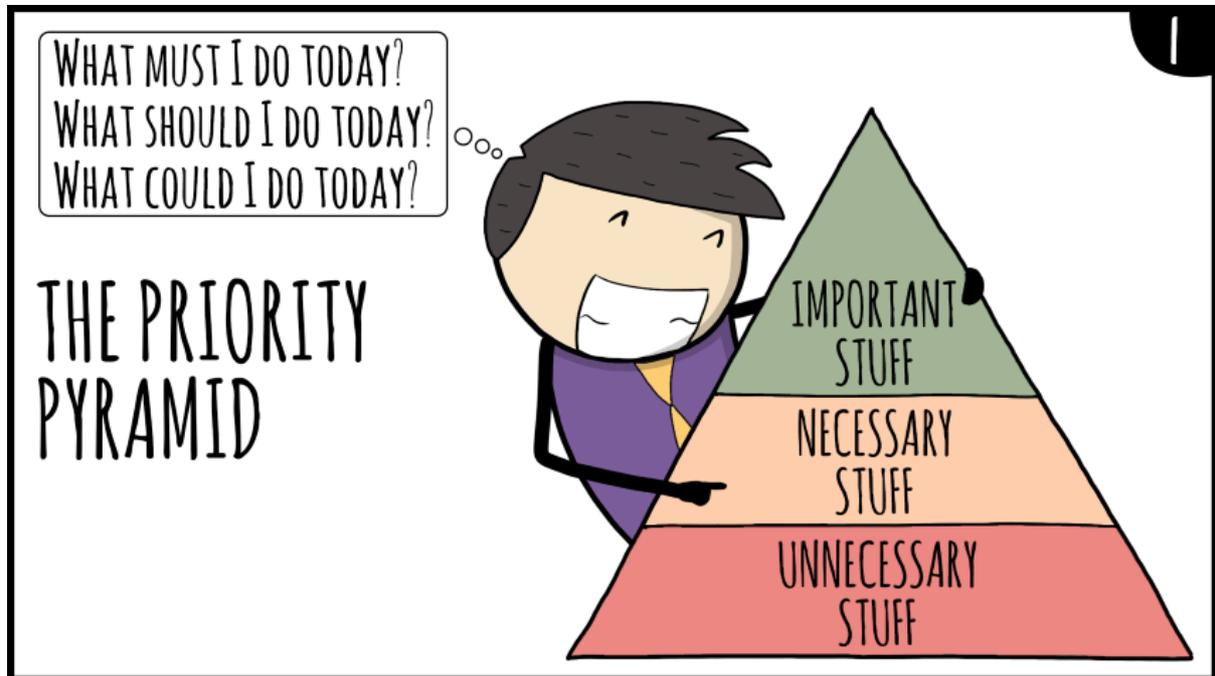


Managing priorities



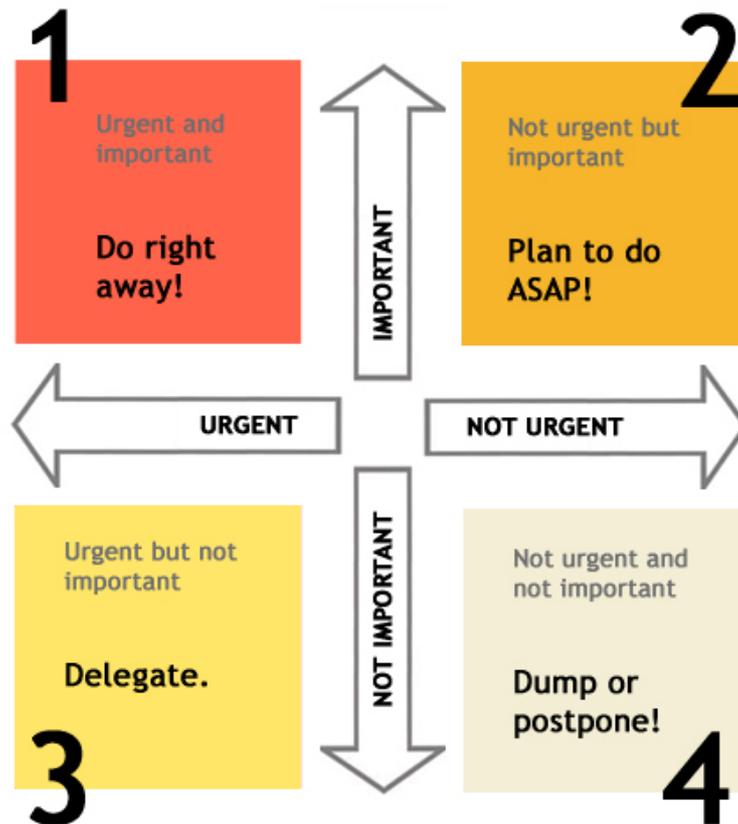
Because time management is in reality no more or less than self-management.

How do you decide the difference between what do now and later?

How can make sense of conflicting priorities?

How do you decide what is really important?

