

Planning Your Success With Jimmy Petruzzi www.nlp-trainingcourses.com

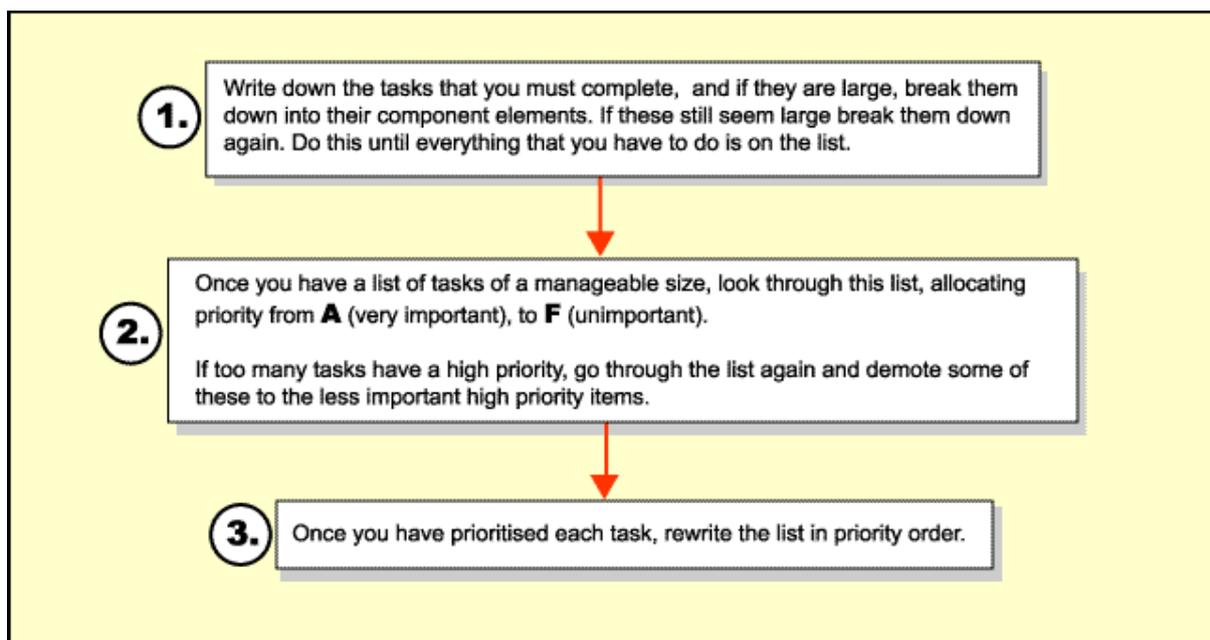
Good time management, as we have already hinted at, is largely about good planning and knowing how to set effective priorities. Understanding what is important and what is not allows you to create a schedule of activities that will allow you to deliver what you need to in a timely manner.

Setting Priorities

Setting priorities is arguably the biggest most important factor in achieving excellence in time management. It is not necessarily always easy, and it requires you to be able to pick out what is really important from what people are saying is important but really is not. Once you have that part in place, prioritisation becomes much easier to achieve.

The first step in prioritising is creating a to-do list. Once you have all the tasks written down in a list it becomes easier to see what is really important and what can wait a while. You can use the simple process outlined below to be able to prioritise a list of tasks. As per step one, breaking down large tasks into smaller parts can sometimes mean that they seem less overwhelming and more achievable, so this is highly recommended.

Figure: The To-Do List



Source: <https://nationalvetcontent.edu.au/>

Of course, the step that people find hardest in the prioritisation process detailed above is step two, because it can be challenging to determine what is most important and to weigh these things up against one another. This is where revisiting the Stephen Covey time management matrix can come in very handy.

As can be seen from the matrix, you need to be able to rank items into "Important" and "Urgent". Once you have done this it becomes easier to plot them onto a matrix like the one below which shows you how you should be prioritising each task. As can be seen from the matrix:

- If something is both important and urgent you should do it right away to get it out of the way.
- If something is important but not urgent you should take time to plan it and make sure that you will be ready to do it before it is due.
- If something is not important and not urgent, the very simple solution for that type of task is to drop it.
- If something is not important but urgent you will need to try and delegate it where possible. In some cases this will not be possible, and in that case, planning when and how you will do it is important so that you do the task before it becomes urgent.

