Time Management Action Guide
Learning how to say No!

Through hard work we can develop skills and create resources; we can't, however, create time. How we use our time greatly influences our effectiveness. That's not to say that we must work 100% of the time, but we must manage our time consistent with our personal goals and priorities. We invest our time into five buckets.

Work Time	Long-term, high priority activities. Includes career as well as family, education, self-development, charity and volunteer commitments etc.
Personal Needs Time	Required personal tasks. Food preparation and eating, bathing, exercise, shopping, medical, house cleaning and maintenance etc.
Recreational Time	Non-work related to re-energize mind and body. Hobbies, sports, social activities, reading, entertainment etc.
Sleep & Relaxation	Required for physical and mental health.
Goofing Off	Occasional and spontaneous activity just because you feel like it.

There is no correct allocation and it will likely change over time. How do you spend your time now? Is it close to where you want it? Do you give sufficient priority to the most important activities? Do you finish what you start?

Let's focus on work time because this determines much of who we are and our effectiveness. Work related activities are our top priority and we need to manage our time effectively as we do for other key investments. Think of Time Management having two elements. Technology provides us with excellent descriptive terms.

Bandwidth	Our capacity to do work. The enemies of bandwidth are insufficient time allocation, working on the wrong things and noise (see below).
Noise	Interruptions and distractions that decrease bandwidth.

At ZF, we often reference Stephen Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" because it clearly explains critical skills and shows a pathway helping students become effective adults. Covey devotes considerable space to Time Management as part of Habit 3 – Put First Things First. Time Management, however, begins with Habit 1 – Be Proactive. The mechanics of time management aren't difficult. A simple list is a great starting point.

The key to time management is to work on the right things and reduce noise – often by just saying NO, when appropriate, to yourself and others.

Covey introduces a model (below) to help guide us as to how to use our available bandwidth most effectively. In this Action Guide, we will focus on work-related time; family, career and education.

Covey divides his model into four quadrants according to the work's "Importance" and "Urgency". Briefly look at the model and guess which quadrant should receive the greatest time allocation?

Important	**I** ACTIVITIES Mission Critical Crises Pressing Problems and Deadlines	**II** ACTIVITIES Important work with Future Deadlines. Relationships and Team Building Planning
Not Important	**III** ACTIVITIES Interruptions and Distractions Some email, social media, phone calls and meetings	**IV** ACTIVITIES Interruptions and Distractions Much email, social media, phone calls and meetings Goofing Off
	Urgent	Not Urgent

No, not Quadrant I. Quadrant II is where time is most valuable because if you plan and meet future deadlines, you will face fewer urgent problems and won't need much time for quadrant I. If you spend a lot of time on quadrant I activities, you are reactive, not proactive and you need to reassess and reallocate your time commitments. Quadrants III and IV, are filled with noise – interruptions and distractions. Many of these are self-generated and simply require the willpower to change bad habits.

Effective Time Management is simply a matter of doing the right work and avoiding interruptions and disturbances. We can't let ourselves, other people or our work environment steal our bandwidth or disrupt it with noise.

You can increase your bandwidth through better planning and by eliminating noise. Higher bandwidth makes you more effective.

Learn how to say No!

Stop automatically saying yes.

Try saying, let me review this in light of my other commitments and
I'll get back to you.

Is this new task important enough for you to change your priorities? It's ok to push yourself, but don't deceive yourself that you have more bandwidth than you have.

Time management is simple, managing your time is hard. Managing your time, however, is essential to becoming effective.

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