

## Time is a Unique Resource

*Abstract: Time management is not about squeezing more into a day or eliminating distractions. It's about managing activities to achieve goals. This article shows you how.*

How many times have you thought or said, “Sure, I’d like to (take a course, take a vacation, work on an additional skill or project, etc) but there just isn’t enough time.” When we say, “There just isn’t enough time,” we’re shirking responsibility. Let’s look at time and I’ll show you what I mean.

Time is a unique resource. It cannot be saved, stopped, or replaced. It’s interesting, then, that some people seem to “find time” to get things accomplished that others don’t. Some people seem to be able to “manage time” better than others and are thus able to “better use time.”

The fact is, these resourceful people cannot “find time” or “manage time” any more than the rest of us. Time cannot be “managed” or “found”. We all have the same amount of time in a day, a week, a month, and a year.

Everyone has: 24 hours in a day

168 hours in a week

8,736 hours in a year

613,200 hours in a lifetime (assuming a life span of 70 years)

306,600 hours left (assuming you’re now 35 years old)

How many hours do you have left in your life? Take a minute to calculate the time and write your answer in the margin. Compare the accomplishments you’ve achieved in the time you’ve already lived with the goals you want to achieve in the time you have left. Are you pleased with where you’re at and where you’re headed?

Ask yourself how you can use the remaining time to accomplish job, career, and personal goals that are meaningful for you. Ask yourself, “What is the one thing I can do TODAY that – if I did superbly – would have significant positive results in my department, career, or personal life?”

Managing time isn’t about time at all; it’s about priorities. It’s about achievements that – at the end of the day – are most important to you. It’s about setting achievable goals and using a planful method for achieving those goals amidst the many forces vying for your time every day.

## Align Your Goals With Outside Forces

Have you ever started a diet around the holidays? Unless you opted to go to a health camp for the holidays, you probably succumbed to the many temptations of tasty, not-very-healthy food found during these times. The fact that no one else seemed to be dieting didn’t help either! In short, your goal of losing weight wasn’t aligned with the realities of the season.



focus too much on the long-term goal OR on the day-to-day task. The truth is that you must look past the day-to-day and before the long-term goal to your intermediate goal.

Think about how you walk. Try walking by looking down at each step you take. You may not ever stumble, but you will certainly lose track of where you're headed. Now, try to walk by looking at your destination (say a building a mile away); you MAY reach your goal if you don't fall down the steps or get run over by a truck as you cross the street! To walk effectively, you must look forward – not a mile forward, but several steps ahead.

To effectively achieve your long-term goals, you must first break them down into intermediate goals, goals that can be reasonably achieved in a week (or for longer-term goals, in a month).

You will want to keep track of these intermediate goals on a monthly calendar. NOTE: You will also want to keep track of appointments, meetings, and other business action items on this monthly calendar as well; this will enable you to quickly see how packed or free any specific week will be.

## Daily Planning

Having long-term and intermediate goals are the first two steps to “managing time.” The third step is to ACT! As the saying goes, “The longest journey begins with the first step.”

Many people – all with good intentions – ignore the realities of the day when they first start integrating their intermediate goals in their daily regimen. They forget that they have meetings they're supposed to attend, job commitments they're expected to fulfill, and other things that will tug and pull at their available time. As a result, they become frustrated with their lack of progress on their goals and become angry with the things – work and family obligations – that are taking all their time.

Take a few minutes each morning to plan your day:

### Step 1: Identify your appointments, meetings, and other business action items.

Your first step in planning your day is to transfer appointments and other business action items from the monthly calendar. These are non-discretionary: you've already made commitments to them. Take time now to transfer any appointments and business action items from your monthly calendar onto your daily calendar in their appropriate places.

Time	✓	Schedule	Other
9AM			
10AM			
11AM			
12PM			
1PM			
2PM			
3PM			
4PM			
5PM			

### Step 2: Plan your daily duties.

Your second step is to plan your daily duties such as phone calls, mail, inbox items, etc. These are activities that are less defined than action items but still require a portion of your day. By planning these duties, you allot time for them without letting them drive your entire day.

### **Step 3: Make appointments with yourself.**

Your third step is to “make appointments with yourself” by identifying which intermediate steps you wish to tackle today. Transfer these discretionary activities (intermediate steps) from your Goal Planning page. This makes discretionary items non-discretionary by the simple act of recording the item in the daily plan. You move the future into the present so you can act upon it now!

Here are some tips to help you “manage time” and achieve long-term success:

- Limit the number of activities you plan for a day. Commit to – and complete – a few activities rather than overcommitting.
- Make a habit of planning for 15 minutes every day.
- Do your priority first. Period. Include a quiet time to accomplish your top priority.
- Take a long-range view of your commitments. Does your calendar fill up quickly? Should it? Space your non-discretionary time carefully week to week.
- Take a medium-range view when planning time for your intermediate steps. “What is the one thing that I know if I did superbly THIS WEEK would have significant positive results in my department, career, and/or personal life?”
- Use your time management system to keep important information such as your department, career, and personal goals and intermediate steps; your appointments, business action items, and other commitments; and your contacts.

### **Entelechy’s Time Mastery Tip**

“What is the one thing I can do TODAY that – if I did superbly – would have significant positive results in my department, career, or personal life?”

This information comes from *Time Mastery*, a module in Entelechy’s High Performance Management program. Check out this module as well as our 40 other modules, training tools, and eGuides at [www.unlockit.com](http://www.unlockit.com).

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