

Chapter 38

Time Management: The Three Keys and Three Stumbling Blocks

By Kathleen E. Post

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§ 38:1 Introduction

Off the coast of Scotland lies an uninhabited 104-acre island called Ailsa Craig, home to the only known supply of blue hone granite, the substance required to make stones for the sport of curling. Despite centuries of investigation, researchers have found this type of granite only here, creating an interesting dilemma for the sport: its existence depends entirely upon the availability of this limited resource. As the number of people interested in the sport increases, so, too, does the possibility of exhausting the substance and endangering the sport.

The quandary facing curling fans compares to one of the most pressing modern-day challenges: our existence entirely depends

upon a limited resource: time. Each day we face the reality that we only have a set number of hours—a supply that often fails to meet demand. This inspires many of our favorite expressions, such as: “There aren’t enough hours in a day,” “Too much to do, too little time,” or “Time flies.” It causes us to write thousands of titles related to the subject of “time management.” We feel extremely eager to solve this dilemma and carve out more time to do what we want in life. How and where we can get our hands on more of this resource?

Lawyers, especially in law firms, particularly face this challenge, often to an extreme degree. It takes a very high level of efficiency to successfully meet firm hour thresholds, while at the same time setting and achieving other professional and personal short- and long-term goals. Those who learn how to organize and manage their time well find critical information more quickly, think more clearly, work more productively, utilize legal skills more effectively, and make an overall better impression on clients and colleagues—not to mention avoid many of the common malpractice warning signals that relate to poor time management. Most importantly, implementing smart time management practices at work can help create more time for outside interests and personal goals.

In accelerated times, living life the way we want to live it and peacefully coexisting with the limited time available to us means learning how to more effectively and efficiently work with the hours we do have. Like the blue hone granite, there are limited quantities of time. We cannot create more of it. However, we can learn how to more effectively manage the promises, commitments, and choices we make with the time we have.

◆ INEFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

MALPRACTICE WARNING SIGNALS

- * Fails to make and follow a priority task list
- * Disorganized office
- * Disorganized files
- * Fails to keep personal calendar
- * Sloppy timekeeper (see the “Capturing Time” worksheet at § 38:8)

§ 38:2 The three keys

This chapter will introduce you to three key strategies at the heart of many leading time management theories and raise your awareness about the primary stumbling blocks that can derail many of our best efforts

§ 38:3 First key: planning

In Chapter 33, you learned how to create an effective individual development plan. The purpose of this exercise was to help you gain clarity around the results you seek in your personal and professional life. Creating a clear plan with concrete goals and action steps provides the single most important step towards gaining a greater degree of control over your time. Without goals, objectives, and a clear sense of direction, you can feel like you live your life in reactive mode. This can lead to exhaustion, lowered productivity, and, eventually, burn out—also known as the “Hamster Wheel” effect.

No Plan = “Hamster Wheel” Effect

Though your objectives may shift over time, a working plan will help you to regain footing when you slip into reactive mode, which can happen to even the most efficient time manager.

Step one: get a system

Once you have a development plan in place, smart planning means using it to inform your monthly, weekly, and daily choices. To do this effectively, you need a system for tracking action steps, tasks, and activities. A mental note-taking system or jotting items on post-it notes will not position you well for keeping up with life's many activities or the demands of a high stakes law work environment. You need to capture all tasks, big and small, in a system that exists outside of your mind. This cuts down on excessive mind clutter, reduces anxiety and stress, and enables you to chart a proactive course towards your goals.

To find the right system for you, consider your preference for paper or technology. Do you prefer to write your tasks on paper? Type them into a personal device? Many prefer to use a combination of paper and electronic tools. Visit a store like Franklin Covey or search "planners" on the Web for paper planning options. Technology solutions and "apps" also abound if you prefer the electronic route. A little research and online shopping will turn up multitude options.

Most importantly you must find a system that works for you. A simple spiral bound notebook for capturing tasks along with an electronic calendaring tool such as Microsoft Outlook can provide a perfectly adequate system. Do not change an existing system if it works for you or merely to feel like you need to buy the "latest and greatest" planning tool. However, if it re-energizes you to find a new system, by all means do so! Having a good system matters, but will only help you to the extent of the practices and habits you use to change how you spend your time.

