

Managing Your Life and Time

1. Define Your Mission

Some definitions of mission: Mission is what you want to create of yourself and the world around you. (Peter Senge). Mission is what you want to be, do, feel, think, own, associate with and impact by some date in the future. (Dr. Linda Phillips-Jones). Mission is a clear mental picture of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances. (George Barna). Writing a personal mission statement is a key to successfully life and management! Here is a template you can use to create your personal mission statement:

A. What must you BE to impact people? As you write down what you want to be for a lifetime think about the kind of person you want to be – choose a noun that reflects what you want to be throughout your life – this is like the best version of yourself – what God meant you to be!

B. What can you DO to impact people? Write down three ways in which you will impact lives – these are verbs and not nouns – i.e. doing or action words.

C. Who do you want to impact? Think about three different groups of people in your sphere of influence that you will impact through your mission. Make sure that it is as board as possible and does not just refer to your work environment.

D. What will be the result of your impact? Write down what you believe your impact will accomplish in the lives of the people groups or in the world in general.

lifetime noun

verbs of impact

people groups to impact

end-product of impact

Now write it out as a sentence: I want to be a _____ (Lifetime noun) who _____, _____, _____ (verbs of impact) to _____, _____, _____ (people groups of impact) so that _____ (end-product of influence)

My Mission is...

2. Identify Your Roles

These are the contexts in which you will live out your mission.

* List all the roles you have in life

* Group the roles into categories

* Select five or six roles to work with

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

3. Create Your Goals

Create 2 or 3 goals for each of your roles. Make them SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely.

Role #1: _____

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Goal 3: _____

Role #2: _____

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Goal 3: _____

Role #3: _____

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Goal 3: _____

Role #4: _____

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Goal 3: _____

Role #5: _____

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Goal 3: _____

Role #6: _____

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Goal 3: _____

4. Plan Your Week

There are six steps that will help you turn your mission into reality. You should consider using a weekly planner. A *daily planner* is so 'close up' that you end up focussing on what is right in front of you and urgency and efficiency can take the place of importance and effectiveness. Using a *weekly planner* is a better tool as it helps you focus on fulfilling your mission.

(1) Review your Mission

The first step in programming for the coming week is to connect with what is most important in your life. The key to this connection is referring to your mission statement that reminds you of what is most important in your life and that which gives your life meaning. This process will also help you to schedule into your week a significant number of important activities.

(2) Identify your Roles

Now you make a list of all the roles you fulfil in life. The total number of roles must not exceed six as it is difficult to mentally manage too many. If you have more roles, you could combine some of them (i.e. family - for husband, father and brother).

(3) Create your Goals

Next, you should think important results to accomplish in each role during the next seven days. You can create goals by asking yourself: "What is the most important thing I could do this week to have the greatest positive impact." While many goals may come to mind, you should limit yourself to one or two important goals for each role.

(4) Schedule your Activities

Most people are always trying to find time for important activities in their busy lives. They move, delegate, cancel or postpone things - trying to find time to do important things, but the secret is not get the most important items into your week as soon as possible and then use the remaining time for things that come up. You also need to create time zones - these are big chunks of time that are set aside for important activities. Here is how to go about scheduling your activities:

(a) Identify Your Big Rocks: Look ahead through the week and make a list of all the things you must accomplish that week. Another key is to think through your roles in life and think of one or two important things you need to get done for each of your roles.

(b) Schedule Your Big Rocks: Get to your weekly planner and allocate time for the important things before you week gets filled up with little, lesser important things.

(c) Schedule Everything Else: Now you can fill in the little to-dos, daily tasks and appointments. You may like to record upcoming events and activities as well.

(d) Be Flexible When Necessary: You may need to rearrange things during the week. Don't feel that having a weekly planner means that everything is set in concrete.

(5) Adapt your Schedule

Once your important goals have been entered onto the weekly planner, the daily task is to keep a focus on priorities as you deal with unexpected opportunities and challenges that arise. There are three keys to effectiveness: (a) *Preview your day* - look at the day in the context of the week. (b) *Prioritise your activities* - mark activities using a numbering system. (c) *Reschedule your activities* - list timed and non-timed activities separately so you know which activities you can juggle.

(6) Evaluate your Progress

Evaluation should be done weekly and monthly: (a) *Weekly evaluation* - at the end of the week ask questions like: What goals did I achieve? What goals did I miss? What kept me from accomplishing my goals? What challenges did I encounter? Did I protect my priorities when I made decisions? How much time did I spend on important activities? What can I learn from this week as a whole? (b) *Monthly evaluation* - at the end of each month or quarter, ask yourself questions like: What patterns of success or failure do I see in setting and achieving my goals? Am I setting realistic but challenging goals? What keeps me from accomplishing my goals?

