

Time Does Not Change – You Have To!

BY
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Conquering Contact Center Time Management

52 weeks, 2,080 hours, 124,800 minutes, 7,488,000 seconds – all ways to measure the time available for the typical manager (not including those nights and weekends of extra time required to do the job well). The key question for most managers is, “How will I use this time to be effective?” We all have the same amount of time in the day, yet why do some people seem to get more done?

Why do some people seem more organized and seem to get to the important stuff while others reach the end of most days with that look of bewilderment, wondering how another day went by without getting everything done? The answer is organization and time management.

Time management – we have all heard the term but can we really manage time? We cannot squeeze in more minutes in an hour – so, we cannot really manage time – but we can manage how we use that time. We can become more effective by implementing a new level of fo-

cus in three key areas – mission, goals, planning. But, you are probably saying, “I have heard all of this before – and I still can’t seem to make it work.” Many people say it takes 21 days to begin a new habit so let’s explore the concepts and see if we can get a commitment to create new focus for the next 21 days – and see what happens.

Mission

A lot is said about the need for company vision and mission statements. In the place where you work, there is probably a company vision or mission statement on a plaque or in a frame in a hallway or lobby. If you can actually quote the statement in your head right now, you are one of roughly 10 percent of the people in the world who can do so. The company may have put a lot of effort into the statement, but it is sometimes hard to personalize that mission.

So, perhaps it is time to create your own statement. We first need to answer some questions in order to create the basis for the personal statement: What are your priorities? Is it to sell products? Manage resources? Collect money? Support software? *(Continued on page 26)*





Manage people? Develop people? Take some time to think about your focus. Based on the jobs required in most contact centers, hopefully developing people is at the top of your list. Here is a step-by-step process for creating your personal mission statement:

1. Choose a place away from work to do this exercise – Starbucks is my choice, but find a place that fits your personality.
2. Create a list of your priorities at work. (examples: develop people, meet sales objectives, meet efficiency objectives, create reports, meetings, etc.).
3. Based on your priorities, create three to four key goals for your work (examples: My goal is to build relationships with my team to develop their attitudes and skills to meet personal, team and center objectives).
4. Based on the goals, create a mission statement that mentions your key goals – putting a personal spin on the statement based on your personality (example: “I will use my passion for developing people to guide the way

I lead on a daily basis. I will seek to bring out the best in my team and build relationships with the call center and across the company to allow us to serve the customer.”).

5. This may take several sessions at Starbucks to complete the process – but that is OK, you can never have too many vente, soy milk, extra shot, caramel macchiatos.

Goals

In the mission exercise we outlined the personal goals that you have at work. In this exercise we will expand on the goals to include specific timeframes. Several years ago, I had a friend pay over \$10,000 to attend a well-known sales-training program in Vegas. The three-day program included some of the top speakers in the country. He came away from the meeting with a litany of ideas and concepts to implement to make him a better salesperson. He told me the sessions were great and he was anxious to implement the ideas. When I saw him about six months later, I asked how things were going and

asked if he still thought the seminar was worth the money. He pulled out a wire-bound notebook and pushed it across the table. He said out of all of the ideas, the one thing that had made a difference was in the book. He said he had begun to write down his goals across four timeframes. He had a list of goals for the year, the month, the week and a daily list. The goals had to meet three criteria. They had to be specific, measurable and have a timeline for completion. He said he had seen a 150 percent increase in his business as a result of the new habit.

I looked through the list and was struck by how detailed the goals really were. Annual goals had specific numbers tied to specific quarterly expectations. The monthly goals were also numerical and timeframe based. The daily goals in some cases moved toward a daily “to do” list with specific people to call or meet with about sales opportunities. Each goal had a measurable result with the ability to check it off as completed or not. I asked him why some goals were the same each day? He said, because no matter how focused he was, he still got distracted and sometimes had to move goals to the next day or week.

So, let’s use this as a measure for success with your goals. To complete this exercise, you will need a wire-bound notebook or a bound journal. On the inside cover write down your personal priorities and your work priorities. These lists will help keep you grounded and help you re-align your world when it gets out of alignment.

On page one write Goals 2009. These goals are long-range in nature; specific but what you hope to accomplish on the horizon. On page two write the next month on your calendar and on page three write tomorrow’s date. Looking at your priorities, goals and objectives that we completed in step one and begin to expound on the goals. Be specific – make them measurable and add a timeline.

Examples:

- Annual – “I will make coaching and development a key goal for the year. I will set specific monthly and daily goals for the number of people I coach.”

Top 15 Things You Should Do Now (that you have more time...)

