

Time Management for the Academic Emergency Physician **Carrie Tibbles, MD**

In our busy lives as physicians and educators, time often seems in short supply. A full email inbox, looming deadlines and frequent interruptions are just some of the pressures we face on a daily basis. In this seminar we will share with each other some of our specific challenges and practical strategies for dealing with them.

Specific Topics we will cover in this session:

- Planning your day and week and year to be productive
- Learning how (and when) to say “no” and sometimes “yes”
- Confronting procrastination and dealing with interruptions
- Discuss how to make the most of meetings and working with your team
- Discuss strategies to more efficiently manage communication including your email inbox
- Learn how and when to effectively delegate to others

Bibliography:

1. Chevalier R. Time Management for the Academic Clinician. *Resident and Staff Physician* 1997; 43:102-106.
2. Perlmutter DD. How to Say No (and Get Away With It). *Chronicle of Higher Education* 2008; 55:A35-A38.
3. Patel H, Puddester D. *The Time Management Guide: A Practical Handbook for Physicians by Physicians*. Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. CanMeds 2012.
4. Schwartz T. Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time. *Harvard Business Review* 2007; 85(10):63.

IDENTIFYING

TIME

WASTERS

Please respond to all items included in this questionnaire. Check the appropriate answer, **YES**, if the statement is broadly true; **NO** if the statement is broadly false.

	Yes	No
1. I sometimes fail to meet my own deadlines.		
2. I sometimes have to clarify instructions which I have already heard.		
3. When I have two tasks to complete, I am tempted to do the most pleasant task first rather than an unpleasant one which could be just as important.		
4. I spend time doing work which others are capable of doing.		
5. A work day seems dull when there is not at least one emergency to attend to.		
6. I lose interest in projects when they drag on and do not always finish them before starting on new ones.		
7. I sometimes try to share decision-making when I have all the information to do it on my own.		
8. I spend quite a lot of time trying to improve work which I have already done.		
9. I don't always find time to write down a plan for what must be done tomorrow.		
10. I often have to leave tasks in the middle because something more urgent comes up.		
11. I would rather not make a decision if it involves too many risks.		
12. Much of my time is spent completing and correcting the work of others and/or myself.		
13. Job pressures require me to do too much work in too little time.		
14. I do not always understand the instructions given to me.		
15. I tend to put off tasks that can possibly wait until tomorrow, especially if they are rather unpleasant.		

IDENTIFYING

TIME

WASTERS

16. I sometimes have trouble keeping track of what is going on in my department.

17. Often work must be done over because it was not done right the first time.

18. I sometimes solve problems without necessarily trying to find their underlying causes.

19. I should be paying more attention to the tasks at hand.

20. I have trouble putting my solutions into practice.

21. I really do not know where problems are likely to develop in my area.

22. I like to think about what I will do after work.

23. I try to solve problems as they occur without spending too much time in understanding what caused them.

Yes	No

IDENTIFYING TIME WASTERS SCORING SHEET

INSTRUCTIONS:

Each square below has a number which corresponds to the questions on the questionnaire. Mark an "X" through the square if your answer to the statement was YES. If your answer to the statement was NO leave the square "blank."

When you are done, total the number of "X's" in each column (A, B, C & D) and write the total in the space at the bottom of each column.

TIME WASTER SCORING

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
Totals			

Add the column totals for a Total Score: _____.

YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

To identify your time management problems, transfer your totals from each of the A, B, C, D columns on the answer sheet to the appropriate spaces on the right hand side of the page below.

Time Management Problems

	Score
A. Crisis Oriented	Total A _____
B. Shifting Focus	Total B _____
C. Procrastination Oriented	Total C _____
C. Do-It-Yourself	Total D _____

Your dominant problem is the category in which you have the highest score. You should concentrate on finding solutions for this problem area.

The area with the second highest score is your secondary problem, and also deserves careful consideration.

Write the names and scores of your dominant and secondary problems:

Dominant Problem _____	Score _____
Secondary Problem _____	Score _____

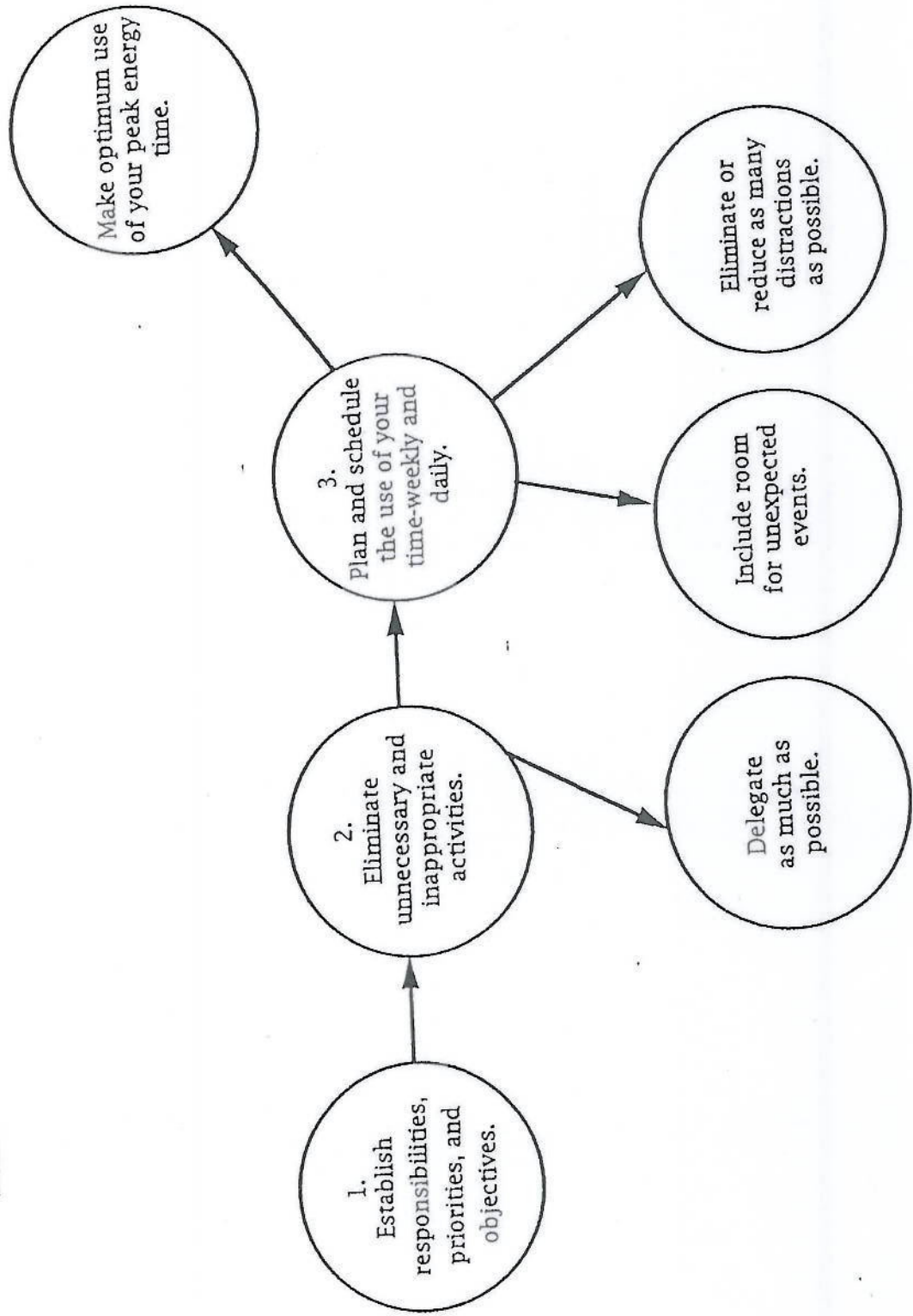
INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE

The higher your total score, the more important it is to make an action plan to improve your time management.

Total Score

- 16-24 Your time management problems are very serious and you need to prepare an improvement plan.
- 10-15 Very ineffective management of time; a formalized action plan is necessary for improvement.
- 6-9 Ineffective management of time; you should make effective utilization of time one of your personal development objectives.
- 3-5 Although you are utilizing your time rather effectively, you could improve your effectiveness significantly by focusing on specific problem areas.
- 0-2 You are an effective manager of time.

HOW TO CONTROL YOUR USE OF TIME



TYRANNY OF THE URGENT

Have you ever wished for a thirty-hour day? Surely this extra time would relieve the tremendous pressure under which we live. Our lives leave a trail of unfinished tasks. Unanswered letters, unvisited friends, unwritten articles, and unread books haunt quiet moments when we stop to evaluate.

But would a thirty-hour day really solve the problem? Wouldn't we soon be just as frustrated as we are not with our twenty-four allotment? A mother's work is never finished, and neither is that of any manager, student, teacher, or anyone else we know.

When we stop to evaluate, we realize that our dilemma goes deeper than shortage of time; it is basically the problem of priorities. Hard work does not hurt us. We know what it is to go full speed for long hours, and the resulting weariness is matched by a sense of achievement. Not hard work, but doubt and misgiving produce anxiety as we review a month or year and become oppressed by the pile of unfinished tasks. Demands have driven us onto a reef of frustration. We confess, quite apart from our sins, "we have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done."

Several years ago an experienced manager said to me, "Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important." He didn't realize how hard his maxim hit. It often returns to haunt and rebuke me by raising the critical problem of priorities.

We live in constant tension between the urgent and the important. The problem is that the important task rarely must be done today, or even this week. The urgent task calls for instant action—endless demands, pressure every hour and day.

Even a home is no longer a castle; no longer a place away from urgent tasks because the telephone breaches the walls with imperious demands. The momentary appeal of new distractions seems irresistible and important, and they devour our energy. But in the light of time's perspective their deceptive prominence fades; and with a sense of loss we recall important tasks we have pushed aside. We realize we've become slaves to the "tyranny of the urgent."

Edited from: *Tyranny of the Urgent*, by Dr. Charles E. Hummell, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL., © 1967.
Used by permission of the publisher.

YOUR ATTITUDE ABOUT TIME

AGREE - DISAGREE

Below is a list of statements. Put "A" if you agree, or "D" if you disagree with the statement. Give your first reaction without analyzing it.

- _____ 1. One should keep busy.
- _____ 2. I have enough time to do what is important.
- _____ 3. Structuring time makes you rigid.
- _____ 4. She who hesitates is lost.
- _____ 5. People who are the most active get the most done.
- _____ 6. A coffee break is usually a waste of time.
- _____ 7. There is nothing more important in your life than your time.
- _____ 8. It is better to postpone doing something now, to get more satisfaction from doing it better later.
- _____ 9. The more efficient you are, the more effective you will be.
- _____ 10. By doing jobs yourself, they get done better and faster.
- _____ 11. It is best to put off making a big decision as long as possible.
- _____ 12. The harder you work, the more you get done.
- _____ 13. Planning for the future destroys spontaneity.
- _____ 14. Time Management means being able to achieve more and more in less and less time.
- _____ 15. To master your time is to master your life.
- _____ 16. The best use of time always involves planned activity.
- _____ 17. One should always be doing something.
- _____ 18. I have so much to do that I come to work even if I don't feel well, and sometimes pass up my vacation.
- _____ 19. Sitting and doing nothing is a waste of time.
- _____ 20. The higher up the ladder you go, the more valuable your time is.
- _____ 21. The most efficient way to do something is the best way.
- _____ 22. People who do not concern themselves with time use are more relaxed and free.
- _____ 23. Time is the scarcest resource, and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed.
- _____ 24. Procrastination is the thief of time.
- _____ 25. Work before play.

Eliminating Interruptions and Creating High Concentration Periods

More valuable work can be accomplished in one hour of uninterrupted time, than in two hours which are interspersed with just 8-10 two minute interruptions. The reason for this is that when interrupted we lose the high degree of mental momentum we had created by focusing solely on that task. When interrupted, our mind begins to wander to many excess items in addition to attending to the cause of our original interruption. A great deal of time is lost before we can return to our original task with the same degree of mental energy we were at before the interruption.

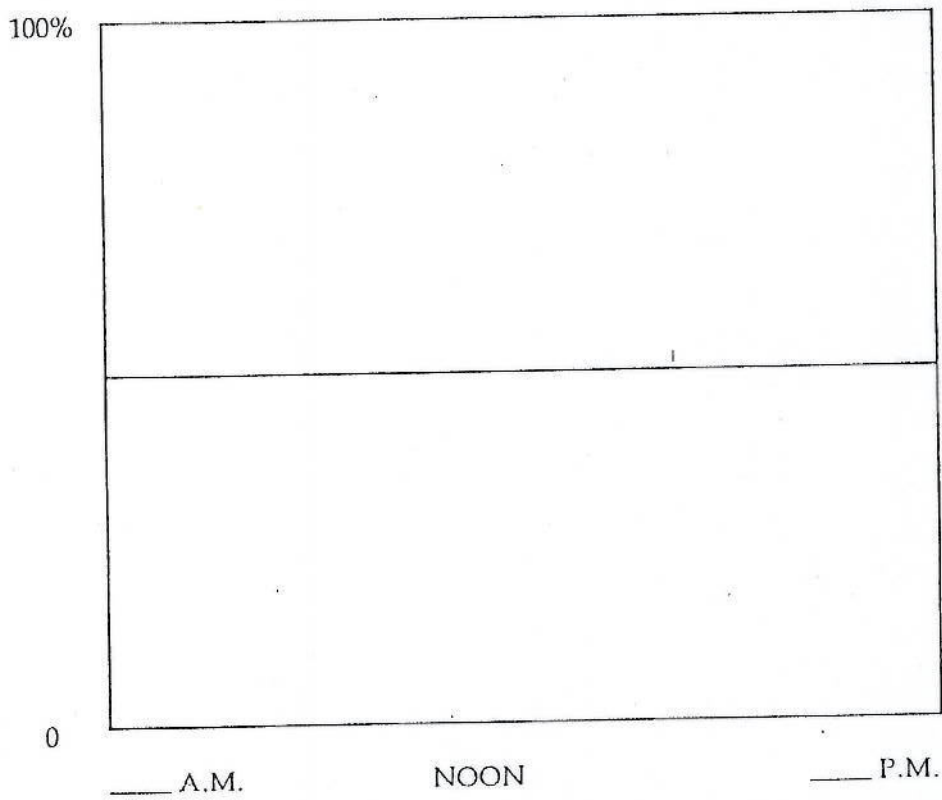
Establishing uninterrupted quiet times are vital for the creation of high concentration periods. Departments within many corporations have now implemented mandatory quiet hours during each work day to ensure that this happens.

A problem with interruptions is that we frequently fail to realize the extent of our own role in maintaining their occurrence. Interruptions are a two-way street! We often allow our day to be a continual stream of phone interruptions, and "5-second" questions from co-workers without willingly accepting the fact that these interruptions could be drastically reduced if we wanted them to be.

No matter how difficult the problem may at first appear, there are ways to eliminate unnecessary interruptions. Sometimes whole departments must work as a team to find and implement these solutions. In any case, you can begin to take more personal control of the problem right now.

CHART YOUR ENERGY CYCLE

Fill in the beginning and ending time of your day on the following diagram. Then draw a line through the day reflecting your typical energy cycle.



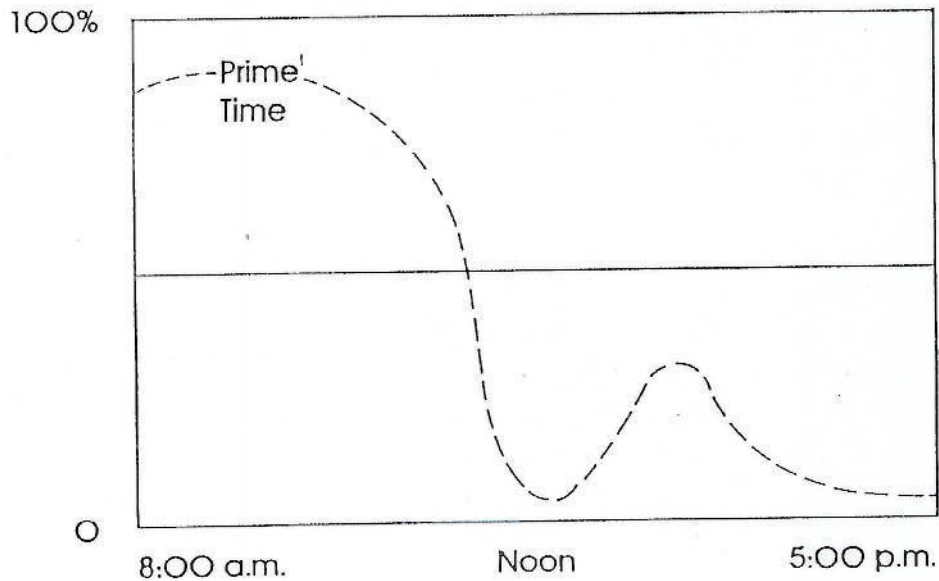
1. Do you arrange your workday (or class load) to take advantage of your energy cycle? _____
2. What could you do differently to better utilize your period of peak energy? _____

PRIME TIME

When considering a daily schedule, it's a good idea to keep your energy cycle in mind. Some people are at their best early in the morning. Others peak in the afternoon. Whenever possible, try to plan your daily schedule to match your "prime time." You will not always have control but consider such ideas as reading, responding to mail or returning phone calls after lunch if your "prime time" is in the morning.

On the facing page is an exercise to help you visualize your energy cycle.

Typical Energy Cycle



Ronni Eisenberg

Want Some Time for Yourself? Here's How to Carve Some Out of Your Busiest Days

Do you remember the last time you had an hour of completely uninterrupted free time to yourself? Chances are it's been awhile. For anyone who's juggling the incessant demands of work, family, church and social obligations, time for one's self is often hard to come by.

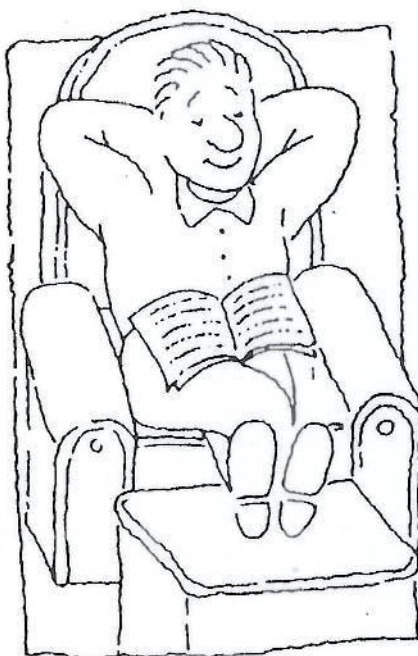
But have you ever noticed that the busiest people are often the same ones you see taking a walk every evening, or strolling out of an art museum on a Sunday afternoon. How do they find the time?

Quite simply, they *work* to reserve time for themselves. Consistently and jealously they plan for personal time, making it as much a priority as their other demands. Author and corporate organizing consultant Ronni Eisenberg is an inveterate believer in time management. And in her experience, the same techniques that work for an executive who's trying to control a busy schedule will work for anyone wanting to carve out time for reading a novel or planting a garden. "Personal time is definitely at a premium these days," says Eisenberg. "And yet most people have so little of it, they've given up on it. The key is to make a firm resolve to protect your personal time—just as you do to guard your other time commitments."

HOW TO SPEND IT

You may be so unaccustomed to having personal time that you've lost track of how to spend it. Take a minute to make a list of activities you'd like to do when you acquire those extra hours. This master list,

which should inspire and motivate you, might include: reading a best seller, taking tennis lessons, at-



**"Make a firm
resolve to protect
your own time."**

tending a major league sporting event or the symphony, enjoying play time with your kids or simply sitting in your yard appreciating the birds and flowers.

FINDING THE TIME

Depending on how your day-to-day life is structured, you might try some of the following strategies:

□ Schedule a particular time

each week that is yours alone and write it into your appointment calendar. Be disciplined in rejecting any other appointments or activities for this period. If you have young children, hire a baby sitter to cover you on a consistent basis.

□ Steal more personal time from your "sleeping time." Set your alarm clock back 10 minutes everyday for a week, until you're rising an hour earlier than before.

□ When you encounter "waiting time"—at your doctor's or dentist's office, at the hairdresser's or at the airport—complete small tasks (opening mail, drafting a letter). Doing this will add time to your workday.

BEWARE OF TIME WASTERS

□ Often a lack of personal time can be traced to an inability to "just say no" to irrelevant demands on your time. Be careful not to take on more outside committees or assignments than you can handle.

□ Take a look at a typical workday, and see how much time you waste looking for misplaced phone numbers or misfiled correspondence. You may find you're losing anywhere from 20 minutes to a hour. If so, straighten up the clutter in your office immediately.

□ If you commute by train, bus or van don't waste time catching up on sleep. Instead, read current publications or get a head start on a project in the planning stages.

□ A plethora of long telephone conversations may be robbing you of personal time. Keep a telephone log for a week to get an accurate idea of how much time you spend on the phone each day. To aid in limiting your calls to five minutes, consider using a kitchen timer each time you use the phone. Whenever the buzzer sounds, you'll be reminded of what else you could be doing with your hours and minutes.

Barbara Floria spoke with Ronni Eisenberg regarding her recent book, *Organize Yourself*. Collier Books, 1986, \$7.95.

TIME
SAVING

TIPS

Read through this collection of ideas and note those you could usefully incorporate into your job.

1. Write down the important "milestones" of each of your important tasks, specify the time by which each "milestone" must be completed and write yourself a reminder and allocate time in your appointment book.
2. List all the tasks you have to perform on a regular basis—daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, half yearly and annually. Regularly allocate periods just for such tasks, especially those that might be overlooked. For example, 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. for looking at and taking action on the mail; 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. on a Friday for planning next week's activities.
3. Maintain a daily and a weekly "to do" list.
4. Annotate the daily "to do" list A, B, C & X where:
A = Tasks relating to a key-result area which must be completed or nearly completed today
B = Less time-critical or important tasks which fall outside key-results areas
C = Unimportant tasks
X = Tasks which could be A, B, or C priority but warrant an "urgent" classification
5. Perform tasks in the order X, A, B on the basis that if you receive an unexpected priority at least you should already have made some progress on your priority tasks.
6. Save the C tasks for a short period each week or month and be prepared to carry them forward if a X, A, or B task arises.
7. Book time with yourself – an appointment book is a planning tool, not just a calendar.
8. Use color and symbols, especially on wall charts for rapid identification of tasks.
9. If possible, allocate some time to yourself every day (preferably when your energy level is at its highest) for tasks demanding your complete attention. Avoid interruptions during those times by finding a private room, diverting your telephone, letting colleagues know when you *will* be available.
10. Plan *everything* – letters, telephone calls, meetings.
11. Set up simple visual self-checking systems so that you can spend less time checking on the progress of projects and the work of others.

TIMESAVINGTIPS

- 12. Avoid heavy food and alcohol at lunch time.
- 13. *Always* carry a notepad with you because you never know when you'll be reminded of something.
- 14. Try to carry different colored index cards using a different color for each person you are supporting, noting key-results areas, projects and so on.
- 15. Keep your work area neat. Chaos makes most people feel over-loaded and stressed.
- 16. Plan tomorrow before you go home today and plan next week on or before Friday of this week. It helps advance planning and orderliness and prepares you for action – sorting our problems, reminding you of facts you might otherwise forget, etc.
- 17. Do not allocate all your time. Reserve some time for emergencies. If nothing happens, you have a chance to get ahead of yourself.
- 18. Don't waste other people's time. This reduces the likelihood of their wasting yours.
- 19. Do something every day to further one of your top three goals.
- 20. Ask yourself several times a day if what you are doing is contributing toward the achievement of your goals.
- 21. Do your thinking on paper. You will make quicker and better decisions if you write down the pros and cons of the line of action. This doesn't take time, it saves time!
- 22. Use a "slush" file -- have a specific place to put all papers which are not important enough to file permanently but which you feel uncomfortable about throwing away just yet.
- 23. In handling correspondence, consider answering routine letters and memos on the original, running them through the office copier for your own records and returning the original to the sender.
- 24. If long periods of sitting make you lethargic, arrange two working levels so you can do some of your work standing up.

TIMESAVINGTIPS

- 25. If you find it difficult to get any "quiet time," try to arrive at the office before anyone else to gain uninterrupted time for planning and other tasks.
- 26. Get a least 10 minutes of programmed exercise every day; and throughout the day use every opportunity to walk, stand, climb stairs, bend over, etc. This not only promotes health but also increases "prime time" by reducing fatigue.
- 27. Avoid clutter. Keep everything you are not working on out of your immediate working area and out of sight, if possible. Always tidy up your desk and work area before leaving the office.
- 28. Set up a desk date file (sometimes called a future file, a suspense file or tickler file) to provide an automatic method of bringing papers to your attention on specific dates in the future.
- 29. Never do errands on impulse. Plan your route carefully, handling as many errands as possible each time.
- 30. Learn to read routine material more rapidly. Don't "backtrack," compulsively rereading phrases before going on.
- 31. Write a memo to yourself for future reference whenever you have completed a difficult task which is going to recur. You will benefit more from an experience if you have made a written record of your mistakes and of the lessons learned.
- 32. If you are always "putting out fires," ask yourself after each crisis: (a) Why did it occur? (b) What can be done to prevent its recurrence? and (c) If it does recur how can I handle it better next time?
- 33. Purchase, rent or borrow from your library cassette tapes on time management, self-motivation and similar subjects as well as any which are available in your professional field, and listen to them whenever you are traveling in your car or on public transportation.
- 34. Don't be afraid to give yourself time frequently to relax, to meditate or even to "goof off." But do so as a result of a conscious decision so that you can relax completely. Don't drift into periods of dawdling, when you are half-working, half-resting.

TIMESAVINGTIPS

- 35. Consider moving closer to your place of work. This is a big step, but if you saved only 15 minutes on commuting time each way, you would gain an additional three weeks of time per year!
- 36. Rewrite your goals and activities, and reprioritize them at least every three months. The world changes, we change and so must our goals.
- 37. Work on only one item at a time.
- 38. Buy paperback books, remove a chapter at a time and read it during your waiting times.
- 39. Expect others to succeed; it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- 40. Don't over-control others. It is frustrating for them and time-consuming for you.
- 41. Purge your files annually. You'll be able to find needed items quicker and will save on storage costs.
- 42. Stand up while on the telephone. Your conversations will be shorter.
- 43. Except for file cabinets and your desk, remove from your office any item on which you accumulate paperwork. It will force you to make the decisions you should make on a timely basis.
- 44. Establish your lowest productivity hour as "interruptions" hour.
- 45. Make a "worry" list. These events seldom materialize, and you won't spend so much time worrying in the future.
- 46. When you go to work, pretend you don't know anything. What you will learn from asking and listening will save you a great deal of time.
- 47. Try to avoid being placed on hold on the telephone. It takes less time to call back.
- 48. As often as possible, provide written instructions to superiors and co-workers. This may prevent numerous interruptions -- by both of you.

TIME
SAVING
TIPS

- 49. At least semi-annually, record and analyze how you are using your time. This will differ from how you think you are using your time.
- 50. Never put uncompleted activities from today at the top of tomorrow's "to do" list. You must reprioritize them.
- 51. Divide seemingly overwhelming tasks into small increments, and attack them one at a time.
- 52. Do one task each day that you don't like to do. It's good discipline and it will help you through the tough times.
- 53. Discuss time management with your boss and with your co-workers, and determine what you can do as individuals and as a team to use time more effectively.

How To Spring the Time Trap

Time Waster	Possible Causes	Solutions
Lack of planning	Failure to see the benefit	Recognize that planning takes time but saves time in the end.
	Action orientation	Emphasize results, not activity.
	Success without it	Recognize that success is often in spite of, not because of, methods.
Lack of priorities	Lack of goals and objectives	Write down goals and objectives. Discuss priorities with subordinates.
Overcommitment	Broad interests	Say no.
	Confusion in priorities	Put first things first.
	Failure to set priorities	Develop a personal philosophy of time. Relate priorities to a schedule of events.
Management by crisis	Lack of planning	Apply the same solutions as for lack of planning.
	Unrealistic time estimates	Allow more time. Allow for interruptions.
	Problem orientation	Be opportunity-oriented.
	Reluctance of subordinates to break bad news	Encourage fast transmission of information as essential for timely corrective action.
Haste	Impatience with detail	Take time to get it right. Save the time of doing it over.
	Responding to the urgent	Distinguish between the urgent and the important.
	Lack of planning ahead	Take time to plan. It repays itself many times over.
	Attempting too much in too little time	Attempt less. Delegate more.
Paperwork and reading	Knowledge explosion	Read selectively. Learn speed reading.
	Computeritis	Manage computer data by exception.
	Failure to screen	Remember the Pareto principle. Delegate reading to subordinates.
Routine and trivia	Lack of priorities	Set and concentrate on goals. Delegate nonessentials.
	Oversurveillance of subordinates	Delegate; then give subordinates their head. Look to results, not details or methods.

Routine & Trivia (cont.)	Refusal to delegate; feeling of greater security dealing with operating detail	Recognize that without delegation it is impossible to get anything done through others.
Visitors	Enjoyment of socializing	Do it elsewhere. Meet visitors outside. Suggest lunch if necessary. Hold stand-up conferences.
	Inability to say no	Screen. Say no. Be unavailable. Modify the open-door policy.
Telephone	Lack of self-discipline	Screen and group calls. Be brief.
	Desire to be informed and involved	Stay uninvolved with all but essentials. Manage by exception.
Meetings	Fear of responsibility for decisions	Make decisions without meetings.
	Indecision	Make decisions even when some facts are missing.
	Overcommunication	Discourage unnecessary meetings. Convene only those needed.
	Poor leadership	Use agendas. Stick to the subject. Prepare concise minutes as soon as possible.
Indecision	Lack of confidence in the facts	Improve fact-finding and validating procedures.
	Insistence on all the facts - paralysis of analysis	Accept risks as inevitable. Decide without all facts.
	Fear of the consequences of a mistake	Delegate the right to be wrong. Use mistakes as a learning process.
Lack of delegation	Lack of a rational decision-making process	Get facts, set goals, investigate alternatives and negative consequences, make the decision, and implement it.
	Fear of subordinates' inadequacy	Train. Allow mistakes. Replace if necessary.
	Fear of subordinates' competence	Delegate fully. Give credit. Insure corporate growth to maintain challenge.
	Work overload on subordinates	Balance the workload. Staff up. Reorder priorities.

* The list is adapted from "Troubleshooting Chart for Time-Wasters," in R. Alec Mackenzie, *Managing Time at the Top* (New York: The Presidents Association, 1970).

TIME

MANAGEMENT

PROGRESS

Survey Instructions:

Six weeks after this class, complete this summary of your progress. It will show you where you are doing well and where you still need to devote some attention.

Scoring Key:

Yes = 1, Usually = 2, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 4, Never or No = 5, Not Applicable = NA

1. Do you have a clearly defined list of written objectives? _____
2. Do you plan and schedule your time on a weekly and daily basis? _____
3. Can you find large blocks of uninterrupted time when you need to? _____
4. Have you eliminated frequently recurring crises from your job? _____
5. Do you refuse to answer the phone when engaged in important conversations? _____
6. Do you use travel and waiting time productively? _____
7. Do you delegate as much as you can? _____
8. Do you prevent people from delegating their tasks and decision making to you? _____
9. Do you take time each day to think about what you are doing and trying to accomplish? _____
10. Have you eliminated any time wasters during the past week? _____
11. Do you feel really in control of your time? _____
12. Is your desk and office well organized and free of clutter? _____
13. Have you eliminated time wasted in meetings? _____
14. Have you conquered your tendency to procrastinate? _____
15. Do you carry out your work on the basis of priorities? _____

TIME

MANAGEMENT

PROGRESS

Survey continued

Scoring Key:

Yes = 1, Usually = 2, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 4, Never or No = 5, Not Applicable = NA

16. Do you resist the temptation to get overly involved in other's activities? _____

17. Do you control your schedule so that others do not waste time waiting for you? _____

18. Do you meet your deadlines? _____

19. Can you identify the critical few tasks that account for the majority of your results? _____

20. Are you better organized and accomplishing more than you were six weeks ago? _____

21. Have you been able to reduce the amount of time you spend on routine paperwork? _____

22. Do you effectively control interruptions and drop-in visitors? _____

23. Have you mastered the ability to say no whenever you should? _____

TOTAL _____

Scoring: Add the points assigned to each item. The lower your score, the better. Look particularly at those items you rated 4 or 5. These represent challenges for further development.

Getting More Done: Strategies to Increase Scholarly Productivity

Sarina Schrager, MD, MS
Elizabeth Sadowski, MD

Scholarship is required for promotion at many academic institutions, and academic physicians have a multitude of competing demands on their time. This article reviews strategies for organizing time, focusing on scholarly tasks, increasing scholarly productivity, and avoiding distractions.

The “To-Do” List

Most successful people plan what they need to accomplish. It has been demonstrated that having a written plan of action increases productivity.^{1,2} Studies looking at the effect of writing down a list of things to do date back to the 1920s and an Eastern European psychologist named Bluma Zeigarnik. The so-called “Zeigarnik Effect” demonstrated that the act of planning activities through “to-do” lists actually reduced executive burden on the brain by freeing the brain from having to worry about unfinished tasks.¹ More recent studies confirmed the Zeigarnik Effect by finding that when people were not allowed to finish a warm-up activity, they performed poorly on a subsequent brainstorming activity.² The implication is that people are more effective when they are able to cross off the first thing on their list. It allows them to go on to the next thing.

There are multiple ways to keep track of things to do. The traditional to-do list is created with a pen and paper. There are also multiple electronic to-do list applications for computers, tablets, or smartphones.³ Stephen Covey, in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*,⁴ describes a method of setting goals and then prioritizing tasks within those goals. He recommends prioritizing to-do lists into urgent and not urgent, important and not important. For faculty who are writing scholarly papers, breaking down each task into smaller tasks will help make the to-do list more effective. For instance, instead of putting “write paper” on the list, you can itemize each individual component, such as “write introduction” or “make tables.”

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-15-00165.1>

Finding a Balance: Learning to Say “No”

Once your to-do list is organized, it is time to focus on the actual tasks you need to do. Since each day has a limited number of hours, it makes sense to spend these hours on important tasks. Using time wisely includes limiting your workload to activities that are directly related to career goals. In doing this, you may be required to say “no” to certain requests for your time.

Saying “no” can be difficult for several reasons. The first reason is the inherent desire to help out colleagues if possible, so the first inclination is to say “yes” to a new request for help. However, saying “yes” to a project, committee, or work group that is not interesting or not aligned with career goals will potentially not allow enough time to complete work that is in your area of interest. Second, being a team player is important and saying “no” may be thought of as selfish, or may jeopardize a relationship (TABLE 1). Finding the right balance between aiding colleagues by saying “yes” to some requests, while also protecting time for your own work, can be challenging.

There are several ways to say “no.”⁵ Most time management experts recommend never saying “yes”

BOX

How to Decide Whether to Say “Yes” or “No”

1. Does the request fit with your career goals?
2. Would the work use your skills?
3. What is the long-term benefit of this work? Could it lead to other work that is more closely related to your goals?
4. What is the timing of this work? Does it need to be done within a week, a month, or can it be done more long term when you may have more time?
5. Can you be involved in part of the work but not all?
6. Are you able to give up another responsibility in order to take on the new request?
7. Is the requestor someone who is your supervisor or who can influence your career?
8. Would saying “no” jeopardize other parts of your job or career goals?

TABLE 1
Saying “Yes” and “No”

Dangers of Saying “Yes” Too Much	Dangers of Saying “No” Too Much
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Become overcommitted ▪ Not be able to do a good job on the project ▪ Not have enough time to do your own scholarly work ▪ Not be able to say “yes” to a great opportunity because you are too busy ▪ People stop asking you because you either do a bad job or don’t finish the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thought of as not a team player ▪ Becomes a habit and then it is not clear when you will say “yes” ▪ People stop asking you to do things ▪ If you say “no” to a request, you may be forced to say “yes” to the next one ▪ You may miss out on an exciting opportunity

or “no” on the spot.⁶ It takes practice, but is ultimately very helpful to always say something like, “Thank you so much for asking me. I’m going to look at my other work and see whether I think I can give this project/committee/work group enough time to do a good job.” Another option for junior faculty is to consult their mentors before saying “yes” to a request. Obviously, if a request is exciting and closely related to your area of interest, saying “yes” seems obvious, but consider the request first. Can you negotiate to get something else off your plate so that you have adequate time for the new project? Can you negotiate for administrative support or time away from clinical duties? Even if what you want your answer to be is obvious to you, spend a day or two thinking about it. The trick is to have a clear idea in your head of what you love to do, what you like to do, and what you are required to do. Then, saying “yes” and “no” can be

based on that, in conjunction with work responsibilities (BOX).

Increasing Productivity by Making Everything Count Twice

Faculty can demonstrate a scholarly approach to patient care and teaching by developing scholarly products based on clinical or educational work. For example, if you enjoy taking care of patients with a specific disease (X), you may collect patient cases and focus your educational material on the presentation, management, and follow-up of patients with disease X. Making your clinical interests into scholarly products may involve using the lectures you have put together on disease X and writing a review article for a specialty journal. You may also involve trainees in developing posters and presentations on different aspects of disease X to present at meetings (TABLE 2).

TABLE 2
Making Everything Count Twice: The Art of Using Day-to-Day Work as Scholarship

Context	Opportunity
Seeing an interesting patient in the hospital?	The resident presents the case for morning report. Write a case report or volunteer to do grand rounds on the topic for your department.
Working on a new curriculum for an inpatient rotation?	Consider getting pretest results from the residents before the curriculum change and then posttest results after the change. Is it an innovative model? Consider publishing it in an education journal or online.
Giving a talk to residents on a clinical topic in which you have a lot of experience?	Consider turning that talk into a publication. ⁷ Suggest the topic for a state or national meeting.
Developing a new clinical approach to a specific set of patients?	Review the literature to determine the various clinical management options that exist and write a review article. Then, devise a study to measure the effectiveness of your new approach and collect outcomes data. Present this work, incorporating trainees to help you. Follow up with a manuscript.
You are asked to head a committee at the medical school and realize an opportunity to start a new program on a quality improvement topic.	Send out a survey to the medical school faculty to measure their current knowledge base. Use the results to develop a workshop or curriculum. Test the faculty knowledge postimplementation of the workshop or curriculum. Present the results, and write a manuscript detailing your process and the final results.

TABLE 3
Common Distractions and Techniques to Minimize Them

Distractions	Techniques
E-mail ^{8,9}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on 2 times each day you will look seriously at your e-mails—and only look at those times to minimize the time you spend on e-mails. Turn off “alerts” so you are not distracted each time a new e-mail populates your inbox. Close your e-mail so you don’t look at it. Don’t spend your most productive time of the day on e-mails. Choose times when you are taking a break or slowing down from a more intensive or important task. For instance, check e-mail at lunch and at the end of the day.
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is most efficient to schedule meetings back to back so you have a “block” of meetings. This also does not allow most meetings to run over, as you have to move on to the next meeting.
Interruptions ⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a place no one can find you, such as home, the coffee shop, or the library. Tell your clinic or nurse you will check in with them at specific times during the day to attend to clinical questions, so to hold your nonemergent messages until then.
Procrastination	<p><i>Reflect on the reasons you are procrastinating:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling overwhelmed, don’t know where to start. Work not exciting or uncomfortable with the work. Worried about not doing a good job. Rather be doing something else. <p><i>Overcoming procrastination:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on the reason and seek a solution. Break down big projects into smaller ones (eg, write 1 section of a grant application at a time or work on tables for a paper). Use the 10-minute rule: Do something just for 10 minutes at a time just to get it started. Ask for help from a colleague. (Can the statistician help you analyze the data from your study?) Make a deal with yourself: If I get this done, I can get x, y, or z.
Perfectionism ¹⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realize your work is never going to be perfect. Perfectionism can be a form of procrastination in that you never finish because you always want to make it better or add more. Realize everyone makes mistakes. Do not dwell on your mistakes, but learn from them.

Being Efficient

To be more productive, we need to focus. Multitasking is a misnomer because our brains can really only focus on 1 task at a time. When we think we are doing 3 things at once, our brains actually switch back and forth from task to task. In a 2006 study that used functional magnetic resonance imaging to document the activation of different parts of people’s brains as they went from one activity to another, only 1 area was activated at a time. The researchers also documented what they called a “bottleneck” at a central area of information processing, which allowed only 1 thought through at a time.¹¹ Other research has shown that it takes 30 to 60 seconds to refocus on 1 task after transferring attention to a second one. The more complex the task (ie, analyzing data or writing an abstract) the longer it takes to refocus. It has been estimated that multitasking can reduce productivity up to 40% and actually decrease intelligence quotients up to 10 points.¹²

Finding a time to write a paper is challenging when clinical or other standing duties are ever-present. We all struggle with issues or habits that distract us and make us less productive.^{13,14} It is important to identify the specific causes of procrastination and learn techniques to minimize time spent on unimportant tasks that distract us from pursuing our scholarly work (TABLE 3). Some successful academic physicians designate time each week as writing time, to limit the number of clinical phone calls and interruptions that they receive.⁸ Faculty members who write regularly are more productive than those who “binge write.”¹⁵ Furthermore, avoiding interruptions of academic work by e-mail, Internet searches, or text messages will lead to more focused academic time and increased scholarly productivity.⁹

Conclusion

Academic faculty are very busy, and often wish for more hours in the day. Developing a plan of action, learning to be efficient, and limiting requests for time

that do not align with personal career goals should help faculty members accomplish more in the same amount of time while boosting scholarly productivity.

References

1. Becher J. The psychology of the to-do-list. *Forbes*. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2014/03/17/the-psychology-of-the-to-do-list>. Accessed August 13, 2015.
2. Masicampo EJ, Baumeister RF. Consider it done: plan making can eliminate the cognitive effects of unfulfilled goals. *J Pers Soc Psychol*. 2011;101(4):667–683.
3. Haselmeyr M. The 9 best to-do list apps for 2014. *Forbes*. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/allbusiness/2013/12/04/the-9-best-to-do-list-apps-for-2014>. Accessed August 13, 2015.
4. Covey SR. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster; 2004.
5. Chua C. 7 Simple ways to say “no.” Zen Habits: Breathe. <http://zenhabits.net/say-no>. Accessed August 13, 2015.
6. Preston C. Why saying no gets you ahead. *Fortune*. <http://fortune.com/?s=why+saying+no+gets+you+ahead>. Accessed August 13, 2015.
7. Schrager S. Transforming your presentation into a publication. *Fam Med*. 2010;42(4):268–272.
8. Lowenstein SR. Tuesdays to write . . . a guide to time management in academic emergency medicine. *Acad Emerg Med*. 2009;16(2):165–1657.
9. Johnson SR. Don’t let interruptions break your workflow. *Acad Physician Scientist*. 2008:4–5. <https://www.aamc.org/download/265062/data/aps2008-10johnsondontletinterruptionsbreakyourworkflow.pdf>. Accessed August 13, 2015.
10. O’Connor P. Perfectionism is self-deception. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/philosophy-stirred-not-shaken/201502/perfectionism-is-self-deception>. Accessed August 13, 2015.
11. Dux PE, Ivanoff J, Asplund CL, Marois R. Isolation of a central bottleneck of information processing with time-resolved FMRI. *Neuron*. 2006;52(6):1109–1120.
12. Bergman P. How (and why) to stop multitasking. *Harvard Business Review*. <http://blogs.hbr.org/bregman/2010/05/how-and-why-to-stop-multitasking.html>. Accessed August 13, 2015.
13. Morgenstern J. *Making Work Work: New Strategies for Surviving and Thriving at the Office*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster; 2004.
14. Cornell M. The 20 top time wasters, stealers, nibblers, and how to nab them. <http://www.matthewcornell.org/blog/2010/2/19/the-20-top-time-wasters-stealers-nibblers-and-how-to-nab-the.html>. Accessed August 13, 2015.
15. Boice R. The neglected third factor in writing: productivity. *Coll Compos Commun*. 1985;36(4):272–480.



Both authors are at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. **Sarina Schrager, MD, MS**, is Professor, Department of Family Medicine; and **Elizabeth Sadowski, MD**, is Associate Professor, Departments of Radiology and Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Corresponding author: Elizabeth Sadowski, MD, University of Wisconsin, Department of Radiology, 600 Highland Avenue, Madison, WI 53792-3252, 608.263.9028, fax 608.263.0140, esadowski@uwhealth.org

Time Management for the Academic Clinician

The academic physician just starting out faces a wide variety of demanding tasks that require effective time management. This can be accomplished by careful structuring of the components of the job, scheduling, and information management. Effective communication and interaction with peers and coworkers, all of whom contribute to productivity, are also essential.

Robert L. Chevalier, M.D., Genentech Professor and Vice-Chair, Department of Pediatrics, University of Virginia School of Medicine, Charlottesville, VA

►As in most endeavors, success in academic medicine depends on a combination of factors, including hard work, enthusiasm, opportunity, and innate ability. Of these four factors, only the first two would seem to be within one's control. However, productivity is also largely dependent on the efficient and sensible use of time. In fact, the new clinical assistant professor quickly realizes that time is the most valuable commodity of all. The advent of managed care has placed an even higher premium on time and efficiency. Given these stresses and obligations, effective time management can make an enormous difference in job satisfaction and success.

Establishing a Niche

In academic medicine, physicians have the opportunity to perform a wide variety of activities that can bring immense satisfaction.¹ In addition to caring for patients, these include teaching others and gaining new knowledge

through scholarship. However, the academic physician must balance personal growth and interests with those of family, community, and coworkers (colleagues, as well as nursing, technical, secretarial, and administrative staff). Successful time management depends heavily on the development of appropriate relationships with all of these individuals.

The new assistant professor will immediately interact with colleagues in the same discipline or subspecialty (division or department) and with others in widening circles, including other members of the institution and colleagues throughout the state, country, and world. While it is appropriate to focus on a chosen area of concentration, physicians should also be aware of key individuals and activities throughout the institution. It is sometimes surprising where the person who may be the most helpful to one's career may be hiding. The same holds true for major players and events on the

national and international scenes.

Components of the Job

Typically, the components of the job of an academic physician, include patient care, teaching, research, and administration. While the wide variety of activities contributes to the appeal of academic medicine, if not carefully balanced, the demands can often be a source of significant stress.

The average academic physician works 63 hours per week.² Assuming that you have negotiated a specific job description with a clearly defined time distribution among these activities, you should develop both short-term (one-year) and long-term (five-year) objectives.³ Since life never evolves exactly the way we predict, you should also refocus your objectives periodically. While you should concentrate on developing a manageable number of strengths, taking on new challenges is the only way to ensure continued growth. The trick is to choose challenges that will allow for this growth without stifling it by becoming overwhelming or by taking on a number of relatively trivial tasks. In this regard, do not lose sight of principal objectives, and learn to say "no" when appropriate.

Most academic physicians in positions of leadership know quite accurately the time required for each task. The best way to develop a sense of which tasks to accept is to interact frequently with colleagues and more senior faculty members

who have a broader perspective on the potential for certain activities to be satisfying or to contribute to career development. One advantage of performing a variety of different activities is that it is often possible to "leverage" a task so that the initial effort can be applied to a variety of activities.³ For example, the literature review for a grant proposal may serve as the basis for a lecture, as well as a review article that can be submitted for publication.

Scheduling and Communication

At the beginning of each academic year, it is useful to mark a calendar with all major commitments, including the call schedule, major meetings, deadlines, and vacations. At the end of each week, review the coming week's schedule. One rule of thumb is that time is more valuable the less it is fragmented. Therefore, set up blocks of time that allow at least one to two hours of uninterrupted work. At the risk of seeming unfriendly, keep your office door closed during this time. It is better to socialize with a colleague after finishing a task that demands significant concentration.

Your secretary can be your most valuable ally, and it is essential to communicate clearly with him or her. Take the time to explain how you like to work and why you like to do things a certain way. Ask that telephone calls be prioritized and batched, but be sure that the secretary indicates to the caller the approximate time he or she can expect to be called back. Indicate times to avoid paging you, if possible. If you do not carry a pager, inform your secretary at all times where you can be reached.

It is useful to develop a daily "to

do" list. A number of computer "organizer" programs include such a list, which can be constantly updated and even reminds you how many days are left before each task is due. The schedule should not be so tight that it does not allow for a reasonable number of interruptions or delays. Not allowing for such flexibility simply increases the level of frustration.

When faced with a new job, it is particularly helpful to note on your daily schedule what you have actually done with your time. This should be done at the end of each day, and at the end of the month, it is useful to divide the work into categories (such as patient care, teaching, research) to develop a realistic picture of where the time is going. Are you really spending your hours on what you wish to do most? Is the output of your activities proportional to the time invested? There is nothing like hard data to know where you stand.

Clinical faculty members generally need to perform rounds. This is an essential activity of the academic physician, and it is important to start and end punctually. This simply shows respect for coworkers, and everyone appreciates some predictability in a world often governed by the unpredictable. Punctuality also garners respect and confidence that improves the student-mentor relationship.

For teaching rounds, there is no substitute for preparation. Review the patients and the literature the day before, and directly involve all of the participants during rounds. Allow time for reviewing the charts as well as for reviewing radiologic and pathologic data. It is the attending physician's responsibility to

know the indications, doses, and side effects of all your patients' medications. Leafing through the *Physician's Desk Reference* (PDR) can be very time-consuming. Consider buying a digital Pocket PDR™, which will allow you instant access to this information wherever you are. While it is important to develop a close relationship with the house staff, prolonged chatting on the wards keeps everyone from getting their jobs done. A better solution is to schedule social gatherings after hours.

As with inpatient rounds, efficient management of outpatient clinics requires preparation before the first patient arrives. Review charts beforehand, and become familiar with the appointment scheduling so that you can use your time most profitably. Teaching can be efficient here: encourage trainees to read about the diseases and pathophysiology, and tell them how much time should reasonably be spent with each patient. After the clinic, review the cases and pertinent laboratory data with trainees at a post-clinic conference. It is always easier to write or dictate patient notes soon after interaction with the patients; set an example for the residents.

The new faculty member is faced with a bewildering array of meetings, conferences, and seminars. In the clinical realm, the departmental grand rounds should always be attended. It is reasonable to pick and choose among the other conferences, depending on individual circumstances. In research, laboratory meetings must be held on a regular basis, and very high priority should be placed on these. As with clinic conferences, it is reasonable to be selective in attending research semi-

nars, and it is a good idea to include some seminars not directly related to your specific research interest. You never know when some concept or technique that has been well developed in another area might apply to what you are doing and could produce a quantum leap in a project.

Information Management

Develop an effective filing system that will allow you to retrieve information when you need it. Have your secretary sort your mail into priority categories. These could include urgent correspondence, informational memoranda, and reprints and journals. Allow time during the day to read and respond to your mail, and discard what is unlikely to be useful in the future. The use of electronic mail can be far more efficient than exchanging multiple telephone messages or even faxing messages back and forth.

Time will be most efficiently utilized if you are well informed. Make every effort to attend the divisional, departmental, and school of medicine meetings. If you are conscripted into certain committees, determine whether the committee is accomplishing useful work or is poorly run, with no resolution of issues at the end of the meeting. Participate in the committee if you are a member of it, but if the committee is not productive, it is generally best to find an excuse to get off it.

Managing the Literature

One of the greatest challenges to the academic physician is mastering the literature. Most members of clinical departments are faced with keeping up with both clinical and research publications.

The most effective way to search

the literature is to use a data base, such as Medline®. If you are inhibited by the commands for Medline, use Grateful Med®, a program provided by the National Library of Medicine. This program allows most searches to be performed with minimal experience at economic rates.

A weekly search of the literature using a tailor-made "search strategy" should be done religiously, using either Medline or a weekly service, such as Reference Update® or Current Contents on Disk®. The latter two permit you to search the entire medical literature for relevant key words, phrases, or journals, and these can be automatically downloaded into a personal data base, such as Reference Manager®. Articles can be annotated and cross-indexed with a variety of key words. One of the most useful features of such a data base is that a unique identifying number can be assigned to each reference, and the numbers can be used in writing manuscripts and grant applications. Numbering of the final sequence in the paper is then done by the computer, which can also print out the references in a format appropriate for the particular publication. This is especially useful in editing the paper, when references need to be added or deleted, without the need for renumbering all the others.

Thirty-five-millimeter slides can be cataloged using a similar data base (Slide Manager®), which permits "mixing and matching" slides from a variety of lectures to be reorganized for various purposes. The most useful type of computer to use is a "notebook" size, which can be carried to and from work, to the library, and while traveling. Long flights provide an ideal opportunity

for uninterrupted writing.

Reading the Literature

It is best to read at times of least interruption. When reading an article, first scan the title. Then look directly at the last one or two sentences of the abstract to glean the conclusions of the study. If these look interesting, and the subject is an area not entirely familiar to you, read the introduction and scan the discussion. Afterward, the data figures, methods, and results can be examined if the paper is of sufficient relevance.

Abstracts of conferences should be scanned as well, particularly those of the major annual national meetings. You may find it useful to jot down an index at the back of the abstract book that lists the papers of most interest. Then review them after the meeting and discuss them with colleagues. It is always important to know what other investigators are doing and to take advantage of any conceptual or technical advances. Textbooks are best used for preparing for teaching (both formal and during patient encounters), but information is usually several years out of date by the time the book is published. Review articles are more up-to-date.

A reliable filing system is critical. Even if you only scan articles, it is better to file them promptly in a place where they can be easily retrieved, rather than stacking them randomly on desks and counters.

Writing and Publishing

Writing is often considered the bane of academic medicine. However, as with other activities, the process can be much less painful if appropriately organized.

Continued on page 106

The Author



Robert L. Chevalier, M.D.

Dr. Chevalier is Genentech Professor and Vice-Chair of the Department of Pediatrics, University of Virginia School of Medicine, Charlottesville. After receiving his medical degree from the University of Chicago, he completed a pediatric residency and nephrology fellowship at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill and the University of Colorado in Denver.

It is important to develop a careful strategy of what to write. Plan well in advance for abstract and grant deadlines to allow for writing several drafts and circulating them for review by your peers. Remember that abstracts count only if the material is subsequently published in peer-reviewed journals. In general, it is a good idea for the young academician to accept few review article and chapter assignments until amassing a series of related original papers that tell a story.

Regardless of what you are writing, it is always useful to outline the material first: form follows logic. There are a number of "outlining" computer programs that allow rapid exposition and rearrangement of ideas and phrases. Jotting notes on index cards is inefficient and obsolete.

After receiving the critique of a submitted manuscript or grant, pay close attention to each of the reviewer's comments. The revision should be meticulous and never ar-

gumentative or arrogant.

Interviews and Evaluations

Time is most effectively used if you are surrounded by competent and conscientious coworkers. Thus, some thought must go to the evaluation and selection process itself.

During the first years on the academic faculty, physicians will need to develop a technique for conducting interviews. This applies to hiring personnel (secretaries, nurses, and technicians), as well as students and residents. It is important to know the regulations (which questions you may and may not ask) and to review the resumé carefully before the interview. It is a good idea to cover a variety of issues and to simply ask what kind of a job the applicant is seeking. One of the realities of academic life is that you are constantly evaluating others and you, in turn, are being evaluated. Learning to critique is a vital part of career development, and becoming a balanced and fair evaluator can be most important.

Social Interactions

Intertwined with the enormous variety of activities that contribute to a career in academic medicine is a prominent social component. To accomplish the most, participate early in departmental activities and become known as a team player. Once again, selective volunteering requires seeking the advice of colleagues and mentors. Their personal insight can be instrumental in facilitating professional relationships.

Get to know individuals in other departments by attending conferences, seminars, and committees. Become acquainted with key figures in your discipline at other institu-

tions. Do not hesitate to track other investigators at meetings and "pick their brains." Poster sessions are ideal for this. If you do not have a chance to ask a question at the end of a platform presentation, find the speaker in the lobby or at the social hour. Present as many papers as you can, so that others get to know you and your work.

Conclusion

Effective time management requires effort and a lot of planning. However, the benefits of maintaining control over time rather than being dragged along by it are quickly appreciated.

There is an enormous variety of jobs available in academic medicine. In addition to the satisfaction derived from patients, academic physicians perform a wide variety of activities and benefit from continuous intellectual stimulation and contact with colleagues, students, and house staff. We have the opportunity to travel and exchange ideas with others throughout the country and the world.

This is not to say that there are no frustrations in academic medicine: as with all professions, there is no perfect job. As George Bernard Shaw said: "There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it." ◀

References

1. Boxer LA: Society for Pediatric Research presidential address 1986: A matter of destiny. *Pediatr Res* 20:1348-1351, 1986.
2. Olefsky JM: The allocation and use of faculty time from an historical, AFCR and individual perspective. *Clin Res* 31:376-383, 1983.
3. Applegate WB: Career development in academic medicine. *Am J Med* 88:263-267, 1990.

The author is grateful to Dr. Robert J. Roberts for his helpful review of the manuscript and Ms. Maureen Coleman for her secretarial assistance.



Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time

The science of stamina has advanced to the point where individuals, teams, and whole organizations can, with some straightforward interventions, significantly increase their capacity to get things done.

by **Tony Schwartz**

STEVE WANNER IS a highly respected 37-year-old partner at Ernst & Young, married with four young children. When I met him a year ago, he was working 12- to 14-hour days, felt perpetually exhausted, and found it difficult to fully engage with his family in the evenings, which left him feeling guilty and dissatisfied. He slept poorly, made no time to exercise, and seldom ate healthy meals, instead grabbing a bite to eat on the run or while working at his desk.

Wanner's experience is not uncommon. Most of us respond to rising demands in the workplace by putting in longer hours, which inevitably take a toll on us physically, mentally, and emotionally. That leads to declining levels of engagement, increasing levels of distraction, high turnover rates, and soaring medical costs among employees. My colleagues and I at the Energy

Project have worked with thousands of leaders and managers in the course of doing consulting and coaching at large organizations during the past five years. With remarkable consistency, these executives tell us they're pushing themselves harder than ever to keep up and increasingly feel they are at a breaking point.

The core problem with working longer hours is that time is a finite resource. Energy is a different story. Defined in physics as the capacity to work, energy comes from four main wellsprings in human beings: the body, emotions, mind, and spirit. In each, energy can be systematically expanded and regularly renewed by establishing specific rituals – behaviors that are intentionally practiced and precisely scheduled, with the goal of making them unconscious and automatic as quickly as possible.

To effectively reenergize their workforces, organizations need to shift their emphasis from getting more out of people to investing more in them, so they are motivated – and able – to bring more of themselves to work every day. To recharge themselves, individuals need to recognize the costs of energy-depleting behaviors and then take responsibility for changing them, regardless of the circumstances they're facing.

The rituals and behaviors Wanner established to better manage his energy transformed his life. He set an earlier bedtime and gave up drinking, which had disrupted his sleep. As a consequence, when he woke up he felt more rested and more motivated to exercise, which he now does almost every morning. In less than two months he lost 15 pounds. After working out he now sits down with his family for breakfast. Wanner still puts in long hours on the job, but he renews himself regularly

along the way. He leaves his desk for lunch and usually takes a morning and an afternoon walk outside. When he arrives at home in the evening, he's more relaxed and better able to connect with his wife and children.

Establishing simple rituals like these can lead to striking results across organizations. At Wachovia Bank, we took a group of employees through a pilot energy management program and then measured their performance against that of a control group. The participants outperformed the controls on a series of financial metrics, such as the value of loans they generated. They also reported substantial improvements in their customer relationships, their engagement with work, and their personal

The core problem with working longer hours is that time is a finite resource. Energy is a different story.

satisfaction. In this article, I'll describe the Wachovia study in a little more detail. Then I'll explain what executives and managers can do to increase and regularly renew work capacity – the approach used by the Energy Project, which builds on, deepens, and extends several core concepts developed by my former partner Jim Loehr in his seminal work with athletes.

Linking Capacity and Performance at Wachovia

Most large organizations invest in developing employees' skills, knowledge, and competence. Very few help build and sustain their capacity – their energy – which is typically taken for granted. In fact, greater capacity makes it possible to get more done in less time at a higher level of engagement and with

more sustainability. Our experience at Wachovia bore this out.

In early 2006 we took 106 employees at 12 regional banks in southern New Jersey through a curriculum of four modules, each of which focused on specific strategies for strengthening one of the four main dimensions of energy. We delivered it at one-month intervals to groups of approximately 20 to 25, ranging from senior leaders to lower-level managers. We also assigned each attendee a fellow employee as a source of support between sessions. Using Wachovia's own key performance metrics, we evaluated how the participant group performed compared with a group of employees at similar levels at a nearby set of Wachovia banks who did not go through the training. To create a credible basis for comparison, we looked at year-over-year percentage changes in performance across several metrics.

On a measure called the "Big 3" – revenues from three kinds of loans – the participants showed a year-over-year increase that was 13 percentage points greater than the control group's in the first three months of our study. On revenues from deposits, the participants exceeded the control group's year-over-year gain by 20 percentage points during that same period. The precise gains varied month by month, but with only a handful of exceptions, the participants continued to significantly outperform the control group for a full year after completing the program. Although other variables undoubtedly influenced these outcomes, the participants' superior performance was notable in its consistency. (See the exhibit "How Energy Renewal Programs Boosted Productivity at Wachovia.")

We also asked participants how the program influenced them personally. Sixty-eight percent reported that it had a positive impact on their relationships with clients and customers. Seventy-one percent said that it had a noticeable or substantial positive im-

Tony Schwartz (tony@theenergyproject.com) is the president and founder of the Energy Project in New York City, and a coauthor of *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal* (Free Press, 2003).

impact on their productivity and performance. These findings corroborated a raft of anecdotal evidence we've gathered about the effectiveness of this approach among leaders at other large companies such as Ernst & Young, Sony, Deutsche Bank, Nokia, ING Direct, Ford, and MasterCard.



The Body: Physical Energy

Our program begins by focusing on physical energy. It is scarcely news that inadequate nutrition, exercise, sleep, and rest diminish people's basic energy levels, as well as their ability to manage their emotions and focus their attention. Nonetheless, many executives don't find ways to practice consistently healthy behaviors, given all the other demands in their lives.

Before participants in our program begin to explore ways to increase their physical energy, they take an energy audit, which includes four questions in each energy dimension – body, emotions, mind, and spirit. (See the exhibit “Are You Headed for an Energy Crisis?”) On average, participants get eight to ten of those 16 questions “wrong,” meaning they're doing things such as skipping breakfast, failing to express appreciation to others, struggling to focus on one thing at a time, or spending too little time on activities that give them a sense of purpose. While most participants aren't surprised to learn these behaviors are counterproductive, having them all listed in one place is often uncomfortable, sobering, and galvanizing. The audit highlights employees' greatest energy deficits. Participants also

fill out charts designed to raise their awareness about how their exercise, diet, and sleep practices influence their energy levels.

The next step is to identify rituals for building and renewing physical energy. When Gary Faro, a vice president at Wachovia, began the program, he was significantly overweight, ate poorly, lacked a regular exercise routine, worked long hours, and typically slept no more than five or six hours a night. That is not an unusual profile among the leaders and managers we see. Over the course of the program, Faro began regular cardiovascular and strength training. He started going to bed at a designated time and sleeping longer. He changed his eating habits from two big meals a day (“Where I usually gorged myself,” he says) to smaller meals and light snacks every three hours. The aim was to help him stabilize his glucose levels over the course of the day, avoiding peaks and valleys. He lost 50 pounds in the process, and his energy levels soared. “I used to schedule tough projects for the morning, when I knew that I would be more focused,” Faro says. “I don't have to do that anymore because I find that I'm just as focused now at 5 PM as I am at 8 AM.”

Another key ritual Faro adopted was to take brief but regular breaks at specific intervals throughout the workday – always leaving his desk. The value of such breaks is grounded in our physiology. “Ultradian rhythms” refer to 90- to 120-minute cycles during which our bodies slowly move from a high-energy state into a physiological trough. Toward the end of each cycle, the body begins to crave a period of recovery. The signals include physical restlessness, yawning, hunger, and difficulty concentrating, but many of us ignore them and keep working. The consequence is that our energy reservoir – our remaining capacity – burns down as the day wears on.

Intermittent breaks for renewal, we have found, result in higher and more sustainable performance. The length

of renewal is less important than the quality. It is possible to get a great deal of recovery in a short time – as little as several minutes – if it involves a ritual that allows you to disengage from work and truly change channels. That could range from getting up to talk to a colleague about something other than work, to listening to music on an iPod, to walking up and down stairs in an office building. While breaks are counter-cultural in most organizations and counterintuitive for many high achievers, their value is multifaceted.

Matthew Lang is a managing director for Sony in South Africa. He adopted some of the same rituals that Faro did, including a 20-minute walk in the afternoons. Lang's walk not only gives him a mental and emotional breather and some exercise but also has become the time when he gets his best creative ideas. That's because when he walks he is not actively thinking, which allows the dominant left hemisphere of his brain to give way to the right hemisphere with its greater capacity to see the big picture and make imaginative leaps.



The Emotions: Quality of Energy

When people are able to take more control of their emotions, they can improve the quality of their energy, regardless of the external pressures they're facing. To do this, they first must become more aware of how they feel at various points during the workday and of the impact these emotions have on their effectiveness. Most people realize that they tend to perform best when they're feeling positive energy. What they find

surprising is that they're not able to perform well or to lead effectively when they're feeling any other way.

Unfortunately, without intermittent recovery, we're not physiologically capable of sustaining highly positive emotions for long periods. Confronted with relentless demands and unexpected challenges, people tend to slip into negative emotions – the fight-or-flight mode – often multiple times in a day. They become irritable and impatient, or anxious and insecure. Such states of mind drain people's energy and cause friction in their relationships. Fight-or-flight emotions also make it impossible to think clearly, logically, and reflectively. When executives learn to recognize what kinds of events trigger their negative emotions, they gain greater capacity to take control of their reactions.

One simple but powerful ritual for defusing negative emotions is what we call "buying time." Deep abdominal breathing is one way to do that. Exhaling slowly for five or six seconds induces relaxation and recovery, and turns off the fight-or-flight response. When we began working with Fujio Nishida, president of Sony Europe, he had a habit of lighting up a cigarette each time something especially stressful occurred – at least two or three times a day. Otherwise, he didn't smoke. We taught him the breathing exercise

beneficial to the giver as to the receiver. It can take the form of a handwritten note, an e-mail, a call, or a conversation – and the more detailed and specific, the higher the impact. As with all rituals, setting aside a particular time to do it vastly increases the chances of success. Ben Jenkins, vice chairman and president of the General Bank at Wachovia in Charlotte, North Carolina, built his appreciation ritual into time set aside for mentoring. He began scheduling lunches or dinners regularly with people who worked for him. Previously, the only sit-downs he'd had with his direct reports were to hear monthly reports on their numbers or to give them yearly performance reviews. Now, over meals, he makes it a priority to recognize their accomplishments and also to talk with them about their lives and their aspirations rather than their immediate work responsibilities.

Finally, people can cultivate positive emotions by learning to change the stories they tell themselves about the events in their lives. Often, people in conflict cast themselves in the role of victim, blaming others or external circumstances for their problems. Becoming aware of the difference between the facts in a given situation and the way we interpret those facts can be powerful in itself. It's been a revelation for many of the people we work with to

People can cultivate positive energy by learning to change the stories they tell themselves about the events in their lives. We teach them to tell the most hopeful stories possible.

as an alternative, and it worked immediately: Nishida found he no longer had the desire for a cigarette. It wasn't the smoking that had given him relief from the stress, we concluded, but the relaxation prompted by the deep inhalation and exhalation.

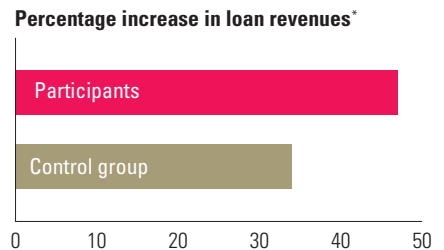
A powerful ritual that fuels positive emotions is expressing appreciation to others, a practice that seems to be as

discover they have a choice about how to view a given event and to recognize how powerfully the story they tell influences the emotions they feel. We teach them to tell the most hopeful and personally empowering story possible in any given situation, without denying or minimizing the facts.

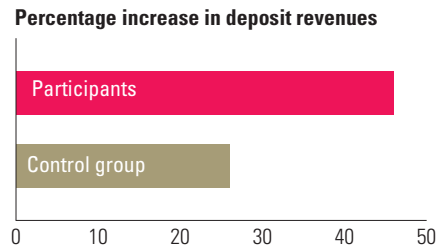
The most effective way people can change a story is to view it through any

How Energy Renewal Programs Boosted Productivity at Wachovia

At Wachovia Bank, employees participating in an energy renewal program outperformed a control group of employees, demonstrating significantly greater improvements in year-over-year performance during the first quarter of 2006.



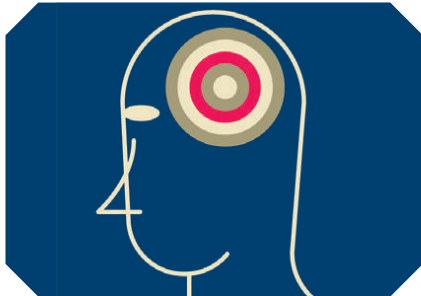
*From three critical kinds of loans



of three new lenses, which are all alternatives to seeing the world from the victim perspective. With the *reverse lens*, for example, people ask themselves, "What would the other person in this conflict say and in what ways might that be true?" With the *long lens* they ask, "How will I most likely view this situation in six months?" With the *wide lens* they ask themselves, "Regardless of the outcome of this issue, how can I grow and learn from it?" Each of these lenses can help people intentionally cultivate more positive emotions.

Nicolas Babin, director of corporate communications for Sony Europe, was the point person for calls from reporters when Sony went through several recalls of its batteries in 2006. Over time he found his work increasingly exhausting and dispiriting. After practicing the lens

exercises, he began finding ways to tell himself a more positive and empowering story about his role. “I realized,” he explains, “that this was an opportunity for me to build stronger relationships with journalists by being accessible to them and to increase Sony’s credibility by being straightforward and honest.”



The Mind: Focus of Energy

Many executives view multitasking as a necessity in the face of all the demands they juggle, but it actually undermines productivity. Distractions are costly: A temporary shift in attention from one task to another – stopping to answer an e-mail or take a phone call, for instance – increases the amount of time necessary to finish the primary task by as much as 25%, a phenomenon known as “switching time.” It’s far more efficient to fully focus for 90 to 120 minutes, take a true break, and then fully focus on the next activity. We refer to these work periods as “ultradian sprints.”

Once people see how much they struggle to concentrate, they can create rituals to reduce the relentless interruptions that technology has introduced in their lives. We start out with an exercise that forces them to face the impact of daily distractions. They attempt to complete a complex task and are regularly interrupted – an experience that, people report, ends up feeling much like everyday life.

Dan Cluna, a vice president at Wachovia, designed two rituals to better focus his attention. The first one is to leave his desk and go into a conference

room, away from phones and e-mail, whenever he has a task that requires concentration. He now finishes reports in a third of the time they used to require. Cluna built his second ritual around meetings at branches with the financial specialists who report to him. Previously, he would answer his phone whenever it rang during these meetings. As a consequence, the meetings he scheduled for an hour often stretched to two, and he rarely gave anyone his full attention. Now Cluna lets his phone go to voice mail, so that he can focus completely on the person in front of him. He now answers the accumulated voice-mail messages when he has downtime between meetings.

E&Y’s hard-charging Wanner used to answer e-mail constantly throughout the day – whenever he heard a “ping.” Then he created a ritual of checking his e-mail just twice a day – at 10:15 AM and 2:30 PM. Whereas previously he couldn’t keep up with all his messages, he discovered he could clear his in-box each time he opened it – the reward of fully focusing his attention on e-mail for 45 minutes at a time. Wanner has also reset the expectations of all the people he regularly communicates with by e-mail. “I’ve told them if it’s an emergency and they need an instant response, they can call me and I’ll always pick up,” he says. Nine months later he has yet to receive such a call.

Michael Henke, a senior manager at E&Y, sat his team down at the start of the busy season last winter and told them that at certain points during the day he was going to turn off his Same-time (an in-house instant-message system). The result, he said, was that he would be less available to them for questions. Like Wanner, he told his team to call him if any emergency arose, but they rarely did. He also encouraged the group to take regular breaks throughout the day and to eat more regularly. They finished the busy season under budget and more profitable than other teams that hadn’t followed the energy renewal program. “We got the same

amount of work done in less time,” says Henke. “It made for a win-win.”

Another way to mobilize mental energy is to focus systematically on activities that have the most long-term leverage. Unless people intentionally schedule time for more challenging work, they tend not to get to it at all or rush through it at the last minute. Perhaps the most effective focus ritual the executives we work with have adopted is to identify each night the most important challenge for the next day and make it their very first priority when they arrive in the morning. Jean Luc Duquesne, a vice president for Sony Europe in Paris, used to answer his e-mail as soon as he got to the office, just as many people do. He now tries to concentrate the first hour of every day on the most important topic. He finds that he often emerges at 10 AM feeling as if he’s already had a productive day.



The Human Spirit: Energy of Meaning and Purpose

People tap into the energy of the human spirit when their everyday work and activities are consistent with what they value most and with what gives them a sense of meaning and purpose. If the work they’re doing really matters to them, they typically feel more positive energy, focus better, and demonstrate greater perseverance. Regrettably, the high demands and fast pace of corporate life don’t leave much time to pay attention to these issues, and many people don’t even recognize meaning and purpose as potential sources of energy. Indeed, if we tried to

Are You Headed for an Energy Crisis?

Please check the statements below that are true for you.

Body

- I don't regularly get at least seven to eight hours of sleep, and I often wake up feeling tired.
- I frequently skip breakfast, or I settle for something that isn't nutritious.
- I don't work out enough (meaning cardiovascular training at least three times a week and strength training at least once a week).
- I don't take regular breaks during the day to truly renew and recharge, or I often eat lunch at my desk, if I eat it at all.

Emotions

- I frequently find myself feeling irritable, impatient, or anxious at work, especially when work is demanding.
- I don't have enough time with my family and loved ones, and when I'm with them, I'm not always really with them.
- I have too little time for the activities that I most deeply enjoy.
- I don't stop frequently enough to express my appreciation to others or to savor my accomplishments and blessings.

Mind

- I have difficulty focusing on one thing at a time, and I am easily distracted during the day, especially by e-mail.
- I spend much of my day reacting to immediate crises and demands rather than focusing on activities with longer-term value and high leverage.
- I don't take enough time for reflection, strategizing, and creative thinking.
- I work in the evenings or on weekends, and I almost never take an e-mail-free vacation.

Spirit

- I don't spend enough time at work doing what I do best and enjoy most.
- There are significant gaps between what I say is most important to me in my life and how I actually allocate my time and energy.
- My decisions at work are more often influenced by external demands than by a strong, clear sense of my own purpose.
- I don't invest enough time and energy in making a positive difference to others or to the world.

How is your overall energy?

Total number of statements checked: _____

Guide to scores

0–3: Excellent energy management skills
 4–6: Reasonable energy management skills
 7–10: Significant energy management deficits
 11–16: A full-fledged energy management crisis

What do you need to work on?

Number of checks in each category:

Body _____ Mind _____
 Emotions _____ Spirit _____

Guide to category scores

0: Excellent energy management skills
 1: Strong energy management skills
 2: Significant deficits
 3: Poor energy management skills
 4: A full-fledged energy crisis

begin our program by focusing on the human spirit, it would likely have minimal impact. Only when participants have experienced the value of the rituals they establish in the other dimensions do they start to see that being attentive to their own deeper needs dramatically influences their effectiveness and satisfaction at work.

For E&Y partner Jonathan Anspacher, simply having the opportunity to ask himself a series of questions about what really mattered to him was both illuminating and energizing. "I think it's important to be a little introspective and say, 'What do you want to be remembered for?'" he told us. "You don't want to be remembered as the crazy partner who worked these long hours and had his people be miserable. When my kids call me and ask, 'Can you come to my band concert?' I want to say, 'Yes, I'll be there and I'll be in the front row.' I don't want to be the father that comes in and sits in the back and is on his Blackberry and has to step out to take a phone call."

To access the energy of the human spirit, people need to clarify priorities and establish accompanying rituals in three categories: doing what they do best and enjoy most at work; consciously allocating time and energy to the areas of their lives – work, family, health, service to others – they deem most important; and living their core values in their daily behaviors.

When you're attempting to discover what you do best and what you enjoy most, it's important to realize that these two things aren't necessarily mutually inclusive. You may get lots of positive feedback about something you're very good at but not truly enjoy it. Conversely, you can love doing something but have no gift for it, so that achieving success requires much more energy than it makes sense to invest.

To help program participants discover their areas of strength, we ask them to recall at least two work experiences in the past several months during which they found themselves in their “sweet spot” – feeling effective, effortlessly absorbed, inspired, and fulfilled. Then we have them deconstruct those experiences to understand precisely what energized them so positively and what specific talents they were drawing on. If leading strategy feels like a sweet spot, for example, is it being in charge that’s most invigorating or participating in a creative endeavor? Or is it using a skill that comes to you easily and so feels good to exercise? Finally, we have people establish a ritual that will encourage them to do more of exactly that kind of activity at work.

A senior leader we worked with realized that one of the activities he least liked was reading and summarizing detailed sales reports, whereas one of his favorites was brainstorming new

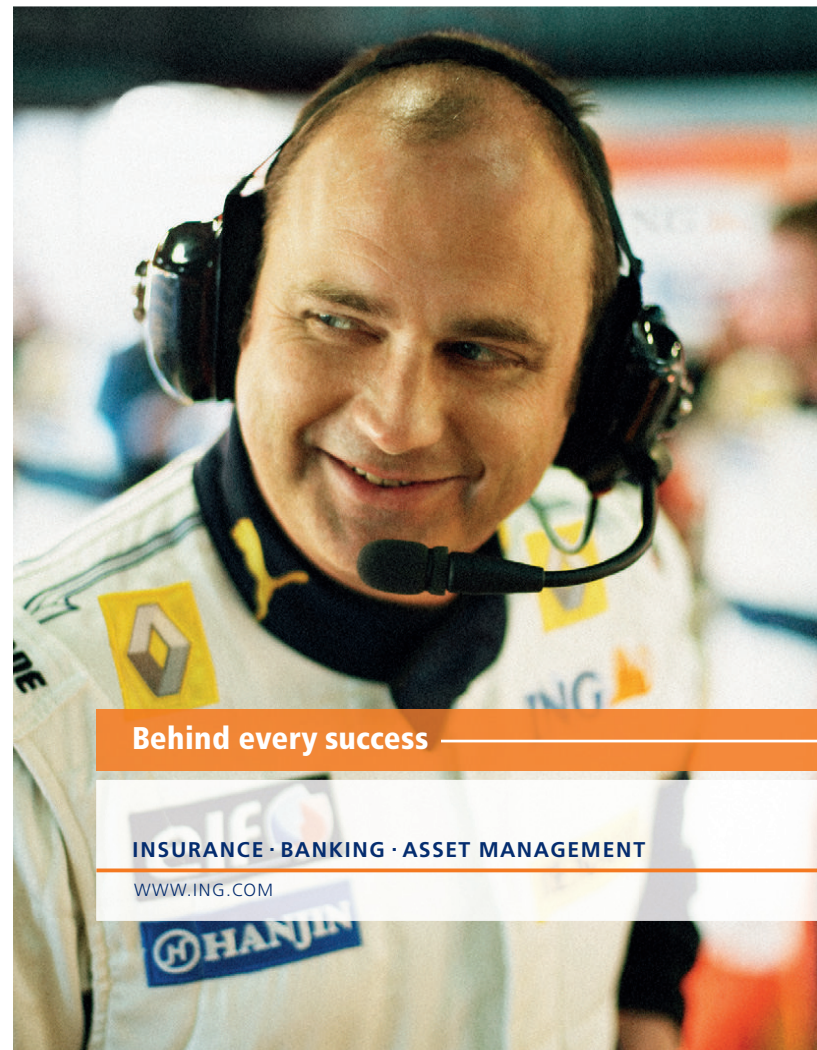
strategies. The leader found a direct report who loved immersing himself in numbers and delegated the sales report task to him – happily settling for brief oral summaries from him each day. The leader also began scheduling a free-form 90-minute strategy session every other week with the most creative people in his group.

In the second category, devoting time and energy to what’s important to you, there is often a similar divide between what people say is important and what they actually do. Rituals can help close this gap. When Jean Luc Duquesne, the Sony Europe vice president, thought hard about his personal priorities, he realized that spending time with his family was what mattered most to him, but it often got squeezed out of his day. So he instituted a ritual in which he switches off for at least three hours every evening when he gets home, so he can focus on his family. “I’m still not an expert on PlayStation,”

he told us, “but according to my youngest son, I’m learning and I’m a good student.” Steve Wanner, who used to talk on the cell phone all the way to his front door on his commute home, has chosen a specific spot 20 minutes from his house where he ends whatever call he’s on and puts away the phone. He spends the rest of his commute relaxing so that when he does arrive home, he’s less preoccupied with work and more available to his wife and children.

The third category, practicing your core values in your everyday behavior, is a challenge for many as well. Most people are living at such a furious pace that they rarely stop to ask themselves what they stand for and who they want to be. As a consequence, they let external demands dictate their actions.

We don’t suggest that people explicitly define their values, because the results are usually too predictable. Instead, we seek to uncover them, in part by asking questions that are inadvertently



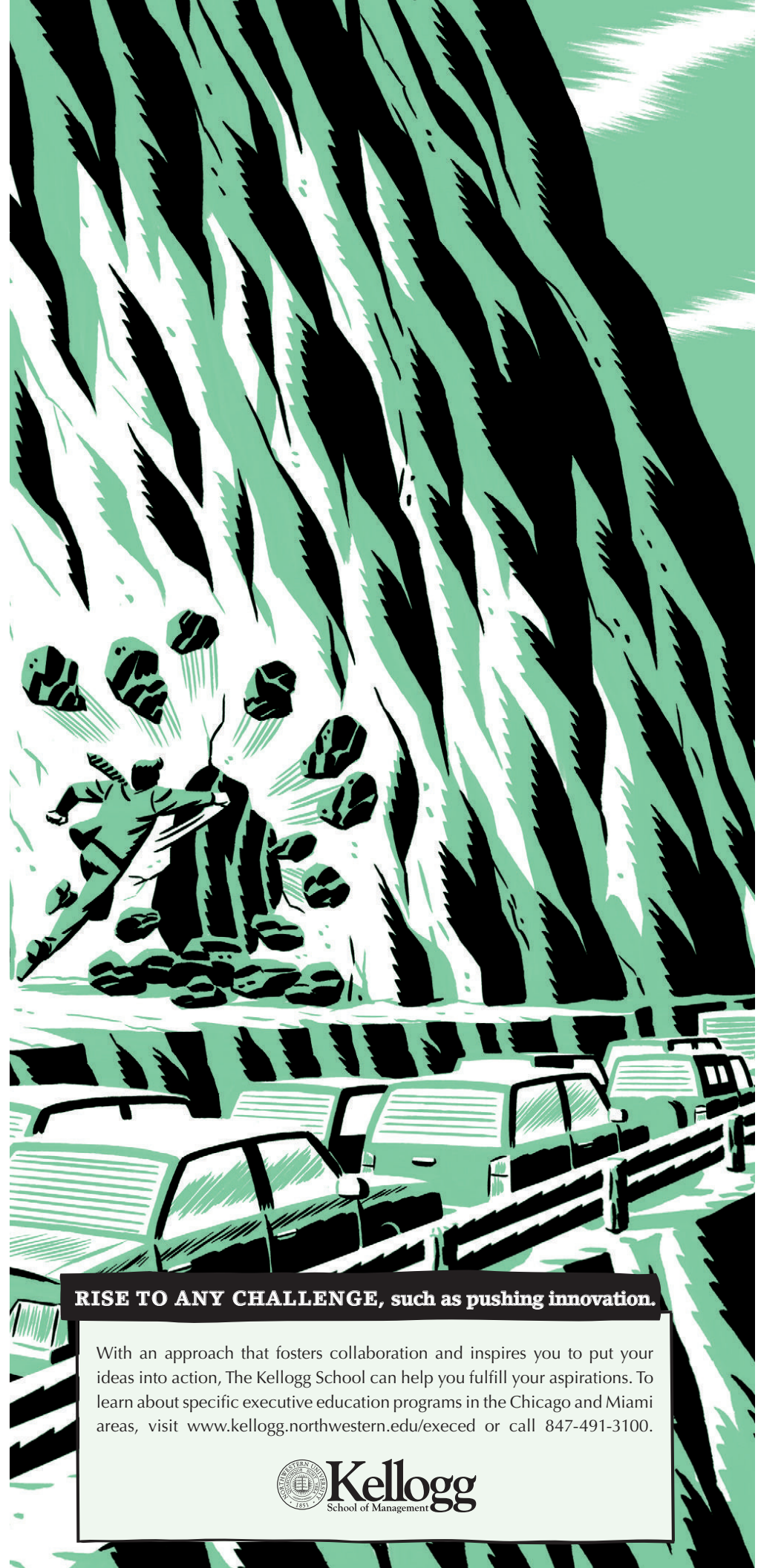
Behind every success

there is someone who speaks your language

INSURANCE · BANKING · ASSET MANAGEMENT

WWW.ING.COM





RISE TO ANY CHALLENGE, such as pushing innovation.

With an approach that fosters collaboration and inspires you to put your ideas into action, The Kellogg School can help you fulfill your aspirations. To learn about specific executive education programs in the Chicago and Miami areas, visit www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/execed or call 847-491-3100.



revealing, such as, “What are the qualities that you find most off-putting when you see them in others?” By describing what they can’t stand, people unintentionally divulge what they stand for. If you are very offended by stinginess, for example, generosity is probably one of your key values. If you are especially put off by rudeness in others, it’s likely that consideration is a high value for you. As in the other categories, establishing rituals can help bridge the gap between the values you aspire to and how you currently behave. If you discover that consideration is a key value, but you are perpetually late for meetings, the ritual might be to end the meetings you run five minutes earlier than usual and intentionally show up five minutes early for the meeting that follows.

Addressing these three categories helps people go a long way toward achieving a greater sense of alignment, satisfaction, and well-being in their lives on and off the job. Those feelings are a source of positive energy in their own right and reinforce people’s desire to persist at rituals in other energy dimensions as well.

...

This new way of working takes hold only to the degree that organizations support their people in adopting new behaviors. We have learned, sometimes painfully, that not all executives and companies are prepared to embrace the notion that personal renewal for employees will lead to better and more sustainable performance. To succeed, renewal efforts need solid support and commitment from senior management, beginning with the key decision maker.

At Wachovia, Susanne Svizeny, the president of the region in which we conducted our study, was the primary cheerleader for the program. She embraced the principles in her own life and made a series of personal changes, including a visible commitment to building more regular renewal rituals into her work life. Next, she took it upon herself to foster the excitement and commitment of her leadership

team. Finally, she regularly reached out by e-mail to all participants in the project to encourage them in their rituals and seek their feedback. It was clear to everyone that she took the work seriously. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and the results spoke for themselves.

At Sony Europe, several hundred leaders have embraced the principles of energy management. Over the next year, more than 2,000 of their direct reports will go through the energy renewal program. From Fujio Nishida on down, it has become increasingly culturally acceptable at Sony to take intermittent breaks, work out at midday, answer

of the CEO, the company was under intense pressure to grow rapidly, and the senior team couldn't tear themselves away from their focus on immediate survival – even though taking time out for renewal might have allowed them to be more productive at a more sustainable level.

By contrast, the group at Ernst & Young successfully went through the process at the height of tax season. With the permission of their leaders, they practiced defusing negative emotions by breathing or telling themselves different stories, and alternated highly focused periods of work with renewal breaks. Most people in the

A number of firms have built “renewal rooms” where people can regularly go to relax and refuel.

e-mail only at designated times, and even ask colleagues who seem irritable or impatient what stories they're telling themselves.

Organizational support also entails shifts in policies, practices, and cultural messages. A number of firms we worked with have built “renewal rooms” where people can regularly go to relax and refuel. Others offer subsidized gym memberships. In some cases, leaders themselves gather groups of employees for midday workouts. One company instituted a no-meeting zone between 8 and 9 AM to ensure that people had at least one hour absolutely free of meetings. At several companies, including Sony, senior leaders collectively agreed to stop checking e-mail during meetings as a way to make the meetings more focused and efficient.

One factor that can get in the way of success is a crisis mentality. The optimal candidates for energy renewal programs are organizations that are feeling enough pain to be eager for new solutions but not so much that they're completely overwhelmed. At one organization where we had the active support

group reported that this busy season was the least stressful they'd ever experienced.

The implicit contract between organizations and their employees today is that each will try to get as much from the other as they can, as quickly as possible, and then move on without looking back. We believe that is mutually self-defeating. Both individuals and the organizations they work for end up depleted rather than enriched. Employees feel increasingly beleaguered and burned out. Organizations are forced to settle for employees who are less than fully engaged and to constantly hire and train new people to replace those who choose to leave. We envision a new and explicit contract that benefits all parties: Organizations invest in their people across all dimensions of their lives to help them build and sustain their value. Individuals respond by bringing all their multidimensional energy wholeheartedly to work every day. Both grow in value as a result. ♡

Reprint R0710B

To order, see page 167.

**Driving Organic
Top-Line Growth:
Miami Campus
December 2-5**

**Creating the
Market-Focused
Organization
December 2-5**

**Negotiation
Strategies for
Managers
December 2-5**

**Finance for
Executives:
Miami Campus
January 13-18**

**Creating
and Managing
Strategic Alliances:
Miami Campus
January 27-30**

**Kellogg
Management
Institute:
Miami Campus
January 30 – June 22**

Find the program that will inspire you to put your ideas into action.

kellogg.northwestern.edu/execed
847-491-3100



Record: 1

Title:

How to Say No (and Get Away With It).

Authors:

Perlmutter, David D.¹

Source:

Chronicle of Higher Education; 9/26/2008, Vol. 55 Issue 5, pA35-A38, 2p

How to Say No (and Get Away With It)

Here are some strategies to lessen the odds that your refusal will be taken as a personal affront

CASE NO. I: YOU are an assistant professor sitting in your office, poring over some data from your most recent experiment. If you can just get a few more hours of work in today, you might be able to submit a paper for a national conference before the deadline. Suddenly a senior professor knocks. It is Von Doom, head of the department's tenure committee. "I have some great news," he states cheerily. He has started a major new research project, and he wants you to be his partner and co-author.

You freeze: A big start-up project would throw off your research agenda and publishing schedule. You also know Von Doom's reputation--"co-author" means "you do the work and I'll sign my name to the publications." But how can you say no to a man who, at least in part, controls your promotion-and-tenure destiny?

Case No. 2: Albert was your first doctoral student, but the relationship has frayed. He keeps changing his topic, taking up more and more of your time, and falling behind in the work he is doing (badly) as your assistant. As the semester ends, you delicately bring up the possibility of his finding a more compatible adviser.

He is astonished. You are the only one in the university who really cares. That's true; three other senior professors have given up on him. Should you slog along for months, perhaps years, to come, knowing in your heart that he will never finish?

Both cases convey the same point: The single most important skills a junior faculty member can develop are the ability to say no and stand by it, and the ability to gauge when refusing a request is not an option.

An inability to say no is a widespread problem in many professions, judging by dozens of self-help books on the subject. But academe presents some special circumstances that make it particularly tricky to say no.

On the pragmatic side, there are people in our work lives who hold what might be termed "ambiguous power" over us. A senior professor asks a favor: He does not have the power to fire you, lower your salary, or get you transferred to the north Alaskan office as would a senior executive in the corporate world. But maybe that professor will nurse a grudge come time to vote on your tenure case.

Then there is the ethical dimension of saying no. That, too, is a familiar issue outside academe: a number of self-help books promise to tell readers how to say no "without guilt." But declining a request is especially problematic for young professors who, after all, become teachers because they like to help others. We are built, by inclination and training, to be "yes" people. What teacher wants to be thought of as selfish and self-centered?

Fear and guilt are real feelings not easily dismissed. But there are ways to deal with both practically--strategies that will lessen the odds that your refusal will be taken as a personal affront and that will allow you to satisfy your own conscience.

Let's return to Case No. 1: How should you deflect Professor Von Doom in his quest to sign you up as his new research partner?

Your initial reply should sound something like this: "That's interesting and promising. I'm honored you would ask me. Let me look it over."

In other words, be polite but delay an answer until you can take the following steps:

- * Develop an accurate assessment of the size and scope of the proposed project
- * Consult your dean and trusted mentors about the proposal.
- * Consider how working on the project will affect mill of your work, not to mention your personal life.
- * Assess the tangible benefits of success in the project. Would it lead to publications that will boost your tenure case?

Afterward, if you decide not to commit to the project, diplomatically say. "This sounds great, but I am already in the middle of these other tasks, and if I took on your project, I'm afraid I would not have lime to do it justice." In last month's column (The Chronicle, August 22), I recommended that assistant professors create a chart to manage their time and projects. Here is the payoff for making that chart look both snappy and serious instead of mere scrawls on the back of an envelope You have evidence to show You Doom how busy and committed you are.

Sure, he may feel spurned and react badly. But if you are sincere and pleasant, he may leave impressed by your professionalism and organizational skills. On some level, the Professor Von Doods of academe understand that learning to say no helped them achieve their career goals. Perhaps he may even decide that, because you are so busy, you probably would not be the best partner for his labors (or the best mule to carry his pack).

In short, the key to saying no with few repercussions is to avoid rejecting a proposal out of hand, without due thought. Show that you've considered the offer and you care. Describe your logic. Explain your reasons. Tone and body language matter: We all know people who, as the saying goes, can make enemies by the way they say yes and friends by the way they say no.

Denying a request can also be justified by simple fairness. Say an undergraduate begs you to change her low grade. She will lose her scholarship, upset her sick grandmother, or fail to achieve her dream of graduating in seven years unless you relent and let her do some quick extra credit to bring up her grade. That is a case where you could use institutional policies--such as those stipulating that points in a course must be available to all students, not just one--to make clear that your no means no.

Another technique for saying no to something you don't want to do is to lay out the alternatives to a "yes." Perhaps your department chair has asked you to take on a new service project that you fear would interfere unduly with your other work. Turn the question around, show your chair what you are working on, and ask: What should I give up in order to do this new thing? Maybe it will be a simple matter of

horse-trading one service project for another. Perhaps your chair will insist, but I suspect that in the future, it will register that when you say you are busy, you mean it.

The key here is maintaining a balance that is easy to advocate but difficult to master. Woe to the assistant professor who refuses all service work. But when you do commit to something, do it well. In fact, that's often the best argument for declining further requests: because saying yes would jeopardize your proven success elsewhere.

Which brings me back to Albert, the troubled graduate student. In some ways, his case is trickier than others. Say no to Von Doom and the only one who gets hurt is you (but probably less than if you committed to his project). Say no to Albert and you could be hurting his life and career.

The key consideration is whether your efforts can really help him. As a friend of mine once put it: "You can't drag them across the finish line." So, objectively, even if you gave Albert your maximum effort, would you really help him? Or just delay the inevitable?

Saying no in such cases is difficult, and the consequences uncertain. But to survive the tenure track, your first loyalty has to be to your career. I realize that sounds Machiavellian, and I understand that some people will want to engage in certain tasks purely out of a sense of altruism.

But at the end of the day, you provide no service to anyone if you fail to get tenure. Your highest duty is to become a productive member of the faculty. Being a doormat for all and sundry requests will sabotage that goal. Don't become like the proverbial pastor who spends so much time helping his flock that his own family falls apart.

~~~~~

By David D. Perlmutter

David D. Perlmutter is a professor in the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. To read his previous columns, see <http://chronicle.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/jobs/news/archives/columns/ptconfidential>.

The Chronicle of Higher Education: (<http://chronicle.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu>) 1-800-728-2803  
Copyright of Chronicle of Higher Education is the property of Chronicle of Higher Education and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.





## Early career faculty time management challenges: The role of the leader

*"...it is mainly through the control of time that academic power is exercised."* - Pierre Bourdieu

As a leader in an academic unit (director of a research group or training grant, division chief, department chair, or dean) you have a responsibility to help your faculty succeed. You know the basics: mentoring for research, teaching, and general career development, support for grant and manuscript preparation, and provision of "start-up" (laboratories and other resources) so that research gets off to a good start. Hopefully your institution and/or professional society offers programs to which you can send your early career faculty to enhance skill building in these areas, as well as the "softer" skills of people management, negotiation, and so on.

You may not think that you have a role in helping your faculty use their time more effectively.

You should think again.

In my conversations with faculty members around the country, "too much to do" is a major source of stress. Although life in academic medicine has always been busy, the pressures these days are particularly intense. You know the effect that, for example, current dwindling of funding and constricted hospital budgets have on everyone. Based on a survey of early career academic medical center faculty, Bellini and colleagues<sup>1</sup> reported 21 workplace "stresses" identified by the group. Forty percent were time-related issues. Nearly 80% of the group felt stressed by both lack of work-life balance and "too many time pressures," and nearly 70% were already concerned about burnout. Some of the specific issues will sound familiar:

- too much paperwork,
- not enough time for research and other academic pursuits and
- lack of control over how time was spent.

I believe that senior colleagues, and especially leaders, have a responsibility to attend to these issues. Faculty members who have a clear idea of what they should do, and effective processes for getting that work done will be more likely to succeed, and this success contributes to the success of the unit and institution.

When I began work on this article, my idea was to offer the typical sort of "self-help" advice along the lines of "Seven easy steps an academic leader can take to ensure good faculty time management among..." -- but I soon realized that the issues are too complex for facile solutions.

Here is a nutshell message: simply telling someone to be more efficient does not work.

### Now for the long version.

Several principles have been useful to me as I think about these issues:

1. New faculty members may have never encountered time management issues before. The path to becoming a physician or scientist is structured, and can often be navigated successfully by those who have problems with procrastination, lack of focus, perfectionism, difficulty making decisions, and general disorganization. However, moving into a faculty position, with its multiple roles, responsibilities, and need for independently directed work, can quickly expose these problems. New faculty may be as shocked as you are at the problems they are experiencing, and they often have no idea how to change.

2. As mentors/advisors/coaches, we should not rely too much on our own experience. If you are among the "naturally organized," you may not really understand why anyone should need to learn these skills; some leaders in this category believe that time management skills are "soft" and not worth supporting. Or, you may have personally overcome time issues, and you have a system that works for you; you need to avoid the error of the convert in assuming your system will work for others.

3. Although an "intervention," such as reading a book or attending a workshop can get things off to a good start, lasting change takes time and experimentation to find what works. The mentor needs to be patient and not expect miracles.

4. Some people have no interest in change, or have an underlying condition that requires professional psychological/psychiatric help to make change possible.

So, although I can't provide easy answers, I do have several strategies for you to consider. These are framed as if you are the direct supervisor of the early career faculty member, but if you are the dean or the chair, you can expect, respectively, your chairs or division directors/mentors to use these approaches.

## **ONE**

**Help your faculty members identify the work they should be doing, and the work they should not be doing.**

I hope it will not come as a surprise to you -- although I agree that this reality is disappointing!

- Our supply of time cannot be expanded,
- We do not have time to do everything in which we are interested, and
- Thus, how we choose to spend our time is critical to successfully accomplishing our goals.

You are probably already expert at conveying clear expectations about outcomes, but I recommend that you go the extra step and discuss specifically what kinds of work will show progress toward those outcomes. New faculty may try to take on too much at once, Or, they may choose projects that seem to lead to the outcome, but you know they will not.

Counseling about "what not to do" can be challenging. Early career faculty often get sidetracked pursuing activities that do not move them toward their career goals, including promotion, or that are not of real value to themselves or the unit. Part of the challenge is that some activities which junior faculty choose sound as if they are valuable. You can think of many such examples, but these include agreeing to write a chapter (when peer review articles are a better use of time), joining a committee (that provides no direct career benefit), devoting excessive extra time to patient care activities, or collaborating on someone else's grant (when the research is not central to the junior person's focus).

Saying 'no' is difficult for many people, and it is particularly difficult for junior faculty. They worry about offending senior people or missing opportunities, or they simply don't know what is in their best interests. You can help by offering to be a sounding board anytime a junior faculty member gets asked to take on something new, and you can offer a "cover story" that can be used when the answer is no ("my division chief won't allow me to do this...").

Finally, ask yourself if the institution really is asking too much -and be willing to consider what might be taken "off the plate." I know this is difficult in our financially challenged times, but sometimes too much is too much, and we pay an institutional price in high turnover or disengaged, burned out faculty.

## **TWO**

**If the faculty member has been promised protected time, figure out how to really protect it.**

I know this is can be very difficult -- an extra clinic needs covering, classes of the professor on leave need to be taught, and so on --, but you have both a contractual and a moral obligation to follow through.

## **THREE**

**Create a work environment that promotes both productivity and well being.**

I believe this to be true: the academic health care center culture encourages people to work in ways that are not healthy, and not supportive of optimal productivity. Examples that I imagine will sound familiar: the expectation (for yourself or others) to work long hours; no breaks; no vacations; and in contact 27/7.

The consultant Tony Schwartz ([www.theenergyproject.com](http://www.theenergyproject.com)) is arguably the most prominent, and persuasive, proponent of healthier work practices. Two of his books, *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy Not Time* (2004) and *The Way We're Working Isn't Working* (2010) are reasonably evidence based discussions of why change is needed, along with concrete strategies for doing so.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of long hours is particularly difficult for early career faculty members. They have a lot to do, and more than can ever be completed. They see some of their peers praised simply for the hours put in ("That Jane is a real go-getter! She's the first one in the building every morning and the last to go home."). As the junior person is staggering out the door at night, already late for something important at home, they notice what they think is a disapproving glance from a senior faculty member still at his desk. Meanwhile, the faculty member has a family, needs sleep, exercise, and relaxation time - but feels so guilty they can't do any of these things.

Schwartz<sup>2</sup>, in a recent blog post, described the issue like this as part of a discussion of work place productivity myths:

"Myth #4: The best way to get more work done is to work longer hours.

No single myth is more destructive to employers and employees than this one. The reason is that we're not designed to operate like computers — at high speeds, continuously, for long periods of time.

Instead, human beings are designed to pulse intermittently between spending and renewing energy. Great performers — and enlightened leaders — recognize that it's not the number of hours people work that determines the value they create, but rather the energy they bring to whatever hours they work."

To be clear, it is not that long hours are always bad - they are either necessary or desirable sometimes -- but rather that a regular diet of long hours is neither sustainable, or associated with optimal productivity.

Here are a few concrete ideas to consider - but you should think beyond these to find approaches that work for your institution and group. This would be a great topic for brainstorming by your faculty as a group.

- Be explicit that faculty members will be evaluated based on the outcomes, not on "face time."
- Don't make comments, or even jokes, that imply the faculty member is not spending enough time at work (As Joe leaves the lab at 6:00 pm, you glance at your watch and say with a smile, "Joe - leaving a little early tonight, aren't we?"). Of course, this does not apply if someone is actually missing required appointments, or not producing outcomes. But address those problems directly.
- Take vacations, nights off, weekends out of the communication loop yourself, and encourage others to do the same. Talk with your colleagues about what you do to relax and relieve stress. You might benefit as well!
- Long hours are sometimes the result of a workplace that is so filled with distractions that work requiring concentration - like writing - can't be done during normal hours. Let your group know that it is OK to close the door or go off site to do intensive work.
- Watch for faculty members who may be spending too much time at work and seem to be distressed. Address the issue with them directly, express your concern over their apparent distress, and offer to brainstorm solutions or to find help, as appropriate.

#### FOUR

##### **Model communication methods that are respectful of people's time.**

I'm talking meetings and email practices here - both well-known workplace time sinks.

Model leadership of effective meetings, and mentor others to do the same. You probably know the basic best practices:

- Make sure the meeting is needed,
- Invite only the people who need to be there,
- Circulate an agenda in advance,
- Start and end on time,
- Stay on topic,
- Create explicit next steps at the end,
- Make sure it is clear who is responsible for each step or task, and
- Follow up to be sure these are done.

Some experts recommend that attendees stand during meetings to ensure brevity, but I can't personally go there!

Reducing the amount of time spent in email depends largely on developing more efficient personal email process (see, for example, my article "Getting Email under Control," posted on my website).

However, some changes in the workgroup email culture can help. Here are some ideas to consider:

- An agreement to create emails that make it easier for the recipient to handle: use of meaningful subject lines, messages limited to less than one screen length, clear instructions in either the **subject line** or the **first line** of the message about what is expected of the recipient (e.g. FYI only, "get back to me today about this:").
- An agreement not to use email for communications that are complex, or that involve conflict or the giving of bad news, or any other situation in which a conversation is more appropriate.
- An agreement about appropriate response times. Email is not the best medium for emergent communication, and you can encourage the use of phone, pagers, and walking down the hall to talk as alternatives. Establishing

an optimal upper end for response time is harder, because it depends on the kind of things for which the group uses email. My sense is that in most workplaces, a response by no later than the next day is expected.

- An agreement that people get to take breaks from email: no email during meetings; no responses expected overnight - say between 6 pm and 7 am, and on weekends; no connectivity while on vacation; and other breaks that make sense to your group such as when an individual is engaged in scholarly writing. Breaks will reduce the "addictive stress" of continuous email connectivity and will improve concentration and focus on real work.

## **FIVE**

### **Support individual change.**

Even though you are not a professional time management coach, as a leader you are in an excellent position to support and promote individual change. You have the authority to discuss these concerns, and ask for change; you either know personally or can find out from others, the nature of the problems and the productivity goals that are not being met; you have (at least some) resources you can bring to bear on finding solutions. If changes are undertaken, you can provide specific constructive feedback on whether progress is being made.

Some problems appear to have a straightforward solution, but one that may not be readily available. An example I hear about frequently is the frustration and inefficient use of time that results when a new faculty member receives no training in the institutional email and calendaring system, or in other software that is commonly used in the department. This problem would be relatively easy to solve, though I expect that budgets for this kind of training have disappeared at most places. To help with this problem you may need to both provide release time and pay for the training - but the long term payoff will be worth it.

At the unit level, you can support - or encourage the institution to offer -- workshops on various time management topics, and access to other self-help resources (books, on line resources, etc.). These methods are sometimes, understandably, met with skepticism as to their effectiveness. Here I need to reveal my conflict of interest as a presenter of these kinds of workshops, and I agree that "proof" of effectiveness is hard to come by. That said, the long term feedback I receive from participants supports the idea that a workshops can get someone started on a path to change, or can provide that one new idea that makes a difference. If you are going to use this approach, my advice is to use the highest quality presenters available.

Finding help for individual complex time management problems is challenging. While there is no guarantee of success, I encourage you to try. You can get ideas from colleagues, and your institution's faculty affairs leaders and human resources offices. There may be private coaches who come highly recommended, and if you are able, you can provide some financial support directly, or allow the faculty member to use a career development account for that purpose.

Living with time stress has become a way of life in our culture. I believe that as a leader, using these ideas as a start, you can make a difference for yourself and your faculty.

By: Susan R. Johnson, MD  
University Ombudsperson  
Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology, and Epidemiology  
University of Iowa  
srj.susanjohnson@gmail.com  
www.thrivingamidstchaos.com

## **References**

(1) Bellini LM, Abuhl S, Grisso JA, Larizzo-Mourey R, Shea JA. Stresses and workplace resources for academic junior faculty: track and gender comparisons. Acad Med 2001 Oct; 76(10Suppl):S622-4.

(2) Schwartz, Tony. HBR Blog Network; Four Destructive Myths Most Companies Still Live By (11:17 AM Tuesday November 1, 2011) <http://blogs.hbr.org/schwartz/2011/11/four-destructive-myths-most-co.html>