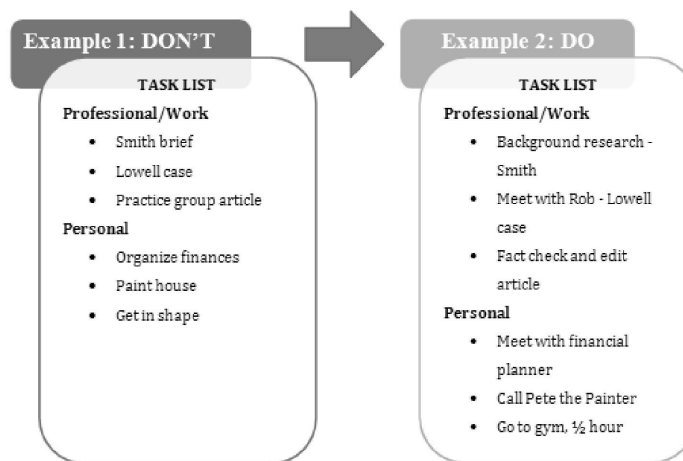
Step two: weekly and daily planning — creating an effective "to do" list

One of the great time management ironies is that it takes time to make time. Effective planning starts with setting aside 10 to 15 minutes once a week (for example, Sunday evening or Monday morning) and at the beginning and end of each day to review your short- and long-term goals and the steps you will take during the week or day ahead to meet those goals. When working on your task lists, realistically assess their size and the steps involved. Many of us mistakenly create task lists so large they collapse under their own weight, leading us to abandon them out of frustration and feel that we have not achieved anything at the end of a day or week.

Smart planning begins with smart “to do” lists. To create an effective list, keep these tips in mind:

- Keep tasks realistic, small, and achievable.
- If you cannot accomplish a certain task in one to two hours or, at the maximum, in one day, break the items down smaller.

Below we give two examples that illustrate this concept. Example one shows a typical task list many of us might have, with items too large and vast even for a weekly list. Example two shows a more reasonable, realistic, and effective approach to integrating planning into our lives and taking steps towards our goals.



Step three: schedule it

Now that you have a reasonable task list broken down into its smallest elements, give every task a deadline. If you have a large project to consider, start from the end deadline and work backwards to the present. For example, say one of your upcoming projects requires you to write a large brief. To approach this project in the most efficient manner, you need to consider all of the steps involved and create a realistic timeline and deadlines for each stage of the process, such as research, planning, writing, fact-checking, and editing. Think about all of the elements, map them to a calendar, and build in time for inevitable interruptions. Most of us fall down at this stage in our planning, despite our best efforts, because we do not realistically assess the project and our abilities, nor do we build in time for unexpected distractions. For those of you who use Microsoft Outlook, putting this idea into practice might look something like this:

Scheduling “To Do” List Tasks



Figure 1

Some find this approach too structured, while others find it essential to their productivity. Everyone differs, so try different tips and strategies to learn what works for you. The best approach for you may involve a combination of different scheduling techniques.

§ 38:4 Second key: prioritizing

Learning how to prioritize forms the core of effective time management. Without prioritization, all of your tasks can start to look equally important and urgent, which can quickly make you feel that life is an endless, overwhelming “to do” list with your most important goals left unaccomplished.

Many of Franklin Covey’s theories and strategies related to prioritization help us to distinguish between “urgent,” “important,” “not urgent” and “not important” tasks.¹ According to Covey, most of us commonly give our attention to urgent yet unimportant activities, taking the focus away from many of the tasks that matter most to our fulfillment, or our “not urgent” yet “important” plans and goals. Covey highlights the fact that for most of us, the things we care about most in life often get pushed aside to deal with the urgent, pressing matters that are the norm in modern-day life and work.² Unfortunately, over time, this tendency leads us to deprive our personal goals and objectives the time and attention they need to come to fruition, and we look back over life feeling like we did not accomplish *our* objectives. To ensure we work the most important goals into our planning, we need to get in the habit of evaluating our daily tasks in terms of importance, value, urgency, and relevance to our overall work and life goals so that we do not squander our time.

For 10 years, researchers studied the behavior of busy managers in nearly a dozen large companies. Their findings on managerial behavior showed that fully 90% of managers squander their time in all sorts of ineffective activities. This means a mere 10% of managers spend their time in a committed, purposeful, and reflective manner.³ To help us identify where we squander our time as a result of poor planning and lack of prioritization, the Franklin Covey theory lays out a four-quadrant time matrix.⁴ In evaluating the matrix below, which quadrants tend to absorb

[Section 38:4]

¹Covey, F. (1994). *First Things First*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

²Covey, F. (1994). *First Things First*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

³Bruch, H. & Ghosal, S. (2002). *Beware the Busy Manager*. Harvard Business Review. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Publishing.