Managing priorities and meeting deadlines - Priority Matrix



The Time Management or Priority Matrix shows how you can divide up all your workplace tasks according to two criteria: how important they are (the vertical axis in the diagram) and how urgent they are (the horizontal axis). As a result of these two criteria, the model creates four squares which we call "quadrants" and which are the keys to your time management performance.

Quadrant 4: Not Urgent and Not Important Tasks

In Quadrant 4 of the Time Management Matrix, (bottom right), are the not important and not urgent tasks. These are the things that we don't need to do but that so often we end up doing to fill in time or because we like doing them. These include aimless web browsing, socialising around the drinks machine, and attending unnecessary meetings. You can call these "time-wasters".

Quadrant 3: Urgent but Not Important Tasks

In Quadrant 3 of the Time Management Matrix, (bottom left), are the urgent but not important tasks. These are the things that we allow to interrupt our working lives because we believe they take precedence over other tasks. The worst examples of such tasks are personal "drop-in" callers, answering every phone call and wading through junk mail. You can consider these "distractions".

Quadrant 1: Urgent and Important Tasks

In Quadrant 1 of the Time Management Matrix, (top left), are the urgent and important tasks. These are the things that we have to do because they are our responsibility and need immediate attention. These are usually emergencies, crises, and pressing deadline-driven problems. They may be the result of our procrastination or inability to face up to doing them at the right time. You can think of these as "firefighting" tasks.

Quadrant 2: Not Urgent but Important Tasks

In Quadrant 2 of the Time Management Matrix, (top right), are the important but not urgent tasks. These are the tasks that aren't pressing but, if we do them, will ensure fewer, if any, problems down the line. They include time on personal health and development, unhurried "quality time" with others, prevention work, thinking time such as planning and preparation, and clarifying our values. These are your most critical and "productive" tasks.

What Your Quadrants Tell You

When you've added up the time you spend in a typical week on each of the four quadrants, this is the action you should take to improve your time management.

- i. if you spend any significant time on quadrant 4 tasks, (not urgent and not important), stop doing them. If you can't, take a long hard look at why you are spending time on them.
- ii. if you are spending any significant time on quadrant 3 tasks, (urgent but not important), realise that, as they are not important to you, you shouldn't be doing them whether they are urgent or not. Delegate them if you can. Dump them if you can't.
- iii. if you are spending any significant time on quadrant 1 tasks, (urgent and important), work out why you didn't do them earlier. Get to the root of what stops you doing them before they become urgent.
- iv. if you are spending any significant time on quadrant 2 tasks, (important and not urgent), congratulate yourself. This is where you should be spending most of your time. If you are, you already know that life is balanced, productive, and good.

Urgent and important - priority matrix - some key points:

1. The judgment as to whether activities are urgent, important, neither or both, is crucial for good time management.
2. Most people who are not good at time management, or in managing their environment, tend to spend most of their time in boxes 1 and 3.
3. Poor time managers tend to prioritise tasks (and thereby their time), according to who shouted last and loudest (interestingly, loudness normally correlates to seniority, which discourages most people from questioning and probing the real importance and urgency of tasks received from bosses and senior managers).
4. Any spare time (or procrastination time) is typically spent in box 4, which comprises only aimless and non-productive activities. Most people spend the least time of all in

box 2, which is the most critical area for success, development and proactive self-determination.

Here are more tips on how to manage time and activities:

	Urgent	Not urgent
Important	<p>1 - DO NOW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● emergencies, complaints and crisis issues ● demands from managers or customers ● planned tasks or project work now due ● meetings and appointments ● reports and other submissions ● staff issues or needs ● problem resolution, fire-fighting, fixes <p>Subject to confirming the importance and the urgency of these tasks, do these tasks now. Prioritise according to their relative urgency.</p>	<p>2 - PLAN TO DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● planning, preparation, scheduling ● research, investigation, designing, testing ● networking relationship building ● thinking, creating, modeling, designing ● systems and process development ● anticipation and prevention ● developing change, direction, strategy <p>Critical to success: planning, strategic thinking, deciding direction, aims, etc. Plan time-slots and personal space for these tasks.</p>
Not important	<p>3 - REJECT AND EXPLAIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● trivial requests from others ● apparent emergencies ● ad-hoc interruptions and distractions ● misunderstandings appearing as complaints ● pointless routines or activities ● accumulated unresolved trivia ● boss's whims or tantrums <p>Scrutinise and probe demands. Help originators to re-assess. Wherever possible reject and avoid these tasks sensitively and immediately.</p>	<p>4 - RESIST AND CEASE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 'comfort' activities, computer games, net surfing, excessive breaks ● chat, gossip, social communications ● daydreaming, doodling, over-long breaks, excessive internet trivia ● reading nonsense or irrelevant material ● unnecessary adjusting equipment etc. ● embellishment and over-production <p>Habitual 'comforters' are not true tasks. They are non-productive and de-motivational. Minimise or cease altogether. Plan to avoid them.</p>