

Urgent vs. Important Matrix

Former US President Eisenhower is quoted as saying, "What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important." Dr. Stephen Covey made these concepts mainstream, calling it "The Urgent/Important Matrix" in his famous book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People."

How do you spend your time? Are you constantly interrupted by others? Do you always seem to move from one crisis to another? Perhaps you are not prioritizing your time as well as you could...

Time is obviously best spent on the **Important but Non-Urgent** tasks. But first:

1. Look at your chart and consider where you spend most of your time.
2. **What % of time do you spend in each quadrant?** Write the percentage below next to each quadrant. Make sure this is a gut-feeling—your first instant response.
3. **List specific examples** that are relevant to YOU for each quadrant and add to the blank lines below.

	URGENT	NON-URGENT
IMPORTANT	<p>Q1 - CRISES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we spend a lot of time here we become stressed & burned out. • Minimize time here by spending more time in Goals & Planning. • Major & minor crises • Pressing problems • Deadlines • Meetings • Projects • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Q2 - GOALS & PLANNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we spend a lot of time here we feel calmer and under control. • Maximize time here by setting aside & using time to plan, prepare, & look after your health. • Preparation & prevention • Goal setting & planning • Building relationships • Clarifying values & priorities • _____ • _____ • _____
NOT IMPORTANT	<p>Q3 - INTERRUPTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we spend a lot of time here we feel like we're not achieving much or getting anywhere. We feel stuck, frustrated, or stressed out. • <i>Minimize</i> the amount of time here by focusing on the high importance tasks first. Say "no" and/or delegate! • Needless interruptions • Interruptions from others • Unimportant meetings, calls, mail/email • Other people's minor issues • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Q4 - DISTRACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some distractions can leave us feeling energized; be aware of when, where & how often you distract yourself. • <i>Eliminate time spent unconsciously</i> in distractions. Use the time reclaimed elsewhere. • Trivia, "Escape" activities & "busy" work • Some phone calls, irrelevant mail/email • Excessive TV, Internet usage • Self-critical thoughts, anger at others • _____ • _____ • _____

Why not post this somewhere you will see it regularly to remind you?

Urgent Tasks: cause us to react; we stop what we're currently doing & work on the urgent task instead. **Important Tasks:** lead us toward our overall mission or goals; these key actions often require planning, organization and initiative.

Review

1. Which quadrant do you spend MOST time in? _____

2. How does that feel? _____

Q1 – Crises – If you're spending most of your time here, how are you dealing with stress?

Q2 – Goals & Planning – Congratulations! How could you make sure you stay in this quadrant?

Q3 – Interruptions – If you're spending most of your time here, you may need to find ways to say "No" to others.

Q4 – Distractions – If you're spending most of your time here, you may need to find ways to say "No" to yourself!

3. So, what's getting in the way of you managing your time better? Be specific. _____

4. Where are you sabotaging yourself? _____

Get Motivated

5. How will your life be different if you managed your time more effectively? What's in it for you? List all the benefits to you of managing your time better including at home, in relationships, and the workplace. _____

6. What COULD you do differently? It's time to do some brainstorming – write all the ideas of things you could do. Note: You don't have to action them – this is a brainstorming exercise for possibilities. _____

7. What is the KEY action that would support all the others? _____

Commitment

It's time to identify 1-3 specific actions you will commit to. Make sure this action is something you can implement right away – or in the next day or so. Note: only pick actions you are 100% sure you will complete – and if necessary make the action smaller until you can commit 100%.

Action 1: _____ By When: _____

Action 2: _____ By When: _____

Action 3: _____ By When: _____

8. The biggest thing I have learned about myself today is: _____

I am committed to achieving these actions. Signed: _____ Date: _____