Figure: Revisiting the Urgent and Important Matrix

| | URGENT | NOT URGENT |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| IMPORTANT | DO IT NOW | PLAN IT |
| NOT IMPORTANT | DELEGATE | DROP IT |

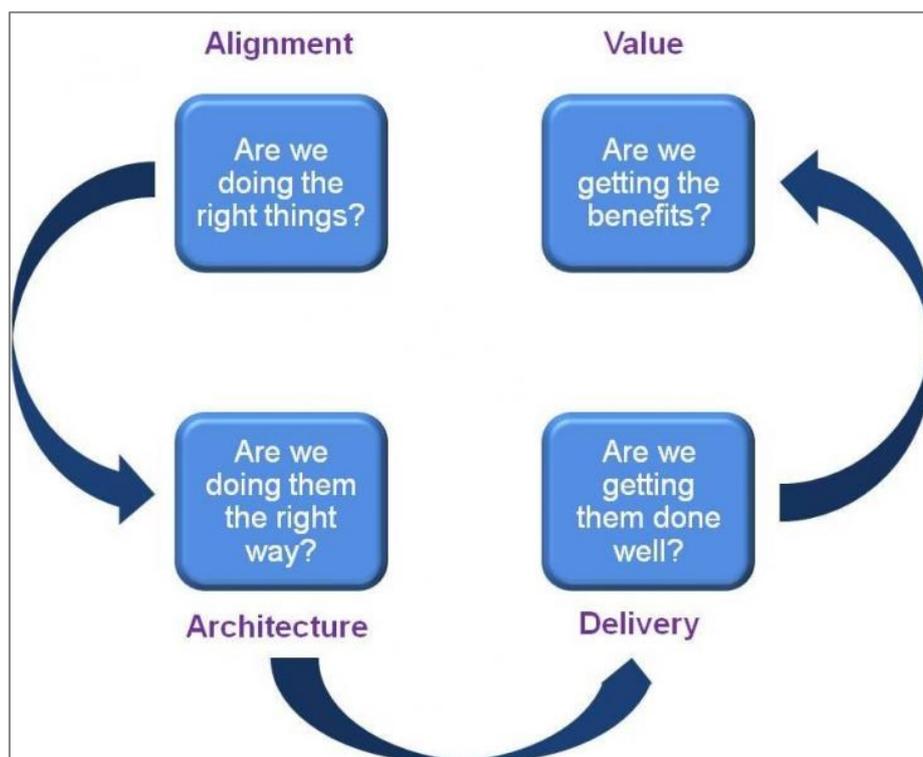
Source: <http://www.scoop.it/t/continuous-professional-development>

Following these rules of prioritisation will almost always help you to be able to devise an effective plan for getting everything done on time.

Effective Planning and Clarifying Objectives

Effective planning revolves around understanding what you are doing and why you are doing it. This means reviewing what you are doing and whether those things are the right things. It means assessing whether or not you are doing those things in the right way, and if you are doing them well or not, and whether they are having the desired benefit. The diagram below illustrates how this process works when considering the activities of a team or organisation, but of course it can also easily be applied to one person's time management activities as well.

Figure: The Thought Process of Effective Planning



Source: http://blogs.forrester.com/alex_cullen/10-10-29-who_should_lead_strategic_investment_planning

It is helpful to look at each area in turn in terms of effective planning for good time management:

| Area | Question | Time Management Considerations |
|------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Alignment | Am I doing the right things? | This one is critical to consider. Determining what the right things are can be achieved by either asking a manager to clarify, or looking at the end result, the benefit. If what is being done does not add value in any way then the task might be possible to drop, freeing |

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| | | up more time for other tasks that are actually important and which add value at work. |
| Architecture | Am I doing things the right way? | Sometimes tasks may be carried out in a certain way because that is how they have always been done. That does not mean that it is the right way to do them, or the most efficient. Look at ways in which you can maximise the time that you have available by cutting out steps that may no longer be necessary with some of your tasks. This can be a very effective time saver. |
| Delivery | Am I doing things well? | If you are already doing things well, you can look at how you could do them even better to save you more time. If you are not doing them well then you need to look at planning in more time to do these tasks effectively. |
| Value | Am I getting the benefit? | If benefit is being achieved from the task that is great – then keep doing it. If no benefit or value is added, then the effective planner would look at ways in which to phase this particular task out. |

Once you have looked at the tasks you have to complete, an effective planner then looks at how to maximise the use of time to complete tasks in the most efficient and timely manner. One way in which this can be achieved is by using the Impact Matrix, shown in the diagram below.