⁴Covey, F. (1994). *First Things First*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

most of your energy and time?

Prioritization: Are You North or South of the Line?

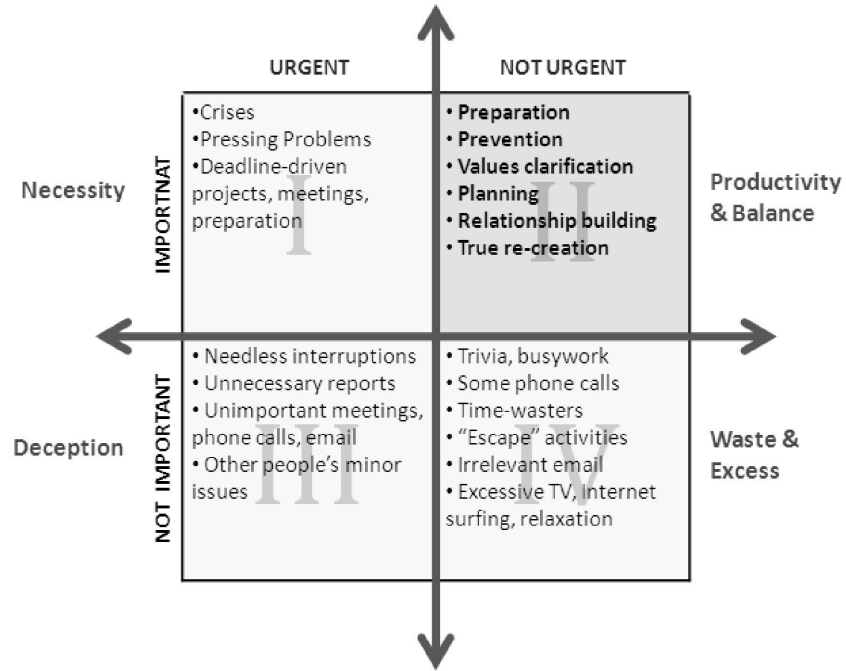


Figure 2

According to Covey, to experience the greatest degree of balance in our lives, we should spend the majority of our time in Quadrants I and II. In reality, however, most of us spend our time in Quadrants III and IV.

Below, we show an example of the quadrants at work during a typical law firm workday:

The Quadrants at Work

	Activity	Quadrant
8:30 — 9:15 a.m.	Arrive at office, get coffee, daily planning and prioritizing.	Quadrant II Productivity & Balance
9:30 — 10:30 a.m.	Colleague drops by — you feel obligated to socialize.	Quadrant III Deception
10:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.	Respond to e-mails; work on nonprioritized planned projects	Quadrant I Necessity Quadrant III Deception
12:30 — 1 p.m.	Go out to get lunch On way back into office, partner requests your presence in unexpected conference call and meeting	Quadrant I Necessity
1 — 1:45 p.m.	Eat lunch, check e-mail, Prepare for conference call	Quadrants I, III Necessity, Deception
2 — 3:30 p.m.	Conference call, debrief	Quadrant I Necessity
3:45 — 4:30 p.m.	Check and respond to work e-mail, read industry newsletters, surf Internet, check personal e-mail	
Quadrant IV Waste & Excess		
4:30 p.m.	Finally return to plan for day	Quadrant II Productivity & Balance

	Activity	Quadrant
	How discouraging! A day full of unexpected interruptions.	
4:30 — 6:45 p.m.	Start on a prioritized project due tomorrow	Quadrant I Necessity
7 — 10 p.m.	Dinner with friends visiting from out of town	Quadrant I Necessity Quadrant II Productivity & Balance
10 p.m. — midnight	Watch TV, surf Internet	Quadrant IV Waste & Excess

Figure 3

Look at all familiar? In this example, the worker spent the majority of time in Quadrants I (Urgent/Important), III (Deception), and IV (Waste & Excess). Everyone wants our time and attention and everyone's requests *seem* equally urgent, which often results in our goals and objectives buried beneath those of others. To prioritize effectively, we must focus on those tasks that matter most to us *at this time*. Your value of collegiality may conflict with turning away a colleague when he or she visits, but *at this time* focusing on your work and gaining traction at the beginning of the day matters more to your overall productivity, fulfillment, and sense of balance.

