

# Summit

## ***TIME MANAGEMENT***

### ***TIPS FOR LEADERS***

## ***TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR LEADERS***

The role of a leader is to be a guide, a mentor, a decision-maker, and yet too many senior leaders cannot spend the necessary resources on these vital roles as they are unwisely investing their time and energy on tasks that could be delegated to a junior employee, or don't need to be done at all. So how can leaders manage their time better? Start by changing the way you look at that question. We can't manage time at all. What we *can* do is manage how we spend our time, and this comes from being discerning with what we choose to focus on.

## ***COMMON TIME STEALERS***

There are a number of flawed behaviours that steal away the time of a busy manager, and to regain control of your focus you must become aware of these and learn to actively avoid them. These are:

### ***1. FIREFIGHTING.***

This refers to the mode of behaviour where someone is so focused on preventing bad things from happening that they have no time (or mental resources) left to invest in making good things happen. When leaders engage in this type of behaviour, an organisation's progress stagnates.

### ***2. MICRO LEADERSHIP.***

Like micromanagement, this refers to a leader excessively checking the progress of their direct reports. Trusting others to complete an important task correctly may not be easy, but it is necessary if you are to complete your own role effectively.

### ***3. WORTHLESS MEETINGS.***

If a meeting lacks focus, or cannot deliver demonstrable value to the team and organisation, why is it taking up leaders' valuable time? Many meetings are truly important, but others achieve nothing more than sucking time out of the day. Be honest about which meetings are necessary and which ones are not.

## **4. LACK OF PERSONAL OWNERSHIP.**

This refers to subordinates relying too heavily on their leader's input for guidance and/or approval. Each team member should know their own roles and responsibilities, including what decisions they are expected to make on their own. While it is important that a leader supports their team and offers guidance when needed, it must be clear that each member of staff is expected to take responsibility and ownership for their area.

## **5. ABSENCE OF EFFECTIVE DELEGATION.**

It's easy to think *'If you want something done right, do it yourself'*, but in a leadership position this is counterproductive. If you spend your time doing everyone else's jobs, who is left to do yours? Effective delegation frees up your time and helps your team build their experience and competence across a variety of areas.

Each of these time stealers can contribute to the leader taking more of a manager role than leader role. And that is not the role you are paid or trusted to undertake.

## ***HERE ARE FIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT AS A LEADER:***

### ***1. PLAN IN ADVANCE WHICH ACTIVITIES DESERVE YOUR ATTENTION AND STICK WITH THEM.***

Inform your direct reports of your focus, what (if any) input you require from them, and why you have chosen that issue/project/area as your focus, then see things through to completion – or at least complete the parts which are yours to complete. Be honest with yourself about what your role really is when you choose your area of focus – what you enjoy doing may not actually be yours to do.

### ***2. DELEGATE, DELEGATE, DELEGATE.***

Delegate to your direct reports all tasks and activities which are theirs to own and complete. Yes, at the outset it may be quicker and easier for you to complete some tasks which would otherwise require a time investment in helping another member of staff learn, but that upfront investment can lead to major progress. Delegation can present learning opportunities for you as well as your team, as you gain experience taking on a coaching role. Your organisation also benefits through the spreading of competence throughout your team, which can lead to achieving more in less time, all to the required standard.

### ***3. PROMOTE PERSONAL OWNERSHIP.***

Help colleagues reduce their reliance on your input and/or approval by ensuring they know they are trusted to use their own judgement and move on to the next stage of a project when they think is appropriate. The more you do the thinking for your colleagues, the less they are likely to take ownership for their own thinking, for making decisions, and for progressing activities as swiftly as they could, or indeed should. Encouraging and enabling colleagues to actually think for themselves, make prudent decisions and take intelligent action is a key leadership skill.

### ***4. CHUNK DOWN YOUR TIME***

How many times have you reached the end of your workday and wondered ‘I don’t know where today went’? The day is a blur and you didn’t get done what you had intended to get done. To achieve more value from the time you invest, you can use an online calendar to create specific time slots for specific activities, taking care to leave 15 minutes between each task. Why? To give your busy brain time to stop, take a rest, and then get ready for the next activity on your schedule. This approach creates more space to think, to consider, to make decisions – partly because your brain knows in advance precisely how it will be spending its time, partly because rigorous schedule management develops structure, and partly because you are not booking back-to-back activities.

## ***5. GO BACK TO THE FLOOR.***

Identify suitable opportunities to go back to the floor – not as a PR exercise, but as a way to develop a genuine understanding of the day-to-day running of the organisation. Get to know the roles and responsibilities of different members of staff, make the effort to understand their day-to-day frustrations and their ideas on how to mitigate these and improve efficiency. While this may initially seem like just another task to take up your time, going back to the floor can help leaders find new ways to increase organisational effectiveness, both through increased understanding and discussion with junior managers and lower-level workers, who often have answers the senior leadership team does not.

Putting these tips into practice will take commitment, effort, and yes – time. But when it comes to time management, one rule to live by is that often, if you don't make the time to do something now, you'll need far more time later when you have to deal with the problems that arise from not doing it. Invest in changing the way you distribute your time and focus and you will reap the benefits for many years to come.

# Summit

Contact us on:



[www.SummitTraining.co.uk](http://www.SummitTraining.co.uk)



[Info@SummitTraining.co.uk](mailto:Info@SummitTraining.co.uk)



0845 052 3701 (UK)