

# **HOW TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF YOUR TIME**



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**HOW TO MAKE THE BEST  
USE OF YOUR TIME**

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**Center for Labor Research  
and Education**

**Institute of Industrial Relations  
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## INTRODUCTION

***“Not Enough Time”*** — You come to work in the morning wondering how you will get done all the many things that require your time and attention. The telephone starts to ring; someone needs to see you immediately; you try to remember where you put the memo about the grievance you were dealing with; papers are cluttering your desk; and you can’t find anything. Sometimes it seems as though your life bears out Murphy’s Law: “Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.” There just isn’t enough time to accomplish what you have to do, what you expect of yourself, and what others expect of you.

***Aims of This Booklet*** — This booklet will give you some tips about how you can change that feeling of being overwhelmed. It will suggest better methods of work that will enable you to achieve more in less time. It will give you suggestions to help you direct your energies toward accomplishing what is essential and avoiding activities that waste your time or take you away from your major goals.

***We All Have the Same Amount of Time***—First, it is important to remember that we all have the same amount of time—168 hours each week!

***Making Choices is the Key***—Secondly, it is not the amount of time, but what we do with it that separates those who use time well from those who do not. While pressures from the outside often have an overwhelming influence on how we shape our day, it is still up to us to make choices, to differentiate what is more important from what is trivial or time-wasteful. We can constantly improve our effectiveness in using time.



***Self Management, Not Time Management***—So, instead of thinking about **time management**, think of the process as **self-management**, and you will have taken an important step toward your goal of achieving the most effective use of your time.

***How to Use This Book***—Turn to the Checklist at the back of the book, “How Well Do You Organize Your Time,” pp. 35-36. Responding to the questions will help you pinpoint your strengths and weaknesses in handling time. Use the Checklist as a guide to help you select the appropriate sections of the book that will be most valuable to you. From time to time review the items on the Checklist to spot problem areas that you decide require further study and work on your part.

You will find that the key to time management is making choices—to the degree that it is possible to do so—as to the best use of your time at any particular moment. Also remember that habits and attitudes do not change overnight. Any change, however small, that gives you confidence about your ability to handle time more effectively is a major gain. The aim of this book is to help you make these changes realizable in terms of your own needs, goals, work-and-life styles.

## **PART 1**

### **HOW TO GET ORGANIZED**

***Organization is a Learned Skill***—anyone can do it. If you have never tried time management, here is a way to begin:

***Set Goals***—First, you have to know what it is you want to, or have to, get done. That means setting goals. Setting goals is essential in any effort to improve effectiveness in your work and your life.

Without knowing where you want to go, you have no way of evaluating whether you are achieving any more or less or getting better or worse results than you did before.

Goals give you a sense of direction; even if you don't achieve them, or reach them only part way, at least you know where it is you are heading and what you are trying to accomplish.

***Four Steps: Step One*** is to ask yourself, "What is it I am trying to accomplish in my job? What are the needs of my job? What would I like to accomplish in the next year, the next month, the next week, right now — today?"

Write down these goals. Think about them. Are they realistic? Do you have to do them all, or can others in the organization be called upon for help?

Next, begin to set your goals by asking yourself a crucial question: "If I had more time, what would I do with it?" List all the uses to which you could put your time, if you had more of it, as the ideas occur to you. Be specific.

**Step Two** is to get out your **appointment book and your calendar**. These are essential parts of your time management tool kit. Write down all the “givens” you know you have to do each week, each month during the year—negotiating a contract that will come due sometime during the year, scheduling regular visits to workplaces (if that is part of your job), all the regular tasks you are expected to attend to.

Block out and enter into your appointment book and calendar the meetings you go to on a regular basis—membership meetings, executive board meetings, community organization meetings occurring on a regular schedule—everything you can plan in advance.

**Step Three** is to make a list of everything you can think of that needs to be done **today**. Put **everything** down; it doesn’t have to be in any order. As thoughts occur, jot them down.

**Step Four** is key. After you have made your list, look over the items. After reviewing the items you have listed, select the top three to five jobs that definitely **must** be done today, and number them, assigning number 1 to the most pressing task, number 2 to the next most important, and so on. **Prioritizing** your goals for the day helps you to judge where your energy should be directed for best results in line with your long range goals and work plan.

In summary, each day the first order of the day should be the making of your list and the assigning of priorities. (Some people find it works better for them to make a list at the **end** of the work day for the following day’s activities.) By making a list and assigning priorities, you make sure that you are working toward your overall goals and are not frittering away your time on trivial or non-essential tasks.

