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Mapping Priorities

Work Priorities

Identify the top 5 priorities within your workflow that take up the most of your time and energy.

- A. Map what percentage of your time is going toward this activity (i.e. meetings, email and slack) or project (i.e. upcoming event, strategic plan, etc.).

You can break down your time by day or by week to identify approximately how much time you spend on this activity in order to identify a percentage.

I work _____ hours in an average week

- B. Rate the level of stress this activity or project generates for you on a scale of 0 (no stress) to 5 (extremely stressful).
- C. Rate the level of joy or satisfaction you derive from this activity or project on a scale of 0 (do not enjoy it at all) to 5 (fun, why I do this work)

Priority	Time	Stress / Anxiety	Joy / Satisfaction
<i>Example: Activity / Project A</i>	<i>~3 hours per week = X%</i>	4	1

Personal Priorities

Identify the top 5 priorities within your personal life that take up the most of your time and energy.

- D. Map what percentage of your time is going toward this activity (i.e. caring for family member, housework, working out) or project / hobby (i.e. grad school, creative writing). You can break down your time by day or by week to identify approximately how much time you spend on this activity in order to identify a percentage.

I have _____ waking hours where I am not working in an average week.

- E. Rate the level of mental energy this activity or project takes for you on a scale of 0 (no stress) to 5 (extremely stressful).
- F. Rate the level of joy or satisfaction you derive from this activity or project on a scale of 0 (do not enjoy it at all) to 5 (fun, nourishing, healing)

Priority	Time	Mental Energy & Focus	Joy

Time Management Strategies

1. **Batching:** Organize your schedule in blocks of time in which you do similar activities, and avoid letting those activities seep into your other blocks of time (ie. check & respond to emails for 30 minutes before lunch, and 30 minutes at the end of the day.) For things that are likely to swell, doing them before something you want to do (eat lunch, go home) can help you say “enough for now.”
2. **Scheduling in planning and reflection:** If you don’t set aside time for this (individually and with your team), it will make your meetings longer, come home with you, and prevent you from harvesting the learnings from what you have done or being strategic about how to use your time. Doing planning on a Monday and reflection on Friday can help you start your week well or get closure. Reflection often leads right into “next to do” items that can kick off your next week.
3. **Work habits chart:** Make a monthly chart of work habits that help you to be more effective and present and keep it where you can see it from your desk. You can use an app for this, but seeing a physical copy and updating it each month will help keep you accountable.
4. **Minimize multitasking:** Try to cultivate periods of presence and focus that are as productive or insightful as they can be by pausing on checking email/texts/slack/other things that distract you. You can set up email folders that you check at certain times, or pause/mute notifications. When your phone or another notification goes off, it breaks your ability to focus even if you don’t check it or respond.
5. **Able to unplug:** In order to be present and effective when you are working, you need to be able to stop working! Practice discipline with yourself about bringing work home, “just doing one thing” when you are in the middle of family/personal time or interrupting a hobby or important activity to work. Your body and mind need to rest and recharge for you to be present, efficient, and creative during your work time. Most things are not as urgent as they seem when we are addicted to being responsive / informed.
6. **80/20:** This is a management strategy (Pareto’s Law) that suggests that most of our time is spent ineffectively. We wrongly believe that if we work on something longer, it will have a more successful outcome. 80/20 says that 80% of the outcomes come from 20% of the input or effort, and the challenge is figuring out which 20% of our effort is succeeding. Reflection and planning (strategy #2) and mapping your time (strategy #14) can help with this, as well as collecting and analyzing data/ feedback.
7. **Shift to do list from completion to first step:** Often people put large projects as a single item on a to do list (ie. “redecorate bathroom”). These things are generally unaccomplishable in a single step or day, so they get put off indefinitely and generate frustration. Instead, put just the first step on your list (ie. choose paint). After you accomplish that, you will have a sense of positive momentum and the next step will likely be clear.

8. **Tackle top three right away:** We tend to procrastinate on what we are anxious about, which just prolongs anxiety. Each morning, write down the top three things that you are anxious about OR the three things that would make your day a “success.” If possible, do them immediately! You will be proud, and feel like the rest of your day is much more spacious.
9. **Cycling:** We can’t focus on everything all the time. If possible, designate certain days, weeks, or months to focus on certain things, and cycle those priorities day to day, week to week, and month to month.
10. **Onboarding checklist:** When welcoming a new colleague, have a plan for what they need to get up to speed. Plan for onboarding to take some time. Delegate and try to share the labor, and check in on how it is going. What can be generated that will be helpful the next time?
11. **Plan for unexpected urgencies:** Especially if you are responsible to external stakeholders, don’t book your week to capacity- plan for at least two hours of unexpected urgent labor to arise. If it doesn’t, this leaves space for planning or getting started on something proactively.
12. **Just ship it:** We can spin our wheels trying to get something perfect before letting it out the door. This idea comes from entrepreneurship/ start ups and pushes you to say “good enough” and move on! If this is a team wide strategy or expectation, especially on internal documents and communications, this will take off the pressure of needing a perfect material.
13. **Less is more:** The more time we spend on one thing, the less energy we have for everything else. The longer hours we work, the less effective and efficient we are. Current productivity research indicates that effectiveness trails off after 4 hours of work, and Sweden is currently pushing for a six hour per day/ four day per week work week based on this. You have a set # of hours you need to work, but can distribute those with some flexibility and can at least try to make sure your work does not expand outside of those hours by being more effective with your time.
14. **Time mapping & timesheets:** “What gets measured gets managed”- the same goes for your time. Was it difficult to know how much of your time you spend on different activities? Then it will be hard to shrink or grow that time. For a week, or two weeks, or month or quarter, keep hour by hour timesheets of how you are spending your work time, then review those numbers in reference to your priorities list. You will notice patterns of misalignment, and even just noticing these patterns can help you shift them, or you can design your next month’s habits and priorities to shift the distribution of time.

Taking the time to manage your time can feel like a waste of time, but is an investment in your future wellbeing and sustainability.

Get more support with time management strategies through [coaching](#) and [consultation](#).