Time Management

The Wedding Planner

**Exercise**

Brian, personal assistant to the stars, was in the process of organising all aspects of the high profile celebrity wedding of Betty Wobbles and Cliff Hanger, which is due to take place in just 7 days.

Unfortunately for you, Brian has now gone off sick (suffering from stress), leaving you to organise the event, as well as carry out all of your normal duties as chauffeur, head chef and head housekeeper for Ms Wobbles. All Brian has left you is the timetable of activities he was going to follow in the lead up to the wedding, which is reproduced on the next page.

Your challenge is to try and organise the wedding, using as little time per day as possible. To achieve this, you will need to:

1. Establish, using Brian’s list and your own imagination, the priority tasks that must be completed. Compare your list of priorities to Brian’s planned list of activities to see where time savings can be achieved.
2. Consider how things have been scheduled and where improvements can be made.
3. Identify any changes you can make to the organisation that will help you manage your time.

You have 30 minutes to prepare a new schedule for the next 7 days.

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| Notes: |

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| **Day** | **Activity** | **Time required to complete this activity** |
| Day 1  am | Drive to Betty and Cliff’s and discuss with them:   * Their preference for flower colours. * Where they want the wedding list from. * Their preferred venues. * Their preferred style of stationery – including colours etc. * Betty’s preferred dress designers. * The Guest List. | Travel 1 hour  Meeting 2 hours |
| Day 1  pm | Spend afternoon driving around venues and assessing their suitability. Pick up brochures of those suitable and check availability. | 3 hours |
| Day 2 am | Ring a selection of fashionable florists and order some sample flowers.  Arrange meetings with fashion designers for day 4, to see dresses available.  Arrange meetings for day 5 with OK and Hello magazines, to negotiate photograph rights. | 1 hour  1 hour  30 minutes |
| Day 2  pm | Write and send invitations. | 3 hours |
| Day 3  am | Update meeting at Betty and Cliff’s house. Take:   * Flower samples for them to choose. * Details of venues for them to choose.   And:   * Prepare wedding list. | Travel 1 hour  Meeting 3 hours |
| Day 4  am | Visit designers with Betty to see dresses available and prepare a shortlist. | Travel 2 hours  Meetings 2 hours |
| Day 4  pm | Send out wedding list to guests, with covering letter. | 3 hours |

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| **Day** | **Activity** | **Time Required to Complete this Activity** |
| Day 5  am | Check any ‘B list’ celebrities haven’t used shortlisted designers this year.  Phone Betty to agree final choice of dress. | 3 hours  30 minutes |
| Day 5  pm | Meet OK and Hello representatives to discuss offers at their offices.  Drive over to Betty and Cliff’s to agree which offer to accept.  Once final offer agreed, telephone OK/Hello to see if they have any special requirements (for example re venue). | Travel 1 hour  Meetings 1 hour  Travel 1 hour  Meeting 1 hour  1 hour |
| Day 6  am | Visit selected dress designer with Betty for fittings. | 3 hours |
| Day 6  pm | Pick up dress. | Travel 1 hour |
| Day 7 | Wedding. |  |

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| Notes: |

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| **Day** | **Activity** | **Time required to complete this activity** |
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Learning Points

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The Art of

Prioritising

The Urgent/Important Matrix

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| **Urgency** | **Urgent but not Important**  Urgent tasks need to be dealt with quickly.  We need to make sure we only deal with what is urgent about the problem.  These tasks should be delegated if possible.  Alternatively, we should tackle the tasks in a brisk and efficient way to allow time for the important tasks. | **Urgent and Important (crises)**  These obviously have to be dealt with, although by ensuring we keep on top of our important but not urgent tasks below, we can reduce the number of these we have to contend with.  We need to make sure that although dealing with a crisis, we deal with it sufficiently well to prevent it coming back for reworking. |
| **Not urgent or Important**  These tasks are potential time wasters, and we need to apply one of the four Ds here:   * Do it. * Delegate it. * Dump it. * Defer it. | **Important but not Urgent**  Important tasks need to be sliced up into manageable chunks and time allocated to getting them done.  The important tasks are likely to be the core tasks of your job.  If time is not allocated to these tasks, they may not get done. Urgent ones will squeeze them out, until they become urgent themselves. |
| **Importance** | |

Pareto was an Italian who realised that 80% of the land in Italy was owned by 20% of the population. This principle of the 80/20 split has been found to apply in many other areas. For example, it is often shown that 80% of complaints originate from 20% of the problems or mistakes we experience.

The Pareto principle would suggest that 80% of the value of what we do comes from 20% of the tasks we complete. The question then is are we doing the right 20%?

Very often we find ourselves giving too much priority to tasks that aren’t urgent or important. It might be that they are more fun, or that they are easier or faster to complete.

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| **Tasks I Have to Complete** | |
| One-off tasks | Regular tasks |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Urgency | **Urgent but not Important** | **Urgent and Important (crises)** |
| **Not urgent or Important** | **Important but not Urgent** |
| Importance | |

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| Notes: |

The ABC System for Prioritising

Another very simple method of prioritising tasks and activities is the ABC system. This is how to use it:

1. In the table below, make a list of all the tasks/activities you have to complete. (For the purposes of this exercise limit your list to ten items). Ignore columns 1 and 2 at the moment.
2. Now do the following in column 1:
   1. Place an A against the most important tasks – if in doubt think about which tasks contribute to the key purposes of your role.
   2. Place a B against those tasks that are less important.
   3. Place a C against any tasks you consider unimportant.
3. Now, redefine all of your B’s as either A’s (important), or C’s (unimportant). Indicate the new category in column 2. Those appearing as A in column 1 are your most important (A1) tasks. Those appearing as A in column 2 are your next most important (A2) tasks.

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| **Task** | **Column 1** | **Column 2** |
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| Notes: |

Prioritisation Matrix

Using a matrix is another simple method of prioritising tasks and is particularly effective if you find it difficult to prioritise using the other methods. This is how to use it:

1. Allocate one task to each of the letters A-J in the table below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A |  |  |
| B |  |  |
| C |  |  |
| D |  |  |
| E |  |  |
| F |  |  |
| G |  |  |
| H |  |  |
| I |  |  |
| J |  |  |

1. Now, in the grid below, compare each task against the others and decide which is the most important. So, for example if you think that B is more important than A, insert B in the B/A square. Leave the partially shaded squares blank.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J |
| A |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| B |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| C |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| D |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| E |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| F |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| G |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| H |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| J |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. Now, count how many times each letter appears in the grid:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J |
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1. Finally, return to the list of tasks on the previous page and insert a ranking in the right hand column. The task with the highest score in the chart above is ranked first.

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| Notes: |

Interruptions and

Other Time Stealers

There are many things that act as time stealers, making it more difficult to manage time effectively. Some of these are:

* Unexpected interruptions.
* Outbound telephone calls.
* Procrastination.
* A cluttered and disorganised workspace.
* Systems problems.
* Staffing issues.

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| Notes: |

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| Other time stealers that affect me: |

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| Managing unexpected interruptions: |

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| Managing outbound telephone calls: |

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| Managing procrastination: |

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| Managing the workspace: |

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| --- |
| Managing systems problems: |

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| --- |
| Managing staffing issues: |

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| --- |
| Managing other time stealers: |

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | What is the most  effective use of  my time right now? |  |

Action Plan

This is your opportunity to reflect on what you have learnt and identify the actions you will take as a result.

| My Goal | What specific actions do I need to take to achieve this goal? | When will I complete these? | What additional support do I need? | How am I doing? Use this space to monitor progress. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
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|  |  |  |
| How will I know I have achieved my goal? |
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