Even if you accomplish only one or two of your top goals—or at best make progress toward achieving them—you

are making good use of your time. You are differentiating between what **must** be done today from what would be **good** to do today, if you had the time, and learning to put off activities that **could be done** at a later time or by someone else.

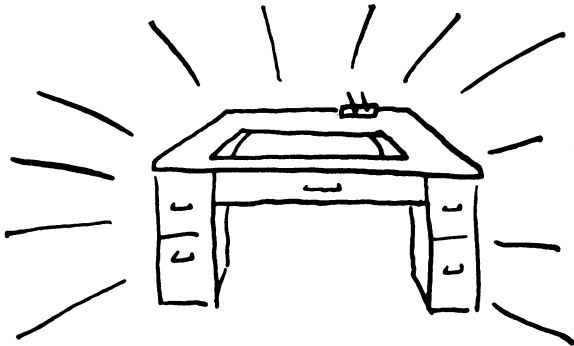
***The 80/20 Rule***—Keep reminding yourself of what the “80/20 Rule” says, “If all items are arranged in order of value, 80% would come from only 20% of the items, while the remaining 20% of the value would come from 80% of the items.” **In other words, in a list of ten items, doing two of them would yield the most value. Select those important two and get them done; 80 percent of the value of your time will be achieved by accomplishing them.** Even if you have to leave most of the other eight tasks on your list undone, you will have derived the most value from your time by working on or completing the two highest value items on your list. Stated another way, 20% of your effort yields 80% of the results.

***Separate the Important from the Less Important Tasks***—Avoid getting bogged down in routine tasks. Often people who feel overwhelmed are so busy doing the less important—but often easier—jobs that they don’t get around to working on their major and more important activities.

If it seems that there are dozens of “important” projects and activities all clamoring for attention, take time to consider the following:

- (1) the relative importance of each item facing you
- (2) the amount of time each one will take
- (3) the amount of time you have between now and your next deadline
- (4) your own capabilities or responsibilities at the moment
- (5) whether or not you can call on others for help on any of the items that require action

In summary, the time you spend in planning will bring you dividends in results and the satisfaction of knowing that you are working toward accomplishing the important goals of your job and the goals of the organization.



## *PART 2*

### **HOW TO CLEAN UP THE CLUTTER ON YOUR DESK**

You have made your schedule for the day,, prioritized your tasks, but your desk is cluttered, and you don't know where you put an essential piece of information you need for a project you are working on.

The stack of papers seems to have multiplied since yesterday. Unanswered mail and unfinished projects are barely visible beneath the pile of memos, messages, and miscellaneous material.

***Take Emergency Measures***—If this description matches your situation, it is time to take emergency steps to **clean up the clutter**.

You must start with the ruthless decision to barricade your door and be "out" for a period of time. If need be, you will have to come to your office earlier than usual to take care of this all-important project because you know that a start to being organized is to clean up the mess.

***Sort Material Into Boxes***—Take four boxes; mark them "routine," "priority," "junk mail," and "to be read later."

Start by throwing all junk mail into one box in preparation for discarding it.

Low priority items go into the carton marked "routine." (Don't be tempted to keep anything unless you can see a profitable use for it.)

Items that **must** be completed in three days or less go into the "priority" box.

Anything that you need to read or look at more carefully goes into the "to be read later" carton.

Within half an hour you should have a clean desk and a wonderful feeling of accomplishment.

***Concentrate on Priority Items***—Now you can take your "priority" box and start dispensing with the items one at a time. Spend as much time as you can to deal with these priority items.

***Get Rid of the Backlog***—Once you have rid yourself of the backlog, you have to organize the flow of paperwork daily so it doesn't get ahead of you again.

## PART 3

### HOW TO CREATE A PAPERWORK SYSTEM

***Handle Each Piece of Paper Only Once***—The trick of paper mastery is to make each piece yield an action. Handle each piece of paper only once. Basically, you can do four things with it—scrap it, delegate it, answer it, file it. Whatever action you take, do **something** with it.

***Choose One of Four Options***—Let us consider these options in more detail.

(1) Throw it away: Whatever can be tossed out, discard! “Man’s best friend, aside from his dog, is the wastebasket.” Ask yourself, “What is the worst thing that could happen if I throw this out? If I throw this out, are duplicates available?”

(2) Refer: Delegate paperwork whenever possible to someone else in the organization. (See the section on “Delegation” for further information on this procedure.)

(3) Act: Place all paper that require action into an “action” folder or box. Pinpoint top priority items on which decisions have to be made with a red check mark so that you can attend to them first.

