As a supervisor or manager, frequently your most difficult task is managing your schedule. Managers and supervisors are often bombarded with meetings, emails, phone calls, and unscheduled visitors. Often times these obligations and interruptions impede your ability to accomplish your daily tasks in a timely manner. However, organizing your office, scheduling your day ahead of time, delegating tasks, and learning how to manage interruptions can greatly improve your ability to manage your time efficiently.

**BECOME ORGANIZED**

Having a messy office not only looks unprofessional, but is also inefficient. Time is wasted looking for files and documents that are improperly stored. In order to become more organized you should:

- Clear your desk—A desk cluttered is distracting and limits your ability to locate items quickly.
- Dispose of all unnecessary paperwork—Out of uncertainty or fear, offices often become disorderly due to the accumulation of paperwork. Go through piles of accumulated papers to determine if anything can be discarded. Consider whether or not the documents you have been keeping are stored on your computer, are available online, or are duplicates. If so, perhaps these documents can be discarded.
- Reorganize your files—Resist using your inbox as a storage center. Establish an effective filing system, in which items are clearly labeled and logically organized. This will reduce the amount of time spent looking for needed items. It is also beneficial to organize your computer files, by clearly naming documents and logically storing items in folders.

In addition to having an organized desk, it is useful to have an well planned daily schedule. To accomplish this you should:

- Prior to leaving work, plan your schedule for the next day.
- Prioritize tasks, putting the more urgent items first.
- Create a “To-Do” list.
- Complete the most difficult items on your list, first. Completing complex or difficult tasks early in the day, when you are at your best, will reduce stress and produce better results.
- Set deadlines for the completion of tasks and stick to those deadlines!
- Set time aside every day to go through letters, emails, and phone messages.
- Schedule time daily or weekly (depending on the needs of your department) to meet with staff. This will reduce interruptions that occur throughout the day.
• Set definite times each day that you are not to be disturbed. This will allow you to focus on your work without interruptions.

HANDLING INTERRUPTIONS

Supervisors and managers are often confronted with frequent interruptions. Perhaps the staff you supervise have questions or issues that require your attention. Or perhaps you have students, employees, or other visitors who stop by with questions, to discuss a matter of concern, or just to chat. Although each individual interruption may take only a few minutes to address, throughout the day frequent interruptions can consume a significant amount of time. Furthermore, these interruptions can cause you to lose focus on the task you are working on thus requiring you to re-focus. Although some interruptions may be inevitable, there are ways to reduce the interruptions.

• Train your staff to screen visitors and phone calls. Provide your staff with the resources to address routine inquiries.
• If you have an unexpected visitor, immediately establish the reason for his/her visit. If it is a complicated matter that will be timely to address, ask your visitor to schedule an appointment.
• Avoid small talk.
• If you receive a phone call that requires information you do not have immediately accessible, set a time to call back.
• During times you have set aside not to be disturbed, allow calls to go directly to voicemail or a clerical assistant.

DELEGATE TASKS

As a supervisor/manager, part of your responsibility is to delegate tasks to your support staff. Delegating less complex duties will clear up time to address more pressing or difficult issues.

• Avoid the, “It’ll be easier and better if I do it” attitude.
• Determine what tasks need to be completed and what your expectations of these tasks are.
• Have the employee that you have assigned a task to write out the instructions you have given him/her and review these instructions with the employee. Provide a deadline for the work to be accomplished. If the employee is not available to review the instructions with you, write the instructions down for the employee. This will reduce interruptions from the employee with questions about the assignment and will clarify your expectations.
• Resist being a perfectionist. If an employee has submitted acceptable work, avoid continually asking the employee to redo it. This wastes time and can be demoralizing for the employee.
• Track the assignments you have delegated by establishing a log. In this log, list the person the task was assigned to, the date the task was assigned, the task assigned, and the due date.
• Allow employees to use their own methods to accomplish tasks if it produces satisfactory results.
• Acknowledge employees who have successfully completed tasks.

One of the biggest challenges managers and supervisors face is effective time management. Frequently, managers and supervisors are required to sit on committees, participate in meetings, and oversee an office or department. With all of these obligations, finding time to complete routine tasks such as reading correspondence or completing performance evaluations for staff members, can be challenging. However, by becoming more organized, planning a daily schedule in advance, better managing interruptions, and delegating tasks, successful time management can be accomplished. Although effective time management may require changes in your daily routine, ultimately it will reduce stress and increase productivity.