

Habit #3: Put First Things First

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An important aspect of being effective is to understand time management. The progression of time management is described as four generations:

1. Notes and checklists
2. Calendars and appointment books
3. Prioritization and comparing relative worth of activities
4. Manage ourselves and expectations, rather than managing time

Every activity can be allocated to a certain quadrant in the time management matrix depending on whether we consider it urgent or not urgent, important or not important. Depending on your center and priorities, your categorization may differ from those of another person. During our everyday, we often spend most of our focus on quadrant I (urgent and important) because of how pressing the problem is. Although some activities will inevitably fall into Quadrant I, if we put too many things into Quadrant I, this begins to reflect a reactive mindset solving problems only when they occur. Activities in Quadrant III (urgent and not important) and IV (not urgent and important) are associated with procrastination. Matters that are in Quadrant II (not urgent and important) are often avoided because they are not urgent, but often serve as preventative measures for matters we often find in Quadrant I.

In order to transition to a Quadrant II focus, one effective change would be to practice weekly organizing. By planning out a week in advance, this allows you to spread out your various responsibilities, identifying certain time constraints while allowing for a certain level of flexibility. The weekly scheduling allow for a chance for reorganization later in the week when activities ultimately take longer than expected, an opportunity that is often lacking in daily planning. Listing your responsibilities also gives you the time to delegate some of your work, giving others an opportunity to schedule these new tasks into their schedule, ultimately leading to a better collaborative environment.

Although delegation can help increase productivity, it is important to still make sure everyone is on top of their tasks. This requires not only a delegation of tasks, but also a general method or direction that you would like others to follow, including desired results, guidelines, resources, accountability, and consequences.