(4) File: Set up a box or folder marked “to file.” Use an “out box” for general office files. Make file headings, if possible, and mark a discard date for each item—three months, six months, a year—to indicate its usefulness.



In summary, sort all incoming papers and move them from your desk to your wastebasket, referral folder, action box, file box, or reading box for later reading. **Remember your system: handle each piece of paper only once.**

Whatever your scheduled time for incoming mail, tell yourself that in regard to each item you receive, you will **dump, do, delegate, deposit in a file, or delay**. Taking the time each day to deal with all incoming paper this way will give you a system that will help you keep control of your paperwork.



## PART 4

### HOW TO KEEP TRACK

Someone gives you a name and address; you are in a hurry, and write the information on a slip of paper. However, when you need the information, you have forgotten where you put it. Like most people, you tend to jot down various bits of information on scraps of paper but find keeping track of them a source of annoyance and a great time-waster. There is a better way to handle the miscellaneous bits of information we accumulate and have difficulty keeping track of.

***Keep Everything In One Notebook***—This is the simple solution to the problem. Record in this notebook every idea, assignment, call, project, task or errand—large or small, minor or important—as it arises. This is your **master list**.

It doesn't matter what the information is—names, addresses, memos to yourself, ideas that come to mind—anything you want to be able to retrieve should be in this notebook which you keep handy in pocket, purse, or briefcase.

***Review Your Master List Daily***—Select items that demand immediate action: for example, five phone calls that must be made today. Put these "must" items on your daily "to do" list.

***Make up a Daily To Do List***—For each priority item decide (1) what action should be taken, (2) who should take it, (3) what the timetable should be.

Other information on your master list can, at the appropriate time, be transmitted to the office staff, placed in a file, or acted upon.

The important thing is that no longer will you wonder where information is that you need. It will be in the notebook you keep for such purposes.

If you discard, once and for all, the habit of keeping information on slips of paper, your Efficiency Quotient will go up, and your Irritation Level will go down.

***Calendars Are Essential For Keeping Track***—Your calendar is the nerve center of your time-management program. It is essential in keeping track of your many duties and responsibilities.

When you delegate all referrable tasks and cross them off your master list, mark the date on which you passed the material along. If follow-up is necessary (for, say a task due one month hence), use your calendar to alert you to the due date.

Also, when you have a large, complex, or time-consuming task to accomplish, break the job down into smaller subtasks, and establish start dates and deadlines for each subtask—all of which you enter on your calendar.

A two-page **desk calendar** is helpful if you use one side for appointments and the other for your daily list and follow-up reminders.

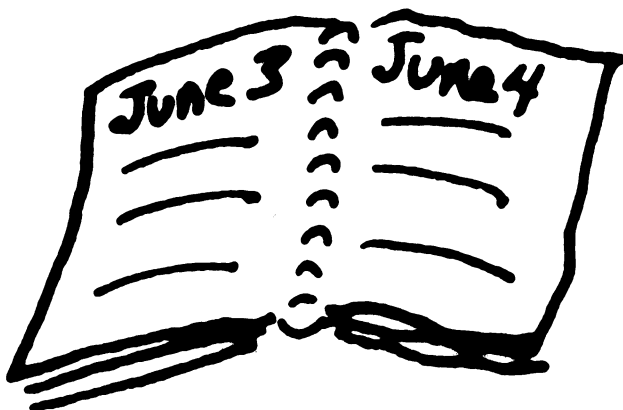
Most people use a **pocket calendar**, too. Select one with enough spaces for appointments, notes, reminders. Many such calendars include an address/phone directory.

For long-term planning (monthly, quarterly, etc.), use a **wall calendar** with large squares for each date. On this calendar, enter project schedules, regular meeting dates, vacation dates, etc. Plot start and due dates for those long-range projects as well.

Be sure to coordinate your desk, pocket, and wall calendars at the beginning of each year, entering the regular meetings, contract expiration dates, and all other fixed or regularly scheduled activities you know are part of your work and personal life.

**Remember—do not run the risk of relying on your memory!**

Keeping effective track of yourself and others is essential to your efficiency. It is the **only** way to be sure that deadlines are met, calls returned, and long-term projects are followed-up on through their various stages toward completion.



## ***PART 5***

### **HOW TO "MAKE" TIME**

Since all of us have the same amount of time—a total of 24 hours per day—there are only a certain number of ways we can make time "expand" for us.

In order to "find" time, we have to "make" time. In order to make time "expand" for you, learn to use the following methods:

- (1) Schedule through careful planning
- (2) Eliminate wasteful or unnecessary work
- (3) Delegate some responsibilities to others
- (4) Make use of small blocks of time
- (5) Do less, which includes knowing how to say "No."