Many people have a hard time learning how to make this distinction and put their own needs first, which often causes short-term, nonimportant urgencies to engulf their time and take them from those things that matter most to their long-term growth, development and fulfillment. It takes persistence to stay on track, but to do this, you must revisit your priorities, learn how to better handle inevitable interruptions, and return to your plan. Take the time to review what caused your plans to get derailed at your 10- to 15-minute close-of-day planning or during the next morning's planning and make adjustments to your approach. Interruptions, unexpected deadlines and crises, and unexpected events inevitably happen in life and work. Getting back on track can help ensure that you meet your goals and

objectives. Later in this chapter, we will discuss a few strategies for effectively dealing with interruptions.

§ 38:5 Third key: creating blocks of uninterrupted time

Time management theorists and neurologists agree that to operate at the highest levels of productivity and efficiency, we need to schedule blocks of uninterrupted time into our schedules.¹ The human brain processes serially and needs dedicated focus time to work effectively.

◆ PRACTICE FOCUSING!

- * Schedule 60- to 90-minute time blocks to focus.
- * Drive, walk and eat without talking on the cell (or texting!).
- * Take deep breaths.
- * Slow down.

We often talk about “multitasking” in a positive light, but realistically, the human brain can only focus on one thing at a time. “Multitasking” actually reduces our productivity. As time management guru Steve Prentice highlights in his book *Cool Time*, when the mind knows it has only a fixed amount of time to accomplish a task, it will more likely do it. Many of us know this instinctively, which explains why we might plan to arrive at work an hour early or stay late at the end of a day. We all accomplish more in a quiet office or home.² If we take this same principal and include quiet time *within* our day instead of adding extra hours at the beginning or end to get the same amount of work done, Prentice and others suggest that we will operate at a much higher level of efficiency. They suggest scheduling 60- to 90-minute time blocks during your high energy times, plan for interruptions, and guard this time with all your might! In taking our subject in the example above, if she had set aside a time block in the morning and closed her door during this time, she would have avoided the interruption by her colleague and would have started on her prioritized tasks sooner in the day which would have given her the traction she needed. She would have ended the day with more accomplished.

You can also improve your efficiency by grouping as many like activities together into your schedule as possible. Research finds that we perform four times more productively when we focus on

[Section 38:5]

¹Prentice, Steve. (2005). *Cool Time*. Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley.

²Prentice, Steve. (2005). *Cool Time*. Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley.

one type of task rather than switching back and forth between different ones.³ Activities that lend themselves to grouping include: returning nonurgent telephone calls, processing e-mail, filing, researching, and reading. Prentice even suggests we create an automatic voice mail each day that includes today's date, an invitation for callers to leave a detailed message, a promise you will respond by a specific time, and a closing remark that you are happy to hear from them.⁴ He suggests a similar practice for e-mails, encouraging us to respond only at preestablished, designated times.⁵ Putting this theory into practice using the example from earlier in the chapter might look like this:

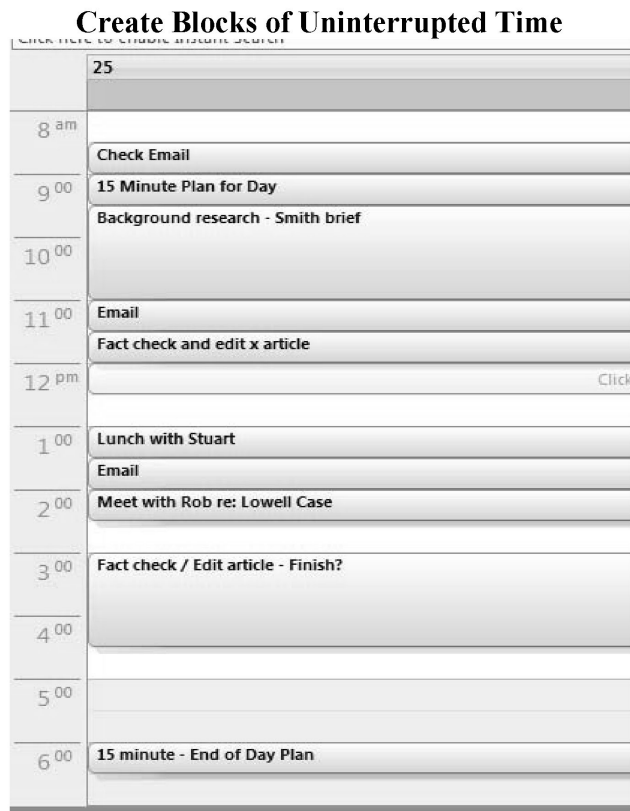


Figure 4

³Prentice, Steve. (2005). Cool Time. Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley.

