

Proven Techniques to Set Priorities That Work

The key to staying productive and focused is to set priorities that maximize your time. You can create a mental picture of what you want to achieve in life and schedule your tasks to align with that picture.

Why Is It Important to Set Priorities?

Setting priorities will enable you to:

Live a Full Life

Some people believe you have to sacrifice an aspect of your life to gain in other areas. You don't have to. You only need to learn how to set priorities that cover all areas of your life.

Setting priorities gives you a sense of what you need to do and when. It will also relieve you of the stress of missing out on an important task. You will have free time to relax and develop a focus on the next task.

Unleash Your Creativity

Understanding what you need to achieve your goals will declutter your mind and enable you to be more creative. You need a high level of creativity to complete your task. Otherwise, your tasks will become boring and exhausting.

Feel a Sense of Success

Anytime you tick a box or cross off a task you have accomplished on your list, you will have a sense that you are moving in line with your life mission. Every completed task takes you forward, while every missed deadline moves you backward. Setting priorities will build the confidence you need to take on bigger goals and responsibilities.

5 Questions to Help You Set Priorities

Brian Tracy, a well-known motivational speaker and self-development author, recommended five questions^[1] you can constantly ask yourself to be certain you are living in line with your top priorities. Here are the questions:

1. Why Are You Being Paid?

Ask yourself if you are doing what you are paid to do. If you are an employee, ask yourself, 'What will I be doing if my boss is present and watching me?'

Here's how to answer the question. List all the tasks you have been paid to carry out. Request that your boss or team leader rank the tasks in order of importance. Henceforth, work on tasks that your boss considered to be the most important. If you are an entrepreneur, prioritize the most important tasks that align with your goals.

2. What Are Your Most Valued Tasks?

Recall that 20% of your tasks contribute 80% of the value to your work. Which of your tasks contribute the highest value to your business?

3. What Are the Key Results You Need to Complete a Task?

Figure out the actual results that you need to achieve in order to perform your job. Find out the most important aspects of the key result areas.

4. What Can Only You Do That Makes a Big Difference?

What is that one thing only you can do that can impact your business or organization positively? Performing this task efficiently can positively impact your career and business.

5. What Is the Most Valuable Thing to Use Your Time for Now?

This is an important question in managing your time effectively. Figure out the most important tasks you should be spending your time on and complete those tasks before anything else.

While these questions can enable you to set priorities that work, here are seven ways you can set priorities to complete your daily activities.

7 Effective Techniques for Setting Priorities

1. Highlight Your Core Values

What are the things that matter to you, those things that you cannot trade for anything in life? Write them down!

You can create a table that covers all your life aspects: your family, career, business, and self-improvement. Then, list the three most significant priorities in each aspect.

Once you have done that, allocate 80% of your time to accomplishing your top priorities. You can complete other tasks that are less important with the remaining time.

2. Align Your Schedule With Your Core Values

Your daily schedule should revolve around those values that you cannot compromise. How much time you allocate for each task reveals what your priorities are. People often spend time on things that don't count while losing sight of what's truly important. You don't have to do it all; you can delegate menial activities while you focus on tasks that demand your skills and experience.

3. Identify Urgent Tasks

The Eisenhower Matrix brought to fore the significance of setting priorities. The matrix showcases your urgent and important tasks, helping you label the things that can't wait.

Some tasks, such as sending emails or completing your reports, should take the upper part of your list because an uncompleted report can delay your presentation with your boss. It's important to find out your urgent tasks and complete them as soon as possible.

Eisenhower recommended that you delegate that which is 'urgent and not important' while you focus on the things that are 'urgent and important.'

4. Analyze Which Are Your Most Productive Days

Each day comes with its meaning and purpose. One of the best strategies is to find out the particular day you are always at your best. It could be a day off from work or weekend. Once you have made this discovery, attempt the most urgent and important tasks on your list as much as you can on this day.

5. Prepare Ahead

How do you plan? Highlight those tasks that may be on your list for the next day at the end of each day. Creating a list for the next day will give you the sense that you are making progress in life. You can wake up the next day to work on the priorities you have already set confidently.

6. Know That Setting Priorities Is a Skill

No one is born with prioritization skills. It takes learning and constant practice to become perfect. Once you set priorities over time, you will build the ability into a skill set. When it becomes a skillset, you will see the evidence in your life and family.

7. Create a Timeline

Set a timeline when prioritizing your tasks. You have to be realistic when setting priorities. Avoid stacking your priorities; instead, spread them over a specific time frame.

Building a timeline for some specific priorities will eliminate the stress of being under pressure when they eventually become urgent. While some people function better under pressure, many don't. Therefore, create a timeline and spread your tasks over it, from the most difficult to the simplest.

Bonus: Eliminate Distractions

Distractions are important enemies you need to deal with when you need to achieve your set priorities. Limiting distractions will enable you to focus on what you have set your mind to do. It takes focus to achieve your goals in life.

Take these steps to eliminate the threats to your focus and productivity:

Turn off Social Media Notifications

You cannot do without your smartphone, but you can manage how you use them. Shut off your social media platforms when you are busy or spending time with important people in your life. Every time you are under pressure to check your notifications, switch off your phone or put it in another room and focus.

Take a Break

Your body is designed to go on breaks. Do not deny yourself that opportunity to renew and refresh your mind. Maximize your break time to do things that give you joy and happiness.

Take Care of Your Body

Physical health plays a crucial role in achieving your set priorities. Exercising and eating healthy food can help you stay fit to accomplish your goals

Complete the Most Difficult Task First Thing in the Morning

You are at your best when you have just woken up. It is reasonable to get those tasks that you dread off your list immediately. This will enable you to free up more productive time later in the day.

Do Away With Toxic People

Toxic people are those who have unhealthy habits. Staying around them can drain you of the strength and motivation you need to keep attaining your goals. Rather, surround yourself with productive, ambitious, and focused individuals. According to Jim Rohn,^[2]

'You are the average of five individuals you hang out with.'

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