5. Manage Your Week

- (1) **Balance Your Whole Life:** Make sure your system covers the whole of your life and not just your work. Your personal life, your family, your work and your hobbies are all important and need to be kept in balance.
- (2) **Learn to Empower People and Delegate Effectively:** Don't do everything yourself – give stuff to others.
- (3) **Get Organised:** Develop a filing system (file don't pile) and keep your office and workspace tidy. Here are some best practises for filing:
 - (a) **Create Your System:** One that works for you and will allow you to retrieve a document in the quickest amount of time possible.
 - (b) **Identify Your Categories:** List the categories you could file items under and create a folder or hanging file for each item.
 - (c) **Clear Your Backlog:** Work through everything on your desk or in shelves by picking it up and asking: (i) What is it? (ii) Do I need to act on it? (iii) Can I file it?
 - (d) **Manage Your Filing:** Set aside time regularly to file material so you don't end up with a huge pile of items to file.
- (4) **Schedule Think Time in Your Week:** Create a weekly appointment where you can think about stuff.
- (5) **Take Time to Give Time:** Don't accept invitations too quickly. Think about preparation time needed.
- (6) **Work Two Thirds of the Day:** Morning and Afternoon or Morning and Evening but not all three.
- (7) **Handle a Piece of Paper Once:** Don't pick up stuff and then put it aside for later - deal with it once!
- (8) **Always Have Something to Do:** A book to read, an article to read, a project to plan, etc.
- (9) **Keep Information at your Fingertips:** Have system to keep track of phone numbers, addresses, etc.
- (10) **Work with Task Check Lists:** Cross off completed tasks when they are done.
- (11) **Automate Regular Tasks:** Don't start tasks from scratch each time you repeat it. Create templates.
- (12) **Confirm Appointments Before You Leave For the Meeting Venue:** Check the person is available.
- (13) **Deal with Interruptions.** Here are some guidelines for handling interruptions:
 - (a) Realize that not every interruption is an interruption. You're both paid and called to focus on others. Some of what may strike you as inconvenient could actually be significant appointment.
 - (b) Realize that most interruptions are your fault. When you design a program that revolves around you, don't be surprised when everything revolves around you.
 - (c) Give people the information they need before they interrupt you. Think ahead about questions you're likely to be asked, include them in a newsletter, or set up a phone hot line.
 - (d) Set up office hours. If people want you, then steer them toward times that make sense to you.
 - (e) Evaluate your interruptions. Keep a log of your interruptions for two weeks. 80 percent of your interruptions are caused by about four people, so take them aside and say, "I'm really trying to protect my study time. Could you help me out by not interrupting me between 9am and lunch?"
 - (f) Stand up when interrupted in your office. Most people will feel too uncomfortable to sit down if you remain standing while they're in your office. If the person has come for a worthwhile interruption, sit down and offer the person a seat. Otherwise, remain standing.
 - (g) Schedule your interruptions. Schedule an "open" time when you are most available for questions and phone calls. Let everyone know that this is the best time you can be reached then make sure you're available.

6. Manage Your Actions

The Five Stages of Mastering Workflow

(1) Collect things that have your attention. (2) Process what they mean and what to do about them. (3) Organise the items by making lists, filing or trashing. (4) Review everything weekly. (5) Do what needs to be done.

A. Collect

You must collect things that have your attention (anything personal or professional, big or little, that you think should be different than it currently is and that you have any level of internal commitment to changing). Here are 3 principles: (a) Get it all out of your head – nothing should be left in your mind. (b) Minimize your collection buckets – these could be physical in-baskets; writing paper and pads; electronic note taking; recording devices (answering machines, voicemail, dictating equipment); email and high-tech devices (computers or phones). (c) Empty the buckets regularly – you must process the stuff you collect.

B. Process

This involves identifying what each item means and what you need to do about them. To get the collection bucket emptied you must process each item. You can ask the following questions:

(1) What is it? We must identify what each item is, where it comes from and what our responsibility is.

(2) Is it actionable? There are two possible answers to whether an item is actionable: YES or NO!

If the answer is No, you have three options: **(a) Trash** – throw it away! **(b) Incubate** – schedule it for future attention using a someday/maybe list or month file system. **(c) File** (reference should be information that can be easily referred to when needed) – this could be filed in an A-Z filing system or a category system.

If the answer is Yes, you must ask two follow up questions: (a) What project or outcome have you committed to? Any item that requires more than one step to accomplish the desired outcome is a project and must be tracked using a 'Projects' list and reviewed each week to check for follow up actions that must be completed. (b) What is the next action? The next action is the next physical, visible activity that need to be engaged in, in order to move the current reality toward completion. Once you have know the next action, you have three choices: **(i) Do it** – if the action will take less than two minutes then do it right away. **(ii) Delegate it** – if it will take more than two minutes consider giving it to someone else to do. **(iii) Defer it** – if it will take more than two minutes and you are the person who must do it, then decide when you need to act on it.

C. Organize

The results of your collecting and processing must be organised. For non-actionable items the possible categories are trash, incubation tools and reference storage. For actionable items you will need a list of projects (these are things that require more than one action step), storage or files for project plans and materials, a calendar (time specific actions, day specific actions, day specific information), a list of reminders of next actions and a list of reminders of things you're waiting for (only review as often as they have to be in order to stop wondering about them).

D. Review

You must be able to review the whole picture of your life and work at appropriate intervals and appropriate levels. This involves being able to scan all the defined actions and options before you – to increase the effectiveness of the choices you make about what you are doing at any point in time. So what should you review and when? Firstly, your project list, your next action list, your calendar and waiting for list should be reviewed. Secondly, a weekly review must be done - this is where you gather and process all your stuff, review your system, update your lists, and get clean, clear, current and complete.

E. Do

The whole purpose of managing your work is to help you make good choices about what you are *doing* at any point in time. So how do we decide what to do? There are four criteria: **(1) Context** – some projects can be done anywhere but many need a specific location – so manage your to do list based on different contents like: @Calls, @Errands, @Office, @Meetings, @Computer, @Home, etc. **(2) Time** – the amount of time you have will determine what you can do. **(3) Energy** – the amount of energy you have will determine what you can do. **(4) Priority** – what is the most important thing to do given the context, time and energy you have?