

Content Analysis of Time Management as a Tool for Corporate Effectiveness

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Abstract

Other factors are sometime attributed as reasons for increase in productivity and growth in measuring efficiency in management of resources while time that plays major role in the overall development is slackly treated with negligence. Effective time management is one skill we must learn for increased productivity and efficiency. This paper re-evaluates the content analysis of time management as a tool for corporate effectiveness and revealed that time management is not only beneficial to managers at all levels of management and to other category of workers, but is also very important in the practice of any profession. It recommends among others are: avoid unnecessary waste of time, occasional confusions, chaos, blankness in the head and stress, by planning your activities in relation to time and adhering strictly to schedules; prioritize your activities and always set a time-frame for accomplishing any goal; and allow your schedules to control your performance and not the other way round.

1. Introduction

Time management, as important as it is, is relatively new in our study of office management. Most classical authors of texts in theory and practice of management or even in office management paid little or no attention to time management, which is one of the major influencing factors of the output and growth of any enterprise. Time is not only a unique resource, but also a limiting factor. We cannot hire, buy or obtain more of it. We have to work within the space time allows us to achieve our objectives, because any time wasted cannot be regained. We often attribute increased productivity and growth to the efficient management of resources in combination with other factors. Without talking about the role effective utilization of time plays in the overall development of our enterprise.

Time is money, as the saying goes, and it has been described by the economists as “an inelastic resource”. Time cannot be stretched or extended and no matter how high the demand, its supply will not rise. It is static. Therefore, we must work within it. It can either be exploited to achieve optimum benefit or it can be wasted. Effective time management is one skill we must learn for increased productivity and efficiency.

What then is Time Management? It is:

1. The heightened awareness of the importance of time;
2. The identification of non-productive, time-wasting activities and ensuring a good riddance of them;
3. An honest appraisal of the use we make of our time;
4. The identification of leaks in our time and instantly sealing them up;
5. The sifting of our priorities more clearly from the trivial;
6. The gracious acceptance of the onus for the strategic investment of our time;
7. The allocation of proper and adequate time to a particular task and having them done within the time allowed;
8. The realization that our goal is not “to find more time but to use the time more wisely”.

Poor Time Management can Result in

1. Chaos in the work environment and grim pauperization of organisation's goal;
2. Infiltrations in our work programme of typical time-wasters and will bring about the denigration of the job-holder's personal and corporate psyche.

Poor time planning and budgeting is the inability to deal with constant pressures towards unproductive and wasteful use of time. This can also result when a task requires, for minimum effectiveness, a fairly quantum of time, and less than this minimum is spent in one stretch with possible interruptions.

2. Issues of Time Management

The principal issues arising from time use include those related to the nature of the job; the personality of the jobholder and the people who make up the jobholder's role-set.

2.1. The Nature of the Job

The nature of the person's job is basic to the degree of control over time that is both desirable and necessary. A person whose job involves regular contact with others is usually a victim of greater pressure from interruptions than the one whose work is of solitary nature. Similarly, a person whose job is undefined, who is engaged with responsibilities over and above his official position, is more likely to suffer from conflicting priorities and unpredictable events than someone whose job is defined, developed and specified; who is engaged within the boundaries of his official position. It is very important that we identify the priorities on the job, what we intend to accomplish, the most important activity on the job and what the job hinges on. Our identification of these will help us in determining how to allocate our time. "The nature of some jobs call for administrative skills, and a sound knowledge of organisation procedures, others demand social skills and a sensitivity to people's needs, and yet others require technical and specialist knowledge and the ability to apply it" – (Cole – Management: Theory and Practice). Some jobs require a combination of these. The executive needs to examine the processes associated with his job and attempt to harmonize them with the available time for these processes.

2.2. The Personality of the Worker

A person's ability to effectively utilize his time depends to a great extent on his personality profile and his individual inclinations. In other words, differences in personal attributes and styles can affect a person's use of time on the job.

There are some people who can only deal with one issue at a time, whereas others can juggle with several issues simultaneously – that is being busy all the time. Those who can deal with one task at a time are the sets that make the best use of their time. This is because the routine aspects of their job are always allocated a pre-determined quantum of time for their accomplishment. Each task has a specific unit of time allocated to it. Time is effectively planned and greater result is achieved.

