Fourth Generation Time Management

APPLICATION Time Management, in my view, has gone through four quite definable stages:

1st Generation - Notes and Checklists - where we adjust to the flow of externally imposed tasks and schedules. We react to situations and in many cases do not feel responsible for results. We are focused upon doing and do not build toward improvement.

2nd Generation - Calendars and Appointment Books - where we schedule in advance and show up when we are supposed to. We become schedule oriented with very little thought and priority given to basic goals.

3rd Generation - Prioritize Activity - where we prioritize daily activity with focus usually being on the urgent. We frequently do not question the importance of urgent activities.

4th Generation - Self Management - where we do not focus upon managing time, but upon managing ourselves. We organize and execute on a weekly basis around pre-planned priorities. We do not prioritize our schedule. We schedule our priorities. We recognize that people relationships are more important than things and we work toward building more capability to produce for the future, rather than just doing the job today.

In the 4th Generation Self Management approach we seek ways to get the job done today and reserve time to “sharpen the saw”. Very simply we have logs to saw today, but realize that we can saw more logs tomorrow if we take the time to “sharpen the saw”. This sharpening includes figuring out better ways to saw the logs; a faster feed or rotation speed; a bigger blade; a different blade; no blade at all (laser cutting); better prepared logs to cut; better trained operators and or no operators by using technological advances.

Yes, sharpening the saw takes time away from actually sawing the logs. Where does that time come from?

"Circle of Influence"
The first step in search of time is to take out a clean piece of paper. Draw a six inch diameter circle in the middle of the paper. Now near the top edge, but inside of the circle print in small letters “Circle of Concern”. Inside the six inch circle draw another smaller, two inch diameter circle. At the top edge, but inside the smaller circle print “Circle of Influence”.

These circles represent our workplace. Inside the smaller "Circle of Influence" lies all of the things that we can influence. Inside this smaller circle our activities and communications make a difference how the job gets done. They are job content and work group related activities.

The larger "Circle of Concern" represents our workplace environment; our job context if you will. Our time spent in this area of the larger circle (not within our smaller circle of influence) is not likely to have much effect. To have any effect outside of our circle of influence we must spend a lot of time away from what we are supposed to be doing.

With 4th Generation Self Management our method of operation is to steadily, if slowly, increase the size of our circle of influence by planning and scheduling activities that we can influence. We gain time to concentrate on our circle of influence (job content) activities by deliberately staying out of the larger circle of concern area (job context) where much more time and effort is needed to produce a small result.
As we build performance credibility our "Circle of Influence" grows and broadens our ability to attain high performance and gradually the area of concern becomes smaller and less significant. The key to increasing our circle of influence is to clearly identify our job content priorities and to schedule, on a weekly basis, time to accomplish these priorities. The time we save by staying out of the circle of concern area can be used by us to sharpen the saw so that we can perform better in the future and increase our circle of influence.

With 4th Generation Self management we are proactive. We begin with the end in mind (planning priorities) and we constantly "sharpen the saw".

The Time Management Matrix
Having considered self management first, let's now look at time management. On another clean piece of paper draw a six inch square. All sides are about six inches long. Now divide the square into four equal sections (Quadrants) by drawing a horizontal line at the midpoint of the sides of the square and drawing a vertical line at the mid point of the top of the square. Inside the top left quadrant print Quadrant I. Inside the top right quadrant print Quadrant II. In the bottom left quadrant print Quadrant III. In the bottom right quadrant print Quadrant IV.

At the top above the six inch square print URGENT above the left half and NOT URGENT above the right half. To the left outside of the six inch square print IMPORTANT next to the top half of the square and NOT IMPORTANT next to the bottom half of the square. You now have created a Time Management Matrix with:
Quadrant I being Important and Urgent
Quadrant II being Important and Not Urgent
Quadrant III being Not Important and Urgent
Quadrant IV being Not Important and Not Urgent

The final step in creating your Time Management Matrix is to print the following inside each quadrant:
I - Crises, Pressing Problems, Deadlines
Quadrant II - Prevention, Relationships, Sharpen the Saw
Quadrant III - Interruptions, Some Meetings, Popular Activities
Quadrant IV - Busy Work, Some Mail and Phone Calls, Time Wasters (some people)

You are now ready to start managing your time using this matrix. Obviously you must spend a lot of time in Quadrant I (Important and Urgent) to get your daily job (production) done. You should avoid spending time in Quadrants III and IV (Not Important-Urgent and Not Important - Not Urgent). The time you save by avoiding Quadrants III and IV should be spent in Quadrant II (Important and Not Urgent) on activities such as crisis prevention, relationship building, and sharpening the saw.

The goal of 4th Generation Time Management is to increase the size of Quadrant II (Important and Not Urgent) by reducing the sizes of Quadrants III and IV. This in turn tends to reduce the size of Quadrant I (Important and Urgent) as you properly delegate and establish stewardship operating processes. The result sought is High Performance Job Design where you have a balance between production (Quadrant I) and sharpening the saw (Quadrant II) thus achieving high performance and personal fulfillment.

If you are in a daily situation of stress, frustration, procrastination and poor use of time you are likely spending way too much time in Quadrant I (production) and burn out is likely to occur. You will tend to seek relief and diversion in Quadrants III and IV which only worsens the future as the saw is not getting sharpened.
Stress, frustration, procrastination and poor use of time tend to go away rather quickly when you spend your available time (by your weekly schedule) in Quadrant II sharpening the saw, preventing crises and building productive relationships.

**Summary**
With 4th Generation Self Management you seek peak performance and self fulfillment by proactively scheduling your priorities on a weekly basis within your circle of influence. You seek to achieve a balance of today's production and sharpening the saw for tomorrow by maximizing the time you spend in Quadrant II (Important and Not Urgent).

Sound simple? It is. Try it. You will like it and your performance and self fulfillment will improve as your circle of influence grows.


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**Discussion Question 5.1** Refer to your “Circle of Influence” - “Circle of Concern” chart that you drew while reading Lecture 5.1:

Think back over the past two weeks (or month) and make a list of the major things that you have spent most of your time doing at work. (We don't want to see the list)

A. What percent of your time did you spend in your "Circle of Influence"?
   - What percent of your time did you spend in the "Circle of Concern"?
   - What percent of your time did you "waste time"?

The total of the above should be 100% -- we do want to see the percentage distribution

B. What specific things can you do to maximize the time spend in your “Circle of Influence”?

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**Discussion Question 5.2** Refer to your "Time Management Matrix" chart that you drew while reading Lecture 5.1:

A. What specific actions can you take to reduce the time you spend in Quadrant III (Not Important and Urgent) and Quadrant IV (Not Important and Not Urgent)?

B. What time will you schedule each week to spent in Quadrant II - Sharpen the Saw?
   - What specifically will you do in Quadrant II with your scheduled time to: prevent crises, build relationships and sharpen the saw?

THE END :-))
Or the Beginning -- Depending Upon Your Perspective