#### ***Five Steps to "Make" Time:***

##### **Step One: Schedule Your Time To Your Best Advantage**

—Schedule your time carefully to make sure the important tasks get done. Recall Parkinson's Law that "work expands to fill the time available for it," and plan accordingly.

Try charting a weekly schedule, allowing blocks of time for fixed activities and for high priority tasks. Plan ahead, as well, for the month and the year.

Reserve particular days or parts of days of the week for major projects. That way, even if your day is fragmented by frequent interruptions, you can still go back to working on your major goals. (See Part 6 on dealing with interruptions.)

Begin by allocating small blocks of time toward the accomplishment of a task relating to a major goal or project, say, fifteen minutes each day or on certain days of the week.

Let everyone in your office know that you do not want to be disturbed during your high priority time except for emergencies.

Study yourself to discover the time your work best. Some people are early starters and do their best work in the morning; others start slowly and build up steam later in the day.

Assess your **prime time**, and try to schedule your top priority jobs during that time period. Prime tasks might be negotiations, important phone calls, meetings. You will find that you will accomplish more if you try to schedule priority time that coincides with your particular peak time and schedule less demanding tasks in the non-peak time, whenever possible.

Another way is by **consolidating** similar activities—appointments, paperwork, telephoning—to specific time blocks of the day.

A word of caution: “overscheduling” has its pitfalls too. Do not book up every minute. In the trade union world, flexibility is needed to cope with all the unexpected happenings that may interfere with a rigidly worked out schedule.

Therefore, always reserve at least an hour of “uncommitted time” during the day for interruptions. Trying to get your absolute “musts” out of the way each day will help you cope with changes in schedule and the distractions that are likely to occur.

In summary, time can be “found” through careful scheduling—time for you to accomplish the important things in your life.

**Step Two: Eliminate Wasteful or Unnecessary Work—**Review a typical day in your life. Analyze your activities and consider whether any of them were unimportant, routine, wasteful of your time and energy. Sometimes a traditional way of doing things has outlived its usefulness, and a more efficient way of doing things could be substituted. Perhaps it is time to see if some of the “things that have always been done” (or done a certain way) are not that important any more and could be eliminated or, possibly, handled by someone else, or in a different manner.

**Step Three: Delegate Responsibilities—**After you have examined your activities and eliminated the five to ten percent which are unnecessary, delegate as many activities as you can to others. The twenty to fifty percent more free time you will have can be utilized for tackling the activities that lead to the most significant results and move you closer to your goals.

Delegation is important for another reason. Since unions are cooperative organizations, ninety percent of their effectiveness comes from people, mostly volunteers, who represent the backbone of the organization.

Knowing how to draw upon the strengths and talents of others in the organization is an essential part of building an effective, democratic union.

The ability to delegate successfully is a critical activity for an additional reason. It will help you avoid the stress that comes from feeling swamped by too many things to do. It will enable you to allocate time for family life, for recreation,

and relaxation—important parts of your life which often get shortchanged in the hurly-burly of your busy work life.

Delegation involves certain steps. Look at your particular job and its responsibilities. Ask yourself the following questions:

- a. What parts of this job or activity can be turned over to someone else, or to a committee?
- b. If so, how will they get advice, training, supervision?
- c. What steps can be taken to develop supplementary leadership—such as increasing the number of stewards, creating unit officers' jobs, setting up committees to handle assignments—either short term or long—and finding ways to train officers and rank and file?
- d. What am I doing that doesn't need to be done, or can be done in a different way, or by someone else, if at all?

Analyze your master list. Divide the outstanding tasks on your list (including subtasks of larger tasks) into one of three columns:

- a. tasks that can be totally delegated
- b. tasks that can be shared in part
- c. tasks that only you can do



Go through your master list frequently, and try to find more and more tasks that you can delegate to others.

Another good way to think about delegation is to consider to whom you would assign projects if you were to go out of town for two weeks. Select appropriate people and then actually turn those jobs over to them.



When you delegate, it is important not to just “dump” jobs on others, but to develop and train people in the organization to share responsibilities:

- a. explain the job clearly
- b. utilize feedback
- c. review results
- d. expect some mistakes; don’t jump on people who are learning
- e. supervise, without stifling initiative
- f. delegate, but don’t abdicate

**Step Four: Make Use of Small Blocks of Time**—True efficiency means using the simplest, least wasteful system to get things done. It means “working smarter, not harder.” It means getting the most from the time you have available.

Even a short time period can yield results. For example, you can handle small projects while waiting for an appointment or while standing in line. Keep a small stack of reports or other papers in your briefcase or handbag for those occasional moments.