⁴Prentice, Steve. (2005). Cool Time. Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley.

⁵Prentice, Steve. (2005). Cool Time. Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley.

§ 38:6 Top three enemies

Though simple strategies, many of us tend to fall short of implementing them, get frustrated, and resort back to old habits. The secret to turning the three time management keys involves learning how to gracefully handle the three enemies you will likely encounter: interruptions, procrastination, and perfectionism.

Obstacle one: Interruptions — people and e-mail

In the section above, we looked at an example of how interruptions — coworkers, e-mails, unexpected meetings — can derail our best-laid plans for the day. Studies show that on a typical day, office workers are interrupted about seven times an hour, which adds up to 56 interruptions a day, 80% of which are considered trivial.¹ The estimated cost of interruptions to the U.S. economy is \$588 billion a year.² Some interruptions deserve your attention, but most do not. If you manage a team, for example, you may have to stay available and responsive to your team members. You may decide that holding brief, regular team meetings gives you a more effective way to avoid these interruptions.

You must learn when and how to say no and how to negotiate in response to competing requests on your time. You do not have enough time to please everyone else—and yourself. Living a productive, balanced life requires identifying which requests critically impact the goals that matter most to us *at this time*. Assess each situation and identify those circumstances in which you have control and can say no, such as with drop-by coworkers. Learning strong communication practices can save you a lot of time, frustration, and resentment.

When to Say No:

1. Not important
2. Can do later
3. Someone else can do it

[Section 38:6]

¹Cole, Wendy. (2004, October 11). “Please Go Away.” *Time*. Retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,995299,00.html>.

²Spira, Jonathan B. (2005). “The Cost of Not Paying Attention: How Interruptions Impact Knowledge Worker Productivity.” Basex Research. Retrieved from [http://www.basex.com/web/tbghome.nsf/23e5e39594c064ee852564ae004fa010/ea4eae828bd411be8525742f0006cde3/\\$FILE/CostOfNotPayingAttention.BasexReport.pdf](http://www.basex.com/web/tbghome.nsf/23e5e39594c064ee852564ae004fa010/ea4eae828bd411be8525742f0006cde3/$FILE/CostOfNotPayingAttention.BasexReport.pdf).

4. A task you do not want to do

When to Say Yes Yet Negotiate:

1. Important request by supervisor or partner
2. Spouse
3. Child or parent
4. Best friend

Ask yourself how much it matters to the person making the request? How little does it matter to you? How much time will it take? Will it get you off schedule? Is this a pattern for you? Is the request unreasonable? Are you being unreasonable?

Steve Prentice suggests that, to find success and satisfaction in life, we must learn how to deal with requests on our time and communicate in a calm, rational way.³ Below we provide two examples for how to handle requests on our time. One involves a colleague who drops by when you do not have time to talk and the other involves a senior partner asking for your time when you already feel overloaded.

Example: Drop-By Colleague

Colleague [drops by your office]: “Long time, no talk! How are things going? How was your weekend?”

You: “Things are great, weekend was really busy! Had to work on Sunday. Hey, I would love to catch up with you but I am really crunched for time right now, have a lot on my plate. Can I catch up with you later today or later this week when I have more time?”

Colleague: “Oh, sure.”

You: “Thanks for understanding—I will touch base with you later.”

Though simple, this type of conversation tends to feel very uncomfortable for many of us. To more effectively manage our time, however, we need to learn how to master this kind of clear communication. Set up a lunch, after-hours get together, or drop by your colleague's office later in the day or week when you can have greater control of the amount of time involved. These kinds of interruptions will happen in both our personal and professional lives. Learning how to gracefully handle them can save us inordinate amounts of time.

Example: Negotiating with Partner

Partner: “Stan, I have a research project I need you to complete as soon as possible. Can you handle this?”

³Prentice, Steve. (2005). *Cool Time*. Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley.

You: “Sure, absolutely. I know you need this as soon as possible. By what exact time do you need this?”

Partner: “As soon as you can get to it would be great.”

You: “Okay, I look forward to helping out with this. Right now, I have two other urgent projects on my plate from other partners that I hope to finish today. Would tomorrow at 4 p.m. work for you?”

Partner: “That should be okay, but any later than that and I should get another associate to work on the project.”

You: “Great. I will get it to you tomorrow afternoon.”

