

Improving my time management nursing essay



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This report was aimed at identifying and analyzing some vital pointers to help me understand the way I currently behave in regard to key career development objectives, and to help me build an effective strategy to assist me in reaching my goals.

For someone in a managerial position, personal and professional development and the problems associated with it is ceaseless. I found time management to be my major weakness and required immediate action. Poor time management leaves us feeling frustrated at the end of the working day, not to mention tasks uncompleted and had to be carried forward. Even worse, poor time management has resulted in me struggling to keep up standards while I am already tired which only produces stress and poor quality work.

Like all management problems, time management, must be subjected to principles of analysis and planning. Maintaining a learning journal and frequent SWOT analysis helped me identify where my time goes, what my

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problems and their causes are, and realistically how long it takes to accomplish certain tasks.

Research on other studies and publications on personal and self-development assisted me in understanding the principles of time management which I applied to my situation and committed them to habit. The Pareto's principle: 80/20 rule, multiple resource theory, Parkinson's Law and The pickle jar theory were analyzed, understood and implemented wherever possible. Setting priorities is one of the many key time management principles I have adapted and it has shown immediate positive outcomes during my first semester in MSc and I believe I will be able to increase my effectiveness, self-satisfaction and success both in the long and shorter term.

INTRODUCTION

Personal development can be defined as the person taking primary responsibility for their own learning and for choosing the means to achieve this (Pedler et al. 2007). Eventually, it is about increasing your willingness, capacity and ability to be responsible and take control over events. Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell (2007) rephrase David Kolb's learning cycle (Sims, 1983) and its stages in a much more user-friendly way. It suggests that, in order successfully develop a personal skill, such as time management in my case, it is essential to diagnose the weakness at the first place, set goals, implement it and when the target date arrives evaluate your progress against your goals and decide what further actions to take. This is depicted

in Figure 1. Self-development is a continuous process and the learning cycle is to be repeated.

Figure 1. The learning cycle (Pedler et al. 2007)

My previous experiences with meeting deadlines of assessments, excessive work in limited time, stress and having to work late to get things done gave me an insight on how poor my time management was. Research on books, articles and experiences of those who have learned to manage their time gave me an insight on astonishing improvements that can be made by implementing a handful of simple techniques. My learning journal reflected that I have to learn to manage and utilize my time effectively.

Being a biomedical scientist and learning managerial skills, it is well understood that time is a valuable resource and my attitude to it and the way I utilize it means the difference between failure and success. Proper time management will result in being more effective and efficient.

DIAGNOSIS

The first step in more effective management of time is to analyze how one is presently spending it (Ferner, 1995). Working out how time is being used with the aid of time logs (McFarlane, 1991) for a week helped me analyze where my time goes. I broke the time log into the areas that are appropriate for me and made a pie chart (Appendix IV – Chart 1) that shows how much time I spent in each area.

The analysis of the time log helped me build up an accurate picture on how I invest my time. It also favored in identifying the following time robbers.

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ACTIONS

Procrastination – Delaying assignments and appointments that could be done sooner.

Personal disorganization – Poorly organized study material and paperwork, cluttered desk.

Attempting too much – Bringing work home feeling I haven't done enough for the day.

Planning – Not setting goals, any daily plan and priorities unclear or changing.

THINGS AND PEOPLE

Electronic devices – Spending too much time on the computer checking sports news, social networking and ignoring high priority responsibilities.

Telephone – Spending more time on the phone with people and using it as an excuse to neglect responsibilities.

Chatting – Involving in unnecessary interruptions by people to chat.

In addition I also performed a SWOT analysis (shown in the Appendix III) in my learning journal, which is a quick and beneficial way to understand my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Cottrell, 2010).

GOAL SETTING

Scholars who have understood the significance of time management have proposed several theories, principles and techniques that can help us direct

our energy towards a specific direction to increase our productivity. I referred to some of the most popular time management theories to understand my priorities and set my goals accordingly.