What You Can Do in Five Minutes:

- a. Prepare a meeting agenda
- b. Dictate a letter or write a note
- c. Make an appointment

What You Can Do in Ten Minutes:

- a. Make one or two telephone calls
- b. Proofread a short report
- c. Organize a small pile of papers on your desk.

What You Can Do in Thirty Minutes:

- a. File a week’s worth of papers
- b. Organize a stack of papers on your desk
- c. Skim magazines, newspapers, grievance reports

**Step Five: Do Less . . . Learn How To Say, “No”**— Sometimes instead of trying to **extend** your working day, try to **reduce** that time and get as much or more done.

Try to build into your schedule periods of “quiet time,” time when you are not available, time for you to sit quietly and think, or go for a walk to reduce the stress of your job. Allow yourself such time; you may find that your efficiency will go up as a result.

It is also important to know how to say, “No” when others want you to say, “Yes,” if saying yes will cut into your effectiveness.

Saying “No,” and meaning it, is an extremely useful skill. Practice it. Sometimes merely saying “No” is not enough. If it is not, give reasons for saying “No,” but refuse to back down under pressure.

In summary, ways to gain time include changing methods, simplifying procedures, eliminating unnecessary jobs, training others to handle some of the work, using shortcuts and checklists, eliminating time-wasters, learning how to do more in less time, knowing how and when to say “No.” All these skills are characteristics of successful time users.

***EFFECTIVENESS IS DOING THE RIGHT JOB;***

***EFFICIENCY IS DOING THE JOB RIGHT;***

**COMBINING THE TWO IS THE KEY TO THE TIME MANAGEMENT PROCESS.**

## *PART 6*

### **HOW TO DEAL WITH INTERRUPTIONS IN YOUR DAILY SCHEDULE**

It seems to happen all the time. You start work according to a plan, a schedule you have developed, and then a crisis occurs, or someone drops by to see you; and your original schedule for the day is disrupted by this unexpected and unavoidable **demand** on your time.

In the trade union world interruptions and unanticipated problems are part of life. You cannot, nor should you, expect to be able to budget every minute of the day and stick to a rigid schedule. As a matter of fact, it is far wiser and more practical to **plan** for interruptions when you map out each day.

In working out your daily plan, there are essentially four categories of activity you have to deal with:

- (1) unfinished work remaining from yesterday
- (2) routine detail handled on a daily basis
- (3) new projects which need to be started
- (4) unanticipated phone calls, visits, other interruptions, and crises in shops, offices, workplaces covered by union contracts

A number of simple techniques will help you deal with interruption problems—the ones that throw your schedule off course. You **can** establish greater control of your time without being rude or shutting yourself off from the needs of the job.

***Plan For Interruptions***—Constant interruptions make getting things done extremely difficult. Everyone needs time to concentrate and focus on the task at hand. To minimize the impact of interruptions, try applying the following methods.

***Designate Interruption-free Periods Every Day***—If need be, close your door, and specify that you are not to be disturbed during this time except for emergencies. Let your staff and colleagues know that you **will** be available the rest of the day. Use your “quiet time” to make headway on major projects, to attend to the most pressing business you know needs handling; even to sit and think or relax from the pressures of your day.

***Arrange Your Desk to Minimize Interruptions***—Arrange your desk so that you will not be immediately available to casual interruptors who might like to stop by and chat. (Of course, this does not preclude talking to union members whose problems require your attention.) Establish guidelines with secretary or staff in order to eliminate avoidable distractions and reduce the time spent on unavoidable ones.

***Schedule Appointments and “Drop-in” Time Each Day***—When you are constantly interrupted in your work for frequent and long-winded talk sessions that prevent you from working on projects requiring time and attention, try one or several of the following techniques.

(1) Schedule appointments and “drop-in” time for a specific block of time during the day.

(2) Establish “open house” hours every day or several times a week, for example, between 8 and 9 a.m. or whenever it is most appropriate—and encourage people to time their visits accordingly. Consolidating visiting time is a help to

your visitors as well as to you, since being able to count on seeing you is a convenience for members who wish to come by.

(3) When a caller arrives at an unscheduled time, have a secretary or other staff member, suggest that the visitor make an appointment.

(4) If you don't have a secretary and you are involved in a crucial task, put a sign on your door or desk which explains that you are working and that the caller should come back later, if possible, or see another staff member. If need be, get out of the office altogether if you have a high priority task to accomplish.

(5) If the visit cannot be postponed, set a goal with your visitor for a certain amount of time for the visit, explaining that you have a meeting, appointment, or deadline to meet.

(6) Rotate when people will be in the office so that if members have a crisis which you cannot attend to, there will be some staff person available.

(7) If it is colleagues who take up a good deal of your time, arrange to meet in their office rather than yours, since it is much easier to excuse yourself than to ease someone out of your office.

(8) Set up regular meetings with secretary and staff so that problems and questions that arise during the day or week can be covered at one time.

(9) Unions with large staff should study office layout and wherever financially possible to do so, provide partitions or separate work spaces for staff to help ensure the privacy essential for concentrated work.

***Use and Misuse of the Telephone***—Telephones can be timesavers or timewasters. Telephones can save writing time and meeting time, but for many people, too much time can be wasted on the telephone. To avoid the feeling of being out of control relative to time spent on the telephone, observe certain time-saving strategies:

(1) Make calls brief; use such conversation “enders” as, “Fine, I’ll get right on it,” or “Well, it was great talking to you.”

(2) Keep check on your phone use by logging time you spend on the telephone each day.

(3) Before making a call, jot down the points you want to cover so you won’t forget anything.

(4) Make notes on all calls, and when staff takes messages, make sure a record is kept of what the call is about and a telephone number taken down so you won’t have to look it up.

(5) Group the call-backs, and arrange them in the order of importance. Just before noon and around 4:30 p.m. are good times to make calls.

***Unanticipated Crises***—Crises seem to crop up when you least expect them. From their frequency, they make you feel that they go along with a trade union job, and that planning a schedule is impossible.

Unexpected problems in one or more shops or work-places that reach an emergency stage, court appearances, strikes, marathon around-the-clock negotiations—any of these and other unanticipated “can’t postpone” events may require your undivided attention for a while. Such situations disrupt schedules and careful planning.

However, since trade unions exist to serve the needs of workers, attending to those needs is the primary responsibility of union officers and all those in leadership.

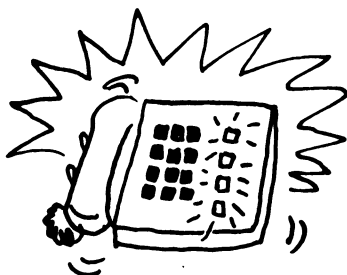
(1) The important thing to remember about these unavoidable situations is that, while the needs of the moment supersede all else, it is still possible to carry on the regular work by turning over some of the responsibilities to others and returning as soon as possible to the projects you have been working on.

(2) It may even be possible for you to give some time to your regular schedule in between handling a crisis; in any event do not give up your goals altogether. Arrange somehow to see that they are handled until you can once again resume your usual schedule.

(3) If you find that the same crisis seems to occur frequently, ask yourself if it could have been prevented with a little advance planning.

(4) Also, if you function always on a fire alarm basis, going from one crisis to another, it is time to check procedures and methods of work to see if changes need to be made that will forestall or prevent the crises.

(5) In general, regard interruptions and crises as an opportunity to put time management skills to work. Demonstrate that you can handle interruptions, and then return and continue with your scheduled activities.



## **PART 7**

### **HOW TO OVERCOME PROCRASTINATION**

***Study Your Particular Procrastination Profile***—We all have a tendency to “put off until tomorrow” jobs that seem too difficult, too overwhelming, or too unpleasant. When this tendency causes you problems on your job, it is time to take steps to change your behavior. Analyzing your own pattern of procrastination will give you a start in overcoming this problem.

***Analyze the Why, What, When, and How of Your Procrastination Problem***—To study your particular procrastination profile:

(1) First of all, ask yourself **why** you are procrastinating even though you know a job needs doing.

Is it because you dislike the task or feel overwhelmed by it because it seems too big an undertaking?

Is it because you don't know where to start or how to handle the project?

Is it because you have a fear of failure or perhaps are too “perfectionist”?

Is it because, secretly, you have a “deadline mentality” and have developed work habits that include a last minute rush to complete a job as an habitual part of your job performance?



(2) Analyze **what** it is you are avoiding by procrastinating. What are some of the things you procrastinate about?

(3) Knowing **when** you procrastinate is also important for you to understand. Do you procrastinate most often at the beginning of a project, or at the end when your energy seems to run out, and you cannot get the last big push going to complete the job?

(4) Give some thought to **how** you procrastinate. When you have mixed emotions about a project, do you suddenly get fatigued? Go out to get something to eat? Straighten up your desk? Have a chat with a colleague? Get on the telephone to make calls? Decide to visit a workplace not on a scheduled day?

Sometimes we manufacture excuses to justify avoiding a job although at the same time we are conscious that we are reinforcing established and undesirable work habits. To conceal from ourselves the reasons for putting things off, we say we're so busy, we're swamped, we don't know where the day goes.

***Work on a Procrastination Prevention Program Which Answers Your Needs***—Recognize the early warning signals that will tip you off to your own procrastination pattern; then work on a procrastination prevention program that is tailored to your needs.

***Seven Common Procrastination Problems and Techniques for Overcoming Them***—

PROBLEM 1: The job seems overwhelming or too complex.

PREVENTION PROGRAM: Divide the task into manageable components. Do a few simple aspects of the job each day, and soon the overwhelming job will not seem so formi-

dable. Set up for yourself daily job packages—make three phone calls, sort four files, etc. Make holes in a large job by doing even five minutes' work on it—check time limits on a grievance for presentation or appeal, check a point of information—whatever it is, often one step will get you moving.

**PROBLEM 2:** You don't know how or where to start a project.

**PREVENTION PROGRAM:** List in no special order all the specific action steps you will have to take to complete the job. Establish "action sequences," organizing the steps in some sort of order. Set deadlines; delegate parts of the job. Enter the specific jobs to be done on your daily list.

**PROBLEM 3:** You still can't get started after trying techniques used for Problem 2.

**PREVENTION PROGRAM:** Make an arbitrary start. Pick any opening move to get you going. For example, if your desk is cluttered, and you don't have time for a major clean-up, begin with the stack of papers to your left, just to have a starting point. Once you tackle some part of an undone job, it is easier to continue. Sometimes just "breaking the ice" will get you going on a delayed project.

**PROBLEM 4:** You put a project off that will require constant checking.

**PREVENTION PROGRAM:** Minimize the difficulty through effective planning. Use due dates for advance events, and group tasks. Prepare a breakdown chart, stating the goal you wish to accomplish. List all possible ways to reach your goal. Break the log jam of inaction by doing "task breakdowns" so that each mini-step toward the goal is listed in sequence and can be checked.

PROBLEM 5: The job is distasteful or unpleasant.

PREVENTION PROGRAM: Delegate, if possible, to someone else. If that is not possible, make up your mind not to drag out the inevitable. Recognize that the stress you feel about doing something unpleasant is causing you to postpone doing it. You know if you do it, a load will be lifted from you. So, instead of telling yourself, "It's unpleasant, so I'll put it off," say to yourself, "Just because it's unpleasant, I'll do it now and get it over with. Then I'll give myself a reward."

PROBLEM 6: Your desk is a mess, and the materials you need are scattered and hard to find.

PREVENTION PROGRAM: See Part 2, "How to Clean Up the Clutter on Your Desk." Clear off everything on your desk except the materials you need for the task at hand, and work on nothing else for a certain block of time. Give thought to setting up a more efficient filing system for yourself and your office. Set up project files and follow-up files, and keep them in a cabinet or drawer near your desk. File daily, and throw out daily. File correspondence in appropriate folders with the most recent at the front.

PROBLEM 7: Your workspace is noisy, inefficiently organized, or depressing.

PREVENTION PROGRAM: Check your office layout to see what improvements could be made so that everything is in easy reach. Move your desk away from a doorway; it is an open invitation for everyone who passes by to say hello. If you do not have enough privacy, move your desk, find an empty room, or arrange for partitions or screens so that you can work undisturbed for a period of time. Find ways to muffle the noise of typewriters and other office equipment. If you do not have a comfortable, ergonomically-designed desk chair, discuss allocation of funds for buying office furniture. Brighten up your work area with pictures, plants, etc.

### ***Rewards for Positive Reinforcement of Desired Behavior—***

When you put into practice some of the techniques outlined above and are on your way toward overcoming your procrastination problems, reward yourself for your efforts, even if it is only a small chunk of a job that you complete.

The reward might be taking time off for a cup of coffee; it can be anything, large or small, that will give you a lift and encourage you to go on.

Giving yourself a reward for taking the steps necessary to overcome your procrastination habits will reinforce your changed behavior, will make you feel more positive about yourself, and will give you the incentive to continue moving in a productive way toward the completion of your goals.



## **PART 8**

### **HOW TO STREAMLINE MEETINGS**

***Decide If A Meeting Is Necessary At All***—In action organizations like trade unions, going to meetings takes up a good deal of one's working time. Meetings are essential; yet many of them are probably unnecessary, energy-depleting, and time-wasteful. Much meeting time is characterized by rambling discussions, unplanned agendas, and a resulting feeling of uselessness and frustration.

In considering the meeting process, ask yourself first of all, "Is a meeting really necessary?" Perhaps the matters involved could be settled through consultation or other kinds of action. If a meeting **is** required, clearly identify the purpose and objectives for the meeting and make sure that key people will be present.

#### ***Five Steps for Productive Meetings:***

**Step One**—The first step in planning for a productive meeting is to prepare a written agenda stating the goals of the meeting—the specific questions and topics to be handled. This agenda should be distributed in advance, if possible, to give participants time to prepare.

**Step Two**—Set limits as to time and stick to them. Start and close the meeting at the appointed hour, and encourage all participants to stick to the subject being covered.

**Step Three**—Develop a follow-up system to ensure that productive action results from the meeting. Print minutes indicating decisions that have come out of the meeting and the next steps for follow-up, including names of those

responsible for agreed-upon actions and dates by which those actions—or substeps of the action—are to be accomplished.

**Step Four**—Productive meetings require leadership, since unstructured meetings tend to be time-wasters. Someone must act as facilitator to keep meetings on track.

**Step Five**—After each meeting, consider what specifically was accomplished, and whether assignments, recommendations, action steps, and so forth were made clear and followed up on.

Practice these techniques to help you plan and participate more effectively in meetings.

Knowing how to streamline meetings may prove to be one of the biggest time-savers in your working day.



## ***PART 9***

### **TIPS FOR TIME SAVING**

1. If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.
2. Time cannot be well spent in the absence of clear goals and specific objectives.
3. It is important to sit down and list which of your responsibilities are daily, weekly, monthly, frequent, infrequent.
4. After a list is made up for the day's work, prioritize activities into: (a) the most important things that **must** be done today, (b) the things that are important which would be good to do today, (c) the things that could be done today, if time allows, but which could be put off.
5. Determine when your "best" time of day is, and plan to tackle the tough problems during this time.
6. Limit the time spent on an activity which is either unimportant or does not lead to achievement of personal or organizational goals.
7. Analysis of your time use will show that about 80% of the results achieved were accomplished in about 20% of your time. Stated another way, 20% of your efforts yield 80% of the results. Concentrate on the important 20%.
8. Be decisive. When faced with a minor decision, make up your mind quickly, but base your judgment on facts. If a decision cannot be reached quickly, ask for help.

9. Include a “quiet time” session in your daily schedule to give you time to think, plan, or relax from the stress of the job.
10. Schedule time for family, recreation, and the achievement of personal, as well as organizational, goals.



## *PART 10*

### **TEN EFFECTIVE TIME-SAVING TECHNIQUES FOR BUSY TRADE UNIONISTS**

1. Set goals—short term and long range.
2. Establish priorities.
3. Learn to tell what is most useful for you to do.
4. Plan for interruptions and know how to deal with them.
5. Work directly toward your goals.
6. Work toward a firm deadline.
7. Finish first things first.
8. Delegate as much as possible in order to spare yourself and build leadership.
9. Keep only current files handy.
10. Define what **must** be done each day by you and others in the organization to reach both the short and long range goals you wish to accomplish.

## ***PART 11***

### **CHECKLIST: HOW WELL DO YOU ORGANIZE YOUR TIME?**

Review this list periodically to see how well you are doing in handling time effectively.

1. Do you waste time "getting yourself together" in the morning, or are the materials you need ready and in order when you start the day?
2. When was the last time you planned your day on paper?
3. Do you keep pretty much up-to-date on your paperwork?
4. Have you developed routine ways of handling routine matters such as correspondence, requests for information, and so on?
5. Can you easily locate things you are looking for, like past correspondence, memos, reports, and the like?
6. Do you usually have an accurate idea of what you must accomplish each day, each week, each month?
7. Do you arrange tasks in order of importance, and tackle the most crucial ones first?
8. Do you establish deadlines for accomplishing things? Do you usually meet these deadlines?
9. Do you ever think about better ways to get things done other than the way they have always been done?

10. Are the meetings you attend always necessary and productive? Are they well organized with a written agenda and follow-up procedures?
11. Have you set certain hours aside each day when you are not to be disturbed except for emergencies?
12. Have you delegated to others the tasks and authority that will enable them to work at their highest potential?
13. Do you have "fill-in" tasks you can attend to in the event you have unexpected spare time, such as a cancelled appointment?
14. Are you aware of your most productive hours, and do you use them for your most demanding work?
15. When you make phone calls, do you know exactly what you are going to say, having jotted down memory joggers on paper?
16. Are you able to deal with interruptions without deviating too much from your major goals?
17. Have you worked out successful strategies to cope with the tendency to procrastinate?
18. Do you find time each week to enjoy some social or recreational activities despite the pressures of work?