Untidiness, stress and, above all, failure are results of planlessness and attempts to juggle several tasks at the same time. Control over time requires self-discipline. It is only when we imbibe personal strengths and attempt to rid of weaknesses that we can really use our time optimally on the job and off the job.

2.3. The Work Context

Several factors constitute a person's work or job context. Some of these are:

1. The people he works with: These include the boss, subordinates and work colleagues. A boss who interferes with the flow of work can be very disrupting. A subordinate who has the ability, initiative and drive to work effectively with minimum of supervision should be enabled to work on personal tasks without undue interruption. Colleagues, especially where the relationship is very cordial, can be a major source of wasted time. For instance, a colleague who is less busy or who wants to take a short break from the job at hand may call into your office and engage you in a long conversation on issues that have no bearing on the organisation.
2. The physical surroundings, that is the office environment: This may mar or boost the executive's efforts to use time effectively. For example, if an office is situating very close to a busy airport, it will be difficult for the executive to concentrate on any task irrespective of the importance of such task.
3. The layout of an office can affect a person's use of time, for instance, if the service department is located at the opposite end of the building, a great amount of time can be wasted walking to and from the department.
4. The culture of the organisation is another factor: An organization that discourages informal contacts, that is, the use of office telephone for personal calls, visits to the employee during office hours and in the organisation's premises, etc., will achieve more from the workers who now concentrate on the job at hand and complete the same on schedule, than an organization where the reverse is the case.
5. The nature of the organisation is a strong factor that can influence an employee's use of time: If an organisation is profit-oriented, output of its workforce is high and staff are rewarded for good performances and increased productivity; while in the civil service and majority of government-owned establishments (particularly in developing countries), most employees lack the sense of commitment to their jobs. In such a situation, setting of any target based on good planning and time frame for accomplishment is usually impracticable. To the employees, nothing is at stake. They receive their pay as and when due without regard to the level of their output. Above all, their job is never threatened by low or lack of productivity.

3. Essentials of the Management

1. Planning

This is a major factor in time management. Planning comes after forecasting or conceptualizing. In other words, we need to know what to do before thinking of how to do it. Here, we are not considering planning from its broad perspective as a tool of management, but as it relates to time management. To have a clearer view of planning in relation to time, we look at how it affects the role of the Chief Executive, his subordinates – which include every staff in the organisation other than casual workers or labourers, and finally, labourers.

- (a) **The Chief Executive Officer (Boss):** Most Chief Executive Officers in both private and public enterprises operate with time diary with hourly schedules. Appointments might have earlier on been arranged and other activities arranged in their order or priority. Time is thus allotted to each of the activities and efforts are made to follow the schedule as strictly as possible. There may, however, be occasions when unscheduled issues and persons will surface, and they may be so important that they must have to be attended to promptly. This is one of the major problems of scheduling. The interruption of the schedule leads to procrastination or postponement or rescheduling of the untreated matter to another date or time. No matter the importance of the unscheduled issues which were attended to in preference to the scheduled issues, some harm has been done, as it could even be some personalities whose time might have been wasted by the sudden change in the schedule.

Another impediment to effective time management as it pertains to the Chief Executive Office is the unlikely disposition of callers on appointment to appreciate the pressure on the officer's time and be brief in their discussions. In most cases callers or visitors do not limit their stay with the Chief Executive Officer – knowing that he also needs to attend to other people and matters. For instance, if the C.E.O. has planned to spend only one hour in attending to visitors. Which number may be about six (as the case may be), it is not unusual for the first caller to spend up to twenty or more minutes? The remaining callers may do the same. That being so, the total number of minutes spent by the C.E.O. on attending to the six visitors will be 120 minutes or two hours, as opposed to the one hour allotted to attending to callers. The sixty minutes spent in excess might be for other issues needing his attention on that very day. He has one out of two options to exercise. Either that he stays late in the office attending to the remaining matters or the matters are rescheduled for another date and/or time.

