



# Time is of the essence

With standard time management tactics reaching the limits of their effectiveness, David Parmenter has some new tips and tricks for taming the work monster

In this high-pressure world we live in, we are becoming increasingly time-poor. The old lessons of time management need to be updated to reflect the new world that we now work in.

Here are some tips for how to make the most of your precious time, compiled from a range of sources.

\* **Out, damned spot** All of us, like William Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, face issues that won't go away because we avoid confronting them. I learnt on a self-development course to ask myself, when I wake up in the morning, what I don't want to do that day. The subconscious will answer you back honestly. Your task, when you arrive at work, is to do that thing that was unpalatable to your subconscious – make that call, organise that appointment or write that report you have been avoiding. Two things will happen: the feared task will not be so hard to complete, and you will feel much lighter as this great weight is lifted off you. Try it – I hope you find it as useful as I have.

\* **The five-second rule** I am a member of a dining club and need to pay fees at each dinner I attend. It is a task I always leave until I get chased up and am embarrassed into action. A friend who is a successful businessman told me about the five-second rule. The consciousness holds short-term to-do actions for about five seconds. When you realise that you have to do something, you then have five seconds to take some action

accordingly or resign yourself to having to think about it again some other time.

I am now a convert to the five-second rule.

\* **Blue-sky Fridays**

Every Friday morning I move my laptop from my home office to the lounge and dedicate myself to looking at tasks that will shape my future. You need the mental space

that this provides (and perhaps a new environment, different from your usual workspace) to be able to leave behind the mundaneness of the day job and look at the bigger picture, whatever that might be for you.

I once met a partner in an accountancy firm who had attended an expensive practice development course. Having invested £5,000 in training, he had not implemented anything. So, one week, he stayed at home on the Thursday morning and focused on implementing a new procedure. Emails were sent and phone calls made. Before he

had even arrived at the office that afternoon, the new procedure was in place. He felt so energised by his success, he has stayed at home every Thursday morning since to focus on implementing change.

Besides these three techniques, I apply a number of rules until an important but not yet urgent task is done:

- \* Don't answer phone calls, texts, emails.
- \* Don't spend time on social media.
- \* Make strategic phone calls.
- \* Write important emails and reports.

Time management is one of your most powerful tools. I urge you to face up to the distasteful, do jobs within five seconds of thinking of them, and vanish, once a week, to focus on tasks crucial to creating a future for yourself. **AB**

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