tasks. Managing your schedule in this way allows you to break down your workweek into several distinct time slots: work on different projects, communication with colleagues, break times, exercise sessions, etc.

Thanks to this strategy, you will be able to concentrate without interruption: ideal for working in the best conditions and dealing with the substantive work.

To create a time block, start by setting your daily or weekly priorities. All you have to do is group similar tasks into a single block of time that you can work on. Finally, set aside blocks of time to focus intensively on your calendar so that you stick to the schedule.

3. Pomodoro technique



The technique explained:

Step 1 – Choose a task

Make a list of the tasks that need to be completed during the day, in order of priority. After some practice of the **technique**, you will begin to estimate and think in Pomodori (plural of Pomodoro).

Steps 2 & 3 – Start Timer & Task

In this step, you choose the task you want to work on. Set the timer for **25 min** and start your Pomodoro. It may seem trivial, but a relatively short time will have several positive effects. First of all, it helps limit **procrastination** and will make it easier for you to get started with what you have to do. Also, a **Pomodoro** is **atomic** (indivisible), once started, it must be finished!

Stage 4 & 5 – Pomodoro Finished & Short Break

A **Pomodoro completed without interruption**, write down what you've accomplished and cross the task off your list. You now have a short **5-minute break**. It's actually not much, but it helps you keep **up the pace** until the end of the day.

Step 6 – Repeat the cycle

All 4 of you Pomodori, you complete a **full cycle**, congratulations! You can now take a longer break of **20-30 min**. This time is important, it allows you to assimilate **the information processed** during your previous Pomodori and to rest for the next ones. In general, **16 pomodori** are expected per full-time workday

4. The "Eat the Frog" Method

The frog: this is the most important task we have to do during the day, the one that puts us off, because it is difficult and/or long, but, if we don't do it right away, in the morning, we will postpone it! It is also **the one that will bring us the most satisfaction** at the end of the day.

If you start your day by doing the worst thing you don't feel like doing, you'll feel lighter the rest of the day!

The 'Eat the frog' time management strategy is inspired by Brian Tracy's book "21 Ways to Stop Procrastinating to Accomplish More in Less Time"

This is a very effective strategy if you organize your days by dividing your activities between regular daily tasks and priority tasks.

By applying this method, you will be sure to deal with the most important tasks each day. To implement this time management strategy, you need to centralize your activities on a single tool that allows you to track and prioritize them. Make sure you connect your day-to-day tasks to the company's goals, and you'll be able to better identify which tasks need to be completed as a priority from one day to the next. Once you've swallowed the day's toad, you can turn your attention to the other tasks.

Brief outline of the technique: :

1. **Set clear goals** in writing with a specific date to accomplish them.
2. List the **tasks that need to be completed** to achieve this goal and then plan those tasks. Then do a small action each day towards your goal.
3. Apply the **80/20 rule**: this is the Pareto law which says that if you choose the 20% of tasks you will do well, they will give you more than the other 80%. So you have to prioritize by doing your most important tasks first, the ones that will bring the most results.
4. Plan your most important tasks. **Spending time planning** is not a waste of time, on the contrary!
5. If the task seems too daunting, break it down into **smaller tasks**.
6. Prepare yourself before you get to work: tidy up your desk, take out only the equipment you need, turn off your laptop, turn off the Internet on your computer and...
7. Focus! **Say no to distractions!** Be focused on your task!
8. Start with your task of the day and **only that task** and finish it! If it's too long, and you haven't finished it, put what you still have to do in your diary, as soon as possible.

5. The Pareto-principle (or Pareto-law)

If you don't have much of an appetite for the idea of swallowing a frog every morning, why not try the Pareto strategy?

The Pareto Principle takes the opposite approach to that of the "Swallow the Frog" method; He encourages you to get rid of small tasks quickly to fill up on motivation at the beginning of the day.

Also known as the "**80-20 rule**" this principle is based on a fundamental rule: we spend 20% of our time doing 80% of the work.

In practical terms, being able to process these 80% of tasks quickly enough gives us more time during our working day to take care of the remaining 20% that will take up 80% of our time.

6.The "Getting Things Done" (GTD) method

Invented by David Allen in the early 2000s, the Getting things done method recommends making a list of tasks planned in writing beforehand. Once you're free of these considerations, rather than relying on work management tools, you'll be able to take action without having to figure out what to do.

To put the GTD method into practice,

1. **Collect.** Log all upcoming tasks in one place.
2. **Process.** After you've written down everything you need to do, sort and prioritize the tasks. For example, some may no longer be necessary (and may be deleted), others may be postponed (i.e. to be included in the relevant project or file), others may depend on certain activities, etc.
3. **Organize.** The tool you choose should allow you to manage all these small details.
4. **Review.** Review your lists regularly.
5. **Execute.** To choose what to do next, you need to consider the **four criteria** of the GTD method: **context**, available **time**, available **energy**, and **priority**.

SIX TIPS TO MANAGE YOUR TIME AND WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY

EXERCISE 2 Efficiency test

Some will appreciate following a recognized time management strategy, others will not. Not every strategy is right for everyone, and that's why there are so many out there. But how do you develop your time management skills? Here are six tips to help you do just that.

1. Connect your daily tasks to goals

Managing your time well isn't just about completing all your tasks: it's mainly about identifying important work and making it your priority. To do this, you need to connect your day-to-day tasks to the team's or company's goals so that you can identify the key tasks that need to be completed each day. However, according to a recent survey of more than 6,000 knowledge workers around the world, only 26% of employees have a clear view of how their work contributes to business goals.

But then, how do you coordinate work and priorities at all levels of the organization? The best way to do this is to use a work management tool, which will allow you to make the link between your daily activities and team projects on the one hand, and the company's objectives on the other. This way, your team members will always have optimal insight into the influence of their actions on the company's priorities.

2. Prioritise and organise your work

Regardless of your preferred method, it's important to be able to identify important tasks. Indeed, you will necessarily be confronted with changes in priority or deadline, in one direction or the other. Without any way to separate essential work from the rest, it's impossible for you to adapt and prioritize the right tasks.

Why do we need to prioritize our tasks? In a word, so that we don't get caught up in burnout. You've probably heard of it before, and you're probably aware that it's affecting more and more employees year after year. But what is less well known is that uncertainties in terms of priorities are far from unrelated. Knowing which tasks to work on first helps combat this problem and ensure that you are doing the right tasks on a daily basis.

3. Get a head start at the end of the day

If our workdays often seem to go by at a frantic pace, it's because we've already fallen behind before we even start. Like many, do you check your emails every morning looking for the most important work to do during the day? Rest assured, there are better solutions.

