



Make it Stick

Activity Pack

Time Management for the Modern Individual

**Helping lessons learned in training blend in to
become *how we work*.**



To the Learner Leader...

This suite of activities has been designed to reinforce the key learning from the **Time Management for the Modern Individual** course. They have been designed to be led by Team Leaders or designated Trainers and do not require training experience, though for best results we recommend that whoever is leading the activities understands the principles of adult learning and has some experience in leading learning activities.

The suite of activities will provide you with up to six months of learning reinforcement. We recommend that an activity is run each month following the Time Management for the Modern Individual course.

When running each activity:

- Ask the group to reflect back on the original course they attended:
- What takeaways they had
- What they have tried to implement
- When revisiting some of these activities for a second time ask them what additional ideas or thoughts they have in applying the concepts and tools in the activities to their job

Each activity will take 10-15 minutes to run depending on the size of the group.

There is one Activity to a page. Each Activity has a brief introduction followed by instructions for the Learner Leader.

We suggest the following to optimise your learning experience:

- Have the group meet away from their normal workspace
- Make sure mobile devices are switched off so that everyone fully engages
- Make the environment 'safe' and encourage everyone to contribute
- Run these activities with everyone standing – try running these outdoors in the fresh air
- Have other team members take the lead and run an activity – this will build confidence and leadership skills
- Don't be afraid to improvise – the learning needs to be about you and your group so make it meaningful
- When debriefing an activity get the group to reflect on what the activity means for them and what they will do differently or continue to do that underscores the learning points from the activity

Activities in this pack

1. Applying the 4 Ds
2. Mind clearing
3. The power of clustering
4. Deciding task priority
5. Overcoming procrastination
6. The power of routines

Activity 1: Applying the 4 D's

Introduction

We each accumulate work tasks we need to deal with one way or another. These can be messages or emails or tasks. The 4 D's provides a shorthand version for prioritising tasks.

Delete – if it is a message – delete it or file it – don't get into the habit of being distracted

Do – respond to the message or email or commit to completing the task

Delegate – delegate the task to someone else if it is not yours

Defer – if the task is not high priority and cannot be completed quickly then defer it

Instructions

Ask each of your team in turn to think back through all the tasks and actions they have taken that day and to reflect on what they could have done differently:

- What should have they deleted?
- What should have they delegated?
- What should have they done immediately?
- What should have they deferred?

Ask the team why these same thoughts didn't come to them at the time? What are the things that can sometimes cloud our judgement about what is and isn't a priority. Things to consider include:

- Time pressure
- Competing demands
- Pressure from higher authorities
- Peer pressure
- Subjectivity
- Being overwilling to help others at the expense of completing our own tasks
- Unbridled curiosity
- Just wanting to get things done

Ask the team how we can be more objective, discerning and disciplined in our approach to how we use our time.

Activity 2: Mind clearing

Introduction

Sometimes we get overwhelmed by the complexity and sheer number of things that we believe we need to do or finish. As a result, we can often lose focus and get distracted which has a knock on effect and makes us less productive than we would otherwise be.

One technique that we can use is dump every task that invades our thoughts onto paper and then curate every task to see if it should make our list of important tasks.

Instructions

Ask your group to bring something to write with and on for this activity.

Ask your group to individually complete the following:

- You are going to get everything out of your head and onto paper
- Capture every task that you can possibly think of both at work and at home
- It doesn't matter if the tasks are connected
- Don't be vague, be specific
- Break down complex bigger tasks into their smaller sub-tasks

After your team have done this, ask them to curate the list as follows:

- For each task you have written down give it one tick for each of the following questions and be objective when deciding
 - It is really necessary?
 - Is it really important?
 - Do you really have to do it yourself?
 - Does it really have to be done now?
- The tasks that receive 4 ticks are the ones you need to prioritise
- If every task received 4 ticks then it is unlikely you have been objective enough

Activity 3: The power of clustering

Introduction

Grouping related items together increases the efficiency of your flow. Picking up the phone and making all the calls you need to make on that day in a batch – is more efficient. Raising all the invoices in one go is another example.

