

TEAM WORK, TIME MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

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Even though collaborative work among individuals is very prominent today, that was not the case over half a century ago. The shift from the typical assembly line to more contemporary organizational models that contain increasing amounts of teamwork first came about during World War I and World War II, in an effort for countries to unite their people. The movement towards teamwork was mostly due to the Hawthorne studies, a set of studies conducted in the 1920s and 1930s that highlighted the positive aspects of teamwork in an organizational setting.

Teamwork is nothing but the collaborative effort of a group to achieve a common goal or to complete a task in the most effective and efficient way. This concept is seen within the greater framework of a team, which is a group of interdependent individuals who work together towards a common goal. It truly conveys Together Everyone Achieves More. Basic requirement for effective teamwork is an adequate team size. The context is important, and team sizes can vary depending upon the objective. A team must include at least 2 or more members, and most teams range in size from 2 to 100. Most innovative ideas often come from small teams, possibly because larger teams argue more, which can get in the way of coming up with those big ideas.

Teamwork is mainly about situational leadership, letting the person with the relevant core competency for a situation take leadership

Four key behavioral characteristics that compose teamwork are:

(a) Performance monitoring :

The first requirement of teamwork is that team members monitor the performance of others while carrying out their own task. Monitoring ensures that members are following procedures correctly and in a timely manner, while also ensuring that operations are working as expected.

(b) Feedback :

Next as a follow-up activity to monitoring, feedback on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of performance is passed along to members being monitored.

(c) Closed-loop communication:

Closed-loop communication describes the information exchange that occurs in successful communication between a sender and receiver.

(d) Back-up behaviours:

Finally, back-up behaviors (i.e., willingness to back team members during operations) are required for effective teamwork. Team members must be willing to help when they are needed and must accept help when needed without feeling they are being perceived as weak. A failure of one of these behavioral characteristics aspects could result in ineffective team performance.

Basic Elements for effective team work:

- Good Communication & Social Skills
- Positive Interdependence: We instead of me
- Individual Accountability/ Personal Responsibility
- Shared goals among all members

- Processes for Conflict Resolution whenever dispute arises.

Stages of Team Development:

1. Forming:

This stage is described by approach/avoidance issues, as well as internal conflicts about being independent vs. wanting to be a part of the team. Teamwork is at its lowest levels which happens during initial stage of team formation.

2. Storming

The second stage is characterized by a competition for power and authority, which is the source of most of the conflicts and doubts about the success of the team. If teamwork is low in this stage, it is very unlikely that the team will get past their conflicts. If there is a high degree of teamwork and willingness to collaborate, then the team might have a brighter future.

3. Norming

The third stage is characterized by increasing levels of solidarity, interdependence, and cohesiveness, while simultaneously making an effort to adjust to the team environment. This stage shows much higher levels of teamwork that make it easier for the above characteristics to occur.

4. Performing

This final stage of team development includes a comfortable environment in which team members are effectively completing tasks in an interdependent and cohesive manner. This stage is characterized by the highest levels of comfort, success, interdependence, and maturity, and therefore includes the highest levels of teamwork as team starts to perform collectively towards common goal.

In short, team work boosts creativity and productivity among team members, helps discover new concepts from colleagues with different experiences and also they tend to take more risks as a team and finish work effectively. For every work, whether done individually or as a team, it requires accurate planning and

proper implementation for getting expected outcome.

Planning, prioritization and time management go hand in hand. If we can prioritize our works effectively through proper planning, we can manage our time to produce required outputs. Since childhood, our parents and teachers have rightly advised us to spend time and money wisely. Time once gone is gone forever. So time management is of utmost importance in every aspect of life.

Time management is the process of planning and exercising conscious control of the time spent on specific activities to work smarter than harder. It seems that there is never enough time in the day. But, since we all get the same 24 hours, why is it that some people achieve so much more with their time than others? The answer lies in good time management. The highest achievers manage their time exceptionally well.

Benefits of Effective time management are enormous viz;

- Greater productivity and efficiency.
- A better professional reputation and increased career opportunities.
- Less stress.

