

The Career Collaborators' Program
Make Time For Your Career

MODULE 1: MAKE TIME FOR YOUR CAREER

Do you say, “I have too much to do, and too little time to do it. Day-to-day activities get in the way. And when I have the time, I’m just too tired to do anything!”

You’re not alone. Many people do.

In this module, you’ll identify and assess how you’re spending your time. You’ll determine how you can reschedule your activities to allow time for career development, how you can effectively focus to maximize the use of your time and how you can increase your level of energy to enable your success.

- 1. Where Does Your Time Go?**
- 2. Reprioritize Your Activities**
- 3. Focus On What’s Most Important**
- 4. Think Healthy**

1. Where Does Your Time Go?

Many people, when asked this question, have responded, “I really don’t know!” The Where Does Your Time Go? four-box tool found in the Toolkit is designed to help busy people like you understand how you use your time, how you can reprioritize your activities, and how you can reallocate some of your time to career development.

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So, how do you use your time?

Let's begin by taking a look at those things you're spending your time on.

List all of the activities you perform each week.

- 1) The activities that you perform for your job are "Required". List these activities in the Required box in the Where Does Your Time Go? 4-box tool. There are also activities that you may be performing as a family member or as a member of organizations. List these, too, in the Required box.
- 2) There are "emergency" activities that all of us engage in from time to time. These might be health-related – our own health or family members, or they might be work/deadline-related. List these activities in the Critical box.
- 3) And there are activities that we engage in that are not required but still provide us some benefit, for example, taking a walk. List these in the Optional Box.
- 4) Do you spend any time in which you simply "shut down"? For some, that time might be spent watching television or playing video games or surfing the Internet. There are times when we need to do this to allow our minds to recuperate from over-stimulation, but many of us spend more time in "shut down" than is necessary. List these activities in the Time Wasters box.

Is anything missing? What about sleep? Note the time you spend sleeping as an activity in the Required box. Studies have shown that most of us don't get enough sleep, however you're the best judge of how much sleep you really need. And don't forget entertainment – having fun is also Required!

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For each of these activities, estimate how much time you're spending each week (in hours) and note the number of hours beside the activity. To check that you

have accounted for everything, add up the hours. The total should equal the number of hours in a week - 168.

2. REPRIORITIZE YOUR ACTIVITIES

Review the activities in each of the boxes to determine whether there are any you could either eliminate or delegate. The Time Wasters and Optional boxes will provide the greatest opportunities.

- 1) In the Time Wasters box, you may not be willing to eliminate all of your TV time, for example, but you may choose to be more selective in deciding what you will watch and then dedicate some of the time you're saving to your development activities.
- 2) In the Optional box, there may be activities that you can either postpone or delegate, however you may choose to move Optional activities such as Going for a Walk to the Required box if you're making that a part of your regular exercise routine.
- 3) It is unlikely that there will be such activities in the Critical box, although there may be some parenting activities that you could ask another family member to take on temporarily.
- 4) There may also be some opportunities for delegation in the Required box.

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After reviewing where you spend your time, you have probably identified a few hours of your week that you can reallocate to your development.

3. FOCUS ON WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT

The key to success in your development is not only how much time you spend and what you focus on, but focusing intently – laser-focusing - on those things that can provide you with the greatest benefit. A little time, laser-focused, can go a long way.

We have so many things going on in our lives today that it's often difficult for us to pay attention to only one thing at a time. But that's exactly what we need to do to be able to use our time effectively.

There are many ways in which we can develop our careers. Some of these involve finding and taking in a large amounts of information. Here's a strategy for information intake that can maximize the benefit of the time you spend.

How to Laser-Focus

1) Break tasks down into mini-tasks that can be completed in less than 30 minutes.

You may be able to devote a couple of hours all at once to your career development, or you may only have smaller "chunks" of time available during the week. Some people say, "If I only have a half an hour, how much can I really accomplish?" Well, let's think about that. You can probably read one chapter of a book in a half-hour. If you did that every day, you would completely read a book with 12 chapters in less than two weeks. Or, you could read one or two articles in a half-hour. Or you could do some Internet research.

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2) Control your environment

If you're working on career development activities in your work environment, there may be obstacles that get in the way of your ability to focus. These may be noise, or interruptions by others, or there may be things on your desk that you need to deal with.

To eliminate noise, there are a couple of things you can do. If the noise is your phone ringing, you can forward your calls to voice mail. If it is noise from the environment around you, you can use a CD player, or tape player, with headphones, playing either non-distracting music or "white noise" to block out the environmental sounds.

To avoid interruptions by others, let your associates know that you'll be unavailable for the next half-hour. You can also post a sign on your door or cubicle entrance asking visitors to please leave their name and phone number, and letting them know that you'll get back to them within an hour.

Before you begin to work, make a prioritized list of items you need to address later. Set aside this list and any other potential distractions on your desk, clearing a large space for the materials you need for your activity. Assemble your materials.

3) Reflect on the importance of the task. What are you about to do, and why is it important to you?

Be "present in the moment." You've already taken care of the external distractions. Now, push aside your internal distractions. We all have many different things competing for attention in our heads. An effective technique for

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clearing your mind is to close your eyes and envision a blank screen. Things may appear on the screen initially but, if you stick with it, the screen will eventually clear. Now you're ready to begin your activity.

As you engage in your activity, from time to time ask yourself what you're learning. It's easy to fall into simply reading the words without truly absorbing the information.

When you have completed the activity, take a few minutes to reflect on what worked and what didn't work for you in performing this activity. For the next activity, customize the process to include only those things that worked well. Continue doing so for subsequent activities until you settle on the process that works most effectively for you.

4. THINK HEALTHY

"When your mind is tired, exercise your body; when your body is tired, exercise your mind". Author Unknown

Gaining the greatest benefit from your career development activities requires that you have the attitude of success – believing you're going to be successful and that you're taking the appropriate actions to assure your success.

There is nothing that can weaken your attitude more quickly than not feeling well. Good health is one of the key elements in career success. When you're healthy, your energy level is high. Having a high level of energy is widely regarded as one of the key differentiators among job candidates. So what makes us unhealthy? Some of it may be heredity, but more often it is the result of three things: poor diet, little or no exercise and lack of sleep.

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1) Sleep

You have already noted Sleep in the Required Box on your *Where Does Your Time Go?* chart.

2) Exercise

If you haven't already included an Exercise activity, think about what you might do for exercise that will fit your busy schedule. One of the best exercise activities you can engage in is to simply take a walk. Walking for 30 minutes every day can have a huge impact on your physical and mental health.

3) Diet

Is there such a thing as "brain food"? Just reference it on the Internet. You'll find many articles on this subject. It seems to be well-accepted that diet makes a difference in our ability to learn. A simple diet guideline is to eat regular, well-balanced meals. So many of us, under the pressures of "too much to do, and too little time to do it", skip meals or find ourselves falling into the habit of eating "vending machine" lunches. If this sounds like you, take some time to do a little diet research and then adjust your schedule to include Eating as one of your Required activities. If that still seems impossible, then at least cultivate the habit of carrying some nutritious snacks with you so that, as time permits, you can feed both your body and your brain.

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QUICK QUIZ - MODULE 1

Here's an opportunity to check what you've learned in this module.

- 1.
2. What are the four key points in "making time for your career"?
3. What does the "Where Does Your Time Go?" chart do for you?
4. Why is prioritization of your activities so important?
5. What does "laser-focusing" help you to accomplish?
6. How does your diet impact your ability to be successful in your career?

(Answers are on the next page)

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ANSWERS TO QUICK QUIZ - MODULE 1

1. What are the four key points in “making time for your career”?

Answer: Understanding where your time goes, reprioritizing your activities, laser-focusing on what's most important, and thinking healthy.

2. What does the “Where Does Your Time Go?” chart do for you?

Answer: The chart helps you to identify and assess where and how you're spending your time.

3. Why is prioritization of your activities so important?

Answer: Prioritization helps you to understand the relative importance of your activities and to determine which activities you may be able to eliminate or delegate to others to make time for your career development.

4. What does “laser-focusing” help you to accomplish?

Answer: Laser-focusing helps you to take in information quickly and effectively, maximizing the result of the time you're spending in career development.

5. What are three health areas which can impact your career success?

Answer: Sleep, exercise and diet.