



Dear Friend,

## Where'd the day go?

I can't tell you the number of times I ask myself that question.

*Where'd the day go?*

Often, these days, the reason I lose track of time is because I'm doing what I love to do. It's nothing for me to begin working, get into a zone, and look up only to discover that half of the day (if not all of the day) has just zoomed by. It's been productive. It's been rewarding. It's just been...quick!

*Where'd the day go?*

Unfortunately, though, not everyone asks that question for the same reason. I talk with a lot of people who are struggling with their days. They're unable to get things done. There are constant fires pulling them hither and yon, or it's hard to get started on anything much less see it through to the end.

So, join me for this month's edition of **EA Insights**. We tackle the issue of time management. Read on for a new take on some of the basics as well as a proven way to make things begin happening in your own life.

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
Executive Advantage, LLC

## Time Management 101

June Melvin Mickens  
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Whenever a new coaching client joins the Executive Advantage family, we begin the program with an extensive introductory session. That first, official meeting covers a lot of territory, but one key purpose is to laser in on some of the challenges underlying the person's decision to engage with us for coaching support. While not true for every client, a large majority generate a list that

includes one frequently seen challenge -- time management.

*Not enough time...  
Too much to do...  
Constant fires...  
Can't get started...  
Last minute scrambling...  
Interruptions...*

You name it. They experience it. We work on it.

Let me share with you five fundamental tips that serve as the launching pads for important work with our clients in the area of gaining more control of time.

### Know your purpose.

Anyone who's ever had an experience with archery knows that it's critical to scope out *what* your target is and *where* it is. Without having a good sight on that target, you end up aiming at nothing, everything, or just shooting in the wind.

The same principle applies with respect to time. Want to put an end to shooting in the wind? Figure out what your target is. In this instance, the key is to determine your purpose. It may be the purpose for your life, your career, your project, or your day. The point is that, if you know what you're in place to do, if you know where you're going, you're better able to make decisions about how to invest your time. You invest in those projects, appointments, or tasks that are aligned with that purpose.

### Plan regularly.

To make the most of your time, planning is essential. Planning may entail stepping back and analyzing an assignment you've been given, breaking it up into smaller pieces, and mapping out the best way to get the individual tasks done. Planning may involve pausing at the end of today to preview tomorrow so that you can devise an approach for tackling what's on your plate.

In order to get the most out of your time, planning isn't optional. And, it isn't something that you do only once a year, quarter, or even week. It really must become a daily habit of stopping briefly to assess where you are, where you're headed, and how you're going to get there

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## "Quotes"

*"You have to know what is right for you and go after it regardless of what others say."*  
~Les Brown

*"The secret of happiness is having something meaningful to do, seeking purpose"*  
~John Burroughs

*"By prevailing over all obstacles and distractions, one may unflinchingly arrive at his chosen goal or destination."*  
~Christopher Columbus

*"The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities."*  
~Stephen Covey

*"The presence of a long-term, conscious goal has helped me maintain stability through the ubiquitous changes of over half a century."*  
~Mary Craig

*"The thing that I find with [her] is that she does her work and then she leaves. She doesn't hang around.... She just gets it done and stays focused, and that's what I'm trying to do, learn from that."*  
~Paula Creamer

*"Until we can manage time, we can manage nothing else."*  
~Peter Drucker

*"It amazes me that most people spend more time planning next summer's vacation than they do planning the rest of their lives."*  
~Patricia Fripp

*"Time management is the hardest thing. It takes a lot more time to do than you realize."*  
~Lucinda Hitchner

### Reprioritize continually.

In case you haven't realized it yet, we live in a constantly changing world. There's uncertainty and flux, shifting priorities, and transition. Think about it. How many times have you actually had a plan for the day, only to arrive at work, learn that something unexpected has occurred, and see your beautiful plan go down the drain? It happens.

That's why, as you think about getting the most from your time, in addition to engaging in ongoing planning, continual reprioritization becomes important. What was top priority yesterday, or even a moment ago, might experience a status change. Consequently, in order to be as productive as possible, in the environment in which you find yourself, having the ability to be fluid and flexible, being able to identify priorities (or ask the right people the right questions in order to do so) becomes a critical skill -- one that will help you invest your time in the right way to meet the goals that have been set.

