
Effective Time Management: A Panacea for Higher Productivity in Organisations

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Abstract

Effective time management is a set of principles, practices, skills, tools, and systems working together to help managers get more value out of their time with the aim of improving the quality of their lives. The study examines the concept of effective time management, managerial levels in organisations and managerial efficiency and effectiveness. Reasons why managers face problems of effective time management were also outlined. It recommends for the need to be proactive and dynamic, prioritization of your duties, making out list of tasks to be attended to daily, weekly or monthly, identifying personal hours of efficiency and using same to attend to challenging and most complex tasks; adhering strictly to visitation hours and brevity in handling visitors; knowing when to permit interruption and fixing deadline for all jobs, acquiring new ideas and skills; avoiding pressures of deadlines as such may be counter-productive; encouraging team-building and effective delegation of duties, avoiding excessive socialization and too many meetings as they hamper effective time management stride; preparation of the mind always for un-expected, developing a sense of urgency as every minutes counts; ensuring self-confidence and use of telecommunication gadgets for efficiency and effectiveness in discharging ones duties. The paper concludes that proficiency of a manager hinges on effective time management for managerial efficiency.

Time can be defined as a moment allotted to an activity, event or purpose. It can also be seen as a period of what has happened, what is happening and what will happen (Onifade, 2004). Time is a unique resource that must be managed properly by every worker especially managers. This is more so as time is perishable as it cannot be

saved but can only be spent. It is indispensable as all work requires time. Time is irreplaceable as nothing can substitute time and nothing else can bring back spent time. Whatever the attributes or qualities of a successful manager, one essential underlying criterion is the effective use of time. With many managers who complain that they do not have sufficient time it may be more of a case that they have failed to organise themselves or their work properly. The most important members of staff to be managed are themselves. Drucker (1998) refers to time as the limiting factor for effective managers. Time is a unique resource – you cannot rent, hire, buy or otherwise obtain more time. The supply of time is totally inelastic, time is totally irreplaceable and everything requires time.

A manager's work has peculiar relation to time as there are so many demands on his time from job activities per se and other people. According to Tracy (2006), because of budget limitations, staff cutbacks, inefficiency, and competitive pressures, individual managers are forced to take on more and more work, all of which appears to be indispensable to the smooth functioning of an organisation and department. This makes for the most common form of stress that managers experience, a feeling of being overwhelmed with far too much to do and having little time to do it. Time constraints have been identified as the highest single problem facing most managers in Nigeria and around the globe. This depicts that time is not enough for managers to discharge all their responsibilities. Time is a very precious constraint and invaluable as it is essential for everyone who is a manager or planner of work or business activities (Sannie, 2009). Just as the manager's work has peculiar relation to time so also is his efficiency. His efficiency is evaluated in terms of the degree of achievement of the organisational goals and objectives as that result to monetary costs and effectiveness. It is obvious that the manager's performance is evaluated in terms of the 3Es of management (Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness) it is worth-noting that these 3Es have some bearing to time management. They are used to evaluate the manager within a time-frame. This implies that economy, efficiency and effectiveness must be attained under conditions of effective time management within the time-frame of evaluation e.g. the financial year.

Time is a very important factor in productivity. It is a vital resource for achieving personal and organisational goals. Thus, how much is achieved within a given time is a function of the effectiveness of the planning and utilization of time. Managing time is inevitable if one must manage other resources.

Managerial Levels

The following are managerial levels in an organisation.

Top Managers: They are those managers at the very top levels of the hierarchy who have the most authority and who are ultimately responsible for the entire organisation. They are those who are responsible for making organisation-wide decisions and establishing the plans and goals that affect the entire organisation. They oversee the overall planning of the organisation, work with middle managers in implementing and

planning, and maintain overall control over the progress of the organisation. Top managers are responsible for the overall direction of the organisation and for creating the context for change and also develop in employees the attitudes of commitment to and ownership in the company's performance and create a positive organisational culture through language and action.

Middle-Level Managers: Middle-level managers are mainly responsible for implementing overall organisational plans so that organisational goals are achieved as expected. They plan, allocate resources to meet objectives and coordinate and link groups, departments and divisions within a company. They monitor and manage the performance of the sub-units and individual managers who report to them and also implement changes or strategies generated by top managers.

Managers need a knowledge base. This knowledge base provides a context for the manager's activities. It can include information about an industry and its technology, company policies and practices, company goals and plans, company culture, the personalities of key organisation members and important suppliers and customers. According to Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2007) managerial job requires three basic skills: technical, human relation (or social skills) and conceptual, with relative importance depending on the manager's rank in the organisation.