Failing to manage your time effectively can have some very undesirable consequences like;

- Missed deadlines and appointments
- Procrastination and lack of focus
- Lack of professionalism and poor professional reputation
- Inefficient workflow and low work quality
- Unwanted stress

Steps for better time management

1. Planning:

Planning is the most important part of the formula we call

time management. Research shows that for every 1 minute we spend in planning, we will gain 10 in execution. Planning will keep us on course in achieving our goals and objectives. When we don't plan, we end up responding to the day's events as they occur. We put forth considerable effort, but at the end of the day, we haven't accomplished anything significant. If we don't determine what we want to achieve, we will experience frequent changes in our plans. Planning includes adding meetings or works to be done using a calendar or reminders, preparing a To Do List or a "TASK PLAN", completing pending tasks one by one avoid multitasking so as to ensure completion of tasks within the stipulated time frame. We can set both long term goals (to be achieved in a year or month, etc) and short term goals (to be achieved in a week, a day, etc).

2. Prioritization:

Prioritizing your daily tasks is the key to successful time management. High Priority work should come on top followed by those which do not need much of your importance at the moment. There are few methods which help us sort between various tasks based on their importance and urgency so as to facilitate prioritization, delegation to capable members or deletion from our schedule.

The 80/20 Rule-Pareto Principle is one such method. Of all the work we have to do within a week, 80 percent of the tasks take up 20 percent of our time. The remaining 20 percent of our tasks however, account for 80 percent of our work effort. This principle is known as the Pareto Principle, named after its inventor Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto. The core lesson to take away from the 80/20 ratio is: There are activities that have greater results than others. Even though the ratio is more of an average estimate than an exact number, we should identify the 20 percent tasks that have the 80 percent results and make them our priority.

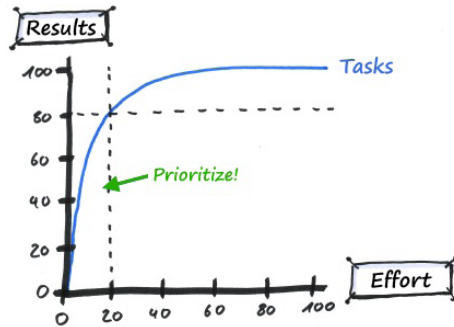


Fig 1 Maximum results with little effort.

Another method is Eisenhower Matrix which helps prioritize work according to their urgency and importance. (Fig.2)

1. Start with completing the most important and urgent tasks and schedule deadlines for the least urgent tasks on your list.
2. Tasks that are important but not urgent can be planned and scheduled for doing after completing above tasks.
3. Tasks that are of secondary importance and should be completed soon are best delegated to team members who are better skilled and have more capacity.
4. Eliminate the tasks that are neither important nor urgent. This saves our time and effort.

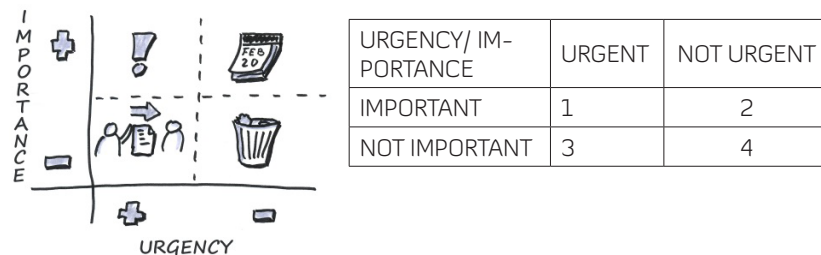


Fig 2 Identify Urgent vs Important using Eisenhower matrix

3. Complete the most important work first - First complete the most important work in our list. If it is a difficult task, it is human tendency to postpone. If we finish that work instead of postponing, it saves time as well as gives a sense of accomplishment also.
4. Plan realistically; Plan for work that can be completed within a day. Make sure we don't have an end-to-end schedule for every work day and instead include buffer times. So that in case of some unforeseen work we would not be stressed.
5. Avoid cluttering; Avoid keeping stacks of file and heaps of paper at your workstation. Put important documents in folders. Keep the files in their respective drawers with labels on top of each file to avoid unnecessary searching.
6. Avoid distractions; In our everyday life, distractions cost us many valuable hours in a day. Mobile phones, chatty coworkers, social media are some of the common distractions at work which should be avoided.
7. Taking regular breaks while working, making sure it does not exceed limits, is an effective way to stay productive all day.
8. Identifying productive hours-We may be at our highest brain capacity, with best focus and attention, before lunch hour, and slow down significantly in the evening. So, if we have a project that involves critical decisions and complex thoughts, the best way is to manage it in our "golden energetic hours".

Effective time management skills can have a positive impact on your work and life in general.