One other area where allotted time is overshot with impunity is at meetings. Although, date and time may be set for the meeting, with possible closing time indicated in some cases, such closing time is rarely adhered to due to the following:

- i) The meeting may never start on schedule.
- ii) Some issues take longer time to discuss than others; and issues not listed on the agenda may come up for treatment under A.O.B. (any other business).
- iii) The closing time may extend to hours beyond the originally scheduled time.

For effective management of time, the Chief Executive Officer must:

- i) Reduce interruptions to the barest minimum;
- ii) Follow the daily schedule and avoid straying out of it adversely.
- iii) Follow meeting schedule and if possible hold meetings late in the day;
- iv) Delegate those functions that could be treated by another person.

- (b) **The Subordinates:** All the activities in an organisation require to be carried out with some degree of urgency. Wages and salaries are measured in relation to job output, which is why movement register and other measures of checking workers' truancy are introduced. There are matters that must be treated at a specific time in the month, such as:

- i) Preparation of workers' salary.
- ii) Preparation of monthly returns, where necessary.
- iii) Preparation of monthly statements of accounts, etc.

On the other hand, meetings might be held and the minutes needed to be prepared timeously for implementation of decisions reached at the meeting, etc. To achieve better results, it is necessary to set a target with time frame for its accomplishment. For self-appraisal in relation to effectiveness, efficiency and productivity, the first step is for the worker to record actual time he spent in accomplishing any task.

- (c) **The Labourer:** This category of worker is not usually regarded as a regular worker or staff because he is 'hired' when there is need for him and as soon as the need is satisfied, he is 'fired'. He works on hourly basis and his pay is also calculated per hour worked. It is necessary to record the time it takes him to carry out a specific piece of manual work. This will be to the benefit of the establishment in determining the aggregate amount of time spent in relation to the cost of performing such a task over time.

2. Delegation

This is an important leadership tool, which helps the Chief Executive Officer to use his time optimally. It is “the process whereby an individual transfers to some other individual the duty of carrying out some particular action, and at the same time, taking some particular decision”, (R.C. Appleby, “Modern Business Administration”). By delegating part of his duty, a manager is sharing his workload with a subordinate. Because of the nature of the task facing the Chief Executive Officer, there is just not enough time for himself to do all that he is committed to doing. The only way he can get to the important things is by pushing over to others anything that can be done by them. For instance, the Chief Executive Officer can send a subordinate to represent him at a meeting or at functions, etc.

3. Assertiveness

This is “the capacity to express our ideas, opinions, or feelings openly and directly without putting down others or ourselves (Turner, Sachdev, & Hogg, 1983). Assertive rights are based on the fact that every adult is the ultimate judge of his/her own behaviour. This implies one being personally liable for his/her actions.

The right to say ‘no’ and the right to refuse to take responsibilities for others’ problem are two rights which are of particular relevance to time management. Some people find that the right to say ‘no’ is difficult for them to accept because it is unco-operative and selfish even though the practice of assertiveness emphasizes the importance of individuals’ right to say ‘no’ without feeling bad about it. When we say ‘no’, we are only rejecting the request or offer and not the person. When considered in relation to time management, it is only when we are able to make use of our personal rights to say ‘no’, that we can avoid certain interruptions from others and thus create more space for ourselves at work.

Time management is not only beneficial to managers at all levels of management and to other category of workers, but is also very important in the practice of any profession. Lawyers, Engineers, Medical Doctors, Secretaries, Lecturers, Accountants, Tailors, etc. will find the practice of time management very rewarding. For the full realization of the wonderful benefits of effective time management, the following should be made to be part of us:

- 1) Avoid unnecessary waste of time, occasional confusions, chaos, blankness in the head and stress, by planning your activities in relation to time and adhering strictly to schedules.
- 2) Prioritize your activities and always set a time-frame for accomplishing any goal.
- 3) Allow your schedules to control your performance and not the other way round.
- 4) Avoid temptations – such as staying away from persons and places that normally take more of your time than you need to spend.
- 5) Avoid unnecessary interruptions. Always operate a tight schedule and leave little or no room for irrelevancies.
- 6) Delegate some of the tasks that you cannot perform due to already congested schedules.
- 7) Try to attend to visitors/callers as scheduled.
- 8) Spend less time with unscheduled visitors/callers
- 9) Provide time for rest or recreation.

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