BY BOB FURNISS AND SCOTT O. THOMAS

1. Walk the floor for one hour today (with no reason other than to be available).
2. Say something positive to each person on your team. (It may be hard, but you can do it! If they are on the phone, shake a hand or high five!)
3. Choose a specific person on your team and begin a mentoring relationship (low-performers are a great choice).
4. Read a book (seriously, invest in yourself).
5. Leave on time every day this week. (Your family and friends will love you for it!)
6. Schedule a one-on-one with every person on your team over the next two weeks.
7. Build a new relationship with a personal mentor; ask them how you are doing. Actively seek feedback.
8. Publicly recognize three people on your team – one high-performer, one mid-performer and a low-performer who has made progress lately.
9. Share a copy of this article with every team member.
10. Plan your next team meeting – share your goals, ask the team members to share theirs.
11. Watch a free webinar!
12. Ask your manager if you can help lighten their load! Then ask your direct reports!
13. Reach out to other departments. Ask them how your internal customer service is. See if you can help them with anything.
14. Find time to stretch, walk or exercise a bit. It will give you more energy and is a great habit!
15. Make someone on your team laugh. I mean a well-deserved belly laugh. CAUTION: It may require you being silly!

- Monthly – “I will complete 45 side-by-side monitoring sessions this month. I will complete 15 one-on-one meetings with my team this month. I will develop a new routine and schedule it within my Outlook calendar to walk the floor each day for an hour.”
- Daily – more in list format: “three side-by-side monitoring sessions, two one-on-one meetings (John and Sara), one-hour MBWA session (management by walking around – see Ken Blanchard’s book *One-Minute Manager*).”

See how the daily goals support the monthly goals - which in-turn support the annual goals. When this becomes a habit, you will see a difference in your life. How do I know? Because I have seen it happen in mine. My “little brown journal” had become such a part of my life that my kids kid me about taking it to the bathroom (which I have never done by-the-way).

Sometimes people ask me, how do you do all you do? My answer, “My little brown book.” Setting goals and managing your life will make a difference!

To Do Lists

In the previous exercise, we almost implemented this concept. The daily goals are actually a part of this program. But the To Do List is a more detailed extension. To Do Lists often are second nature for people who fall into the “driver” personality category, but it may be hard for others. My sister is so wrapped-up in the To Do list that she will actually write down something that she had already done and put a checkmark beside it because she says it makes her feel successful. My recommendation is that you try the To Do List concept for 21 days and see if it works for you – because I believe it will make a difference.

There are a couple of options for when to create these daily lists. One is at the end of the day – a time to review the previous day and validate the focus for the next day. Another option is to start your morning with this exercise. In my handy “little brown journal” I actually have items on my To Do List for

the next week. Items that I know I will not get to today may be listed for tomorrow. Less-urgent, but important items may get moved to the weekend or even to the next week. But living from a list helps keep me focused.

Re-Align and De-Clutter Your Life

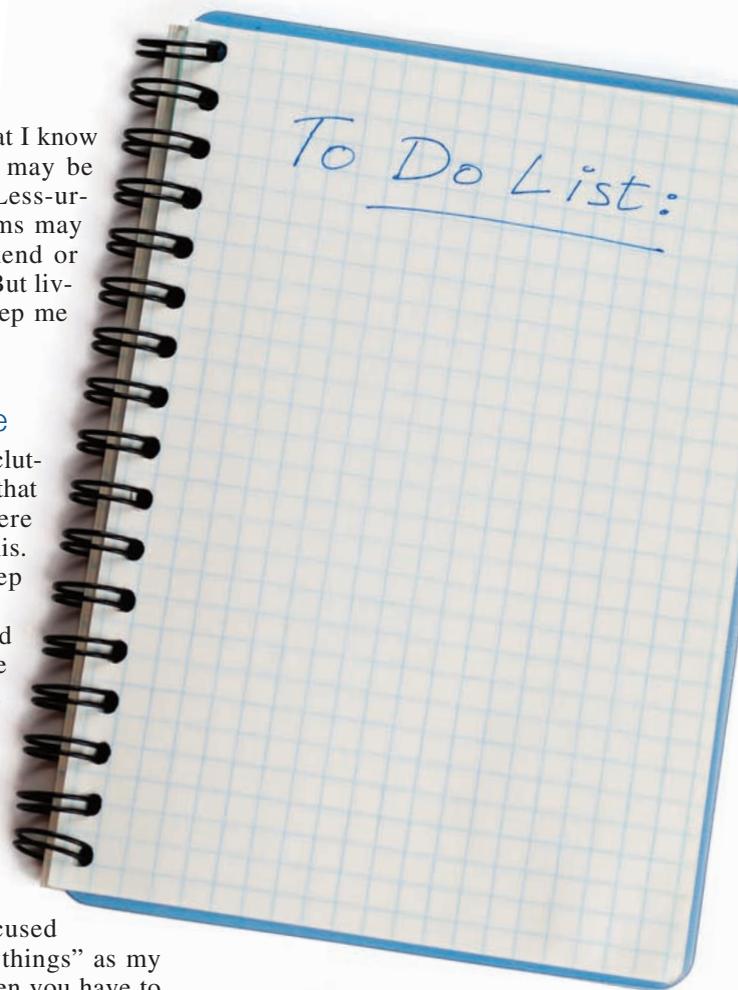
One last step is to de-clutter your life with things that are not necessary. There are several ways to do this. Again, it is a three-step process:

