

Managing your time effectively

Skills that this session will develop:

Self-awareness

By the end of this session the mentee will be able to:

- Explain what the Covey Matrix is
- Create a Covey Matrix to analyse how they manage their time, and adjust their plans going forward

Session Preparation:

1. Mentee to note down what they did each day in the week before the session.
2. Mentor to review Covey's Matrix and think about other time management techniques they use.

Session Plan:

Review the information below, and then use the Covey Matrix to create a time management framework for the mentee based on their last week.

Effective time management happens when you plan and control how much time you spend on the various activities you do at work or school. It involves you analysing the time you take for each task, prioritising which are most important and urgent, and then reorganising them so that you meet your deadlines, increase your productivity, and get more done. Good time management involves a shift of focus from feeling busy and carrying out a lot of activities, to being effective and focusing on results.

Stephen Covey's urgent-versus-important matrix is an effective tool for good time management that will allow you to determine whether you should address a task immediately, postpone it, or even not do it altogether.

The top-left quadrant contains important tasks with high urgency. These tasks really affect us and must be done right away, for example, emergencies, customer complaints, and important meetings or coursework. Too many items in this quadrant will result in stress, burn-out and a constant state of crisis management.

The bottom-left quadrant is for important tasks that are not urgent. These items should contribute to your long-term development, such as strategic planning, learning, building relationships, health and exercise. By scheduling enough time for these activities you will prevent them from becoming urgent, and you will have fewer fires to put out in the top-left quadrant. Correctly prioritising these tasks, will give you vision, perspective, balance and control.



The top-right quadrant contains tasks that are urgent but not important. Items in this quadrant often include interruptions, emails, phone calls, unimportant meetings, and popular activities. You should regard these items as distractions because they are seemingly important to someone else, but not to you. They will not contribute to your output or affect your long-term goals, but merely interrupt the important work you are doing. Eliminate or delegate these tasks where possible. Too much time spent on these activities will lead to a loss of focus on your long-term goals, the consequent diminishment of your purpose, and a loss of control.

The bottom-right quadrant houses tasks that are neither important nor urgent. They have little or no value. They include trivial communication and surfing the internet. Eliminate these activities as much as you can during the hours you work or study and leave them to designated periods where you can relax.

You can use the Covey matrix in two main ways. To help you plan, at the beginning of each day or week, by mapping out your jobs onto a Covey matrix. You can then prioritise and organise what you will do and when. Or, you can carry out a weekly assessment to review how well you spent your time in the last week.

	Important	Not Important
Urgent	DO NOW Emergencies Exam revision Coursework or reports	AVOID OR DELEGATE Interruptions Unimportant meetings Unnecessary emails
Not Urgent	PLAN TO DO Long-term development Learning Health	DON'T DO Social media Surfing the internet

TASK: Together, map out all the activities the mentee completed in the last week onto a Covey Matrix. Identify where the mentee spent too much time, and use this to adjust their plans for the next week.

Next to Covey's matrix, you should also remember some important tips to maximise your time:

- Break complex tasks down into manageable chunks so that you can make progress when you have smaller windows of time
- Address one item at a time so that it gets done properly, rather than doing a little of everything so that you feel busy
- Change tasks when you feel bored
- Build slack into your schedule to deal with emergencies
- Plan quality, uninterrupted thinking time and recognise that this is productive
- Be firm and polite when rejecting tasks that are not your responsibility
- Involve others in projects to share the workload