Rather than racking your brains every morning to figure out what you need to do, spend the last five minutes of the day preparing for the next one. This way, you'll know exactly what to spend your days on, which makes you more motivated to work. In addition, it is a good method to ensure that you carry out the most essential tasks on a daily basis. No need to deal with requests or emails received at 4:30 p.m. in the late afternoon! All you have to do is fit this essential work into the next day's schedule.

4. Learn to say "no" and delegate

Another benefit when priorities are well defined is that you can identify less essential work much more easily. It's not always easy to say no to a particular task, but it's easier when you're able to explain that the job doesn't meet current priorities. Set your own priorities and share them with your team members. This will make it clearer for everyone.

If this work is necessary but not a priority for you, consider delegating it to another team member. Above all, keep in mind that handing someone else a task doesn't mean it's not important, but that this job is not in your priorities at the moment. The task in question may simply require a different expertise than yours, for example.

When you reassign a task, the first thing you need to do is make sure that it's done by the person who is best suited to do it.

5. Check your tasks

In addition to "turning down" certain tasks, you need to take the time to look at the tasks you decided to complete some time ago and are still working on now: do they all still align with your team goals?

If this is not the case for some of them, ask yourself whether they need to be accomplished. Are they no longer essential to your team? You can postpone them to a later date. Are they still so? Ask yourself if you're the best person to make them happen. If not, think carefully about the person(s) to whom you should entrust them.

6. List your tasks with a tool rather than by hand

Are you still tracking your activities by hand? Switch to an online tool! Taking notes by hand is certainly nice, but writing your to-do lists in this way is quite inefficient and can lead to organizational problems, mistakes and oversights.

So it's best to organize most of your project management from a specific tool. Project management tools offer a wide range of features that help you make the most of your time.

With these types of tools, you can:

- Coordinate your cross-functional activities, and keep track of exactly who is doing what and for when.
- Communicate about work, share feedback, and report on project status all in one place.
- Track progress in real-time to know exactly where the work is at.
- Identify deadlines so that you can achieve your goals with peace of mind.

SIX SIMPLE ACTIONS TO TAKE TO MANAGE YOUR TIME WELL

1. Disable notifications

We spend our time juggling apps, notifications, and tasks. As soon as possible, turn off your notifications or use "Do Not Disturb" features to do so temporarily. This will allow you to dive into the background work while letting your team know that you'll get back to them later.

2. Organize your workspace

You're probably thinking that a messy office isn't a big deal. Yet, the clutter around us can affect our state of mind and affect our concentration.

Take a five-minute break to tidy up your desk: throw away any papers that are no longer needed, tidy up your books, and roll up any cables lying around. You'll certainly be able to concentrate much better when you get back to work.

3. Group similar tasks together

Every time you move from one task to another, your brain has to look for the information and context associated with the new task, and recall it to your memory. For him, it's a matter of just a few seconds, but constantly juggling tasks and projects forces him to work overtime.

The consequences are simple: a drop in productivity, but also greater fatigue at the end of the day. That's why it makes more sense to group similar tasks together. If possible, make sure you work on all tasks related to the same project or deliverable within a single block of time. This will reduce the amount of time spent switching contexts and allow you to spend more time on higher value-added activities.

4. Deal with small tasks in between meetings or hours of intensive concentration

You too, every day, probably have to do several small tasks that take you five to ten minutes: answering a few lines to a team member, correcting a typo in a document, sending a work request form to a colleague, etc.

In this case, keep these types of tasks where they will be easily visible, for example within a work management tool, without taking an immediate interest in them. Save them for the few free minutes you have between meetings or after lunch when you're getting back in shape to work. Not only will you have the satisfaction of being able to take care of it quickly, but it will also prevent you from wasting valuable energy, which you could spend on more complex tasks.

5. Have a break

This trick might seem counterintuitive at first glance, but one of the best methods to better manage your time is to take breaks. When we have work late, we tend to work more. What our brains need is time to rest and come to their senses. If you work too much and it leads to burnout, you won't be able to do anything, let alone take care of essential tasks.

6. Take back control of your schedule

In conclusion, you could say that time management is more of a mindset than anything else. To manage your time effectively, prioritize your tasks so you know what to work on a daily basis. Don't let your to-do list lead you by the nose and instead think about the impact of your work.

MY RELATIONSHIP TO TIME

What you accomplish in 24 hours depends on your motivation, energy, talents and skills, and other resources at your disposal. Since you'll always be in demand, it can be helpful to think about what you're going to do to make the best use of your time and consider strategies to better manage it.

The aim of time management is not to make you work harder and longer, but to work smarter so that the job gets done faster and more easily.

EXERCISE 3 Are you a monochronous or a polychronous person?

THE COMPASS OF THE CULTURES OF TIME

Inspired by the work of anthropologist Edward T. Hall and enriched by the Chinese approach, **this compass** aims to make the most of the different cultures of time around the world

The **monochronous culture** (Europe, North America) favours results and respect for deadlines. The **polychronous culture** (southern and eastern countries) gives a preponderant place to social exchanges.

Chinese culture is opposed to the Western planning approach: inherited from Taoist philosophy, it considers that nothing happens by chance. It's about being attentive to the signs to seize opportunities.

The purpose of this compass is to make our approach more flexible to optimize our organization according to the tasks at hand and to work more effectively with others.

It is a useful reference point for collective projects and on an individual basis to organize our days more efficiently.

How to use it?

- **Monochronous:** You prefer to do one thing at a time, quietly and without interruption. You like to get to the bottom of things and cultivate your expertise. You value the result. You prefer to work individually or in pairs.
- **Polychronous:** You multitask. Interruptions are welcome and contacts stimulate you. You value versatility over expertise. Relationships are key. You love working together.
- **Planner:** You set clear goals and schedule your time to achieve them. You are committed to optimizing resources.
- **Opportune moments:** You are attentive to opportunities to do things with less effort. You know how to be patient and pick the fruit when it's ripe.

Choose the most appropriate approach.

- **Monochronous:** ideal for dealing with substantive files that require concentration, important tasks of reflection, meticulous tasks with a risk of error in the event of an interruption.
- **Polychronous:** very effective for collective projects where the sharing of ideas is a prerequisite for success, it allows you to test new ideas and collect feedback. It allows you to maintain a réseau et de capter des informations. Elle est aussi compatible avec des tâches à faible charge mentale.
- **Planner:** an approach to projects par excellence, it is an essential lever of time management in the West. Many efficiency tools are derived from it.
- **Opportune times:** If an opportunity arises to do now what you planned to do later, calculate the potential time savings to make your schedule more flexible. Listen to the signals related to your projects, and say "yes" to what will allow you to achieve them. Finally, be sensitive to your energy levels and do things at the right time for you.