Many of us have a difficult time negotiating with those in positions of power, particularly in the early years of our careers. For example, a first-year law firm associate may feel he or she has no bargaining power and must take on every project. While this can establish your reputation as a dedicated, hard worker, you must recognize when saying “yes” may adversely affect your reputation by sacrificing the overall quality of your work. Most partners would prefer that you express interest in the project while also honestly explaining the other matters on your plate so that your other projects do not jeopardize the quality of his work. It is much more effective and efficient to honestly communicate than say yes to too many projects and sell yourself—and your supervisor—short in the end.

E-mail

According to statistics, the average manager spends two hours each day on e-mail, and e-mail and storage tasks consume 40% of a typical professional’s day.⁴ Some research suggests that e-mail volume is rising at a rate of 14.6% per year.⁵ Time management expert Dave Allen suggests touching each piece of information input once and making a decision on each one immediately.⁶ He calls it the “Three Minute, One Touch” rule. If you can accomplish the task in three minutes or less and make minor decisions quickly, do it immediately to clear your mind of clutter. If it will take longer than three minutes, file it for appropriate action. Using this approach, your in-box should only include active “to do” messages. You should have filed or deleted everything else. Take the time to reference online help forums and tutorials in your e-mail management software for tips and tools for effectively managing e-mail. It may surprise you to learn all the things your

⁴Prentice, Steve. (2005). *Cool Time*. Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley.

⁵Prentice, Steve. (2005). *Cool Time*. Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley.

⁶Allen, David. (2002). *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. New York, NY: Penguin.

e-mail management software (such as Microsoft Outlook) can do to help you work more efficiently. A few tips:

- Use folders, rules, flags, color coding, and other organizational tools in your e-mail client software to keep your inbox organized.
- Take advantage of free software tutorials (such as Microsoft Outlook).
- Write clear subject lines.
- When reasonable, consider setting aside specific times of the day to check and respond to email. Check email only three to four times a day.
- Turn off e-mail notification, particularly during your uninterrupted time blocks.
- For e-mails that you cannot answer right away but deserve a response, reply to the sender that you have received the e-mail and indicate a time by which you will respond. Place these e-mails in an action folder and add 'check this folder' to your priority list.

When you find your daily priorities have been derailed by interruptions, whether people or e-mail, take a few minutes to regroup, refer back to your priorities and plan for the day, set aside blocks of time to concentrate, and get back in the groove.

Obstacle two: procrastination (most common trap!)

You reach the office early at 8 a.m. sharp. You plan, prioritize, and schedule your daily tasks. For your first task, you must complete a research project due in two days. You dread this task and do not feel at all inspired to complete it. You push desk papers around, get coffee, talk to a coworker, return to your office, check and respond to e-mail, read news on the Internet, organize your desk. Before you know it, it is time for lunch. After lunch, you promise yourself you will get back on track. Your strategy for doing so is to focus on a few other projects you enjoy more than this research to gain some degree of traction. You complete several other tasks. Near the end of the day, you realize you have made no progress on the research. Well, you have tomorrow, you tell yourself. Tomorrow you promise yourself to focus entirely on this research. Your next morning goes similarly to the day before. You think, "What is wrong with me? I am running out of time. Why can't I get this done?" You end up staying at the office late into the night because the research proves more complicated than you expected. You end up pulling it together by the deadline but you ultimately did not have enough time to fully investigate all the angles before you needed to check in with the

partner on your progress. You feel disappointed in yourself because you enjoy working with this partner and wanted to impress her. You feel tired, stressed, and regretful that you put off the project for no good reason, which ultimately led to substandard performance in your estimation.

Tips for Tackling Procrastination

- Go back to planning basics. Break your projects into small tasks starting from your end date and working back to the present.
- Plot these tasks on your schedule and reward yourself for each step taken.
- Consider Alan Lakein's "Swiss Cheese Technique."⁷ Pick a small, fast, easy and "instant" task related to your project. Follow this with another and then another. As the cheese wedge gets filled with holes you will gain momentum. Consider starting with five minutes only and give yourself permission to quit after those five minutes. After a series of these teasers, you will realize you can accomplish the tasks, and so you continue and accomplish your goal.
- Remind yourself about the positive outcomes of having the project done and the negative consequences of not doing the job well or missing the deadline.
- If you can delegate, do it!