### Invest in the important.

Think about yesterday. How many things did you do yesterday that were not important at all, or at least not important to you?

It's easy to get sucked into just doing things because someone asks you, because they're routine, or because you're *supposed* to do them. But, the real question is whether they're important.

	IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
URGENT	1	3
NOT URGENT	2	4

You've probably seen a chart like this one before. Activities are *urgent* when they must be completed in a limited time. Activities are *important* when they enhance results and goals. With those definitions in mind, revisit yesterday's schedule. Where did your activity fall?

You see, when time is a challenge, you may discover that too much of yours is being devoted to activity that falls in Quadrants 3 and 4; whether or not it's *urgent*, it's simply not *important*. So you've got to ask yourself why you're investing precious time doing it. On the other hand, if you constantly find yourself scrambling while doing very important things, it's likely that you're living too much of your life in Quadrant 1 -- the *urgent* and the *important*. While some situations may validly fall into this quadrant, the stress involved with living there is unhealthy. When possible, where you want to invest the greatest amount of your time is in Quadrant 2. You want to devote yourself to matters of importance -- things that help you to advance your purpose - - and do so in a manner that allows you to function at a comfortable pace -- not scrambling, not dragging your feet, but moving purposefully.

### Manage distractions.

Bolt the door. Turn off the phone. Disable the email bubbles on the computer. Go into cocoon mode. Sound good? (*Trust me, I know!*)

The reality is that, no matter how well you know your purpose, how good you are at planning and prioritizing, or how diligent you are about winnowing out that which isn't important, distractions still await at every turn. It's unlikely that you'll be able to rid yourself of them completely. The real skill comes in learning how to *manage* them.

And so, depending on your circumstances, managing distractions may involve identifying work spaces that are conducive to getting something done -- whether that's to save you from yourself (e.g., working nowhere near a TV, bed, or other things that allure) or to save you from others. Managing distractions may be developing a coping strategy for a constantly ringing phone or email that's blowing up -- a strategy that allows you to be responsible and responsive while still having the ability to focus and actually accomplish something. Managing distractions may entail extricating yourself from meetings at which your presence truly isn't required so that your time can be invested in what is necessary. However you do it, the key is to recognize the time-stealers in your life and to craft relevant ways to keep them at bay.

I'd venture to say that you've read or heard some, if not all, of these tips before. There's very little that's new here, which is why the article's title is "Time Management **101**." I can't tell you how often I share a tip only to hear, "*I knew that!*"

You see, the *information* is easy to know; it's the *application* that's hard to pull off. Yet, it's the application that takes this all from the theoretical and places it into the realm of the practical. It's the application that moves you from simply *knowing* how to use your time effectively to actually *using* your time effectively. And, that's what makes the difference for the folks who seek us out; it's the support of a coach who helps you not only gain knowledge but who also walks with you as you turn that information into action and habits.

So, want to graduate from Time Management **101** to the **201** level and beyond? Want to go from just knowing about time management to being a better manager of your time? Contact us today to explore how **Executive Advantage** can partner with you. We're here to help you learn how to guard your time as you build a thriving [career](#) or [business](#).

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## About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about **Executive Advantage**, contact us [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

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"If you dream of something worth doing and then simply go to work on it and don't think anything of ... distractions, it is amazing how quickly you get through those 5,000 steps."  
~Edwin Land

"Prioritize your projects so that they fit in with your long-term goals."  
~Lorin Lee

"My decision was based on what's really most important. What do I prioritize?"  
~Hideki Matsui

"The soul which has no fixed purpose in life is lost to be everywhere, is to be nowhere."  
~Michel Montaigne

"Give me a man who says, "This one thing I do," and not, "These fifty things, I dabble in."  
~Dwight L. Moody

"It's always important for people to prioritize. Separating tasks, finding good work environments... these things are still fundamental."  
~John Powell

"This is the key to time management -- to see the value of every moment."  
~Menachem Mendel Schneerson

"What comes first, the compass or the clock? Before one can truly manage time (the clock), it is important to know where you are going, what your priorities and goals are, in which direction you are headed (the compass). Where you are headed is more important than how fast you are going. Rather than always focusing on what's urgent, learn to focus on what is really important."  
~Unknown

"If you're alive, there's a purpose for your life."  
~Rick Warren