Embrace the dominant culture of your environment. You'll save time and energy.

EXERCISE 4 Time management – Setting priorities

BENEFITS AND BARRIERS OF TIME MANAGEMENT

THE BENEFITS OF TIME MANAGEMENT

If you manage to manage your time more effectively, you will be rewarded in several ways:

- You'll run your day more efficiently
 - You will be more successful in your work.
 - On a personal level, you will feel better, you will have more energy and better morale
-

EXERCISE 5 Barriers to good time management

In subgroups, list the obstacles to good time management

COLLECTIVE DEBRIEFING

BARRIERS TO GOOD TIME MANAGEMENT

There are many situations that make it difficult to manage our time effectively.

Let's take a look at some of the most common ones and see if they apply to us.

Unclear goals – It's hard to hit a target with your eyes closed, and it's just as hard to accomplish something if you don't know exactly what it is.

Lack of organization – It's easy to see that your desk is a mess, but sometimes you have to take a step back and ask yourself if you're using a logical method to complete all your tasks

Inability to say "no" – We all want to be as helpful as possible when others need us, but this may mean we neglect other priorities in order to accomplish something unexpected.

Interruptions – Often the phone rings just when we're doing something important. These phone calls prevent you from completing the task and sometimes interrupt the flow of ideas, so you can't continue working without first going back.

More interruptions – It makes us happy to chat with others, but conversations that take place at inopportune times can waste our time as we have to stop our work and put aside our projects.

Periods of inactivity – Even though we feel like we're busy, there are times during the day when we don't actually do much. If we identify and take advantage of these moments, it can have a positive effect on our efforts.

Too many things at once – Many tasks are not routine but require focus on details. If we try to do too much at once, each individual task suffers.

Stress and fatigue – Everyone experiences stress from time to time and our performance is sometimes better when there is some degree of nervous tension. Excess stress, on the other hand, hinders our performance and makes us physically and mentally tired. The ability to cope with stress is an important aspect of time management.

Work at the expense of leisure – In general, successful people know how to create a balance between work and play. If work completely dominates your life, your body doesn't have time to rest and you risk sacrificing the most important aspects of your life, such as your family and friends.

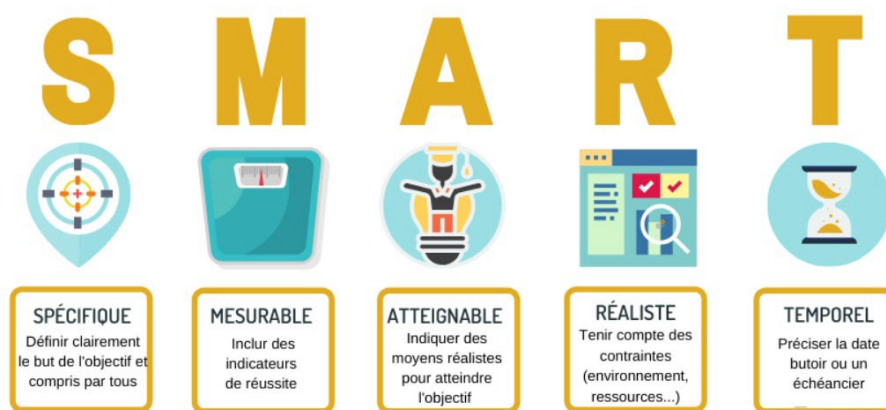
EXERCISE 6 Are you a good time manager?

STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The obstacles we face are not insurmountable. Sometimes the hardest part is identifying the existence of these barriers and admitting that they are hindering our ability to manage our time. Once you've identified the obstacles, you can start overcoming them.

Here are some strategies you can use to overcome the obstacles we just mentioned.

SETTING SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE GOALS: "SMART"



General tips on the optimal formulation of SMART goals

1. Don't try to put everything in one goal! Since the goals need to be specific, you'll probably need to come up with a few for your project.
2. Make sure that the objectives target outcomes related to increased knowledge or skills, or changes in attitudes, values or behaviours.
3. Use action verbs so that goals are oriented towards specific outcomes.
4. Use a positive formulation (don't use words like don't, won't etc).

Meaning of SMART

Specific	> clear, concrete and understandable
Measurable	> includes measurement indicators
Achievable	> consistent with the environment
Realistic	> not too easy or too difficult to achieve, and a healthy challenge
Time-bound	> has a deadline or deadline

Specific

A specific goal is one that is understood equally by everyone and should describe a clear end result.

Tip: Have someone read your goal and ask them what they understand. If he interprets it the same way you do, then your goal is indeed specific. If, on the other hand, it has a different interpretation, it is a sign that our objective is ambiguous, so it will have to be reworked.

Measurable

It is important to be able to identify elements that will allow us to determine how far we are progressing towards this goal, how far it is progressing and finally how well we have been achieved. It is said that a measurable goal can be quantified or qualified.

Example "Add a 30-minute walk to my weekly routine, 3 times a week for the next 6 months.

Attainable

According to the definitions of the acronym S.M.A.R.T., the letter "A" stands for the words "Achievable", "Ambitious", "Appropriate" or "Attracting", they often depend on the perception we have of a goal.

To be achievable, the goal must also respect ethics, moral and social codes. It must remain, achievable and appropriate in relation to our means, our capacities and our competences.

The objective is attainable when it preserves and respects the interests of all parties directly or indirectly involved in its achievement.

Realistic

An objective gains from being ambitious what it loses from being unrealistic. We need to question and measure our ability to bring this objective to fruition, depending on our resources, environment, etc. It must be ambitious in its own right (not too ambitious to avoid discouragement, not too insufficient to avoid procrastination).

Time-bound

A goal should be time-bound and have a timeline. Set a delay that is long enough to avoid unnecessary pressure and short enough that it is not diluted over time.

Add language to the goal that allows everyone to know exactly when it will need to be achieved.

Example:

« ... by 2022",

« ... by the end of fiscal year XXXX,"

TIP to help you formulate a SMART goal:

By _____

I want to realize _____

I will know that I have achieved my result because: _____

And achieving this goal will allow me to _____

SETTING PRIORITIES

You certainly won't be able to do everything, and it's prudent to make a list, periodically, of all the tasks that await you, and prioritize them.

The following technique can help you prioritize:

Do's – Determine from the list the tasks that you consider to be the most important and that you need to complete yourself.

Delegate – Remember that many colleagues have the skills, experience, and motivation to complete a wide range of tasks. Delegating gives you time to do other things, allows you to use resources efficiently.