Give your brain the opportunity to do similar tasks together, instead of needing to re-orient it's thinking all the time which takes a LOT of extra time.

Instructions

Ask each of your team to list all the tasks they complete on each day of their working week.

Get them to analyse what they do and to identify those tasks that are related or are repeated on a daily basis.

Ask them to think how they could complete these tasks as a cluster and free up time through being more efficient.

Ask your team members to share their ideas with each other.

Example can include:

- Filing paperwork
- Listening to and answering voicemail
- Responding to emails
- Making sales calls
- Writing reports
- Testing products

Activity 4: Deciding task priority

Introduction

Each of us uses some method to prioritise tasks. What we probably don't question that often is whether our method could be improved or if our reasoning is sound.

Methods include:

- The Urgent/Important matrix – sort tasks based on their importance and urgency
- The 80/20 rule – determining which tasks will give the biggest bang for effort
- ABCDE prioritisation – ranking your tasks from A to E or 1 to 5
- Paired comparisons – if I got nothing else completed today would I do A or B?

Instructions

Ask the group in turn which prioritisation method they use for which types of task. Have the rest of the group compare this to what they do and discuss the pros and cons of each.

Ask the group what criteria they use to make their determination about priority and whether this is always the best way to prioritise. Criteria can include:

- The boss asked
- The boss repeatedly asked
- Looming deadlines
- Customer complaints
- Carried over from the to do list
- Emotional connection
- It is easy and I get a sense of achievement
- I would feel guilty in not doing it
- Perfectionist
- Need to complete things
- ???

Ask the group how important clarifying expectations around deadlines is and whether they are in the habit of doing this. Ask the group if they want to establish some rules around setting deadlines that the team agrees to abide by.

Activity 5: Overcoming procrastination

Introduction

Procrastination means delaying a task (or even several tasks) that should be a priority. The ability to overcome procrastination and tackle the important actions that have the biggest positive impact in your life will lower your stress levels and improve your productivity.

Instructions

Ask the group why they tend to procrastinate at work and in which particular tasks. Reasons can include:

- No clear deadline
- Inadequate resources available
- Don't know where to begin
- Task feels overwhelming
- No passion for doing the work
- Fear of failure or success
- Perfectionism
- Overanalysing
- Focus on the negatives

For those tasks that people struggle with more than others ask the group to describe why that may be the case. Ask the group for strategies to overcome the behaviour – what works for them.

Ask the group what they can do to overcome this behaviour. Examples include:

- Delete it
- Delegate
- Do it now
- Ask for advice
- Chop it up
- Obey the 15-minute rule
- Have clear deadlines
- Give yourself a reward
- Remove distractions

Activity 6: The power of routines

Introduction

Routines and rituals can help increase the spontaneity and fun in your life. Because routine tasks are already planned for, you have more energy to spend on the tasks that will bring you closer to your goals and bring more joy to your life.

Once you have been using a routine for a while, you may find that you have bits of extra time here and there. For example, you may find that by establishing an exercise ritual, you finish five or ten minutes earlier because you know exactly what you're going to do at the gym. At the end of the day, you may find that you have a half hour or more of unexpected time.

This is where the "Trigger" part of routines can come into play. Instead of setting a specific time of day, you choose a situation or an event that will cause a ritual to come into play.

Instructions

Ask the group to jot down what routines they have established outside of work and what they have established at work. For each routine get them to answer:

- Why have they established the routine?
- What benefits the routine brings them?

Discuss the importance of biorhythms to maximise productivity. Where do energy levels peak for them and how this affects their productivity – e.g. early morning, late afternoon

Get them to reflect on the workplace and where else it would make sense to establish routines. Ask them to share with the group what they are going to do differently.

Some example of routines include:

- During a break at work or at home, read for ten minutes.
- Take one minute to do some deep breathing and stretches.
- Take five minutes to clean off your desk or some other small area.
- Take ten minutes to update your Personal Productivity Journal.
- Set aside one lunch hour a week to do personal errands. Or, make a list at the beginning of each week, and do one a day.