The Impact Matrix considers the speed that it will take to complete something and the impact that it will have overall. Like the Stephen Covey Matrix of time management there are four quadrants that are utilised:

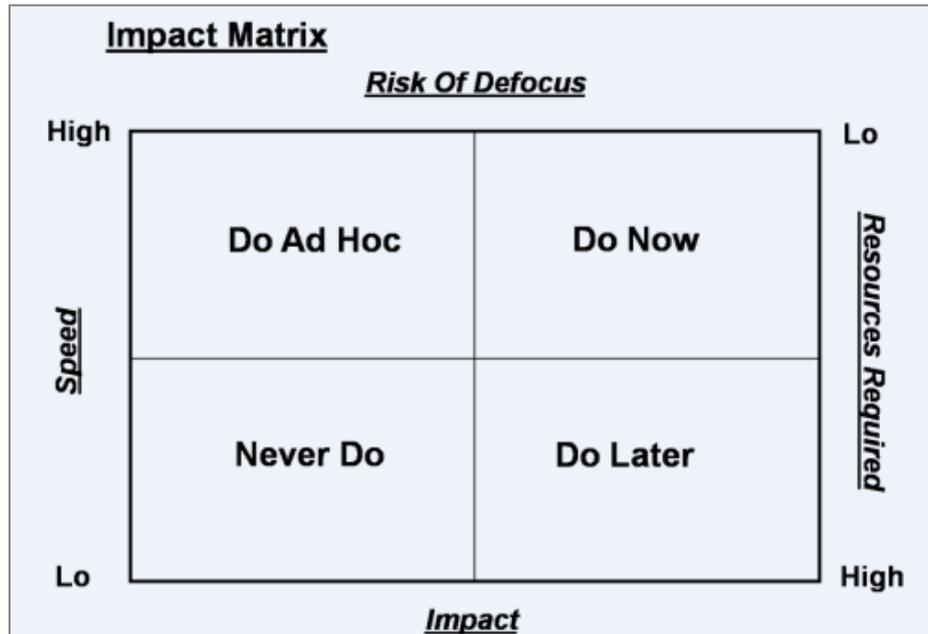
High Speed, High Impact – high speed and high impact tasks are important ones because they add value and can also be completed quickly. They are candidates for “Do Now”. They are also commonly known as “quick wins” because you are able to accomplish them and deliver results and value very quickly.

High Speed, Low Impact – these types of tasks are good in the sense that they can be done quickly, but the value that they add is limited. In terms of planning them in, they may be considered to be tasks that you can “Do Ad-hoc”, as and when you have the time to be able to complete them.

Low Speed, High Impact – these are thought to be tasks that you can focus on later on. Consequently they are classified as “Do Later”.

Low Speed, Low Impact – in the Impact Matrix these tasks are considered to be potentials to “Never Do”. You can look and see if it is possible to strike them from your list of tasks to be planned in.

Figure: The Impact Matrix - Planning to Complete Tasks



Source: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/johngreathouse/2012/12/12/attack-2013-like-a-startup-ninja-with-this-simple-and-effective-planning-tool/>

With all of this in mind, effective planning for good time management becomes easier. However, there is also the important step of clarifying objectives that should be carried out to make sure that you understand and are working on the right things in the eyes of your manager, or in terms of your own goals also.

Different people have different perceptions of what is required from a particular objective or task. When working for another person, this means that clarifying objectives is essential. One way to do this is to ask your manager:

"When I have completed this, what will the end result look like, in your opinion?"

This helps to make sure that you are on the same page as the person that is managing you and that you will be delivering with the same end goal or objective in mind. This can avoid disappointment on the part of you and your manager.

It cannot be emphasised enough how important this particular step is. All too often people do not deliver what is expected of them. For example, your objective from your manager might be:

"Write a report on the subject of X".

This might at first seem easy, as you maybe know a lot about the subject matter. However, how much time you dedicate to the report depends on how long the report is to be and the sorts of questions that should be answered in the report, as some of these might take longer to deal with than others.

If you deliver a report that is 60 pages long and your manager was looking for a 5 page report, you will have wasted a tremendous amount of time that could have been better spend doing other things. Also, you will likely have to spend even more time reworking the report so that it meets the requirements that your manager has.