Procrastinate – Some tasks can wait. The danger comes from putting off too much to a date too close to the deadline. The best method is to define when a task needs to be completed, how long it will take, and what possibilities your current schedule gives you.

Delete – If you have set goals using the guidelines mentioned earlier, you may find that some goals are not achievable, realistic or unimportant. Know how to focus on the most important and remove the rest.

Take care of the most urgent

- Accomplish as much as possible early.
- Set deadlines for tasks that need to wait.
- After prioritizing tasks, **it's important to:**

Take care of the most urgent – Take care of tasks that have immediate consequences, as quickly as possible.

Do what you can early – Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today.

Set deadlines for tasks you decide to postpone – If you've determined that a task can wait, don't put it aside but set a deadline and mark the date to start working on it in your calendar.

Organise

As you set priorities and deadlines, you'll want to organize your projects and actions. Some of you prefer paper and pencil and I encourage you to use a planner with a calendar where there is plenty of room to write notes.

Planners often contain space to mark daily activities, people's contact information, and to-do lists. Find an agenda that adapts to your needs and use it: it will be an indispensable tool for managing your time.

Maybe you're using, or considering using, a computer to help you. Computers often have software that contains calendars, to-do lists, reminders, and contact information. If your computer doesn't have these programs, it's easy to get and install the necessary software.

You may want to consider using a small computerized planner. These devices are hand-held and use the same software as your personal computer. Computerized planners are handy tools if you step away from your computer during the day or if you're traveling for business.

Learn to say "NO" you don't need to do everything

Don't take on tasks you won't be able to complete. Stay true to your goals. The strategies we've mentioned so far are all about common business practices. I'd like to talk about some more "personal" strategies that you can use in your personal life. They, too, have a big impact on how you manage your time.

The first strategy is to know how to say "NO" if necessary. When you say "NO", you are not refusing to take responsibility but on the contrary, you are ensuring that you keep your commitments and accomplish the maximum within the deadlines given to you.

To be able to say "NO" we must accept three principles:

1. I realise that I can't do everything
2. I won't take on a task or project if I know I won't be able to complete it in time
3. I will not make commitments that are not in line with the goals and objectives I have set myself.

If you remember these principles, it will be easier for you to justify (and explain) why certain requests should be refused. You will find that you are better able to accomplish the tasks to which you have given priority.

Focus on the task at hand

Focus on your goal. Avoid interruptions. You'll have to juggle many different tasks. An important strategy is to focus completely on the task at hand.

It can be hard to focus if you have a lot of concerns. You'll get the most out of the time if you:

You focus on your purpose – You most certainly have many commitments and concerns, but you will accomplish more if you focus on the task you are currently doing

Ignore interruptions – You'll find that your concentration is better if you can set aside certain times of the day when you won't be answering the phone or having visitors. You can't isolate yourself all the time, but you may find that it's possible to accomplish certain tasks much faster than you thought. If the phone needs to be answered, keep the interruption to a minimum by asking if you can call back later or on another day.

When are you in shape?

In the morning? In the evening? At night? Are you one of those people who gets up before dawn and starts working? Or do you prefer to work in the evening, after dinner? Or do you prefer to wait until the quiet of the night to complete the really difficult tasks?

We are all different. Research generally shows that tasks that require the greatest mental focus are performed most effectively in the morning, but even these studies admit that the rule is not absolute and that each person has a preference.

When making your plans, identify the time when your performance is at its best. If you're doing your best work in the morning, consider completing routine tasks later and focus on the more demanding tasks when you're at your best. If you're more dynamic later, take care of routine tasks in the morning and save more difficult tasks for later.

Celebrate your successes

Celebrate the achievement of your goals to maintain a healthy balance between work and play. Find a way to reward yourself when you complete a task or project.

If you've worked as part of a team or given some tasks to others, reward everyone who participated. Celebration is an indispensable aspect of project management. Even if your schedule is very busy, it's worth it!

The illnesses of our time

Are you constantly interrupted by colleagues, clients and friends? Don't have enough time to finish your work? Can't get on with the task without the pressure of a deadline?

If so, you probably have one or more of these diseases of time:

chronophagia, lifophilia, timedinitis or hearing.

Chronophagy (getting eaten up your time)

Chronophagy is the tendency to let yourself be constantly interrupted either by the people around you such as your colleagues, your boss or your children if you work from home, or by electronic devices such as your notifications, emails, messages, pop-ups, social networks...

This is a problem because it prevents you from moving forward effectively in your work. Not only do you take longer to complete your tasks, but you also make more careless mistakes that you have to correct later.

To solve this chronophagy problem, reduce distractions and learn to focus better.

Timedinitis (inflammation of time)

Timedinitis is the tendency to underestimate the time needed to complete a task and overestimate the time available. This disease of time can be explained in particular by Parkinson's law and Hofstadter's law.

When you have timedinitis, you feel like you're always running out of time and you have trouble meeting your deadlines.

To reduce this inflammation, you need to learn how to plan and prioritize.

Saying "yes" instead of refusing

It's about saying yes too often. When you're asked, you're going to have a hard time saying no even if you're already overwhelmed. The problem is that the more you say yes, the more work you overload, which often leads to burnout.

Hearing often comes from the fear of displeasing people, the fear of offending, the fear of being frowned upon, or the fear of being perceived as incompetent. You'd rather say yes even if you're already overwhelmed than face your fears and say no.

Lifophilia (confusing urgency with importance)

Lifophilia is a very common problem that involves spending your time dealing with urgent tasks. Typically, if you're working on something and another urgent task comes up, you're going to stop doing what you're doing to take care of it. As a result, you do a lot of things, but you don't finish a lot.

You always give more importance to the last tasks you are given to do rather than the tasks that are really important. You do what is called "*busywork*". That is, you invest yourself in small, insignificant tasks that make no difference to your end result.

Lifophilia stems primarily from a difficulty in prioritizing. The best way to deal with it is to determine precisely what your goals are and also to know the difference between what is urgent and what is important.

LAWS AND PRINCIPLES OF TIME MANAGEMENT

Pareto's law: 80/20

Vilfredo Pareto, an Italian sociologist and economist, is the author of this law, also known as the 80/20 rule.

This rule shows that 80% of the results result from only 20% of the work done **or that some actions, on the other hand, take 80% of the time for 20% of the results.**

It is therefore necessary to know how **to prioritize** by starting your day with tasks that have a positive impact and relegate accessory tasks to the end of the day when you are less efficient.

You also have to be able **to say no to things** that are not essential to focus your energy on your core business and expertise. To know how to prioritize, weigh the question: if you could only work today, what would you start with?

