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**Are you always missing deadlines at work? Do you feel short of time almost daily? Sorting things out and making the most of your time may not be as hard as you think. Here's how.  
  
Choose tasks carefully  
  
Make sure your work adds value to the organisation, and that it makes the best use of your skills. Ask yourself, 'Will this advance my career?' and 'Will I able to do justice to this assignment?' before sitting on a committee or taking on an additional project.  
  
Instead of overburdening yourself with additional work, you can also earn a lot more respect by teaming up with a colleague whose expertise compliments yours. For instance, it is better to assist a senior colleague on a report that has to be submitted to the CEO, rather than volunteer to help plan the office picnic menu. There is a reasonable chance your name may reflect in the report and catch the CEO's eye.  
  
Stop useless meetings  
  
Learn to determine if a meeting is absolutely necessary. Conference calls and online chats can offer flexibility, as you don't have to be physically present. So, see if you can use these media instead. Is your team meeting on Monday a necessity or a habit?  
  
With adequate planning and preparation, most meeting objectives can be accomplished within 30 minutes. One-hour meetings should be the exception, not the rule. Establish an agenda for important meetings and distribute it to all participants a few hours in advance. Then, stay on track by starting and ending on time.   
  
If your presence is not essential, ask your boss privately, in advance, if you could excuse yourself early.  
  
Only invite those who can contribute to at least 50 per cent of items on the agenda. Also, try and discuss sensitive issues with key participants before a meeting. And, finally, realise that the effectiveness of a meeting diminishes with groups larger than 10 or 12.  
  
Organise your desk  
  
Maintain a clearly designated 'in basket' so people do not dump files on your desk. Avoid having too many personal items like photos, knick-knacks or plants. Also avoid leaving spare chairs around, as they invite disturbance.  
  
If your desk faces a door, turn it around. This will keep you from catching people's eye and lessen daily interruptions. You can even place your monitor directly in front of you, if you want to discourage people from interrupting your work.  
  
  
Dedicate a Sunday for cleaning. The thought of working on a weekend may be annoying, but it will save you time in the future.  
  
Make lists  
  
In addition to scheduling and planning, make a daily 'to-do' list, which must include short-term goals. There is nothing more satisfying than crossing off another task that has been accomplished. Include urgent and non-urgent items to avoid forgetting or overlooking something.  
  
Carry your list with you at all times and break down projects and assignments into specific actions. For instance, instead of writing 'Prepare the sales report', break it down into individual tasks such as:  
. Research sales trends for last quarter   
. Review related files   
. Assess current sales performance   
. Meet with sales executives for feedback  
  
Put all tasks in their order of importance, with the most important on top.  
  
This may seem obvious, but think about how many times you may have put off an important (or unpleasant) task so you could call a friend or do something else you really didn't need to at that time.  
  
Club similar activities  
  
Make all your phone calls and check all e-mail at once. Send out mailers at one go. Here's an example of how you could create blocks:  
. Block 1: 9 am-10 am (meetings)  
. Block 2: 10 am-11 am (emails)  
. Block 3: 11.15 am-12 pm (take messages and return calls)  
. Block 4: 12 pm-1 pm (lunch)  
. Block 5: 1.15 pm-4 pm (Office training)  
. Block 6: etc.  
  
Schedule up to 60 per cent of your 'to-do list' with important tasks, 20 per cent for things that crop up and 20 per cent for emergencies. You could change the order of tasks every now and then, if monotony sets in.  
  
Show up early  
  
The early morning hours are usually the most productive. Make it a point to come in an hour early, at least on Mondays and Fridays. Plan your week on Mondays and wrap things up on Fridays. Also, try and get to work at least 15 minutes before your boss does.  
  
Don't overfill the 24 hours you have in a day. Maximise them by becoming aware of how you spend your time. If you maintain a routine and create shortcuts, you'll still have time to spare.**