“If you don’t manage your time, someone else will”: Yes, but how?

Richard Smith  
Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor  
Professor of Health Economics
Six Terrific Truths About Time

First: Nobody can manage time. But you can manage those things that take up your time.

Second: Time is expensive. As a matter of fact, 80 percent of our day is spent on those things or those people that only bring us two percent of our results.

Third: Time is perishable. It cannot be saved for later use.

Fourth: Time is measurable. Everybody has the same amount of time...Pauper or King. It is not how much time you have; it is how much you use.

Fifth: Time is irreplaceable. We never make back time once it is gone.

Sixth: Time is a priority. You have enough time for anything in the world, so long as it ranks high enough among your priorities.
What I plan to cover

• My background – why ‘time management’?
• Three key questions to ask yourself
• How I’ve approached them and seen others experiences
• Happy to answer questions on anything at all related to webinar or careers more generally
Summary of my career journey over 28 years

• Undergraduate and postgraduate economics University of York
• 1991 – Sydney (CHERE)
• 1993 – Cambridge (consultancy)
• 1994 – Bristol (RF)
• 1996 – Melbourne (L/SL)
• 1999 – Norwich (SL/Reader)
• 2018 – Exeter (DPVC)
Some stats

• **GRANTS**
  - >50 successful grants, >25 as PI (incl. ESRC, MRC, EU, DoH, NIHR, Wellcome, Leverhulme ...)
  - Research income of >£50,000,000

• **PUBLICATIONS (H-index: 40)**
  - Books: 6
  - Chapters: 45
  - Journals > 200
  - Other > 50

• **RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENTS**
  - Supervised: 18
  - Examined: 11
Current external roles

- Senior Editor (Economics), Social Science & Medicine
- Member, editorial board of Journal of Public Health
- Member, editorial board of Globalization and Health
- Member, Executive Board, IHEA
- Member, College of Reviewers, Canada Research Chairs Program
- Member, cross-council AMR initiative steering group, RCUK
- Member, Longitude Prize Committee
- Member, International Scientific Review Committee for Large-Scale Applied Research Projects, Genome Canada
- Member and vice-chair, Expert Panel on The Potential Impacts of AMR in Canada, Council of Canadian Academies
- Mentor: HESG, iHEA and University of Exeter schemes

- Chair, Large Grants Competition, ESRC
- Member, Future Leaders Fellowships Panel College, ESRC
- Member, International Scientific Advisory Group for project at Monash Sustainability Institute, Melbourne, Australia
- Chair, Scientific Advisory Group for project at University of Bristol
- Member, Devon STP Collaborative Board, Devon
- Non-Executive Director, South West Academic Health Science Network, Devon
- Non-Executive Director, Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust, Truro
- School Governor and Chair of Resources Committee, St Sidwells Primary School and Nursery, Exeter
My main role...
Three key questions

1. What am I actually spending my time on (and is it what I want to spend my time on)?

2. How can I reduce time on things I don’t want to do?

3. How can I spend ‘less time’ doing things I want to?
   (OR ... How can I do what I want to do using less time?)
1. What do you spend your time doing?

• In an existential sense... are you doing what you want to be doing?
  • Time management can only help so far!
  • What you spend time on should reveal your priorities/values

• Importance of cataloguing how your time is spent
  • ‘Timesheet’ or apps

• And then map this against how you’d like to spend your time
  • Determines how much ‘management’ you may need to do

• Be careful of perception over reality
  • a minute of pain can seem longer than an hour of pleasure!

• Keep tracking and monitoring how your time is spent
Example timesheet – from 2007 average week!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Lect/sem</th>
<th>Marking</th>
<th>MSc</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
<th>PhD SUPERVISION</th>
<th>MACRO-ECON</th>
<th>GLOBALIZATION/TRADE</th>
<th>MISC</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>PER</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
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HOURS WEEK
9 M 10
T 12
W 11
T 7
F 4

PhD SUPERVISION: MACRO-ECON: GLOBALIZATION/TRADE:
<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Other te</td>
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<tr>
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<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average wk: 43.519231
Or use an app...there are plenty!!

- Everhour (web)
- FreshBooks (Android, iOS, web)
- Harvest (Android, iOS, macOS, web, Windows)
- HourStack (Android, iOS, web)
- OfficeTime (iOS, macOS, Windows)
- Paydirt (web)
- Timely (Android, iOS, macOS, web, Windows)
- Timeneye (Android, iOS, web)
- TMetric (Android, iOS, Linux, macOS, web, Windows)
- Toggl (Android, iOS, Linux, macOS, web, Windows)

https://zapier.com/blog/best-time-tracking-apps/
1. What do you spend your time doing?