➡ **80% of the effects are the product of 20% of the causes.** It's important to target the actions that will be most effective for your business.

Practical advice from this law:

1. Separate the essential from the accessory in the core of your business.
2. Prioritize.
3. Know how to say no and delegate non-essential tasks.

Carlson's Law. Limit your interruptions

This law was created by Sune Carlson, a Swedish economist. This rule is also called the law of homogeneous sequences.

In his 1951 book *Executive Behaviour*, Carlson points out that

"continuous work takes less time and energy than when it is done in several stages."

Interruption is the worst enemy of productivity. Split-time work is less efficient than continuous work.

This is because it takes about 3 **minutes for the brain** to reconnect with the task and work. It is therefore important to remain constant in your work and not fall into **multitasking**, which disturbs your attention. The goal is not to take away any moment of relaxation. Our brains need it too, but we need to do it sparingly and not overdo it.

➡ **Supportive tip** Get into the habit of concentrating as much as possible to get your work done from A

to Z while protecting yourself from "time eaters".

Practical advice from this law:

1. Avoid any interruptions (phone, email, etc.) so as not to slow down your work pace
2. Isolate yourself, signal to those around you that you need to be quiet
3. Avoid checking your email more than twice a day.
4. Optimize your time by grouping tasks of the same nature.
5. Avoid multitasking.

Parkinson's law or time stretching: Set yourself deadlines

Parkinson's Law or the law of self-inflation of time spent states that the time invested in a job varies according to the time available.

"The work expands until it occupies the entire time."

Putting it into practise:

1. Think in terms of the time needed for an activity and not in terms of the time available
2. Set deadlines and deadlines for yourself.

Illich's Law: Give yourself a break

Established by Ivan Illich, an Austrian thinker and former parish priest, this law is based on **the theory of diminishing returns**.

Beyond a certain threshold of work (90 minutes on average), human efficiency decreases until it becomes negative. Of course, it is important to avoid treating your work in a heterogeneous way, but it is important to be able to impose moments of rest on yourself in order to take a step back from your work and improve your concentration afterwards.

The Pomodoro method, more commonly known as the "tomato timer", is a time management technique that goes in this direction. The goal is to divide work into intervals with 25-minute work sessions separated by short 5-minute breaks. The 25-minute time allows you to focus on one task and then recharge your batteries before starting another.

➡ **Supportive tip** Take some time to breathe and take breaks from your workday.

Practical advice from this law:

1. Apply the Pomodoro method
2. Don't work during your lunch break.

Douglas's Law: Tidy your desk

Douglas' Law is often cited in time management training. Douglas is now an anonymous person. He is said to have established a law on material disorder, taken up by management professors such as Eric Abrahamson, a professor at the origin of a theory of disorganization.

This law is for people who are disordered.

This method was originally created with a quality approach in mind, but can be applied to your material organization. This solution makes it easier for you to find your belongings and have a more pleasant working environment.

Indeed, for some, the larger the workspace you have, the more you tend to accumulate stuff on that space until you can't find your way around. Thus, you **waste time** finding a document or folder hidden under a pile of belongings.

This also applies to **organizing your files on your computer**. You don't file your files on your desktop and you waste time finding useful information.

➡ **Supportive tip** Tidying up your desk and documents is one of the best ways to save time.

Practical advice from this law:

1. Store your documents neatly on your computer.
2. Leave your workspace neat and tidy at the end of each day.

Murphy's Law: Leave room for the unexpected

Murphy's Law, sometimes better known as "the law of maximum annoyances" was designed by Edward Aloysius Murphy Jr., an aerospace engineer.

In our work, nothing ever goes according to plan. Indeed, although your self-employed status gives you **total autonomy in your missions**, you may have unforeseen events from your clients or yourself.

For example, you have to go to a place to give training and there is a train strike or your car no longer works. You didn't plan for it. In some cases, you can prevent these unforeseen events from becoming problematic.

Planning ahead will allow you to improve your time management. Make a **schedule** by making a list of the missions you need to complete. Each mission must have a **deadline**. This deadline should always be longer than the scheduled date. This allows you to anticipate possible unforeseen events so that you are not overwhelmed by stress and work at the last moment.

Practical tips from this time management law:

1. Plan your work and plan for a wide range of time to complete it
2. Always estimate your working time by taking into account the unexpected

Côté's Law or Law of the optimal and practical use of time

Avoid taking five minutes to decide to procrastinate what can be done immediately, in less than five minutes; Instead, perform these tasks at a designated time during the day.

Law of Ecclesiastes: Vary your activities

The Law of Ecclesiastes or the Law of Alternation says that "there is a time for everything and a time for everything under heaven."

Putting it into practise:

1. Find the right activity for every moment
2. Do only one thing at a time, and do it well, giving it your all
3. Know how to do different, even opposite, things at different times

Swoboda-Flies-Teltscher law

Also known as the law of biological rhythms, it states that:

- Every human being is crossed by multiple biological rhythms (physical, emotional, intellectual)
- The three biorhythms start together at birth and are perpetuated each with its own periodicity, throughout life

Putting it into practise:

1. Discover your personal rhythms and listen to your internal clocks
2. Schedule strategic or reflective activities at the time of high fitness and routine activities at the time of recover

Use of time is personal

If there is one resource to which we are all equal, it is time. The big difference lies in how each person uses it.

These great laws will help you maximize your time in all areas of your life. Keep in mind that these are fundamental basics applied by those who enjoy life the most.

It's up to you to do the same by changing your habits. go gradually and keep pushing the limits of time.

Chronobiology

When should you get up, go to bed, eat... to optimize well-being, health and performance? In his book entitled "When?" published by Belfond, the American Michael Breus classifies humanity into four chronotypes - **lion, bear, wolf and dolphin** - and gives the right time for all types of activities.

EXERCISE 7 Chronobiology

The **bear** is the most common human chronotype, found in roughly 55% of the population. People with the bear chronotype essentially follow the sun, waking up when the sun rises in early morning and retiring as darkness falls in the early evening. Their peak productivity hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. People with the **lion** chronotype tend to wake up early, often around 5 a.m., and feel most energetic and productive before noon. Lions tend to feel most accomplished when they tackle their daily to-do list as soon as possible. As energy levels begin to fall in the early afternoon, lions typically wind down in the early evening and fall asleep no later than 10 p.m. Roughly 15% of people have the lion chronotype.

If you know someone who isn't a "morning person," chances are they're a **wolf** — about 15% of the population has this chronotype. Wolves usually wake up later in the day, and feel most productive between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. They'll also get bursts of energy in the evening. Midnight or later is a common bedtime for wolves.

