

Meyer's Management Models

60. Time Management Funnel

How can I manage my time more effectively?

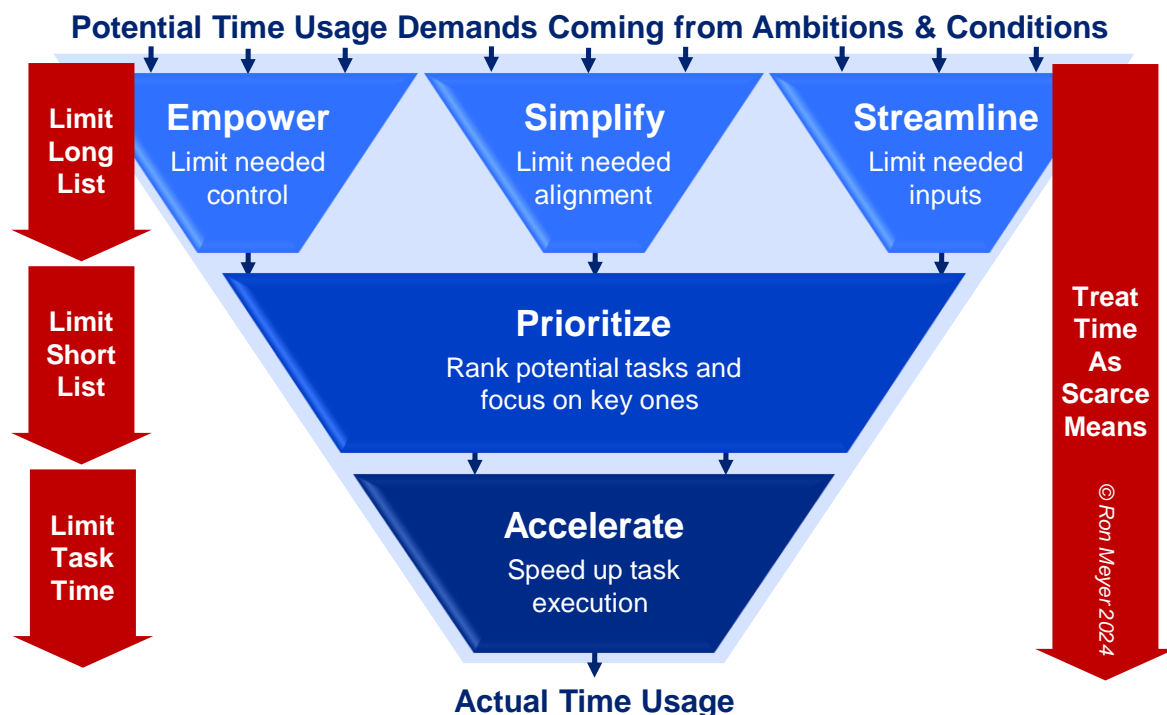
Key Definitions

In most countries an official working week is 40 hours, but few managers are able to squeeze all their activities into this limited timeframe. Most managers end up laboring longer hours and even then their work isn't finished, but they run out of time, energy and/or attention.

Time management is the process of consciously allocating time as a scarce resource, investing it into activities that will give the most attractive returns, while not overspending time on work, to the detriment of one's family, friends, health, and other endeavors.

Conceptual Model

The *Time Management Funnel* gives an overview of the three steps that can be taken to limit the amount of time that managers need to invest in work. The assumption is that managers have fewer hours available than demanded, so they need to filter and squeeze activities to fit within their "time budget". Demands for time will come from the external and organizational conditions surrounding managers but will also depend on their specific ambitions (strategic and operational goals). Managers should start by *limiting their long list* of potential activities, by filtering out the low value drains on time. Then they should *limit their short list*, by prioritizing the highest value ones. Finally, they should *limit task time*, by working more efficiently.



Key Elements

The five parts of the time management funnel are the following:

1. **Empower.** To first way to limit the long list of activities is to delegate as many tasks as possible to others and then limit the amount of "vertical" control needed to ensure that this

work is carried out correctly. This means making sure that colleagues are hired, trained, and retained who are capable of taking on significant responsibilities independently, and then going through the *Empowerment Cycle* (see model 21) to quickly build their autonomy.