Do not assume that your manager will automatically give you the parameters that you need to be able to deliver your objectives effectively. While a good manager probably will define the parameters and boundaries for you, not everyone is perfect! This means that it is also your responsibility to ask and to clarify. If a task starts becoming much bigger and taking longer than your manager had indicated that it might take then you also may want to re-clarify to make sure that they want you to spend additional time on it, or if you should cut back on the original objectives accordingly. You can work with your manager to make the objectives SMART so that you are more likely to be able to achieve them. You can find more information on how to go about this at the end of this section.

If you are developing objectives to meet personal goals then they should also be made SMART. This will ensure that you are able to get on track to meet your personal targets.

Life Goals

Setting goals should be applied to all areas of your life so that you can achieve everything that you hope to in all the different and varied areas of your life. Setting goals is not an activity that should be limited to work alone. This means getting the bigger goals in place first. Then, once you have the overall life targets in place you can look at ways to build small steps to be able to achieve them.

When creating your overall goals for your life it is necessary to look at all areas at once since different areas affect other areas. For example, if you are a female and want to have both a high flying career and children, it can be done but it needs to be very carefully planned to make sure that you are able to set time frames within which you are able to achieve both. Additionally you do not want to achieve amazing feats in one area at the neglect of all other areas of your life. This will most likely have the end result of frustration and dissatisfaction, as well as disappointment.

Exercise: Developing Life Goals

Look at the categories that follow, and think about the different questions that are presented. This should help you to determine what some of your life goals should be. Ultimately these are just questions to get you started with brainstorming regarding what you really hope to achieve overall.

Career

- What level do you want to reach in your career?
- Will you need more education / training to get to that point?
- Are you satisfied in your line of work or do you want to change to a different area?
- How important is it to you to help people as part of your work?
- How important is it to you to have a flexible working pattern?
- How important is it to you to make big money?

Lifestyle / Hobbies

- How important to you is time out to take part in hobbies?
- What would you like to achieve with your time outside of the workplace?
- Are sporting or artistic goals an important part of your career? Can you combine both lifestyle and career?

Relationships

- Do you want to get into a relationship?
- If you want to be in a relationship, how much personal time do you need?
- If you are not in a relationship, but you would like to be in the future, when would you like this to happen?
- Where does your relationship sit in terms of other life areas such as career and hobbies? How do you plan to balance these areas?
- How important are your core values and which ones must your partner share with you for relationship success?
- If you are in a relationship, what steps do you plan to take to maintain that relationship in a healthy manner?

Family

- Do you want to have children one day?
- If you already have kids, what is your role?
- Does your parenting role need to change?
- If you don't currently have children, but want them, will you work afterwards?
- How will your partner feel about your decisions regarding work and bringing up your children?
- How important is existing family to you? Do you need to spend more time with them? Less?
- Do you plan to support elderly and/or sick parents, and if so, then how?

Wellness

- Is being fit and healthy a key area of importance to you?

- How important is it to you to stay in good shape physically?
- How important to you is your health and being in good shape once you reach old age?
- How much effort are you prepared to expend on personal fitness and health to stay in lifelong good health?

Financial

- How much do you need to earn to live the lifestyle that you want to live?
- How much can you save each year, being realistic?
- How important to you is spending money right now to feel happy with life?
- How much of your wages do you need to spend each month to feel as if you are doing everything that you want to be?
- What material possessions do you want that you do not already have, such as a house or a car?
- How important is it to you to have money saved for retirement?

Use these questions to build up a series of goals. Try to limit this to three goals per area of your life, and you can use the space below to record these, since writing goals downs means that you will be more likely to achieve them.

| Type of Goal | What I Hope to Achieve |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Career | 1. 2. 3. |
| Lifestyle / Hobbies | 1. 2. 3. |
| Relationships | 1. 2. 3. |
| Family | 1. 2. 3. |
| Wellness | 1. |

| | |
|-----------|--|
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. 3. |
| Financial | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. |

Once you are finished, look back over the list of goals that you have created. Are any of these likely to be in conflict with one another? When do you hope to achieve them by? Make sure that you prepare goals that are not going to create personal conflict for you.

Following this exercise you can also assess your attitude towards achieving your goals. This will have a strong bearing on whether you reach your targets or not. A positive approach is likely to bring you a much greater chance of success, but with a negative approach you may be setting yourself up to fail.

Whenever you find yourself thinking, "I can't do this," turn that negativity around and start to think about what you can do. There is always something that you can do. Perhaps the target can be reduced into smaller parts to make it more likely to be able to be achievable. Most people can achieve anything they want to, if they put the sufficient amount of energy and time into it. Try to keep that in mind when you are approaching your goals.