About 10% of people have the **dolphin** chronotype, which is the hardest to form a schedule around without sacrificing sleep quality. This chronotype gets its name because dolphins in the wild remain alert while sleeping to evade predators. People with this chronotype tend to be sensitive to light and noise while they sleep, and prone to fragmented sleep patterns. Many are considered insomniacs. However, dolphins have a strong productivity window between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

The "circadian cycle" is a biological rhythm that lasts 24 hours. All of our biological functions are subject to this rhythm. It determines our sleep-wake cycle, body temperature, blood pressure, hormone production, cognitive abilities, mood and memory.

This rhythm is generated by the body itself. It is mainly influenced by exposure to light, but also by outdoor temperature and physical activity, however their effect is more modest.

To organize your days effectively, you need to plan your tasks around your circadian rhythm. That is, working on the most energy-intensive tasks when you're at your peak and doing the less important tasks or taking breaks when you're less active.

Distinguishing between 'important' and 'urgent'

Is the «Urgent» more important than the «Important»?

When does urgent need immediate action?

The urgency to act is determined by the magnitude of the situation.

But in everyday life, how many situations, requests, tasks require immediate action in order to avoid a serious consequence such as a production stop, a major breakdown, the loss of an important contract? Probably less than 10% of cases.

Urgency without importance, is only the Time factor. The relationship between the deadline, duration, deadline, and start of completion of a task or project. The consequence of a misassessment of these 4 dimensions of time.

We'll talk about:

Due date for delivery date

Duration for the time it takes to complete the task

Delay for a waiting time because the resources needed to complete the task are not immediately available (approvals, delays, absences, out of stock, traffic jams, unforeseen events).

Start for the date on which the project is to start, start the execution of the various tasks.

Realistic Durations + Reasonable Timelines = Achievable Timelines.

In 80-90% of cases, **urgency is the consequence of a lack of planning** on the part of others, negligence, unrealistic demands (colleagues, clients, other departments).
The simplest solution to reduce emergencies is to better plan, follow-up, forecast, anticipate, negotiate.

Questions to ask yourself to **assess the degree of urgency**:

- When is the task due (due date)?
- Can it wait a few hours or days (fake emergencies)?
- How long does it take to run?
- When are the necessary resources available (deadlines)?

- What is the safety margin for unforeseen events and emergencies (delays)?
- Why do you always ask for it at the last minute?

Why does 'important' need attention?

Because of the **consequences** (short, medium and long term) of doing it or not doing it.

The operational impact or on the achievement of objectives.

- Not enough planning? (emergencies)
- Not enough preventative maintenance? (breakdowns)
- Not enough skills? (errors)
- Not enough monitoring and evaluation? (quality)

And in the long run we can say goodbye to effectiveness, efficiency, productivity, customers and the survival of the company and employment.

In short, **the important** reflects the **value** one places (high, normal, or low) on different tasks, requests, projects, or goals.

Not agreeing on the value given to a request creates a conflict of priorities between one and the other (customer-supplier, superior-employee, general management-employees, boss-union, etc.).

Questions to Ask Yourself to **Assess the (relative) Importance**

- Who is the applicant?
- What is the impact, the consequences of doing it or not doing it?
- Does it contribute significantly to our mission, our goals, our priorities?
- Does it respect our values?
- Does it add real value?
- What does our intuition say?

Why is the 'urgent' valued more than the 'important'?

URGENT

Thinking short-term, acting quickly, solving real problems, putting out fires, getting immediate gratification, gratification from others.

Emergencies are a must for us. No need to take responsibility for the *Why?* of urgency. Act on the

effects, not the causes. RIGHT NOW!

IMPORTANT

Think in the medium term, plan before jumping into action, anticipate problems, prevent fires, accept to postpone satisfaction, not to receive gratification from others. The important urgent step must come from us.

Requires personal will, faith in the future, desire to make the future better. Act on causes, not effects. **LATER!**

When we talk about the Important and the Urgent, do we have the same definition between manager-employee, customer-supplier, requester-requester?

Depending on the degree of importance and urgency, should we deduce that the **right thing to do** is either:

1. Do
2. Delegate
3. Plan
4. Delete

How can we agree on these 2 concepts: Important and urgent, on the notion of prioritization and on what is the right thing to do?

What to prioritize? tasks to be done, emails to be read and processed, projects to be carried out, objectives to be achieved, problems to be solved, decisions to be made.

Prioritize: classify – put in order



Sort in what order?

Chronological, i.e. in logical order of execution

In **sequential** order (task A must be done before B) and B cannot start until A is completed (critical path)

In **parallel** order (B can start even if A is not completed; by **due date, by start date, by degree of importance**, by manager, by project...

Yes, but. You need to be able to **visualize at a glance all the things that need to be done to do** them in order.

This is not possible if they are scattered in your calendar, notebook, phone, voicemail, SMS... It is therefore essential to **centralize them**.

Make choices

Why do we have to make choices?

Because there are often more things to do, requests, requests, expectations than resources available (human, material, financial).

Because the new requests add to an already very high workload.

Because our agenda is already full!

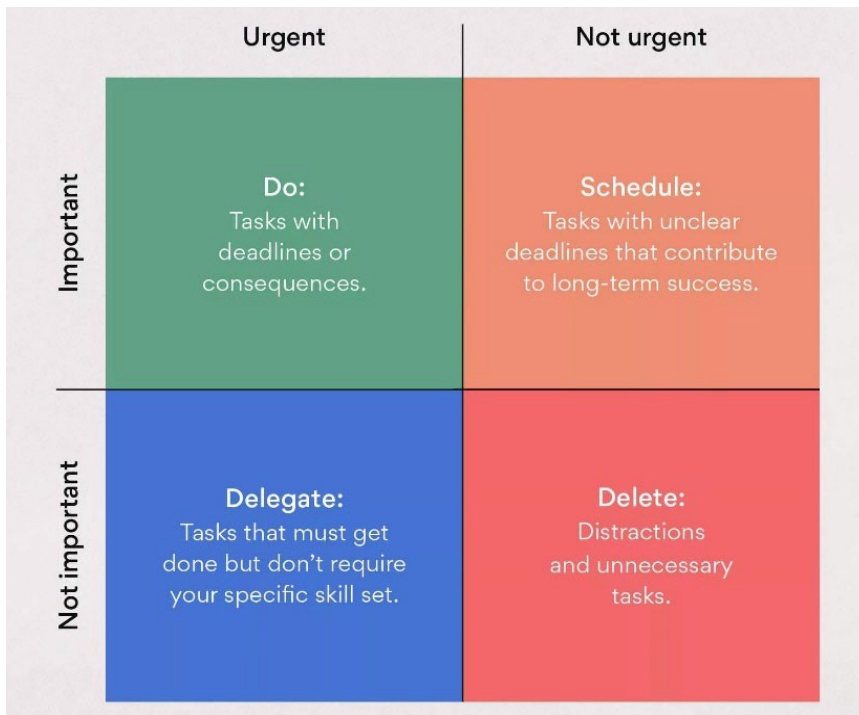
Making choices between what and what? Between different options that revolve around 3 poles:

- **Results**
- **Deadlines**
- **Resources**

What are the options?

