



Why is time
management
important at work?

Introduction

Aside from sleeping, work devours more hours of our lives than almost anything else. For most people, this is a non-negotiable arrangement. (If you're an heir or heiress to a large fortune, you may stop reading now.) However, whether this massive chunk of your life is a constant source of stress or a source of joy, meaning, and purpose depends largely on you—namely, how you choose to manage your time.

Careful time management makes the difference between spending our working lives absorbed in deep, meaningful tasks or constantly scrambling in a hum of frenetic energy. As [Annie Dillard](#) puts it, a schedule is “a net for catching days. [It] is a peace and a haven set into the wreck of time; it is a lifeboat.”

Time management is known as a [meta-skill](#) or a “higher-order skill that magnifies and activates other skills.” Therefore it's one of the most important things you can master to boost your proficiency, no matter what discipline you're in.

Here are four major reasons why time management is important in the workplace.

1. Unlock praise, promotion, and pride

You may have heard the claim, popularized by Malcolm Gladwell's [Outliers](#), that it takes 10,000 hours to master a skill. While this is an [oversimplification](#)—research has shown that the quality of the practice matters just as much as the quantity—it does contain an important kernel of truth. That is: Putting in the time is a prerequisite to getting good at anything.

If you can manage your time effectively, you have a much better chance of using the finite hours in your workday to produce the greatest possible results. You can easily fritter away eight hours answering emails, attending meetings, and attending more meetings to plan other meetings. Or you can take control of your time and use it to advance key projects, engage in strategic planning, and continually sharpen your skills. The implications for your career trajectory are profound.

It's a common myth that multitasking helps you get more done. Studies show that it actually [worsens your working memory](#), causes you to make more mistakes, and

makes you take more time to complete simple tasks. Fragmenting your attention with constant task-switching means you're unlikely to progress your skills and advance towards the next level in your career.

After all, as popular Pinterest wisdom tells us, "You have the same amount of hours in a day as Beyonce." Or Elon Musk. Or [insert your industry-relevant superstar.]

2. Create harmony and boost morale instead of stressing about your team

People often think of time management as an individual practice, but it also has deep implications for teams. Think about it—if you're writing an article, but you fail to factor in time for your boss to review, your designer to create graphics, and your marketing team to create campaign tracking, suddenly you have a three-car pileup of stressed people.

A crucial benefit of effective time management is that it can foster a more positive and collaborative team environment. When you and your teammates aren't stretched thin, you're more likely to engage in the behavior that boosts team morale—like offering support to teammates when they're overloaded or replying on Slack with funny GIFs instead of terse replies. What's more, stress and creativity have an inverse relationship. If you can keep [burnout](#) at bay, you'll be able to access the full extent of your creativity and inspire others around you to do the same.

Another benefit of time management is that it sets the stage for better team communication because it gives you a common framework to align on priorities. For instance, author of [Indistractable](#), Nir Eyal recommends schedule-syncing, where managers and employees regularly review their schedules to make sure the employee is spending the most time on the most important tasks. This can be especially helpful if the employee reports to multiple managers because it helps keep all parties on the same page.

On global teams where members often reside in different time zones, aligning schedules becomes even more important. For example, you may want to set a block of "core hours" where all employees keep their schedules free for meetings, and designate time for focused work outside of those hours. Careful consideration

of overlapping core work blocks allows you to work harmoniously with your team.

3. More job satisfaction

According to author [Cal Newport](#), there are top three factors that lead to job satisfaction: relationships, mastery, and autonomy. We've already covered how better time management creates stronger relationships in the previous section. There's also a strong link between time management and mastery. Whether you're a creative or an engineer or anything in between, you advance your skill set with each hour of deep work you put in.

If you can enter a [flow state](#)—a pleasantly immersive headspace where you don't notice the clock ticking because you're so absorbed in your project—you'll be able to measurably level up your skill set. The hours you spend answering emails and rapidly switching between urgent but trivial tasks do little to help you hone your craft. Time blocking uninterrupted hours to devote to mastery while still keeping on top of crucial but trivial admin tasks are key.

What's more, achieving mastery is often rewarded in your working life with greater autonomy. Whether it's formally through a promotion to a leadership position, or informally when your team trusts you to own increasingly larger projects, the more you can demonstrate deep mastery of your craft, the more you'll be free to chart your own course as an employee.

4. Better run, more profitable businesses

Author Douglas Adams once quipped, "I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by." Without careful time management, it's easy to be swept up in a current of distractions and fail to make good on your plans. While the effects of time management on individuals are profound, they grow by an order of magnitude when you multiply by an entire workforce.

When employees manage their time effectively, businesses become more profitable for a number of reasons. One, it saves employee time. If employees can save time on counting their hours, it frees up more of their time to work on billable

tasks. Two, low-stress environments unlock greater creativity, leading to higher client satisfaction. And finally, it will lead to a happier workforce with less employee turnover, which is expensive and disruptive for businesses.

Mike Nellenbach, VP of Product Innovation at industrial design firm Tekna, saw a night-and-day difference when he took control of his team's time management. He [introduced Harvest](#) to replace their previous system of managing billable hours in Excel spreadsheets, which was a massive headache for both employees and managers. Managers would spend a full day each week generating client reports, and it was nearly impossible to extract meaningful insights from the rows of unstructured data.

"It was similar in terms of the inputs we were doing before but it just made [all of the data visual](#), meaningful, and much easier to engage with," says Mike. "Harvest has fundamentally helped us diversify and scale our business and it's definitely made many of the things that were just necessary tasks of running an agency very easy."

You don't have to drown in the sea of workplace stressors

The good news is that if you're struggling in the sea of workplace stressors, you have the power to radically improve your own circumstances by applying [time management strategies](#). Time management rescues you from drudgery, low motivation, stagnation—and allows you to reconnect with the most fun and engaging aspects of your work. Time management truly is a lifeboat—all you have to do is hop aboard.



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