

Where does your time go?

You will need some counters (tiddlywinks) for this exercise)

Instructions

Ask participants to take 16 counters from the pot on the table. Each counter represents 30 minutes.

Issue Handout “Where does your time go?”: Ask them to place the counters in the grid depending on how much time they think they should spend on each type of time. For example – if technical tasks and duties take up 5 hours of your day, place 10 counters in the personal tasks box. If supporting your team members and having team meetings takes up 2 hours, place 4 counters here and so on.

Then introduce different scenarios, and ask them how they would need to move the counters to deal with it. For example, if your manager asks for a meeting at short notice that will take half an hour, you need to put 1 counter in the ‘manager’ box, but where do you get them from?

Read our different scenarios and encourage participants to work on their tables/in small groups to discuss what they move, why and what implications this has on other areas that need their attention.

1. Your manager asks you to attend a meeting that will last for around an hour
2. There’s a technical problem you need to sort out urgently – 30 minutes
3. There’s an unavoidable delay on your way to work. Lose 30 minutes.
4. You have to deal with an urgent customer query/complaint – 60 minutes
5. A colleague needs your help – give them 30 minutes.
6. You forgot to prepare for a meeting tomorrow – find 90 minutes.
7. Your IT fails you – lose 30 minutes getting it back up and running
8. Etc.

Points to bring out in the Debrief:

- Every unplanned activity steals time from somewhere else.
- If you don’t plan, you are less likely to think about where you take that unexpected time from.
- Therefore, you are less likely to consider the long and short-term consequences
- In the end, you are likely to end up working late, letting people down or making mistakes.
- Just ‘reacting’ to unexpected demands on your time doesn't always add value or help you to achieve your goals.
- Being organised doesn’t prevent these interruptions, but it does help you to control them a little better.

Where does your time go?

Doing routine tasks
required of your job

Responding to your
manager's requests

Helping team members
or colleagues

Dealing with
unplanned
interruptions, requests
and problems

Planning/Thinking

Doing
admin/paperwork/
record keeping (NOT
core to your job)

Holding or attending
meetings

Travelling/waiting