Propose to do partially (expected result, deliverable), do later (deadline), do it (resources).

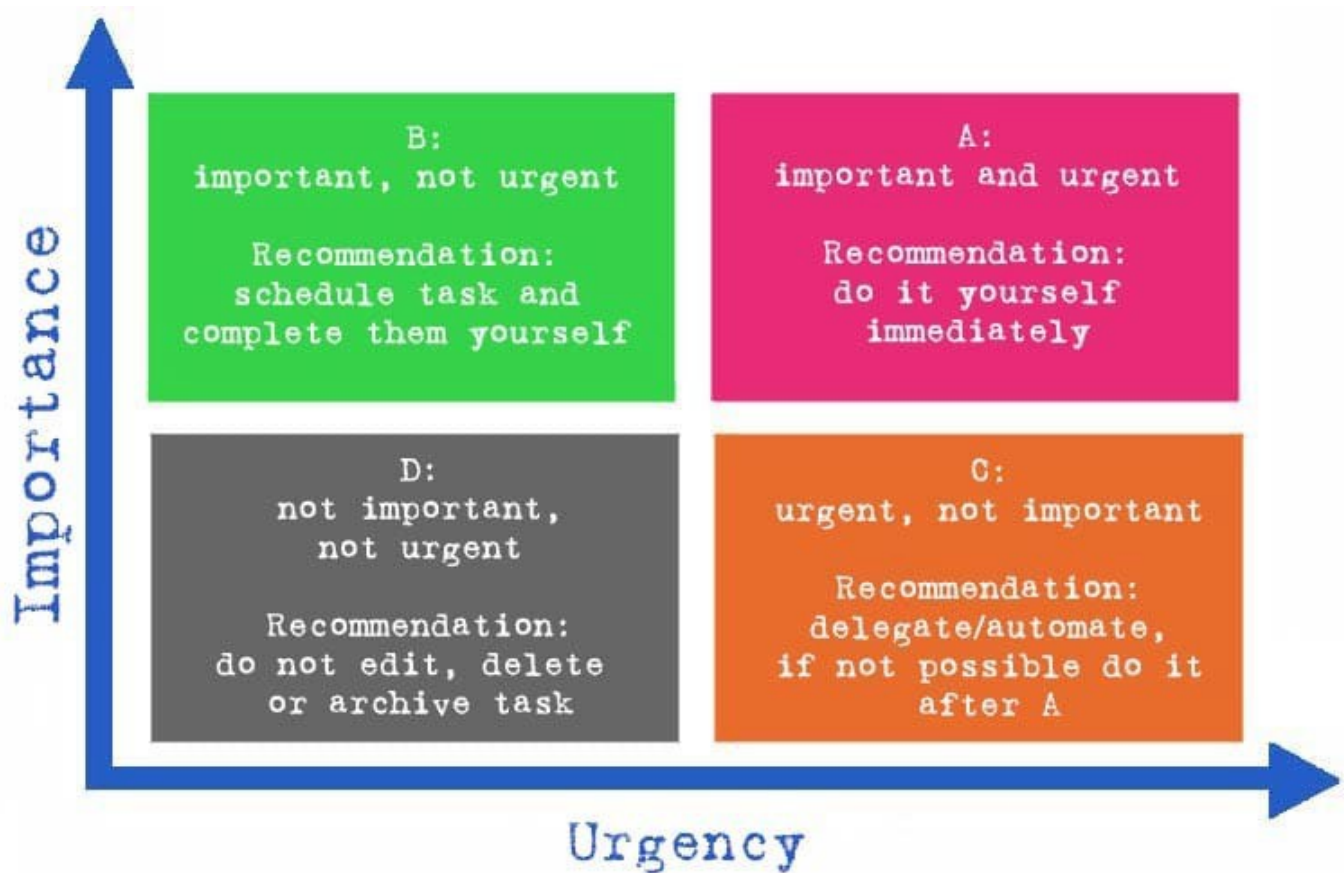
Agree on the actions to be carried out



THE EISENHOWER MATRIX

Build the Matrix:: It is a 2-axis quadrant for your priorities and reduce urgent tasks.

This matrix is composed of the urgency axis and the importance axis



This results in 4 classifications.

- Urgent and important
- Urgent and non-important
- Important and non-urgent
- Non-important and non-urgent.

On a daily basis, week after week... Year after year, your tasks can be prioritized by asking yourself:

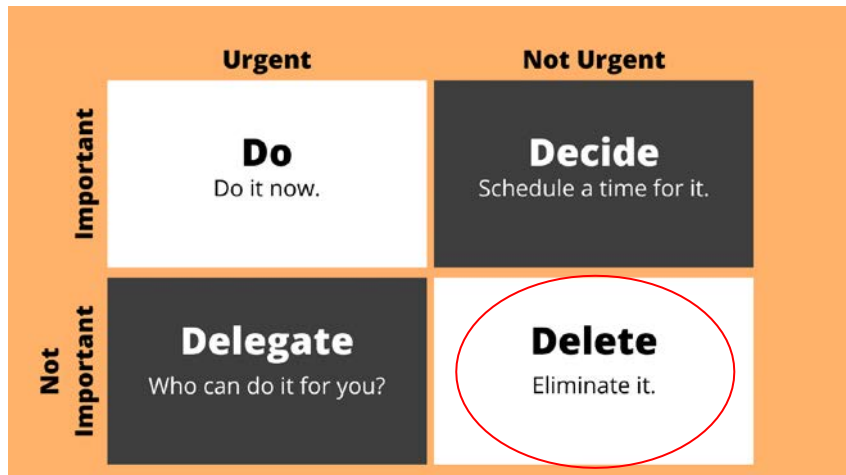
"Is it an urgent or non-urgent task?"

"Is it an important or non-important task?"

By developing this mental reflex, you will quickly be able to fit each task into the matrix.