We all have a tendency to procrastinate and postpone complex or unpleasant tasks. To prevent this, you need to honestly assess what leads to your particular brand of procrastination. Do you not feel informed enough to start or complete the task? Do you fear asking a supervisor the questions that will help you to get started on the right foot? Do you postpone similar kinds of tasks regularly? What do you always seem to get done versus postpone? Do you easily start projects but have a hard time finishing? Do you have trouble starting, but once you get into it, you gain momentum?

◆ FIVE REASONS WE PROCRASTINATE

- 1-. Projects are too large and not broken down into smaller tasks
- 2-. We do not know where to start
- 3-. It is a boring or unpleasant task
- 4-. We fear asking the questions that might help us get started

⁷Lakein, Alan. (1997). Give Me a Moment and I'll Change Your Life: Tools for Moment Management. Kansas City, KS: Andrews McMeel Publishing.

- 5-. We prefer the excitement of “shiny new” projects to the “moldy oldies”

Consider how procrastination manifests in your life, recognize when it happens and get back on track. Most importantly, do not punish yourself. When we give ourselves a hard time for a natural tendency, not only does it not solve the problem, but it makes matters worse by increasing anxiety and feelings of guilt, which can lead to more procrastination! It is a part of life. Spend time assessing the root cause of your procrastination, and put strategies in place to combat it when it runs the risk of severely derailing your plans.

Obstacle three: perfectionism

Our third obstacle, perfectionism, can subtly eat away large chunks of our time. Perfectionism can derail effective time management strategies when we do not know when to stop working. How does the sculptor know when he has finished the sculpture? What does “good enough” look like? What does “finished” look like?

Often the brightest people suffer the most from perfectionism and have a difficult time knowing when they have made their work “good enough.” For example, while writing a brief, you keep envisioning a better way to structure it. And a better way. And a better way. And a better way. Before you know it, you have one day remaining before the deadline and have not finished some of the more substantive sections. Turning in a brief with two flawless sections and others that you have not fully explored means a substandard final product. Alternatively, you may stay up all night for multiple days in a row to create a perfect final product, with all sections flawless—yet the version you created two days ago was well beyond adequate to serve the client's purposes. A perfectionist may feel he or she needs to build a castle when a well constructed center-hall colonial would more than suffice.

Overcoming perfectionism requires practicing letting go and learning when you have created a sufficient product. If you struggle with knowing when you have made your work “good enough,” talk to a supervisor or mentor you trust about your work. Request honest, constructive feedback about what he requires and whether certain changes or edits were necessary or overboard.

§ 38:7 Getting started

Just like curling's blue granite, time *is* a limited resource. Learning how to manage it to work productively and efficiently

and achieve goals relies upon the extent to which you can create new habits. Like any worthwhile effort, doing so takes time, practice, and persistence. One recent study found that to develop a relatively simple habit like eating a piece of fruit each day or taking a 10-minute walk at lunchtime, we must repeat the new behavior daily over two months before it becomes a habit.

◆ **FINAL SUMMARY TIPS**

- * Experiment with various techniques, tips, and strategies.
- * Check whether you focus enough energy on the things that matter most to you.
- * Make note of the main culprits usurping your time and vary your approach to combat them.
- * Team up with a friend or coworker working on similar goals or hire a time management coach. Accountability helps create lasting change.
- * Remember there is no “correct” way to manage your time, nor a one-size-fits-all solution. Better time management requires vigilance.

To get started, take a few moments to complete the assessment on the following page. This evaluation will help you to identify your primary areas for development so that you can identify the most effective strategies for you. Once you have finished the evaluation, use your responses to inform the use of the remaining worksheets and exercises.

We cannot do anything about the limited time available to us, but with determination and a positive sense of direction, we can create the space necessary to make goals and dreams a reality.

Small Changes Add Up*

Minutes “found” per day	Minutes “found” each year	Hours “found” each year	Based on an average hourly billing rate of \$300, revenues gained each year
6	1,320 minutes	22 hours	\$6,600.00
15	3,300 minutes	55 hours	\$16,500.00
30	6,600 minutes	110 hours	\$33,000.00

* Figures are based on 220 working days per year

§ 38:8 Worksheet #1: assessment of time management skills

Instructions: Answer “true” or “false” in response to the following statements. Evaluate the statements honestly and do not over-think your answers.