- ❖ Technical skills are skills that reflect both an understanding of and a proficiency in a specialised field. Technical skills include knowledge of and proficiency in a certain specialised field, such as engineering, computers, accounting or manufacturing. These skills are more important at lower levels of management since those managers are dealing directly with employees doing the organisation's work.
- ❖ Human relation skills are associated with a manager's ability to work well with others both as a member of a group and as a leader who gets things done through others. Because managers deal directly with people, this skill is crucial. Managers with good human skills are able to get the best out of their people. They know how to communicate, motivate, lead, and inspire enthusiasm and trust. This skill is required by managers at all levels.
- ❖ Conceptual skills are skills related to the ability to visualise the organisation as a whole, discern interrelationships among organisational parts and understand how the organisation fit into the wider context of the industry, community and world. Conceptual skills are the skills managers must have to think and to conceptualize about complex situations. Using these skills, managers must be able to see the organisation as a whole, understand the relationships among various subunits, and visualize how the organisation fits into its broader environment. Top level managers need this skill most.

The job of a manager hinges on how their time is being spent. Most of a manager's working hours are spent talking with people, and his other work activities often interrupted by people and events. Yet, he is not expected to complain that he receives too much people, listens to too many complaints and attends to so many activities that he has no time to do his work properly. This is where the subject of this paper "effective time management" hinges.

Concept of Effective Time Management

According to Hisrich and Peters (2002) time is a unique quantity a manager cannot store, rent, or buy. With its supply being inelastic, it is totally perishable and irreplaceable. Everything requires it and it passes at the same rate for everyone. It cannot be changed, converted or controlled. It can only be spent. Each of us receives an equal amount of time everyday. We spend it, even if we accomplish nothing. In actuality, managing time means managing yourself in relation to your time.

Time management is a major factor in your productivity and feelings of job satisfaction, your reputation as an effective worker, and opportunities for advancement. Managing your time at the office is a process of choosing the most effective way to do your job. The creative use of techniques to manage time will enrich a manager's work life. Time management is the process of planning your activities to gain better control over how you spend your time (Oliverio, Pasewark and White 1998). Managing your time effectively is critical to your success on the job. When a manager analyse how he spends his time it will increase effectiveness in managing his work. Time management is the act of allocating our scarce time to our numerous daily activities through proper planning in order to achieve our objectives (Onifade, 2004). Time management hinges on the principles that it is more important to do the right things than to do things right. This principle implies that the key to effective time management is prioritizing the items that should be accomplished in any particular time period. This is why most managers and individuals can be three or four times more productive without ever increasing the number of working hours. Thus, time management is a set of principles, practices, skills, tools, and system working together to help you get more value out of your time with the aim of improving the quality of your life (Okolo, 2009). Time management depends on will-power and self discipline (Hisrich and Peters, 2002). This is the principle of the recognising that he or she is a time waster, and that he/she needs personal improvement in time usage.

There is also the principle of analysing the way you use your time. A manager should determine how he spends his time now and decide whether or not he is using it to its best advantage. Time study experts suggest keeping a log of your daily activities in half-hour increments. Then study the log and focus on recurring activities that cause you to use your time effectively. A manager should learn how to delegate duties.

Effective time management also depends on the principle of effectiveness. This means focusing on the most important issues/tasks as 'there will never be enough

time to do everything you have to do'. The things that matter least must be at the mercy of the things that matter most. This is the real meaning of the pareto principle which says that 20% of your activities will account for 80% of the value of your activities. This means in essence that if you have a list of ten items to accomplish, two of these items will be worth more than the other eight items together. These two activities are thus worth-concentrating on as they contribute the greatest value to your work. This principle is sometimes called the principle of forced efficiency which states that "there is never enough time to do everything, but there is always time to do the most important things".

Another important principle is that a manager should continuously improve himself. There is need to learn new things and develop natural talents and attitudes. Continuously improving your knowledge and skills increases your marketability, can boost your career and is the most reliable path to financial independence. Acquisition of new skills will enable you handle your tasks efficiently and effectively thereby having enough time for your activities.

Other principle ranges as follows: take time to do a quality job; separate productive from non-productive activities; minimize procrastination; careful forward planning; clear objectives and flexible working. According to Hisrich and Peters (2002) embarking on effective time management increases productivity; more job satisfaction; and minimise stress' better health and enable you feel in control of your life. According to the Chartered Institute of management effective time management can help gain more control over activities, increase efficiency and improve work/life balance. Good time management has always been an important skill, but it is now increasingly essential, as factors such as information overload and the need to balance private and working lives have put pressure on managers to squeeze more out of their working day.