1. Learn to say no. I find this to be one of the hardest words to say. Your boss, or fellow employee, asks you to manage or help with a new project. Your “can-do” attitude says you should participate, but if you want to stay focused “mainly on the main things” as my friend Phil calls it, then you have to learn to say “no.” This is when the steps above will begin to pay-off. Now that you know what your priorities and goals are, ask yourself this question, “How does this project or additional item support my priorities and goals?” “If my day is full, what will I set aside in order to make room for this new responsibility?” Everyone knows that there are some things that are given to you by management and there is not an option for you to just say “no.” I once worked for a boss who constantly gave me new direction and items to add to my long list of responsibilities. I finally learned to take my list with me when I met with him. I would ask him where this falls into my current list of priorities and responsibilities. This was my way of pushing back on more work and it allowed him to update his expectations based on real data. Did it solve my problem and create magic in my life? No! But it helped.
2. Confirm how the new item fits into your personal goals. Does it help

- you accomplish new goals? Does it align with your mission statement? If not, then see if there is a way to say no. Is there a way to delegate the opportunity or problem? Consider the decision-tree methodology outlined in the sidebar article to help you make good decisions.
3. If yes is the right answer, work the new responsibility into your monthly and daily goals and To Do List.

Even with these new habits you will find a need to constantly re-align your work expectations to your lists. Remember this is a working document. My friend said this changed his life in a lot of ways. We talked several years later and he told me his business had grown so rapidly that he had hired two new assistants. He was building a new house and loved how much he was able to accomplish each day.

We have all been given the same 7,488,000 seconds of work each year – how you choose to manage yours is your decision – what will your new habit be in 2009? CP



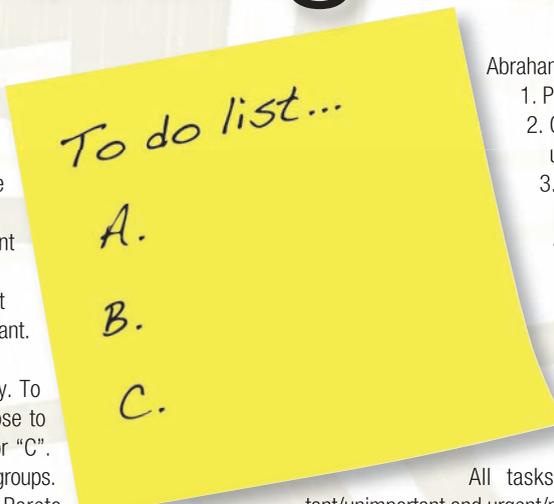
TECHNIQUES for Setting Priorities

ABC Analysis

A technique that has been used in business management for a long time is the categorization of large data into groups. These groups are often marked A, B and C—hence the name. Activities are ranked upon these general criteria:

- A – Tasks that are perceived as being urgent and important
- B – Tasks that are important, but not urgent
- C – Tasks that are neither urgent nor important.

Each group is then rank-ordered in priority. To further refine priority, some individuals choose to then force-rank all “B” items as either “A” or “C”. ABC analysis can incorporate more than three groups. ABC analysis is frequently combined with Pareto analysis.



Pareto Analysis

This is the idea that 80 percent of tasks can be completed in 20 percent of the disposable time. The remaining 20 percent of tasks will take up 80 percent of the time. This principle is used to sort tasks into two parts. According to this form of Pareto analysis it is recommended that tasks that fall into the first category be assigned a higher priority.

The 80-20-rule can also be applied to increase productivity: it is assumed that 80 percent of the productivity can be achieved by doing 20 percent of the tasks. If productivity is the aim of time management, then these tasks should be prioritized higher.

Fit

Essentially, fit is the congruence of the requirements of a task (location, financial investment, time, etc.) with the available resources at the time. Often people are constrained by externally controlled schedules, locations, etc., and “fit” allows us to maximize our productivity given those constraints. For example, if one encounters a gap of 15 minutes in their schedule, it is typically more efficient to complete a task that would require 15 minutes, than to complete a task that can be done in 5 minutes, or to start a task that would take 4 weeks. This concept also applies to time of the day. Fit can be applied to location — free time at home would be used differently from free time at work, in town, etc.

POSEC Method

POSEC is an acronym for Prioritize by Organizing, Streamlining, Economizing and Contributing.

The method dictates a template which emphasizes an average individual’s immediate sense of emotional and monetary security. It suggests that by attending to one’s personal responsibilities first, an individual is better positioned to shoulder collective responsibilities.

Inherent in the acronym is a hierarchy of self-realization which mirrors

Abraham Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs.”

1. PRIORITIZE-Your time and define your life by goals.
2. ORGANIZING-Things you have to accomplish regularly to be successful.
3. STREAMLINING-Things you may not like to do, but must do.
4. ECONOMIZING-Things you should do or may even like to do, but they’re not pressingly urgent.
5. CONTRIBUTING-By paying attention to the few remaining things that make a difference.

The Eisenhower Method

All tasks are evaluated using the criteria important/unimportant and urgent/not urgent and put in according quadrants. Tasks in unimportant/not urgent are dropped, tasks in important/urgent are done immediately and personally, tasks in unimportant/urgent are delegated and tasks in important/not urgent get an end date and are done personally. This method is said to have been used by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and is outlined in a quote attributed to him: “What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important.”

From Wikipedia

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