2. **Simplify.** The second timesaver is to limit the complexity of the organization by reducing the number of interfaces and alignments. This can be done by creating small separate teams with the freedom to run end-to-end processes independently, instead of having large teams that need a lot of internal coordination, that in turn need to coordinate with other teams. All forms of “horizontal” alignment burn through management time at a high rate.
3. **Streamline.** The third way to compress the long list is to limit the number of steps and stakeholders in decision-making processes. Each extra cook in the kitchen increases the amount of discussion time needed exponentially, while each extra quality check creates additional bureaucracy. By streamlining decision-making to a few people and a few steps, 80% quality can be achieved in only 20% of the regular time, which is usually good enough.
4. **Prioritize.** Even if the long list of potential tasks is reduced to a much shorter one, it is still important to rank the remaining tasks and focus on the key ones. In the *Fruits & Nuts Matrix* (model 26) this prioritizing was done along two dimensions, first distinguishing which activities will have the highest impact, and then identifying how much effort each activity will require. The low hanging fruit (high impact, low effort) should usually be done first.
5. **Accelerate.** Finally, it is also important to use time efficiently, by speeding up activity execution. Important ways to accelerate include not overengineering an outcome (avoiding perfectionism in favor of “good enough”) yet getting most things right the first time around (avoiding constant repair work). Also, not multi-tasking (focus on one task at a time) yet being quick at switching to a next task (redirecting focus).

Key Insights

- **Time is a scarce resource.** Managers deliberate extensively about how to spend their money but spend their time casually, as if it is endless. Yet, time is a scarce resource that can only be spent once. In practice, managers end up stealing time from their private lives to plug the holes in their work “time budgets”, often damaging their relationships and health.
- **Time management requires conscious spending.** To avoid overspending time on work activities, managers need to intentionally manage their time budget. They need to be *frugal*, by choosing what not to do (limiting activities), and they need to be *efficient*, by doing the things they have chosen in less time (limiting time per activity).
- **Time management requires a three-step funnel.** Limiting time spending starts with reducing demand. This is called *limiting the long list* and is achieved by empowering others (to limit the time needed for control), simplifying the organization (to limit the time needed for alignment) and streamlining decision-making processes (to limit the time needed for agreement). The second step in the funnel is to *limit the short list*, by prioritizing the remaining time demands. The third step is to *limit task time*, by working more efficiently, speeding up the execution of the highest priority activities.
- **Time management can be helped by lower ambitions.** The time management funnel helps to invest time wisely, but “step 0” can be to ask whether the investment goals make sense in the first place. Lowering ambitions to a more feasible level is the easiest way to live within the available time budget. Your ambitions might create more stress than stretch.
- **Time management requires a time investment.** Ironically, managers often feel they don’t have the time to consciously manage their time. But you need to invest time to save time.

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Insightful Tools to Kickstart Your Thinking

Publication Schedule

<i>July 2019</i>	<i>Mind the Gap Model</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2019</i>	<i>Digital Platform Map</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>September 2019</i>	<i>Interaction Pressure Gauge</i>	<i>Interpersonal Interaction</i>
<i>October 2019</i>	<i>Revenue Model Framework</i>	<i>Revenue Model Typology</i>
<i>November 2019</i>	<i>House of Engagement</i>	<i>Organizational Engagement</i>
<i>December 2019</i>	<i>Confidence Quotient</i>	<i>Trust Building</i>
<i>January 2020</i>	<i>Competition Tornado</i>	<i>Competitive Strategy</i>
<i>February 2020</i>	<i>11C Synergy Model</i>	<i>Corporate Synergy Management</i>
<i>March 2020</i>	<i>Leadership Fairness Model</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>April 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Agility Model</i>	<i>Strategy Process Approach</i>
<i>May 2020</i>	<i>Control Panel</i>	<i>Corporate Control Dimensions</i>
<i>June 2020</i>	<i>Rising Star Framework</i>	<i>Talent Management</i>
<i>July 2020</i>	<i>Strategy Development Cycle</i>	<i>Strategy Process Steps</i>
<i>August 2020</i>	<i>7I Corporate Center Model</i>	<i>Corporate Organization</i>
<i>September 2020</i>	<i>Storytelling Scripts</i>	<i>Leadership Communication</i>
<i>October 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Bets Framework</i>	<i>Strategic Decision-Making</i>
<i>November 2020</i>	<i>Rebound Model of Resilience</i>	<i>Organizational Resilience</i>
<i>December 2020</i>	<i>4C Leadership Capabilities</i>	<i>Leadership Competences</i>
<i>January 2021</i>	<i>Digital Product Model Dial</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>February 2021</i>	<i>Digital Distribution Model Dial</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>March 2021</i>	<i>Empowerment Cycle</i>	<i>Employee Empowerment</i>
<i>April 2021</i>	<i>Innovation Box</i>	<i>Innovation Approaches</i>
<i>May 2021</i>	<i>Knowledge Sharing Bridges</i>	<i>Best Practice Sharing</i>
<i>June 2021</i>	<i>Followership Cycle</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>July 2021</i>	<i>Everest Model of Change</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2021</i>	<i>Fruits & Nuts Matrix</i>	<i>Priority-Setting</i>
<i>September 2021</i>	<i>Powerhouse Framework</i>	<i>People & Organization Strategy</i>
<i>October 2021</i>	<i>Strategy Hourglass</i>	<i>Strategy-Making Steps</i>
<i>November 2021</i>	<i>Disciplined Dialogue Model</i>	<i>Interpersonal Communication</i>
<i>December 2021</i>	<i>Team Building Cycle</i>	<i>Team Building Process</i>
<i>January 2022</i>	<i>Market System Map</i>	<i>External Analysis Framework</i>
<i>February 2022</i>	<i>Strategic Alignment Model</i>	<i>Business Level Strategy</i>
<i>March 2022</i>	<i>Creativity X-Factor</i>	<i>Creativity Enhancement</i>
<i>April 2022</i>	<i>Organizational System Map</i>	<i>Organizational Analysis</i>
<i>May 2022</i>	<i>Corporate Value Creation Model</i>	<i>Corporate Level Strategy</i>
<i>June 2022</i>	<i>Change Manager's Toolbox</i>	<i>Change Methodologies</i>

