**JUST Training Fiche: Time, tasks and teamwork management**

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| **Title** | Time, tasks and teamwork management | |
| **Keywords** | Time organization; Personal organization; Urgent-important matrix; Procrastination; Communication; Deadlines; Distractions | |
| **Provided by** | University of Málaga | |
| **Language** | English | |
| **Objectives** | The objectives of this module are to underline **the importance of personal organization**, to explain what **urgent-important matrix** is and how to use it, and to teach how to **avoid procrastination**. | |
| **Learning outcomes** | * Understanding how important personal organization is to improve productivity * Understanding the process of planning * Learning how to avoid procrastination | |
| **Training Area** | **Business Etiquette** |  |
| **Digital Skills** | **X** |
| **Soft Skills** |  |
| **Smart Working** |  |
| **Content index** | **Time, tasks and teamwork management**  **Unit 1: Time and tasks management**  Section 1: Personal organization  Section 2: Planning activities  Section 3: Stop time thieves in meetings: attitude and behaviour to avoid them | |
| **Training content** | **Time, tasks and teamwork management**  **Unit 1: Time and tasks management**  **Personal organization**  Personal organisation is the action a person takes to structure his or her actions in a productive and psychologically balanced way. It includes a whole set of skills that allow the person to deal efficiently with his or her tasks. It means to make the most under the time and resources conditions available, in order to get the established objectives. These skills are more or less present in all people, depending on genetic, cultural and parenting factors. In any case, they are skills that can be learned and practised, so that everyone has the possibility of acquiring and improving them. Among these skills, one of the most important is the ability to organise one's time.  Personal organisation implies knowing the starting point before starting a task, what the objectives are, knowing the available resources, planning a procedure and establishing a timetable. To be functional, objectives must meet the SMART conditions: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. All this means that when doing something, the person has a clear path to follow in order to achieve the objectives. As a consequence, personal organisation achieves the following:   * It increases productivity. * It focuses attention: it allows the person to concentrate on what is important. * It reduces distress by reducing the degree of uncertainty about how to do things. * It avoids procrastination.   When the objectives are very large, complex or very long-term, it is useful to split them into simple and short-term objectives. For example, we can have as an objective to make a purchase in the market. This objective involves several tasks: going to the market, shopping at the greengrocer's, shopping at the cheese shop, and so on. At the same time, each of these smaller tasks can be broken down into even simpler tasks and so on.  **Planning activities**  Personal planning is the ability to set personal goals, to have a plan of action and to carry them out, which helps to improve professional performance.  Tasks can be classified in many different ways in order to be scheduled. One way is to use the urgent-important matrix, also called the Eisenhower matrix. This matrix organises tasks in both dimensions (urgency and importance) in a table of four options. This organisation facilitates the prioritisation of tasks as well as decision-making.  Other methods to classify tasks are available on https://www.usa.edu/blog/time-management-techniques/.  There are multiple strategies for personal organisation: creating an agenda for the day, creating a to-do list, using a task filing system, etc. In any case, most of these strategies are based on being clear about the starting point, the goal, and the way to get from one point to another.  The following steps constitute a procedure to plan the tasks:   1. Be clear about what you want to achieve (the goals). 2. Write the objectives in a way that meets the SMART conditions. 3. Prioritise the objectives according to the criteria established by the company and personal issues of interest. Establish also sub-objectives when the objectives are complex. 4. Write down the necessary tasks that need to be performed to achieve the objectives and sub-objectives. Subdivide the tasks into simple tasks. 5. Classify the tasks. For example, using the urgency-importance matrix. 6. Establish how much time is allocated to each task. Include them in the agenda. 7. Establish a follow-up procedure to check that the established plan is being followed.   Apps, websites and applications that can help:   * Trello. * Google Calendar.   **Stop time thieves in meetings: attitude and behavior to avoid them**  What are time thieves?  In the world of work, they are those activities or people or even situations that waste your time. There are external and internal time thieves and you have to be the one to decide whether they will steal your time or not. There is two different time thieves, external and internal.  **External Time Thieves:**  **1. Interruptions**  This is one of the most frequent time thieves: phone calls, walk-ins, requests for help?  When faced with an interruption, it is important to be firm and decide for yourself whether or not your time is being stolen.  If you receive one of these interruptions, assess whether it is an emergency that requires your immediate attention. It is important that you assess it and not the person who is interrupting.  If you decide that it is not necessary to attend to it at that moment, politely and firmly reject the interruption. One way to avoid upsetting or worrying the other person is to set up another time when you will attend to their request. Saying "not now" is not the same as saying "not now, see you at five o'clock".  You can also put up some barriers to avoid these interruptions, such as turning off the phone, closing the office door, using headphones, asking not to be interrupted at certain times, etc.  **2. Notifications**  These are similar to interruptions, with the difference that they are almost never urgent: email, social networks, instant messaging, subscriptions, etc. The key is to remember that no urgent task comes through these means.  You must lose the fear of being disconnected from these channels for a few hours. Think that, if someone needs something urgent from you, they are not going to send an email, let alone a notification via social networks. They will surely call you on the phone or come to visit you.  To avoid these time thieves, the most effective way is to silence all notifications, both on your mobile and on your computer. Ignoring them is difficult, so it's best not to have them. You should also resist the temptation to check if you have received anything. Set times during the day when you will check each channel.  **3. Meetings**  If you work with other people, you will necessarily have to attend meetings; also with clients, partners or suppliers. Meetings in themselves are not time-stealers, only when they are done badly, so that your meetings don't become time-stealers, you have to take two aspects into account:   * **The form:** Meetings should have a structure, with a start and end time. The topics to be discussed should be clear and each person should know what to bring to the meeting. At the end, everyone should leave the meeting with clear tasks; there is no point in talking for two hours about a topic if responsibilities and tasks are not distributed afterwards. * **Content**: When attending a meeting, everyone should be clear about what is to be discussed. Everything else is left out of the meeting. If business issues arise, which are not related to the topic of the meeting or which do not involve all attendees, they should be dealt with at another time. * **Urgencies:** We cannot control everything and sometimes issues will arise that require immediate attention. The problem is that most of these situations are not true emergencies, they are time-stealers. They arise from poor planning, things that were not done well at the time, mistakes that were not corrected, tasks that were postponed, and so on.   To avoid this, it is important to keep track of your obligations and deadlines. Don't let a normal task become urgent just because you forgot to schedule it.  You should also limit the urgencies of others. Remember that each person is responsible for his or her own time management. There is no point in improving your organization if you are then saddled with the mismanagement of others.  **Internal Time Thieves:**  **1. Lack of organization**  When you are not well organized, you waste time deciding what the next task is; you have to leave activities half-finished to attend to others that are due before, you forget deadlines and pending tasks become urgent. Another symptom of poor organization is the absence of clear objectives. Objectives provide an overview, determine the plan of action and establish priorities. If you don't have them clear, it is likely that some tasks will conflict and you will end up confusing the important with the urgent.  The best thing to do is to dedicate some time each day to planning and monitoring activities. To neutralize these time thieves, the diary becomes an essential tool to ensure that you have everything under control.  **2. Procrastinating**  Procrastination is spending too much time doing things we don't have to do, or that are unimportant, instead of spending time on the things that really matter. For example, compulsively checking email instead of practising a new technique or studying a new procedure.  It should not be confused with doing nothing, since procrastination involves doing something, but it is unimportant compared to what needs to be done.  The reasons may be multiple, depending on the characteristics of the person, the situation at the time, and even cultural issues (boredom, anxiety, work pressure, excessive perfectionism, poor personal or work organisation, etc.). There are also multiple negative effects. Some of them are the following:   * Poor job performance. * Poor reputation among co-workers. * Increased anxiety and distress. * Loss of self-esteem. * Health effects, such as hypertension.   Below are some strategies to avoid procrastination:   * Self-analysis. See how you use your time and be aware of how you spend your day. * Avoid multitasking (doing several things at the same time and focusing on a single task) and distractions (interruptions, alarms, notifications, etc.). The Pomodore technique can be used. * If possible, set specific times during the day to check email and take calls. * Follow a previously established plan (previous section). * Change the way you talk about tasks. Instead of saying "I have to..." say "I would like to..." or "I choose to...".   A widespread strategy to focus attention is the Pomodoro technique. It consists of planning a series of tasks to be carried out during a certain period of time, avoiding doing anything else. Normally, the time allotted varies between 25 and 50 minutes. After each cycle, the person has 5 to 10 minutes of rest. The main benefits of the pomodoro technique are:   * It is easy to follow. * It is effective. * It provides quick results. * It helps to improve performance. * It is safe. * It is cost-effective.   Apps that help   * Tracking time apps: toggl.com; atimelogger.com * Pomodore.   **3. Not delegating and not knowing how to say "no"**  These two behaviors rob you of a lot of time and energy. When you don't delegate some of your tasks and pretend to do everything, you overload yourself and run out of time for the tasks that are really important. Remember that there are things that others can do better, faster and cheaper than you.  Not knowing how to say "no" is just as exhausting. It forces you to do tasks that you don't want to do or that are not yours to do. To avoid this, you should ask yourself what it is that stops you from refusing requests: are you afraid of disappointing someone? that they will be angry with you? that they will consider you less capable?  **4. Communication problems**  In your personal life and in your work, interaction with other people is very frequent. In order for these interactions not to become time-stealers that slow down your productivity, you need to train your communication skills.  Sometimes, for fear of being awkward, we beat around the bush too much or leave some points open or unclear. The result is poorly done or incomplete work. This way of talking can also generate a long list of subsequent queries, which makes the work more burdensome. To avoid this, try to be clear and specific. You will save time in explanation and avoid unnecessary queries.  The same applies when you receive an assignment. Listen carefully, take notes if necessary and do not end the conversation until you are clear on all points. It is better to resolve any doubts at that very moment. | |
| **Glossary** | **Personal organisation:** Action taken by a person to structure his or her actions in a productive and psychologically balanced way.  **Pomodore technique:** A time management technique that consists of focusing on a single task for a predetermined amount of time, avoiding doing anything else during that time.  **Procrastination:** Procrastinating on important tasks, spending time on other tasks that are not worth doing.  **Time thieves:** Interruptions or distractions that make us spend our time on things that are not a priority and often make us feel frustrated and unmotivated.  **Urgency-importance matrix** (Eisenhower matrix): a time management tool used to prioritise tasks. It is based on the idea that there are four different types of tasks based on the dimensions of urgency and importance. | |
| **Self-evaluation (multiple choice queries and answers)** | 1. The personal organisation is a or an:   1. **Action to be performed by the person.** 2. Obligation of the person. 3. Personality trait.   2. The urgency-importance matrix is also known as:   1. **Eisenhower matrix.** 2. Decision table. 3. Steve Job matrix.   3. Personal organisation improves work performance because:   1. **The most important tasks are done during working hours.** 2. Personal self-esteem increases. 3. It improves the ability to multitask.   4. Approach tasks by saying "I choose..." instead of saying "I have...".   1. **It avoids self-demanding, reducing stress.** 2. Sets distance between work and personal life. 3. It is an assertive way of communicating with colleagues.   5. A person has four tasks to do today. Classify each of them as A (very important), B (important), C (unimportant). Another person has to do the same tasks, and allocates the time he/she will spend on each of the tasks.   1. **The two strategies are complementary and should be used together.** 2. The first strategy is the most effective because it allows to have a list of priorities. 3. The second person is the one who does it properly, because there will be time for every task.   6. They are external time thieves:   1. Procrastination and lack of goals 2. Meetings 3. **Interruptions and urgencies**   7. Internal time thieves are:   1. **Procrastination and lack of organization** 2. Meetings 3. Interruptions and urgencies | |
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| **Resources (videos, reference link)** | Goals intro:   * https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpKvs-apvOs   SMART goals:   * https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCRSVRD2EAk   Time manager techniques:   * https://www.usa.edu/blog/time-management-techniques/   Eisenhower matrix:   * https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBy-3G1m-ME * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nNZUtfNAyE> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xyYArJnEGE>   TRELLO:   * https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZwOAMpkPQo   Google Calendar:   * https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxnukqJyJEY * https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sD44\_TGcyVQ   Procrastination:   * https://www.mindtools.com/a5plzk8/how-to-stop-procrastinating * http://toggl.com * http://www.atimelogger.com | |