

TIME AND PRIORITIES: How to Maximize Your Vital Resources

Bobby Hill

Who controls how you use your time? Do you decide or are you being pushed to use your time in ways decided by your employer, your friends, your spouse or parents, or by others? In order to live your life according to your values, you must control your own time priorities. **You** have to decide what is **important** for you to do. And, **you** have to decide which things are **urgent** and which things can wait.

The author Stephen Covey designed a time management matrix* to help people manage themselves through managing their priorities. The quadrants of the matrix relate importance and urgency for life activities. Study the matrix shown here; typical activities that fall into each quadrant are illustrated.

I. URGENT & IMPORTANT	II. NOT URGENT & IMPORTANT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crises• Pressing Problems• Deadline-Driven Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation• Relationship Building• Recognizing New Opportunities• Planning• Spiritual Disciplines
III. URGENT & NOT IMPORTANT	IV. NOT URGENT & NOT IMPORTANT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interruptions• Many Pressing Matters• Some Phone Calls• Some Pager Calls• Some Mail• Some Meetings• Many Popular Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trivial activities• Busywork• Some Phone Calls• Junk Mail• Time Wasters• Escape Activities

* For reference see *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey, 1989, and *First Things First*, Stephen Covey, 1994.

Consider activities shown in each quadrant on the previous page:

I URGENT and IMPORTANT

Clearly, these activities should take first priority. However, your long term goal should be to reduce time spent here by prevention, preparation, etc. (see quadrant II).

II NOT URGENT but IMPORTANT

The key to success in gaining control of your time priorities is to focus on activities in this quadrant. If you are currently doing very little here, begin by carving out a small amount of time each day and building on it.

III URGENT and NOT IMPORTANT

Many of us get trapped by other people's sense of urgency telling us what is important. Allowing your priorities to fall here can result in a frenzied rush to get "things" done, followed by a sense of emptiness and lack of satisfaction.

IV NOT URGENT and NOT IMPORTANT

Obviously, minimize time spent in activities in this quadrant.

Now, write your own specific activities in this matrix and look at changes you can begin to make. A friend/coach could help you review what you write here and strategies for the future.

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III. URGENT & NOT IMPORTANT	IV. NOT URGENT & NOT IMPORTANT