- In an existential sense...are you doing what you want to be doing?
  - Time management can only help so far!
  - What you spend time on should reveal your priorities/values
- Importance of cataloguing how your time is spent
  - ‘Timesheet’ or apps
- And then map this against how you’d like to spend your time
  - Determines how much ‘management’ you may need to do
- Be careful of perception over reality
  - a minute of pain can seem longer than an hour of pleasure!
- Keep tracking and monitoring how your time is spent
Importance of ‘control’

• Often what can make us feel we don’t have time is control

• Relates back to values/priorities – are you spending time doing what you want or feel you should be spending it on?
  • If not, why not?

• ‘More time’ will not solve this fundamental problem
  • I do 50-60 hours pw but (mostly) doing what I ‘want’, so does not seem ‘unmanageable’ or ‘stressful’ most of the time
  • Not absolute time, but time/activities that is under your control that key

• So...how do we get a better balance if that is what we want?
2. How can I reduce time on things I don’t want to do?

• Remember – values, priorities and monitoring as foundations
• Say ‘yes’ to say ‘no’
  • Being clear what say yes to can help say no, and provide reason
  • Sometimes say yes now means can say no later (pick your moment!)
• Work on what gives you ‘power’ (ie more control) – what does your institution, line manager etc ‘value’?
• Satisficing – not everything has to be done to the best of your ability!
• Try ‘units of time’ and set a limit
Units of time

"I find the key is to think of a day as units of time, each unit consisting of no more than thirty minutes. Full hours can be a little bit intimidating and most activities take about half an hour."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0H7VtFG9F-c
Emails

• Handle emails once
  • Answer, delete, forward, file (even if need to action later)
• Divert emails to someone else – hard unless you have a PA
• Ignore first email – people get used to the system
• Auto-reply that asks you to divert to specific categories – delays issue
• Have specific times of the day to respond – can help along with above
• Avoid getting involved in ‘chains’ if you can
• Use of portable devices can help if ‘controlled’
Social media

• Part of career – but treat like any other activity
• Priorities – what using it for
• Specific times of day
• Allocate maximum ‘units of time’
• Be selective on which platforms you use, and for what
• Try to get consolidated feeds and treat like other ‘reading’ material
Meetings

• Try to reduce time – you’ll find ‘standard allocation’ can be 1 hour, but if you went for 45 mins or even 30 mins it would still work
• Try meeting standing up or walking – seems to make them go quicker
• Decide purpose of meeting and stick to it
• Tight agenda and control over it – esp if you are chair
• Be confident to close meeting early if chair
• If not chair be confident to take control if chair ‘weak’ – suggest move on, or indicate at beginning that you do have to leave at finish time
3. How can I do what I want to do using less time?

• Remember – values, priorities and monitoring as foundations
• Much of preceding also applies of course
• Become more efficient
  • Should happen with time/practice but may be specific things you can do
• Diminishing returns
  • Knowing when you’ve reached the ‘optimum’ and move on
  • Either be happy that it is finished OR...
  • Do something else for a while and come back refreshed
3. How can I do what I want to do using less time?

• Multitasking
  • Emails whilst on teleconf, writing whilst travelling, thinking whilst walking

• Delegation and teams
  • Working with other should mean > sum of parts (comparative advantage)
  • Writing partners (papers, grants), ‘teams’ and networks (‘who you know’)

• Make sure you have allocated time to ‘think’ before you act!
  • Part of this is making sure plan so NOT forced to ‘do’ things at last minute
  • Time spent in preparation is invested not wasted…
Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.

Abraham Lincoln
Yes, but...

• If you are responding ‘yes, but...’ to all this then just remember that whatever you are doing if you were to stop then life would still carry on...so if you really do need some more time then...

• Pretend you are sick and catch up on whatever it is at home, as everything else ‘back at the office’ will get done anyway, will wait until you are back, or will simply disappear!!
  • But remember this really is a last resort!!!
"Time and tide wait for no man."
Geoffrey Chaucer

"Don't say you don't have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michaelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein."
Life's Little Instruction Book

"One life - a little gleam of time between two eternities."
Thomas Carlyle

"The whole of life is but a moment of time. It is our duty, therefore to use it, not to misuse it."
Plutarch

"Time is but the stream I go a-fishin in."
Henry David Thoreau

"Determine never to be idle. No person will have occasion to complain of the want of time who never loses any. It is wonderful how much may be done if we are always doing."
Thomas Jefferson

"Make use of time, let not advantage slip."
William Shakespeare

"He lives long that lives well; and time misspent is not lived but lost."
Thomas Fuller

"A man who dares waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of life."
Charles Darwin

"The ability to concentrate and to use your time well is everything if you want to succeed in business - or almost anywhere else for that matter."
Lee Iacocca

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