The Pareto Principle: 80/20 rule – Vilfredo Pareto's 80/20 rule was interpreted by Juran (1988), as 20 percent of work requires 80 percent of time. He called it the "vital few and trivial many." It suggests that workers must list and prioritize their work, then emphasize their time and efforts on the cardinal 20 percent of their work.

Multiple resource theory – In this model developed by Wickens (2002), a person can multitask effectively as long as the tasks don't require the same resource pool. One can multitask reasonably well, talking on the phone with a friend about a football match and in the meantime write an email on a budget.

Parkinson's law – Cyril Northcote Parkinson's (1955) theory asserts that work expands to fill the time available. If too much time is allocated for a work, it will be procrastinated and will be left to the last minute. If less time is allocated, it won't be done due to lack of time.

The pickle jar theory – Wright (2002) uncorked the simple pickle jar theory which teaches us to spend more time on the major responsibilities of our life or our goals, comparatively lesser time for hobbies and the daily chores of life between goals and hobbies. It also states that distractions that lead to mismanagement should be completely avoided.

In order to set goals, I focused on short term goals on a weekly basis to make proper time management a habit and show immediate results which in a way will motivate me. Taking into consideration the time management theories I learnt, I organized my priorities accordingly. So as to ease myself into the habit of time management I considered tasks as short term goals. Appendix II is one such example. I plotted out my long term goals (Appendix I) which would help evaluate how my short term goals together has worked towards making my long term goals a success.

ACTION

To apply relevant theories into action, I started with making a weekly timetable on what to do and when. According to the 80/20 rule and the pickle jar theory I decided to spend more time on studying which will also help me achieve my long term goals as well as short term. Following the multiple resource theory, I utilized my travelling time for reading recent research in biomedical science and my breakfast time to check my emails and read news. Taking Parkinson's Law into account, I estimated the time each task would take to complete, including procrastination time and allocated only the time required to do the work, for similar work in the future.

I put these into an action plan (Table 1) that involved setting targets for accomplishing an action. Pedler et al.(2007) states that an action plan commits one to a course of action which one will achieve to a certain standard or by a certain date.

KEY PERFORMANCE TASKS

STEPS TO TAKE

NEEDS

TIME FRAME

Dedicate more time for studies

Utilize the travelling time to read recent research

Study in the library as it is more productive

Money to buy a tablet pc

During MSc

Be more organized

Create a task list and prioritize the tasks.

Plan work and holidays ahead.

Allocate time required for a task

Work according to the timetable prepared.

Timetable

Support from colleagues

Money

In 2 weeks

Spare time for hobbies

Minimize wasting time on chatting online

Consider procrastination your enemy

Do not bring workplace related work home

Commitment

Immediately

Get into shape

Cut on sleeping time

Jog to the park every morning

Commitment

In one week

Learn how the business works

Work with manager to develop business

Manager's contribution

One day a week

Table 1. Action plan

EVALUATION

Ferner (1995) states that poor time management habits are hard to break and one can easily slip into old time-wasting ways. Therefore it is necessary to do repeated analysis and follow up. In order to evaluate my progress over the period I repeated the time log for a week and plotted a pie chart (Appendix IV - Chart 2). It reveals that after implementing the new strategies the way I spend my time has changed with positive effects. It is understood that I now spend more time on my higher priorities such as studies and I have more leisure time to relax.

CONCLUSION

Whether one is in a management position or aspiring to one, the increasing need for personal and professional development across a wide range of skills follow everywhere and time management is one such skill only a minority has mastered. The basic objective of time management is not to become super-efficient, super productive, or super-busy, but to use our time in ways to achieve important personal goals (Ferner, 1995). Comparison of Chart 1 versus Chart 2 (in Appendix IV) shows the difference between how I spent my time and how I spend my time now. The progress is satisfactory and I believe there is more to come.

Learning time management has led me to be more efficient and focus more of my time on my priorities. This will help me get more out of my day, produce better results and make me a valuable commodity at my workplace. Reduced stress levels, increased leisure time and clearer goals and plans are some of the other positive side effects of proper time management. The fact

that I must maintain this skill at all times during my time at Kingston University and in my future career is abundantly clear.