Managerial Performance

According to Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2005) managerial performance measures how efficient and effective a manager is – how well he or she determines and achieves appropriate objectives. Managerial performance means how well or badly manager fares in achieving the set goals and objectives of the organisation he manages. In a broad sense, a manager's performance is measured by the 3Es of management (Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness). This approach has been widely accepted as a better one. The manager is provided with resources in the form of men, materials and money for the purpose of achieving stated organisational goals and objectives, what lowest appropriate costs are being maintained (economy), what quantity and quality of goods/services are being produced, and resources used to produce them (efficiency), and how far the expected organisational goals are being achieved (effectiveness), becomes the best yardsticks for measuring, the performance of the manager. The manager's ability to acquire the above resources to maximize his productivity all depends on the effectiveness management of limited time. Managerial efficiency is

concerned with ‘doing things right’ and related to inputs and what the manager does (Mullins, 2010). The word efficiency and effectiveness are often considered synonyms, along with terms like competency, productivity, and proficiency. Roberts (1994) defines efficiency as “to the degree of economy with which the process consumes resources especially time and money”, while he distinguishes effectiveness as “how well the process actually accomplishes. But what is important is the manner in which the manager achieves result and the effects on the people.

Effectiveness is concerned with ‘doing the right things’ and relates to output of the job and what the manager actually achieves’ (Mullins, 2010). Efficiency is productivity. Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2005) sees productivity, as the ratio of output to input, is a measure of a manager’s or an employee’s efficiency in using the organisation’s scarce resources to produce goods and services. The higher the numerical value of this ratio, the greater the efficiency.

As a result Ayegh (2005) emphasised that “effectiveness must be judged on the balance of positive and negative consequences”. Thus a manager’s performance is a totality of his economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the procurement and use of his organisational resources to accomplish his organisational goals and objectives. Effective time management plays a vital role in the effectiveness and efficiency of a manager’s performance in achieving the organisational goals.

Problems Associated with Time Management

Many managers face time management as a result of the under listed reasons.

1. **Frequent Interruption:** Interruptions in a manager’s work can come from many sources – unplanned visits or questions from subordinates, customers and phone calls. Each of this interruption is deterrent to completing a manager’s task. Most managers’ derail from important tasks as a result of these interruptions and this is a major constraint to effective time management.
2. **Excessive Socialization:** Although some socialization will help a manager maintain good working relationship with others, too much is misuse of company’s time. Some managers involve themselves in too many meetings, and social activities which hamper their time management stride.
3. **Lack of New Skills, Knowledge and Abilities:** The most foolish manager of all is either the manager who feels that he has no time to learn about time management techniques or, even worse the manager who, while being overwhelmed with work, feels that he already knows all that he needs to know about the subject (Tracy, 2006). Failure of a manager to attend seminars/conferences and workshops may retard his time management skill. Seminars/workshops given by authorities in the manager’s field can be good opportunities to learn new ideas, techniques and skills that can save the manager’s time.

4. **Procrastination of What Can Be Done Now:** Procrastinating what should be done now or leaving it undone completely is a problem facing some managers and their time management. This is more dangerous when it involves important tasks that hinges on the goals of the organisation.
5. **Inability to Take Decision:** Some managers find it difficult to decide on what to do and what not to do. They waste a lot of time tussling around alternative course of action.
6. **Other Reasons why Managers Fail in Time Management Are:** lack of self-discipline, disorganisation, lack of team work, unwillingness to accept good corrections; lack of daily priority list, poor creativity, lack of delegation, ill-health and poor working environment.

Conclusion

The concept of effective time management requires the development of so many managerial skills. It is indeed a very challenging aspect of the management process. It has been discovered that effective time management is an indispensable tool for every manager to attain effectiveness and efficiency in achieving the organisational goals. The recommendations will help the managers to effectively manage their time for optimal performance. Benjamin (2008) said “Do you love life? Then do not squander time, for it is the stuff that life is made of”.

Recommendations

In the light of the above submissions, the following are suggested as solution to time management problem.

- ❖ A manager should learn how to delegate duties to enable him have enough time to attend to those duties that only him can perform.
- ❖ Prioritization is a vital tool in time management and manager should prioritize his duties and stick to the schedule. A manager has to know when he is more efficient (morning, afternoon, evening, night). He should use such a period of time to work on the hardest and most complex tasks. Often, such tasks are the most valuable, having tremendous payoffs and rewards. The most difficult part of every hard challenging job is getting started on it in the first place.
- ❖ Managers should avoid procrastination for it is the major time waster. Once you have a task to perform, go ahead and start it for procrastination is not a solution.
- ❖ Good and organise working environment enhances productivity. This includes a comfortable table and chair, a daily dairy, a memory aid and efficient pending file. Visitation hours should be adhered to and brevity should be maintained with visitors.
- ❖ Other suggestions include availing yourself of new skills and methods in discharging your duties; taking break when you are exhausted, identifying bad habits that affects your time management, avoiding pressures of deadlines,

being committed to building self-confidence; creating specific amounts of time for certain jobs and scheduling your time in advance; being proactive and dynamic; team building with co-workers and ensuring clarity in setting goals.

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