

## **Time Management for IFMSA officers and NMO presidents**

We all suffer from lack of time and find ourselves working very late in the evenings and occupy all our weekends to catch up the work (the backlog and the forward project) This will lead to stress that we haven't completed our work.

I don't claim myself to be a good time manager, however, I believe, that we can all modify our work pattern towards a systematic action that will leave us with good amount of time for ourselves and a wave of satisfaction with our completed work.

Below I have outlined, based on my experience and some of the training I have received the method of time management and the purpose of writing this is to help our TRD director in her process to train the officers and NMO presidents.

Nobody can deny that the major demand of time is from our studies and preparation of exams. Then how can we find time to work for IFMSA? Both IFMSA officers and NMO presidents have to allocate substantial time for IFMSA.

The tremendous benefits of time management are:

- complete all the work we are expected of
- provide quality work-outcome
- give you a sense of satisfaction
- leave you with enough time for your private life

Pareto, famous economist of last century, said that if we plan well we could achieve 80% of work with 20% of resource. Of course he applied this in terms of money. But I strongly believe that we can translate in terms of time as well. If we really want and really try, we can achieve 80 % of work with 20 % time.

To achieve the above four benefits and to what Pareto said we need to improve following three of our work behaviours:

- work habit
- work system
- work planning

### **Work Habit:**

- Do It Now
- Use Salami Techniques
- Screen unnecessary information
- Reduce interruption
- 21 day challenge

***Do It Now***: The core message of personal efficiency process is to *Do It Now*. You read

e-mail *Do It Now* whatever you want to do with it: reply it *now*, delegate it *now*, forward it *now*, file it *now*, delete it *now*, decide to reply later *now*.

**Use Salami technique** : For big and complicated task use Salami Technique i.e. break it down into small fractions and complete every piece at a comfortable interval without crossing the deadline.

**Screen Unnecessary Information**: This is an age information revolution and you are 'attacked' by information of all sorts necessary and unnecessary. Don't feel sad and sorry to delete and screen the unnecessary information.

**Reduce interruptions**: Excessive interruption is the cause of major source of frustration and inefficiency. To prevent re-doing the work, state your requirement, meet requirements and clarify it properly. We the IFMSA officers would know that when the e-mail doesn't work in 48 hours then we have to resort to either SMS or phone.

**21 day challenge**: Behavioural studies have shown that to develop a positive habit or to break a wrong habit it has to be practised for 21 uninterrupted days and if you fail to do so in the process you have to repeat it for another 21 days. So officers and presidents, choose some habit that you want to break or develop. It could be replying e-mails within 24 hours or waking up at six o'clock every day etc. whatever you choose practise it for 21 days.

### Work System: -

Work system impinge upon your working table, filing system (both in computer and paper files) and a big BIN or Trash.

On the table (and in your computer) you should have four trays:

- ◆ in tray
- ◆ out tray
- ◆ pending tray
- ◆ reading tray

The In-Tray (or inbox in computer) need to be emptied at the end of each day. The pending tray holds the papers or mails that should be emptied within 48 hours.

The reading tray holds those papers or document that you decide to read in your allocated free time. IFMSA list serves gives much opportunity to read information. But only feed this tray if you are sure that you will allocate time for reading it. Otherwise delete or if not archive it.

The Filing systems has three components,

- ◆ working files,
- ◆ reference file
- ◆ archive files.

The working file is the ones which you are working with NOW. This has to be kept near your working table where your computer is. What does the working file should contain? Let us take an example the working file of SCOPH director.

One of his working file could be 'Activities of the Global Embrace Day'. Another example, the working file of our VPI could be 'NMO development survey project'. The life of the working file is till the project/work/assignment lasts. After the date of completion of the work the file has to be replaced by another set of working files. The reason for keeping these files near you is that it shouldn't take more than five seconds to retrieve the working file when you are seeking it.

**Reference file** has the necessary documents that you need for the reference of working files. The reference files for SCOPH Director could have minutes of last SCOPH working committee, updated address-list of the NPOs. Similarly the reference file for VPI might have the previous result of NMO satisfaction survey and the address list of the NMOs and so on.

**Archives files** are far away from your working table as you seldom use it. It is used when you want to consult some past documents or would like to make a research to aid your on going work. Hany, the editor of Anniversary book, used the archive file kept in our General Secretariat when he wanted to collect information.

You can divide your present documents and keep in the archives file, reference file and working files.

In the center of all these files there should be a big BIN which should be used most. One thing I have learnt is that to *throw away everything that you will distract you and that you don't need.*

### **Work Planning**

Somebody has rightly said that if we fail to plan then we are planning to fail. Every hour you plan, you save eight hours. Planning enables you to

- ◆ Work in the right thing and right sequence
- ◆ Maximize your capacity and resources
- ◆ Anticipate obstacles and minimize crises

Tools for work planning are:

Daily planning, weekly planning, monthly planning.

Your diary should have the logs for day, week and month. It is handy to carry to big enough to contain all you need to feed. Some use Palm diary but practise shows that paper diary is more manageable than the electronic though it varies with individuals.

In a day, while working for IFMSA you do either of the three:

- Routine work (e-mail, fax, mail etc)
- Planned work (that is agreed with the team or self for a day, week, month or a year such as IFMSA plan of action 2002)

- The contingencies (the urgent work that is not expected or planned. The contingency for Mariek the outgoing SCORP director, this year was to work with MSF during the disaster in India)

Therefore you have to plan as follows in the pyramid-widening-fashion form daily to strategic planning as follows:

- Daily planning
- weekly planning
- monthly plan
- strategic plan

In IFMSA strategic planning is an organizational planning and usually runs for half a year to one year. *The IFMSA Plan of Action 2002* is the one example of the strategic planning.

Take another example. Your new SCOPE director, Jana is making a strategic planning publish MSI on exchange by the end of her term. NMO's strategic planning could be to declare your schools tobacco free by the end of May, for example.

The Monthly, weekly and the daily planning are the filling-ins of the strategic planning.

### **Coping Strategies**

If you think your planned activities exceeds your available time then you need to try or more of the following coping strategies. -

**Prioritize:** There are four types of works. Whenever you receive a request for work it could be classified into the following four.

- I. urgent and important
- II. not urgent but important
- III. urgent but not important
- IV. not urgent and not important

Complete work in the order of priority I, II, III and IV.

**Analyze :** Your past calendar (monthly and weekly) how you did could be a valuable resource to analyse where you are improve and where you can duplicate.

**Negotiate:** Discuss your workload with your colleague or your superior and ask for suggestion.

**Delegate:** Delegate the task and clarify properly the task before sending or receiving the delegated task.

Fellow officers and presidents, we mostly always fail to plan. This is the major reason of our inefficiencies. We might believe that planning is the waste of time but soon after practice we will be compelled to believe that planning is the only mean to maximize our capacity.

Most successful planner plan their next day the day before and the next week on Friday

the week before.

Try this and you will realize the difference. One thing to bear in mind is that changing t  
work habit , work system and work planning is a process and required a perseverance.

If you decide to practice this observer yourself how you are doing it.

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