



Time Management

John Maxwell said, *"Being successful is not about how hard you work - it's about how smart you work."* In a true leader's life, there's a big difference between activity and accomplishment. Michael LeBoef said, *"Devoting a little of yourself to everything means committing a great deal of yourself to nothing."* I am conscious of that both in ministry and corporate leadership. In fact, I try to guard the time of those who report to me so they can be "focused".

So, you may ask, what is activity? Activity is being busy. Henry David Thoreau once said, *"It's not enough to be busy; so are the ants. The question is: What are [you] busy about?"*

There are five ways that people spend their working hours. Determine which one best describes how you spend your time:

1. Crucial - Loud things first.

You've no doubt heard the saying: The squeaky wheel gets the oil. Well, that shouldn't always be the case in leadership.

As a leader, you will probably encounter a lot of "squeaky wheels" in the form of complaints or requests or suggestions from the people in your organization. We can all place names and faces on the complainers. Some of them will be valid and merit spending your time on them. But often, oiling the squeaky wheels in your organization isn't the best use of your time. Someone has said, "The person with an hour to kill usually spends it with someone who can't spare a minute."

Though it's tempting -- especially if you're a people pleaser -- you have to learn to discern what wheels really need oil, what ones can be oiled by others and what ones will squeak no matter how much oil they have on them. How I wish all leaders understood and lived by that rule.

2. Disagreeable - Hard things first.

Many of us are taught this concept when we're young. It's the "dinner before desert" mentality, and there can be some value in it. Henry Kissinger once joked, *"Next week there can't be any crisis. My schedule is already full."* As a leader, you have to constantly check your motives. If you have a strong work ethic, you may naturally want to get the harder things done first. The question though, lies in value. If doing something easier is a better use of your time, then do that before you tackle the difficult tasks.



3. Uncompleted - Last things first.

If you're like most leaders, you work on a day-to-day schedule. And many times your to-do list is left a little undone at the end of the day. If you have only completed eight of the ten items on your list, the tendency is to automatically place the remaining two items at the top of your list for the following day. But that's not always the best use of your time. As Johann Wolfgang Goethe once said, *"Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least."*

Chances are, if the two items you didn't finish a day earlier were on bottom of your list, they weren't top priorities in the first place, and probably won't be top priorities the next day either. Remember, always set new priorities each new day.

4. Unrewarding - Dull things first.

If you subscribe to this notion, your tendency is to want to get boring things out of the way so you can refocus on what's really important. As a result, you spend time doing the dull, mindless things, **like reading e-mails first**. But even though those things must be done, they are rarely the top priority.

Too often we waste time "getting things out of the way." Instead, get a jump start on carrying out your most important task first. So much to do. So little time. Prioritize! As a Bi-Vocational pastor I had to come to grips with the truth that some people would not be seen. Some jobs will not get done unless they could be delegated. Remember, keep first things first.

5. Vital - First things first.

Do you naturally spend time on the most important things first? Whether you do them first or second or last, they eventually have to get done for you to succeed. Commit to give your best time -- right now and in the future -- to your most important tasks.

So the question we must ask is are we hard working or smart working?