



First Steps Toward Time Management

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Help employees start thinking about the way they use their time.

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: Approximately 5 minutes to review the PDF. Use the Additional Discussion section to spend more time on this topic.

HOW TO USE: This is an exercise that might work best in a one-on-one meeting with employees so you can give them personalized feedback. You could also use it in a group meeting if you have someone who is willing to share with the group.

DISCUSSION GUIDE:

We all have a list of tasks we need to get done. Here at the store, your first priority is taking care of customers. When you're not helping a customer, you're likely engaged in doing something else in the store, such as restocking inventory or resetting a display. You have a list of tasks in your personal life too. Some are tasks you have to do, others are things you enjoy doing.

We all make choices about how we spend our time. Everyone has the same amount of time in a day. Some people get more done in a given time than others. Why does that happen? It's true that some people are more talented or more experienced. However, people who get more done in a day, whether it is at work or at home, tend to be those who have learned to manage their time. They have learned to make better decisions about what to do with their time.

When you manage your time well, everyone wins. When you make good decisions about how you manage your time, you are able to get more done and you feel less stressed. A lower level of stress is good for your health and good for your relationships. When you manage your time you also have a better work-life balance.

How well are you managing your time? Most of us could make better decisions about how we spend our time, but it may be difficult to know where to start making improvements. Here is an exercise that will help. At the end of the day, reflect on these three questions.

- What went well today? Find at least one instance of a task that went according to plan or something you would consider a success. Talk briefly about why that task was successful. What was your role in making that successful?
- What didn't go well today? Find one instance of something that didn't go according to plan. Describe what happened and why. What was your role in what didn't go well? What did you have control over and could have changed? Walk through alternative scenarios of what you could have done differently to make that situation better.
- What did you learn today? Reflect on why you were successful in one task but not in the other. Think of something you could have done to make better decisions. This is something you can use the next time you're in a similar situation.

Conclusion

This exercise is just the first step towards making better decisions about how you spend your time. As you start reflecting on these three questions, you'll find ways to improve your productivity. Remember, when you manage your time well, you'll be more productive and help our business grow, which is good for all of us.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:

Here are three tips that will help you be more productive.

- Prioritize tasks. Every day, you should have a list of tasks that need to be done. Write everything down, then prioritize according to A) Tasks you absolutely have to get done today, B) Tasks you need to get done soon, but not necessarily today and C) Task that are low priority. Make sure you start by getting the A tasks done first.
- Do what's hardest first. We are more likely to do the easy task first, but we usually feel better when we accomplish something difficult. If you start by doing the most difficult task first, you'll waste less time worrying about it and have a sense of accomplishment that will carry you through the rest of the day.
- Limit distractions. Distractions can eat up time and divert your attention. When you're not fully focused on work, you're not as effective and it probably takes longer to do a task. Limit distractions you can control, such as alerts from your phone and excessive socializing.