



Important Deadlines and Calendaring

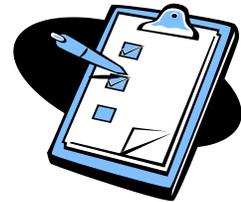
It's About Time...



- Define your goals, know your priorities... and focus on them.
- Track how your time is spent now by logging your activities for a couple of days or weeks. Match how you spend your time against your priorities and work on eliminating “time wasters” that don’t support your goals.
- Apply “the three tests of time”: 1) *The Test of Necessity*: Is it necessary, or just nice? Is it useful, or just a habit? 2) *The Test of Appropriateness*: Who should be performing this task? And, 3) *The Test of Efficiency*: Is there a better way to do this?

“To Do” and “To Don’t” Lists

- Create a list of short-term “to do’s,” with deadlines and reminders attached to each. Break larger tasks into smaller, more manageable pieces. Double check your list frequently to make sure your “to do’s” support your goals and are not simply a set of disconnected activities.
- To make more productive use of time you have to change habits, to “un-learn” behaviors that waste time. Some of the more common time wasters are: attending unproductive meetings; reviewing and re-reviewing documents that should be handled only once or twice; engaging in gossiping or unproductive conversations; procrastinating; being so disorganized that you spend a lot of time looking for things; being a “hyper-perfectionist,” spending too much time getting everything “exactly right”; and, being unable to say “no” to the point that you get drawn into unnecessary, time-consuming tasks. So, along with your “to do” list, make a list of your most common time wasters and add them to your “to don’t” list.



Work Backwards

When planning a project, identify the deadline or “benchmark” dates by which specific tasks must be done. Put those dates on your calendar and/or task list. Then, think of all the steps necessary to getting from “Point A to Point B,” from today to completion of your benchmark deadline. Add those steps and dates to your calendar as well. In doing this, you may find that there is not enough time to complete the project as quickly as you first thought, so you may have to adjust the target date for completion and work backwards again from there.

This exercise may also help you figure out who else and what else you need – beyond time – to complete the project. You may find that you need resources (like funding) that you hadn’t originally thought of, and you’ll need to make time in the plan for acquiring those resources, for training others to do tasks and for other “precursors” to actually getting the job done.