1. I use my personal development plan and goals to inform my daily, weekly, and monthly priorities. True / False
2. My system for tracking tasks and appointments is _____.
3. This system is effective and supports me in the achievement of my goals/priorities. True / False
4. I regularly take the time to plan my priorities for the week ahead. True / False
5. I set aside time each morning to plan my day and prioritize tasks. True / False
6. When I create my task or “to do” lists, I try to break each item into its smallest possible elements. True / False
7. When I estimate how long tasks will take to complete, I build in time for the unexpected. True / False
8. I delegate as much and as often as I can. True / False
9. It is the rare exception that I don't meet a deadline. True / False
10. I regularly build blocks of uninterrupted time into my schedule. True / False
11. I have put systems and strategies in place for handling phone call, e-mail, and/or people interruptions, particularly during the time blocks I have set aside as high concentration periods. True / False
12. I am comfortable saying no or negotiating, to the extent appropriate, in response to demands on my time. True / False
13. I am aware of the tools available to me for keeping my e-mail in-box organized. True / False
14. I try to keep procrastination to a minimum; overall, it rarely decreases my productivity and/or achievement of my goals. True / False
15. I have a good sense when good is “good enough” and don't have a need to perfect things. True / False

Scoring

Add up all of the statements to which you responded “true”. Give yourself 1 point for each, then refer to the scale below:

10–14 points: Congratulations! You are a time management

superstar! Unless you received a perfect score, you may still have areas in which you would like to make improvements. Note those statements to which you responded false and focus your energy on making adjustments in those areas.

5–9 points: Good work! You seem to have mastered a number of the keys to effective time management. Look closely at the statements to which you responded false and refer back to the sections of this chapter that address those specific time management keys or enemies. Think about how you might be able to work some of the strategies from this chapter or other time management resources into your day-to-day professional and personal life.

0–4 points: Kudos to you for your honesty in responding to these statements. Simply completing this worksheet is your first step toward implementing a more effective time management system! Take a look at the statements to which you responded false, refer back to the content of this chapter, and start mapping out a strategy for how you will make changes in each of these areas. With persistence, in just a short time you will be answering “true” to these statements.

§ 38:9 Worksheet #2: getting started — effective time management

Instructions: Following are 20 time management strategies and tips from this chapter. Pick three of these strategies to try this week and track the effectiveness of the tips and strategies you implement. Which ones work for you? Which ones do not? Why? Why not? Next week, continue with the ones that work and add in one or two others. Continue this practice until you find the balance that works for you.

3 Keys: Plan, Prioritize, Create Uninterrupted Time Blocks

1. Create a development plan.
2. Put a time management system into place: paper or electronic.
3. Implement more effective billable time keeping (see worksheets #2, 3, and 4).
4. Create a more effective document and file management system (see Chapter 40, Organizational Skills) and, where applicable, train your staff to use the system to support you.
5. Start taking at least 10 minutes every week and day to plan, using your short- and long-term goals to inform your choices.

6. Create a more effective “to do” list by breaking large projects into small tasks.
7. Prioritize weekly and daily tasks.
8. Schedule your tasks into your calendar.
9. Set aside uninterrupted time blocks and protect them!
10. Hold brief weekly meetings with team members to cut down on interruptions.
11. Group similar tasks to accomplish at set times (such as email or making phone calls).

3 Obstacles: Interruptions, Procrastination, and Perfectionism.

12. Practice saying no and negotiating with others—communicate!
13. Use online and e-mail management software tools and tutorials.
14. Experiment with turning off your e-mail notification for set periods of time.
15. Ask more questions to get the information you need to start undesirable projects.
16. When procrastinating, use the “Swiss Cheese Technique.”
17. Keep a log of the culprits taking over your time and vary your approach to combat them.
18. Delegate early and often.
19. If you have perfectionist tendencies, ask a supervisor or mentor for feedback on how to recognize when you have made your work good enough.
20. Get an accountability partner or coach.

§ 38:11 Worksheet #4: capturing billable time (example 2)

Date: _____

Page: _____

Client: _____

Matter #

Start time: _____

End time: _____

Time billed:

Description: _____

Client: _____

Matter #

Start time: _____

End time: _____

Time billed:

Description: _____

Client: _____

Matter #

Start time: _____

End time: _____

Time billed:

Description: _____

TIME MANAGEMENT

§ 38:11

Client: _____

Matter #

Start time: _____ End time: _____ Time billed:

Description: _____

§ 38:12 Worksheet #5: daily planning

Date:

Must Do Priorities:

-
-
-
-
-

**Must E-mail or Call
Priorities:**

-
-
-
-
-

Files to deal with:

Name of File:

-
-
-
-
-
-

To Do:

Scheduled Events:

Matter:

-
-
-
-

Time and Notes: