

ATTE
Training Quality Product:

**Time management
for international trainers**

by Carina Stabauer

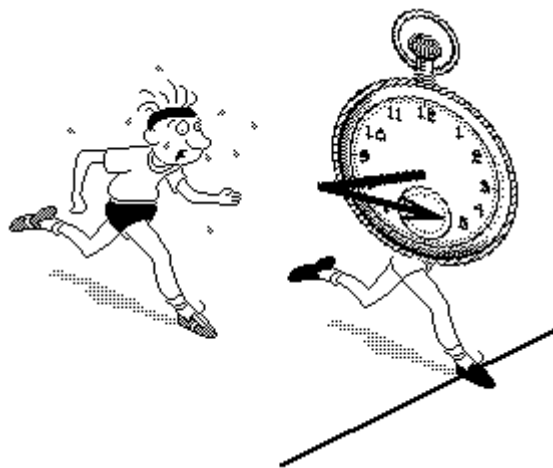


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Intro

The first time I felt the urgent need for knowing more about time management was when I started working again after my daughter Jana was born. I had the feeling that there just weren't enough hours in the day to complete all the demands. I wanted to find a balance between my professional, family and personal activities, and therefore I enrolled in a time management course and read several books to that topic.

During the “Different pATTErns – Consolidation and Development Seminar” in January 2003 in Strasbourg the participant trainers were asked to offer workshops and so I did a two hours session on time and self management. What really surprised me was, that after the workshop a lot of trainer colleagues asked me for more information and some extra explanations, even those who didn't attend the workshop. I felt a real interest and need about that topic and we even talked about time management during the open space session two days later.

This was the first time when I was thinking of writing my TQP about time and self management. I really liked the idea of sharing with other trainers different tools and ideas in order to plan our time before, during and after a training more effectively.

1. Time management and trainings

1.1. Importance for trainers

After feeling such an immense interest in that topic I asked myself why time management could be important for trainers.

Being a trainer we are faced with numerous demands in our job (meetings, reports, preparation, implementation of a course), in our private life (sporting, invitations, holidays, family) as well as our personal demands (interests and hobbies, personal development, sleep, hygiene, eating, etc.).

For me especially among international trainers, there are certain values on how to behave and act. I have the impression that many think that an ideal trainer is a person, who puts 200% into training, and who has a great collection of innovative methods in his/her head. Moreover (s)he is available for his or her training colleagues as well as for the participants anytime and is willing to stay for endless team meetings.

Even though you can find a description of an ethical trainer in the T-Kit number 6 (2002, p.18) characterising that a “super trainer” is not the job profile to look up to, many trainers nevertheless do.

Therefore it is not unlikely to find reactions among trainers that can compromise either their health or their wealth being:

- Sleeping less
- Heavy coffee drinking and smoking
- Eating on the run
- Staying at work after office hours or taking work home
- Spending less leisure time
- Feeling stressed

The implementation of a project calls for the use of a range of resources. It is important to manage:

- money, so as not to fall into deficit,
- material, to avoid interruptions of the activity or waste,
- people, to ensure they are sufficient in number and the right place at the right time, and of course
- time to do it.

Time is a resource which needs to be managed like any other. The problem with time is, that you can't see it or hold it in your hands. You can only feel it ...

In my perception time is one of the powerful tools trainers have, but of which they are often not aware of. And it is not only the personal time of every trainer, it is also that trainers are responsible for the time of the participants. They are in charge of deciding the programme and how long a topic will be dealt with. Therefore they should be really careful about how they spend their own time as well as the time of the participants. So time management for trainers is a extremely important, but also a difficult task.

1.2. Different requirements for trainers

Since working as a trainer implements a huge variety of different working phases, like defining and planning, implementing a project and performing, as well as the time between different projects, time management for trainers must be seen from different perspectives.

The process of defining and planning a project, writing applications and reports, includes a lot of thinking and organizing and usually takes place in an office. Working on a desk in front of a computer next to a telephone involves various time wasters, such as telephone interruptions, unnecessary e-mails or drop-in visitors. A lot of books are dealing with this kind of time wasters, because office people seem to be the classical target group for time management literature.

Running a training course has different time management requirements. Usually it is not so much paper work, but team meetings, preparing sessions and performing. Classical time bandits during a training course are often not setting priorities for meetings, not saying no to participants, not allowing oneself to go to bed early and so on.

The third big block besides the administrative work of a project and the implementation of a training is the time in between projects. Depending on the personal situation of every trainer different scenarios are: e.g. to work in another job like being a youth worker or an author, to spend time with families and children or to enjoy hobbies. There exists also one group of trainers who is more or less always on the run, so that actually they do not have some time out in between projects.

Whatever situation trainers are confronted with, it is important to fill up the batteries again in order to be able to handle the challenging job as a trainer. Some trainers are involved in too many activities and then recharging your energy is difficult.

1.3. Different ways of dealing with time management

Traditional time management was created to make factories more efficient. Every worker had to be in place for the assembly line to begin and the clock was the single measure of how time was “kept”. Monochronic time was born¹.

Monochronic or linear time management means: plan, prioritize, schedule and do it. One task after the other.

Most of the conventional time management guidelines offer instructions for using time in a linear fashion. Linear time systems are set up for a lot of people and they often advise to do annual, monthly, weekly and daily plans, which best should be combined in a time management aid (Filofax, palm, etc.)

Unfortunately this way of keeping track of the things only works for the so called left brainers or logic brain thinkers, people who think in a linear way.

But another group of people seems to need a more creative environment, meaning jumping around rather than follow a step-by-step approach, juggling several things at once, following more their instinct and having several piles on the desk and still knowing what to find where.

This group is called the right brainers. Among the right brainers you find many artistic folks, who’s strengths are originality, creativity and resourcefulness. They know all too well that the muse doesn’t always strike you when you want it or when the deadline for the next project is coming closer.

In my opinion a lot of trainers belong to this group, and in order to use time more in a way they want it to, polychronic time management tools are needed. The problem with polychronic time management is, that right-brainers tend to prefer very unique ways of getting organized and it is rather difficult to bring this into a scheme.

I know that this oversimplification is risky, but for me the distinction between more linear and more creative people is one reason to explain, why so many trainers are interested in time management and nevertheless have problems using it. The creative or polychroniy way of time management is not so common yet and it really takes some effort to search for material.

In reality persons tend to be both right- and left-brainers at the same time. Both hemispheres interact constantly, and the balance can vary at different times during your day depending on what you are doing. If you have a dominant side, however, your approach to a given problem will reflect that perspective².

The goal is using both hemispheres of the brain to their full capacities.

The right-brained creative trainer who can do simple accounting for budgeting a project has an advantage, as the left-brained logical trainer who can find innovative ways to a knotty problem.

¹ McGee-Cooper, Ann: Time management for unmanageable people, p.4

² Silber, Lee: Time management for the creative person, p.288

2. Effective personal time management

2.1. Spend time planning and organizing

Using time to think and plan, is time well-spent.

*“In fact, if you fail to take time for planning, you are in effect, planning to fail.”*¹ (Kathy Prochaska-Cue)

The better we plan our time, the better we can use it for our personal and professional goals. Planning actually means the preparation to realize your goals. The biggest advantage of planning is: you win time.

The German time management guru Lothar Seiwert writes², if you only save eight minutes for planning every day, then you can save daily an hour to focus on the more important things.

Besides saving time, according to Masterton Ailsa³, planning offers several benefits:

- *it forces you to identify objectives*
- *it helps establish what resources are required*
- *it enables you to complete the task in the optimum sequence*
- *it enables you to check that it is possible to complete the project*
- *it provides a visual tool that can be used as a way of communicating*
- *the plan can be used as the basis for feedback and evaluation*

Planning means thinking logically about what needs to be done, being clear about why the project should be undertaken, looking at the implications of any influences that need to be considered, and evaluating the achievements and how they might influence future projects.

Plans are tools which enable us to obtain a global view. They give us a rapid and clear idea of the action and deadlines. Of course, establishing a plan does not automatically guarantee good time management, but the use of plans is essential insofar as they serve as indicators for evaluating time management.

Considering how to achieve the desired result within the given time implies asking questions such as: what action, what tasks, when, in what order, with whom, etc.

One of the basic rules for planning is to allow some time for unforeseen things. Seiwert⁴ suggests to only plan for 60% of the daily activities, because 20% should be reserved for unexpected activities (like interruptions, time thieves) and another 20% should be kept free for spontaneous and creative times.

Some other time experts even recommend to leave space for 50% of the time in order to be flexible.

If you do not follow that rule, than you will experience very soon that planning your time is not of any help, but it only puts you under pressure.

¹ www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/homemgt/nf172.htm

² Seiwert, Lothar J.: 30 Minuten für optimales Zeitmanagement, p.35

³ Masterton, Ailsa: Getting results with time management, p.29

⁴ Seiwert, Lothar J.: 30 Minuten für optimales Zeitmanagement, p.42

2.1.1. The list of things to do

First of all you need to know what tasks have to be fulfilled, whom you should be in contact with and what deadlines will come up.

So the easiest is to have a paper ready which can be your “TO DO list”:

During the day often ideas come to our minds or we are asked to do things which have nothing to do what we are doing at that particular moment. Rather than remembering them later or getting distracted, make regular notes. This reminders can be used for further planning.

Since this is similar to brainstorming it is well useable for left- as well as for right-brainers.

2.1.2. Planning charts

But when it comes to the more concrete planning, the more linear type probably will visualize his/ her plan of action using tools such as planning charts.

There are different kind of plans, depending on the short- or long-term perspective like yearly plans, monthly plans, weekly or daily plans. The following sample should only give you an idea about how a schedule often looks like:

Sample Daily Schedule			
Time		Task	Activities
6:00			
6:30			
7:00			
7:30			
8:00			
...			

A diary, personal or electronic organisers are all mechanisms for keeping track of appointments and planning ahead.

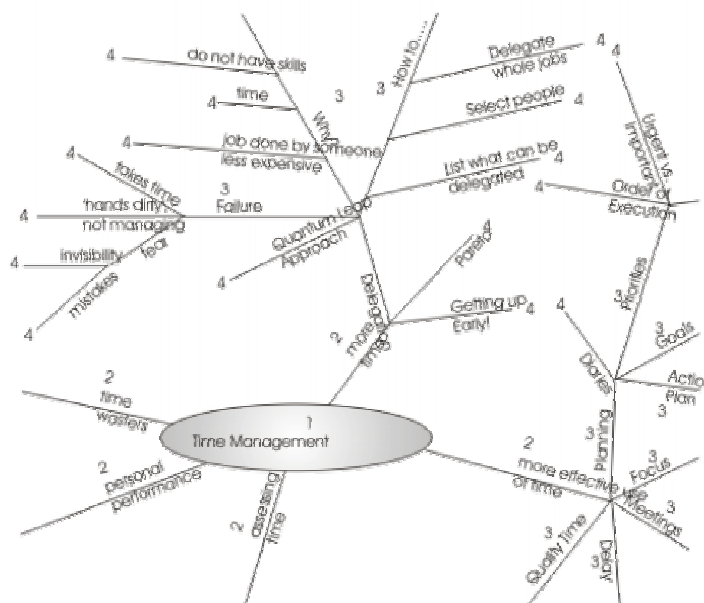
2.1.3. Mind mapping or concept mapping

To write down the different tasks in such a way doesn't work that well for the more creative type. Seiwert suggests therefore in his book “Time management for chaotic people” to use mind maps in order to structure ideas and plans. The big advantage of using mind maps is that

maps show the structure of the subject and linkages between points, as well as the raw facts contained in normal notes.

Mind mapping (or concept mapping) involves writing down a central idea and thinking up new and related ideas which radiate out from the centre. By focussing on key ideas written down in your own words, and then looking for branches out and connections between the ideas, you are mapping knowledge in a manner which will help you understand and remember new information.

Figure 1: Part of an Example Concept Map¹
(The idea of “levels” is used to help show how the Concept Map was created)



It doesn't matter which methods suits your style as a trainer better, as long as you use one in order to get a better overview about what you have to do. Whatever method works is best for you. It also might be interesting to try a new system – you might find out that works even better than your present one.

I know that many say, that they have all their plans in their head, but writing it down makes a difference. You get a much clearer picture about what you already achieved, what is still missing and it will also enable you to identify better the tasks that you regularly put off until somewhere, someday.

All the planning doesn't help if you do not make use of it. I experienced myself where good plans for the programme of a training course were made, but when it came to the implementation, the discussion in the team meetings started again about what, how and when to do. Although I am aware that everyone in a team should agree upon what is going to happen, I experienced that the law of project management No.7 is very crucial:

“If project content is allowed to change freely, the rate of change will exceed the rate of progress.”²

¹ <http://www.mindtools.com/mindmaps.html>

² Abriagni, Bernard; Dussap, Anne; Gomes, Rui; de Vilder, Dirk; Merry, Peter; Roy, Alain : T-Kit on Project Management, p.85

2.2. Establish priorities

“You can do anything you want – you just can’t do everything you want.”¹

We often want to do too much, which results in us dissipating our efforts and realizing that important tasks have not been completed.

We also want to do things perfectly, which results in us putting many tasks aside through lack of time.

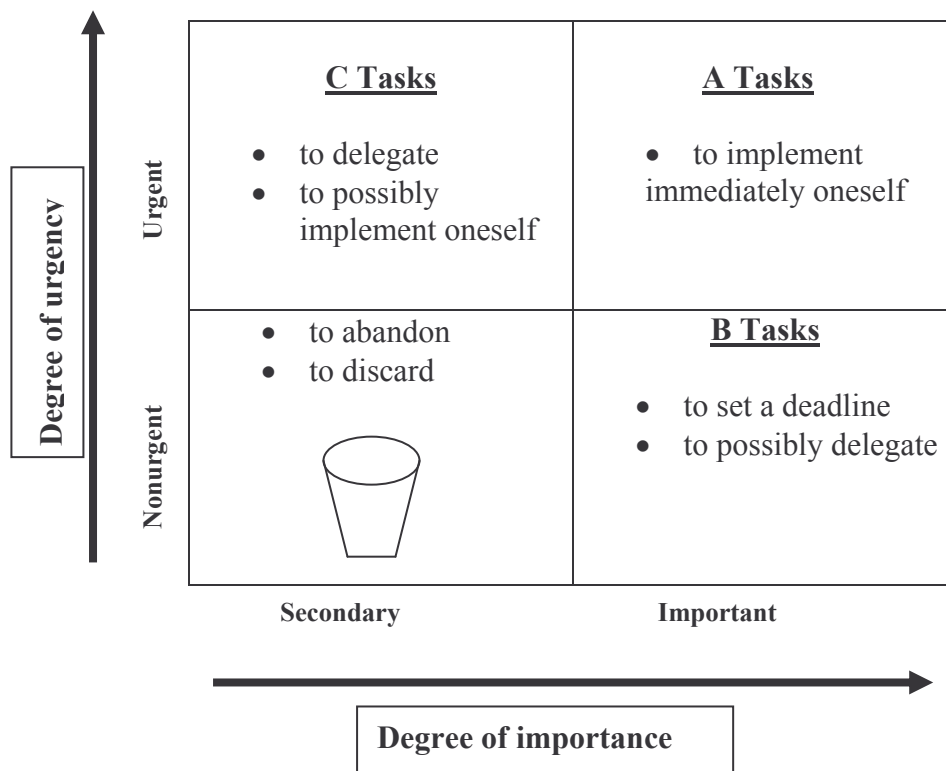
This can be avoided by:

- establishing priorities, by deciding what is important and what is secondary, what is urgent and what is not
- giving priority to the very important tasks and deal with the others according to their degree of urgency
- establishing in advance our requirements vis-à-vis the achievements of a task (form, content, presentation, etc.)²

2.2.1. The Eisenhower principle

A very simple decision grid is attributed to the former United States general and president, Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969). Especially if you have to decide rapidly, this grid helps to prioritise the different tasks according to their degree of urgency and importance.

Eisenhower principle³



¹ Silber, Lee: Time management for the creative person, p.48

² World Organisation of the Scout Movement: Managing Time, p.15

³ World Organisation of the Scout Movement: Managing Time, p.16

A Tasks - important and urgent:

tasks with deadlines need immediate response and should be dealt with now

B Tasks - important and not urgent:

Tasks that are important and need to be done, but could be scheduled for a later date

C Tasks – urgent but not important:

Tasks are of secondary importance, but have a certain degree of urgency. Example: tasks from colleagues that they tell you are urgent (because they want them dealt with), but which you discover they do not until the end of the week. Sometimes some minor tasks will solve themselves. Just wait three days, and see if it is still necessary.

Wasted time:

Information that lands on your desk which bears very little relevance to your work and is not worth bothering with.

The trick is to learn to assess tasks and demand from others to define the degree of the task.. Prioritizing is a matter of habit. It is learning not to tackle what is immediately in front of you, but deciding each day what should come first and what can be left for the moment.

One of the primary struggles for creative right-brainers can be, that everything can seem like a priority. It's not always obvious which things to put first. On top of that, creative minds constantly come up with all kind of new ideas, creating more work than anyone could possibly accomplish. Combining flexibility with focus will help you make the most of your eclectic nature¹.

So once you have decided what's most important stick to your guns.

Generally speaking the problem sometimes is, that urgent tasks, even if they are of secondary importance and therefore of little value, make the most noise in order to get your attention – and they usually get it.

So how do you know what is important? One way of getting a clearer picture is asking yourself, if doing this will matter in a year.

It is very difficult to give a general example to the Eisenhower principle, because the important, urgent task of one trainer can vary a lot from the A task of someone else. One trainer might have decided that physical exercises are very important for him/her, in order to stay in shape, and therefore no matter what, wants to go jogging every single training day. Another trainer thinks it is important to collect more methods, and therefore tries, whenever possible, to exchange with his colleagues.

¹ Silber, Lee: Time management for the creative person, p.48

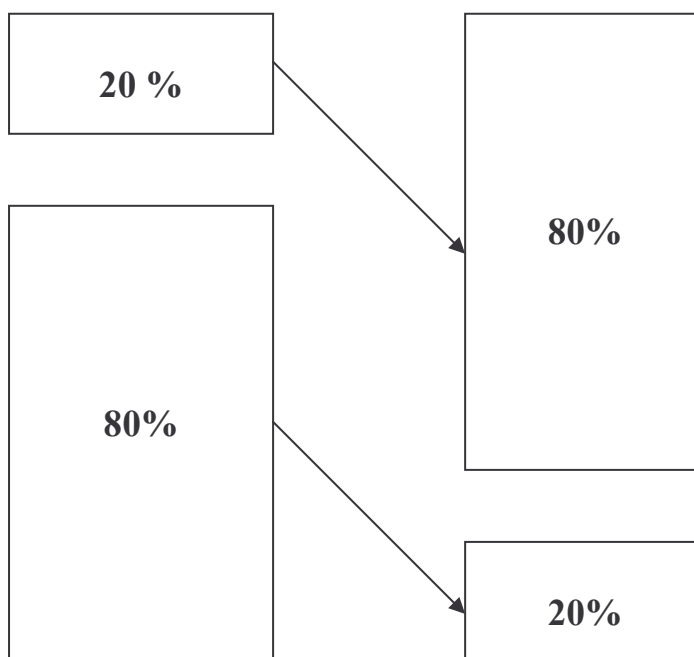
2.2.2. The Pareto Principle

Some people spend most of their time, to deal with many little irrelevant tasks and problems instead of concentrating on the less, but essential activities.

According to Pareto, already with a small percentage of the required time expenditure (20%), we often manage to obtain the larger part of the expected results (80%).

Instead of starting to fulfil all the tasks, which needs to be done, without thinking, first you should ask yourself: which activity has a major impact at the requested result?

Pareto was an 19th century Italian economist (study on the unequal distribution of the national income), who discovered the 20/80 % law.¹



According to that principle:

- 20% of the time devoted to a priority task produces 80% of the result
- 20% of the priority task represent 80% of the useful and effective action
- 20% of what we do contributes to accomplish 80% of the task
- 20% of a letter contains 80% of information and of course vice versa:
- 80% of a letter contains 20% of information and so on.

To be familiar with that principle can help to define goals as well as it might be a support when planning activities.

To work effective means, to do those things, which produce the outstanding result, within a short amount of time.

¹ World Organisation of the Scout Movement: Managing Time, p.17

During the “Different pATTErns – Consolidation and Development Seminar” in January 2003 in Strasbourg we were talking quite intensive in the open space session about that principle and how it can be used for trainings.

The discussion was around: How can you find out which 20% are the most effective? Does this model show that 80% are of no relevance? Are the same 20% important for every single participant?

At the end we agreed that even if 80% of a session can be designed in 20% of the time, that the remaining 80% are often used for creating nice flipchart papers or for the selection of background music and therefore also of importance.

Lothar Seiwert recommends in his German book “30 minutes for optimal self organization”¹, that for the daily work you should pay the most attention to tasks according to their importance and reward. Following consequently the Pareto principle means, to analyse all the tasks after their active part on the result after the categories A, B and C (A are the most important tasks, B are the average important tasks, and C are the less important tasks).

What is important in my perception is to keep in mind, that even if you as a trainer think that every single minute of your programme is extremely important, that participants might pick out a small 20% piece and for them it has an 80% value.

It also means that it is nonsense to fill up all the day with heavy programme, because participants wont appreciate and remember it anyway.

¹ Seiwert, 2001, p.36

2.3. Identify your time thieves

Time thieves or stealers are sometimes hard to identify and it is the small amounts of time which eat away the day that are hardest to check. Tasks we had planned to complete are not finished, but often we are not quite sure why, and we keep complaining that we do not have enough time.

The following questionnaire should help you to analyse your personal time thieves.

A questionnaire to analyse your thieves of time

(T-Kit on Organisational management, p.31)

The following questions should help you to control your time at work and to identify your thieves of time	True			
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
The telephone bothers me when I am in a meeting or preparing an important document				
Telephone conversations are almost always unnecessarily long				
My assistants or colleagues interrupt my activities to tell me their problems or to have a chat				
Visitors or vendors interrupt my personal work by turning up without warning				
Working meals and receptions make me feel heavy and sleepy				
Meetings last too long and are too frequent				
The agenda of meetings is non existent or badly prepared				
The computers break down too often				
The secretaries are overworked				
My assistant calls me up during the weekends and during my family holidays				
I have a mountain of matters on my desk to deal with				
I find it difficult to establish and meet deadlines except when under pressure				
I have too many papers on my desk, the mail and other reading take too much time				
I put off to the last moment the important tasks which demand a great deal of concentration from me				
I can't clearly define my objectives and priorities. They are confused and changeable				
I deal too often with secondary matters				
I don't make a daily work plan				
I don't delegate a part of my responsibilities to others				
I have a tendency to want to do things too well. I get too involved in details				
I often have to resolve problems which others could deal with just as competently				
Add up the points obtained in each column	=	=	=	=
Multiply the total in each column by the value which is allocated to it	X0	X1	X2	X3
Calculate the general total	=	=	=	=

From 0-30 points :

You are letting yourself be robbed every day by the thieves of time. As you do not plan your time they are stealing your capital of time.

From 31-40 points :

You try to install a security system to protect yourself from the thieves of time. But the system does not work sufficiently or regularly enough for you to really succeed.

From 41-50 points :

You manage your time well enough but you notice some problems and weak points in your control system through which the thieves could attempt an armed attack on your capital of time.

From 51-59 points :

Your capital of time is not likely to fall into the hands of the thieves. Congratulations, you are a model for all those who want to learn to manage their time.

2.3.1. External and internal time thieves

You can divide between external time thieves, which are distractions from outside, and internal time thieves, meaning that it is you who are blocking yourself.

External time thieves are for example pointlessly long telephone calls, drop in visitors, colleagues coming in to chat, too many e-mails, long and insufficiently prepared team meetings, machines which break down etc.

Internal time thieves are sometimes more tricky to analyse and to change, because we ourselves are the culprit and maybe are even used to the time stealing habit. To be our own time thief includes the lack of a work a plan, badly defined objectives, lack of priorities, a tendency to do too much, lack of order, family preoccupations, difficulties in delegating and in saying no.

According to the Time management guidelines of the World Scout Office ¹ you have to:

- *start analysing your own situation in order to identify your time thieves.*
- *adopt an attitude toward time which allows you to deal with obligations, unforeseen events and pleasures*
- *ask yourself questions in order to stop yourself in time like “is this really necessary?”*
- *strictly adhere to your decisions*
- *know how to persist in saying no to someone, irrespective of what is said*
- *understand why we sometimes allow ourselves to be persuaded to do something we did not really want to do*

In the world of training there are many time thieves around.

Many creative trainers don't even realize that time bandits are stealing their time. People, who tend to be chaotic, sometimes even seek interesting alternations, and interruptions often don't bother them. A lot of times they are not even aware, that time thieves are hindering them in order to get their work-rate done.

2.4. Some of the biggest time wasters for trainers:

2.4.1. Lack of priorities, objectives and planning

These are probably the biggest and most important time wasters. It affects all we do both professionally and personally. Those who accomplish the most in a day know exactly what they want to accomplish.

Unfortunately even some trainers still think, that goals and objectives are yearly things and not daily considerations. This results in too much time spent on the minor things and not on the things which are important to our work and lives.

¹ World Organisation of the Scout Movement: Managing Time, p.26

2.4.2. The inability to say “no”

Such a small word and often so difficult to say. Saying yes is usually so much easier because we don't want to upset people by turning them down.

In my observations many trainers like serving others and therefore feel guilty declining.

A lot of trainers are also very curious personalities by nature and saying “No” to a new project also includes to miss something. You miss to travel to a maybe new country, to exchange with other trainers and to meet interesting participants.

So learning to say “No” is one of the golden rules of time management, which helps not to become overloaded and to save some hours and minutes you want or need for yourself.

2.4.3. Procrastination

Procrastination means: No decision making, but decision avoidance.

Putting it off until later, and you never get it done. By reducing the amount of procrastinating you do can substantially increase the amount of active time available to you.

In my experience procrastination is one of the “methods” often used when trainers need to write applications and reports. I found out that many wait until the very last day before the deadline is over before they hand in the application or report. I am not really sure why, but I imagine, that many trainers prefer to work with people instead of working with paper or computers.

Another observation I made, which I think is actually a bit funny, is that many trainers (including myself) wait for the very last minute to pack before they are travelling to a course.

In the book “Time management for busy people” Roberta Roesch¹ recommends to:

- *Make a list of all the projects, tasks, and items on which you've been procrastinating.*
- *Figure out why you're procrastinating, e.g., hating a project, disliking the person who gave you the deadline, feeling overwhelmed by the pending deadline, fearing you'll fail, waiting for the right time to start, or wanting to collect all the details and necessary information before you start.*
- *Face whatever reason applies to you and, instead of letting the reason paralyze you, make yourself get started.*
- *Write on an index card the benefits you'll gain from beginning and finishing the job.*
- *Set aside half an hour a day to get started on what you've been putting off. This working for half an hour at a time will help get rid of your overwhelmed feeling and increase your momentum to work faster in each new half-hour stint. Besides, half-hour minutes add up to hourly totals.*

¹ Roesch, Roberta: Time management for busy people, p.48-49

2.4.4. Perfectionism

One of the giant time waster is the goal to do a perfect job. In many situations, e.g. preparing a session for tomorrow's program during a training course, it's more important to strive for a good job that you can deliver on time rather than a perfect job you're never ready to deliver. You simply won't get everything done if you demand extremely high standards.

Lothar Seiwert is speaking about the "Good-instead-of-perfect-principle"¹ and describes, that very few jobs really justify the time and commitment it takes to make them perfect. Living with the good-enough approach you also will feel more relaxed (because you didn't work the whole night in order to get things done) and you are more flexible to react to upcoming needs and requests of participants, because your heart is not only concentrating on the perfect session you designed.

2.4.5. Poor organization

To be disorganized means to clutter and not knowing what to do next, which wastes time and energy.

While the right-brainers need e.g. a clean desk in order to have an overview, usually creative types prefer a bit of a messy atmosphere in order to get "inspiration". The golden rule therefore is to tidy up in a way which allows you to find your stuff easily, even if the desk still looks full.

A very useful tip in order to only have at your desk the things that you need is to move everything off your desktop for a fresh start and place the content in a big box. Then only get back the things you use every day and rearrange them. The stuff which is in the box you rather store or throw away.

2.4.6. Team meetings

Especially team meetings during a training course can be extremely time consuming, if the time frame is not clear and if the items depending on the importance are not limited.

Advices for making meetings more effective you can find in many of the time management guides. Masterton Ailsa recommends to²:

- Plan and compile the agenda (how much will you be able to achieve?)
- Chair meetings (effective and fair chair plays a key role in terms of involving participants, taking decisions, and in keeping it on track and not wasting time)
- Record meetings

2.4.7. Fatigue

When you are tired, it takes you longer to do something.

¹ Seiwert, Lothar J.: 30 Minuten für optimale Selbstorganisation, p.19

² Masterton, Ailsa: Getting results with time management, p.39-46

The effects of a lack of sleep and energy include loss of memory, trouble focusing, lack of creativity, slower reaction time and poor decision-making ability.

Especially during a training course many trainers seem not to get enough sleep. There are several reasons for that like team meetings until late after mid-night, socializing with colleagues and participants, preparing material for the next day session and sometimes people have difficulties falling asleep because they are constantly thinking on their performance or the program and therefore can't relax.

2.4.8. Interruptions

A frequent time daemon that holds you from moving ahead with your plans is the habit of responding too quickly to phone calls, faxes, e-mails, questions from your colleagues and drop-in visitors.

It's tempting to react to interruptions instantly, especially since the people who interrupt you can be very demanding. But often it turns out, that urgent items aren't really so urgent.

2.4.9. Crisis management

It is easy to get sidetracked by emergencies. On some trainings trainers have to spend so much time "putting out fires" that they have problems to get to the real business at hand.

I remember one training, where part of the participants were drunken more or less the whole training course, which was really difficult to deal with. At the end of the course they were found totally pissed on the street and had to go to hospital.

Some people thrive on crises, but if it becomes too much, the burn-out-point reaches very fast.

2.5. Time savers

Eliminating time wasters and getting this into your daily routine is the best way of spending time - the most precious commodity we possess - in a way we want it.

2.5.1. Setting priorities and having a plan

The lesson to learn is that the time we spend for planning and prioritizing, the more time will we have for activities which are important for us. I know I already referred to that several times, but planning and prioritizing are the golden keys to good time management.

Successful people make constantly lists. It enables them to stay on top of priorities and enables them to remain flexible to changing priorities. This is valid both for personal and business goals.

Whatever your priorities and goals are, it is important to keep in mind that they should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Rewarding and Timely).

2.5.2. Delegation

Effective delegation is one of the most important time-management skills to master and employ.

Yet there are many reasons that people have trouble redistributing some of their workloads to others, according to Julie Morgenstern¹:

- *You feel too busy to delegate*
- *You feel guilty “dumping on others”*
- *You have difficulties depending on others.*
- *You’re afraid of becoming dispensable.*

To delegate tasks to other people means that you can use your time and your energy for higher-priority tasks.

To delegate is a wonderful thing in order to save time if you have someone to delegate to. But being a trainer means often working on your own and not necessarily having an assistant. So delegating can be really tricky.

Sometimes it might be an idea to delegate to someone you pay, like an expert (who can do it better, faster or more efficiently than you), or to give the job to someone who is as qualified as you. The biggest time but the least money investment is necessary, if you delegate to someone who is a beginner. Usually this way of delegating will require training and monitoring of those to whom you delegate, but this often is one option to free yourself long-term. Another possibility are maybe family members who are capable of doing certain tasks, involving them at the same time letting them know, what life as a trainer is about.

2.5.3. Defence mechanism for interruptions

First of all you have to be aware that interruptions always happen, and most of them will feel urgent. So be prepared and allow time for distractions!

One of the effective defence mechanism in order to fight interruptions is to practice a policy of closing the door and taking the phone off the hook whenever our activities require to do so. But of course it is more difficult to send people away if they are already standing at the door. This might be salespeople, colleagues, friends or relatives, and any of those can easily steal you a whole afternoon or evening, but as well can be trainer colleagues or participants who occupy you in your free time (if you have some free time during a training course at all!).

In order not to get annoyed is to schedule your agenda not too tightly, so you still have space to handle interruptions without dumping your plan for the day.

Time management experts suggest to set up a certain time frame system to allow for the interruptions you must face if you are working in an office. Especially if you know that you will face the most distractions in the morning between 8 and 10a.m., plan this time for unforeseen things.

¹ Morgenstern, Julie: Time Management from the Inside Out, p.171-173

2.5.4. Conquer procrastination

If the project is so big that it eats into your breaks, meals and sleep, you have two choices: delegate parts of it, extend the deadline to a realistic time frame, or break it up into smaller pieces that you can handle while having a life.

One way of conquering procrastination is the “Swiss Cheese Method”¹. When you are avoiding something, break it into smaller tasks and do just one of the smaller tasks or set a timer and work on the big tasks for just 15 minutes. By doing a little at a time, eventually you’ll reach a point where you’ll want to finish.

2.5.5. Strategies for emergencies

The best way of dealing with emergencies is to prevent them by good planning and by anticipating, watching for signals. But since it is not always working that way, and since copy machines sometimes break down just when you need them most, since an expert you invited might tell you a day in advance before he is scheduled, that he won’t come to do an input, be prepared to deal with crisis.

Silber Lee² is recommending the following in case of an emergency:

- Don’t freak. Keep your cool and make plans to catch up later.
- Is it really an emergency? Is it YOUR emergency? Someone else’s deal?
- Bend, don’t break.
- Don’t go flying off half-cocked. Think about the best way to deal with the situation. Use that creative brain to come up with solutions. THEN act.
- Find appropriate help.

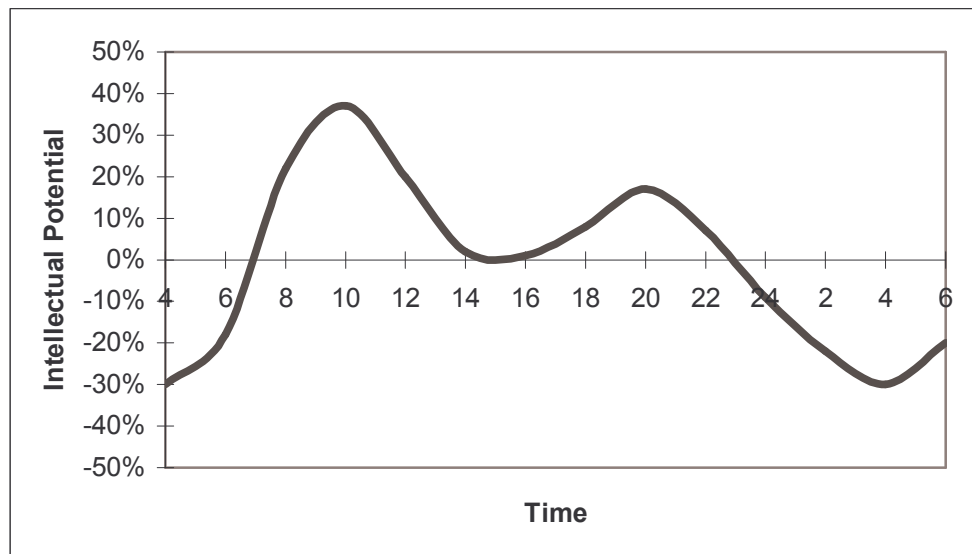
2.5.6. Respect your individual rhythm

Our capacity to act, think and concentrate is not constant throughout the day. Therefore we establish our daily plan, we should take our individual rhythm into consideration. Moreover the rhythm imposed on us by our body is not linear, it is subject to fluctuations, and to alternate periods of tension and relaxation.

¹ <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/homemgt/nf172.htm>

² Silber, Lee: Time management for the creative person, p.80-81

The statistical average potential of our productivity looks graphically like the following ¹:



Generally speaking you can note, that :

- Our efficiency potential and maximum productivity are highest in the morning
- Our powers of concentration and level of activity are lower after meals
- Our levels of activity and efficiency rise at the end of the morning, but drop progressively in the early evening

Of course your biological prime time might vary a lot from the above graphic, depending on the country you are coming from, personal eating habits and your personal preferences. Some people work best in the morning when they are feeling fresh. Others will work late into the evening to tackle an important matter.

To use that time of the day for your priorities (if possible) is effective time management. But it is also important to leave some space for breaks (if possible) in order to recharge your batteries.

Problems can arise, when you are working in a team during a training course, and you have some trainers who are “night owls” and others who are “morning persons”. This is then one of the situations where you have to find a good compromise, when to start with the programme and when to schedule team meetings in order to meet the needs of both groups.

2.5.7. Being flexible and realistic about time

Being flexible not only helps in order to be prepared for interruptions, but also to be able to better respond to emergencies as well as to your personal needs, as a trainer and the needs of the participants.

Referring to a training situation my dear mentor Inge Stuer, already practised to be more flexible, by scheduling the end of the programme every half-day session half an hour in advance before the official closing. Through this unplanned 30 minutes, you as a trainer have more freedom to react to unforeseen things, answer questions, or if you don't finish in time,

¹ World Organisation of the Scout Movement: Managing Time, p.23

the participants won't already stress you because they want to have their break. But what is even more essential, is that you do not feel stressed and this relaxed atmosphere also feel the participants.

In case no more questions arise and you finish the session ten minutes before lunch will be served, the participants for sure won't mind.

One of the reasons why it is maybe hard for many trainers not to fill up all the time with program, is that many of us have the concern to give too less to participants if not every single second is prepared, to have too less to offer.

2.5.8. Rewarding yourself

Reward yourself even for small successes, for each step along the way and upon completion. In my perception it is very effective if you promise yourself a reward for tasks you tend to procrastinate.

Rewarding yourself will help you to maintain the necessary balance in life between work and play. As Ann McGee-Cooper¹ says, "If we learn to balance excellence in work with excellence in play, fun, and relaxation, our lives become happier, healthier, and a great deal more creative."

2.5.9. Balance in life

Even if we try real hard to use the different time and self management tools, often we miss the important things in life, because we only see the urgent ones.

The concept of "Life-leadership" is a way, of balancing ourselves and our lives in order to be more content and happy. "Life-leadership" as described by the German time management guru Lothar J. Seiwert² means an active way of living and is following the principles of time and self management. Those methods are completed by an integral approach according to what is important in your live. Seiwert suggests that having so many options we should carefully decide, where we invest our time and energies. Someone who only focuses on his or her career loses quite easily the balance and doesn't recognize, that relationships, family, inspiration are essential in order to live a balanced life.

The idea behind this "Life-Leadership" concept is in my point of view especially interesting for trainers. Some of us are so focused on their job, that they only fly from one project to a new one and then it is really easy to lose the feet on the ground.

Being a trainer means working with our whole personality and also means acting as a model for participants. Therefore it is especially important to balance our lives.

I think to pay attention to family and friends, to the way how we treat our body and to philosophical topics like religion are just as essential as delivering a good training.

¹ McGee-Cooper, Ann: Time management for unmanageable people

² Seiwert, Lothar J.: Life-Leadership: sinnvolles Selbstmanagement für ein Leben in Balance

3. Time management parable

I will finish my TQP about time management with a little story which I found in the internet. For me the story shows very clear, how important it is to set priorities in a certain way.

And for us as trainers the method which is used in the story is an excellent way of maybe introducing time management during a next training session.

Time Management Parable¹

by: Author Unknown, Source Unknown

One day, an expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students and, to drive home a point, used an illustration those students will never forget.

As he stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers he said,

"Okay, time for a quiz" and he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouth mason jar and set it on the table in front of him. He also produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class yelled, "Yes."

The time management expert replied, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. He dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. He then asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?"

By this time the class was on to him. "Probably not," one of them answered.

"Good!" he replied. He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in the jar and it went into all of the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?" "No!" the class shouted.

Once again he said, "Good." Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things in it!"

"No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all."

What are the 'big rocks' in your life, time with your loved ones, your faith, your education, your dreams, a worthy cause, teaching or mentoring others? Remember to put these big rocks in first or you'll never get them in at all. So, tonight, or in the morning, when you are reflecting on this short story, ask yourself this question: What are the 'big rocks' in my life? Then, put those in your jar first.

¹ <http://www.inspirationalstories.com/6/609.html>

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