<i>July 2022</i>	<i>Sustainable You Model</i>	<i>Personal Sustainability</i>
<i>August 2022</i>	<i>Value Proposition Dial</i>	<i>Business Level Strategy</i>
<i>September 2022</i>	<i>The Tree of Power</i>	<i>Organizational Power</i>
<i>October 2022</i>	<i>Psychological Safety Compass</i>	<i>Team Dynamics</i>
<i>November 2022</i>	<i>Strategic Action Modes</i>	<i>Strategy Process</i>
<i>December 2022</i>	<i>Corporate Management Styles</i>	<i>HQ Management</i>
<i>January 2023</i>	<i>Thinking Directions Framework</i>	<i>Reasoning Skills</i>
<i>February 2023</i>	<i>5I Innovation Pipeline</i>	<i>Innovation Process</i>
<i>March 2023</i>	<i>Resistance to Change Typology</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>April 2023</i>	<i>Ambition Radar Screen</i>	<i>Motivation Analysis</i>
<i>May 2023</i>	<i>Corporate Strategy Framework</i>	<i>Corporate Strategy</i>
<i>June 2023</i>	<i>Cultural Fabric Model</i>	<i>Organizational Culture</i>
<i>July 2023</i>	<i>New Pyramid Principle</i>	<i>Presentation Approaches</i>
<i>August 2023</i>	<i>Activity System Dial</i>	<i>Value Creation Analysis</i>
<i>September 2023</i>	<i>Customer-Centricity Circle</i>	<i>Organizational Design</i>
<i>October 2023</i>	<i>Status Snakes & Ladders</i>	<i>Leadership Branding</i>
<i>November 2023</i>	<i>Stakeholder Stance Map</i>	<i>Stakeholder Management</i>
<i>December 2023</i>	<i>Best Practice Sharing Modes</i>	<i>Sharing Methods</i>
<i>January 2024</i>	<i>Duty of Care Feedback Model</i>	<i>Feedback Method</i>
<i>February 2024</i>	<i>BOLD Vision Framework</i>	<i>Organizational Vision</i>
<i>March 2024</i>	<i>MOVING Mission Framework</i>	<i>Organizational Mission</i>
<i>April 2024</i>	<i>Leadership Circle Map</i>	<i>Leadership Skills</i>
<i>May 2024</i>	<i>Digitalization Staircase</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>June 2024</i>	<i>Time Management Funnel</i>	<i>Personal Time Management</i>
July 2024	Wicked Problem Index	Organizational Decision-Making
August 2024	Performance Assignment Matrix	Corporate Strategy
September 2024	Farming & Hunting Matrix	Sales Management
October 2024	Self-Centered Thinking Framework	Thinking Styles
November 2024	Sustainability Maturity Model	Sustainability Management
December 2024	Triple Diamond Model	Organizational Decision-Making
January 2025	Interpersonal Interaction Levels	Communication Approaches
February 2025	Synergy Value Matrix	Corporate Level Strategy
March 2025	Dynamic Organization Paradigm	Human-centered Organization
April 2025	New Learning Curve	Personal Learning
May 2025	Partnership Distance Model	Interorganizational Relations
June 2025	Embedded Identity Model	Personal Awareness