Two types of urgencies

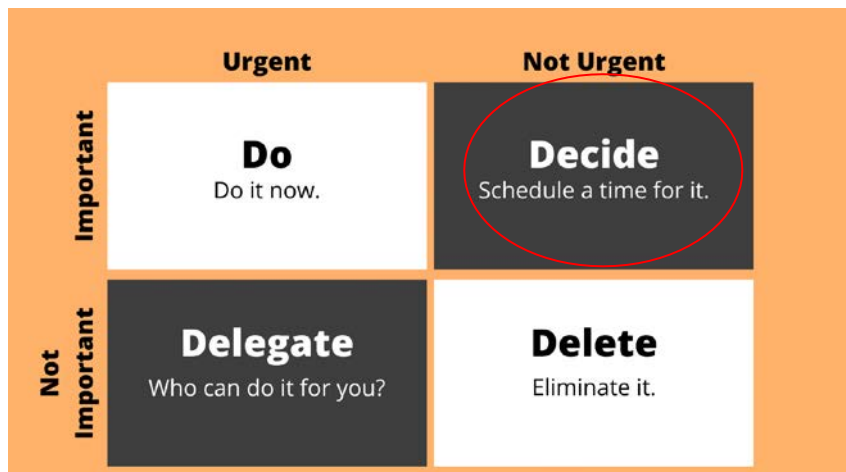
1. Lack of organization of those around you (urgent and non-important)



If someone contacts you and says, "You absolutely have to do this or that" and it wasn't planned, I politely reply that my infinite calendar is full.

If it's your boss (or if you depend on that person in any way) you can politely ask, "It's noted, I'm going to do this new task. And what do you want me to take away from everything you've already entrusted to me so that I can do this task?"

2. Life and death emergencies (urgent and important)



If you don't do what's important, sooner or later urgency and importance will kick in and come into your life. When that happens... You can't delegate.

Sometimes urgent and important tasks come into your life **simply because you're unlucky**. But that aside (since you have no control over chance) most of the time, urgent and important tasks are related

to ignoring important aspects of your life.

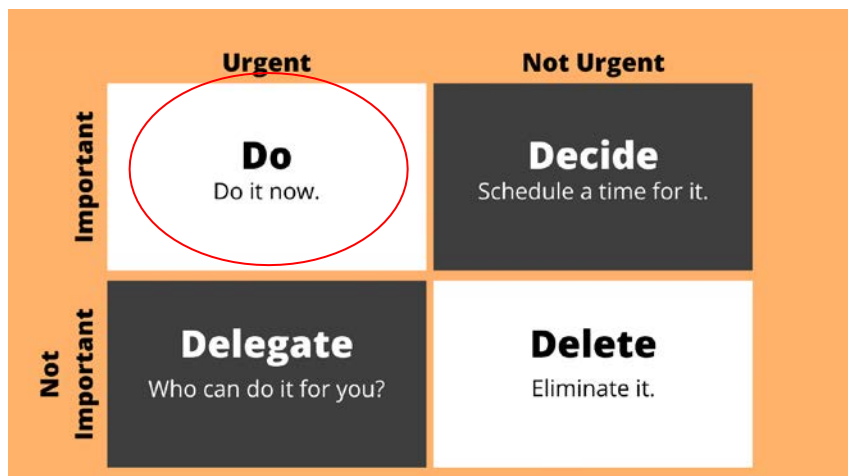
For example, if you eat poorly, one day you may get sick. And you can't delegate your illness!

You now understand that the URGENCY assessment remains personal.

Two types of importance:

1. There's me! For me, that's what's important and non-urgent.

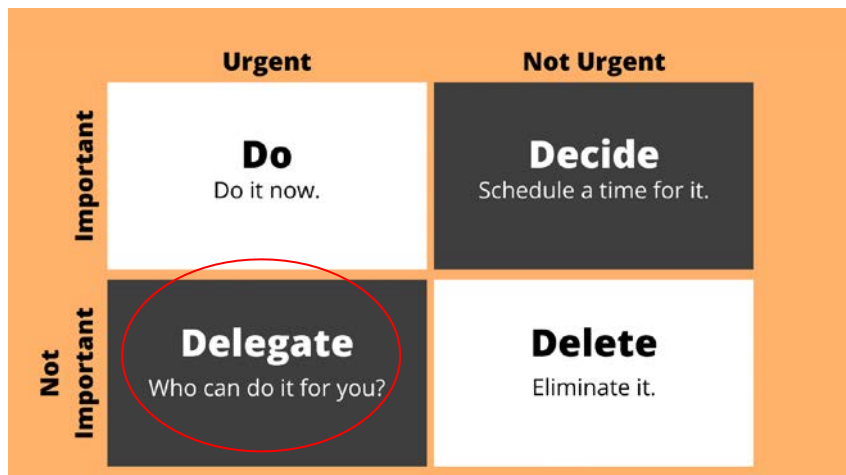
- These are tasks that allow me to gain autonomy.
- This is what keeps my system alive a little longer.



Important tasks **are related to health** (sport, sleep, diet), **related to my skills** (important work, reading, studying, training) **and socially healthy** (e.g. playing sports with friends, or discussing ideas

Put your tasks in your calendar, because it's a well-known fact... What is not on the agenda will not be done.

2. There are rewards or things that don't deserve to be done (non-important and non-urgent)



As for the tasks that can be ignored, we will remember Peter Drucker who said:

"There is nothing more useless than doing perfectly what is not worth doing."

The more time you allocate to what's important, the less urgency there is in your life.

There are two squares that you need to be able to discern quickly:

1. Urgent and non-important tasks.
2. Important and non-urgent tasks.

In short, there is me and the others.

Why not include important and urgent tasks?

Because they are obvious and rarely require much thought. We simply endure them. We don't organise them!

What will this tool do for you in the long run?

Method, matrix, technique or tool... I don't care. By focusing your time, money and energy on the important tasks, the urgency will quickly disappear from your daily life.

You'll still have important, non-urgent tasks. At this point, you can use a new weighting: the **impact of your actions and the resources needed.**

This will allow you to continue to prioritize your tasks, but this time... by making a little better use of the 80/20 rule applied to your tasks.

That's right, you can use Pareto's law to add a level of prioritization to the amount of tasks that are in the Important and Non-Urgent box.

Find the right action to do – according to each quadrant

1. **Important and urgent:** To be dealt with immediately. EX: crises, pressing problems, projects with close deadlines, etc.
2. **Important but not urgent:** to be planned. E.g. goals, network development, search for new opportunities, long-term planning, personal development, hobbies, etc.
3. **Urgent but not important.** E.g. interruptions, emails, calls, meetings, popular or non-recurring activities, urgent matters, etc.
4. **Not urgent and not important.** E.g. trivialities, occupations, procrastination activities, certain calls and emails, passive pleasure activities...

EXERCISE 8 Self-assessment

www.softwareskills.eu