

Never Enough Time, So How Do We Decide?

Learn what the experts say about time management

By: Leigh Barnes, John Simatovich Elementary School

Contact: lbarnes@union.k12.in.us

Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

After receiving intense training in the 8-Step process I still found that my building level learning log meetings lacked direction and purpose. I set out to find additional resources I could use to aid in teaching my staff how to make data meetings more productive and in making their inquiries lead to better instructional practices. Therefore the purpose of my action research was to increase my own professional self-efficacy through the use of inquiry based leadership.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered if I researched time management; changed my mindset; made and followed a daily priority plan; would I get more done and feel more accomplished at the end of each day?

Methods/Procedures:

Once each team finished the forms I then began the process of evaluating the data. The overall results indicated that teams had very different opinions regarding what data held the most significance to their practice. The overall results can be found here:

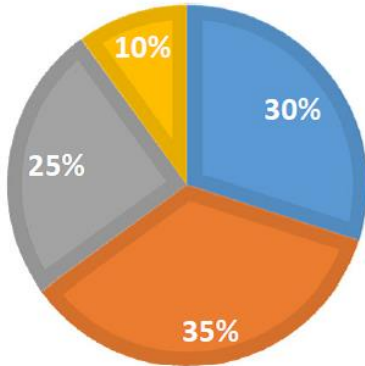
<https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2Fspreadsheets%2Fd%2F12NXst-K5ntWgU8e7qpP2LnOudS-gEaVao0avT2a9fdg%2Fedit%3Fusp%3Dsharing&data=02%7C01%7CLori.Davis%40indstate.edu%7Ce18b4125ff4043af132c08d5cb2539df%7C3eeabe396b1c4f95ae682fab18085f8d%7C1%7C0%7C636638283102616540&sd ata=8U1zsVOUw9f97tvch4Xx8w0HhkAT%2F%2FTeN6cCfgamx1M%3D&reserved=0>

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, two important things I learned include: 1) most of my time was spent in Quadrant I, the Important and Urgent, and in Quadrant III, the Not Important and Non-Urgent; and 2) it was imperative that I examine my values, passion, and mindset as a servant leader. As indicated in the included graph and table below, most of my time was spent in Quadrant I, the Important and Urgent, and in Quadrant III, the Not Important and Non-Urgent. In Quadrant I, I was addressing crisis, solving problems, and attending meetings and in Quadrant III, I was tending to immediate teacher needs, building staff concerns, and answering e-mails and phone calls. Overall, I realized both of these quadrants led my day to be managed by outside pressing issues and concerns rather than my own authority. I also realized I was spending time in these quadrants to solve problems for staff and provide immediate answers to staff on what were actually non-urgent matters.

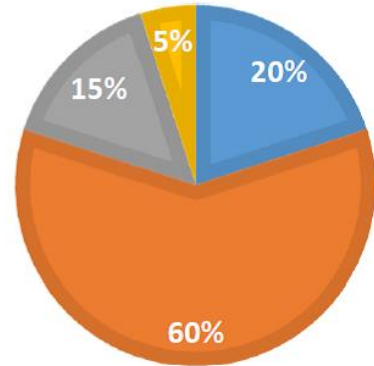
DATA COLLECTED

■ Quadrant I ■ Quadrant II
 ■ Quadrant III ■ Quadrant IV



PERSONAL GOAL

■ Quadrant I ■ Quadrant II
 ■ Quadrant III ■ Quadrant IV



| Covey's Time Management Grid | URGENT | NOT URGENT |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| IMPORTANT | <p><i>I Goal: 20%</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Crisis Other Pressing Problems Behavior Issues Building Management Deadline Projects E-mail Teacher Requests Staff Concerns Parents Concerns | <p><i>II Goal: 60%</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning SIP Relationship Building Classroom Visits and Observations Innovated Development Building Leadership Capacity of staff Teacher Development Meetings Culture Building |
| NOT IMPORTANT | <p><i>III Goal: 15%</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Concerns Interruptions, not important Phone Calls Meetings Pressing Matters Teacher Requests E-Mail Parent Concerns | <p><i>IV Goal: 5%</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beautifying Data and Newsletters Phone Calls E-Mails Mail Fun Activities Busy Work Culture Building Planning |

*Many repeat tasks were divided into quadrants based on reflection of the four areas.

*Goal percentages are individually set.

In Covey's (2013) book "7 Habits of Highly Effective People", he conveys that in order to be highly effective time managers, we as leaders should spend most of our time in Quadrant II, with the non-urgent and important tasks. Covey informs that spending the majority of our time here will in fact, in the end, decrease the amount of time we have to spend in the other quadrants as it focuses on development, improvement, and relationship building. Moreover, Covey conveys that we should avoid the other three quadrants, especially the not important tasks. The other learning that occurred as a result of my action research surrounded the answers to why I was consistently accomplishing some tasks more than others and why I was spending most of my time in two quadrants. The following is a recorded excerpt from the kept daily journal of thoughts and feelings at the end of each day, "Today, I am overwhelmed not knowing where the time went, frustrated that I spent so much time solving one teacher's staff problem and not getting into the classrooms I wanted to visit today." This example summarizes many of the journal entries.

As a result, I began to read articles surrounding time management to look for more than managing the "time" itself but instead the decisions I was making daily to drive my time. Answering questions presented by Psychologist Julia Pappas in her articles (2017) surrounding time in terms of "choices and priorities" as well as the "why" in our decision making in time management became a vital step in realizing a change. Pappas discusses the idea of giving time to those tasks that "matter" to us based from our values, passion, and choices and as a result, in accomplishing those tasks, we will feel like we have enough time in our day. Whittaker (2012) in *What Great Principals Do Differently*, also provides affirmation for finding your "core", stating, "Without a core of firmly held beliefs, it's difficult to steer a steady course. With this core, we feel secure and confident." Change occurred in the way I viewed the precious time I had each day. Articulation of my values and passion as a leader was monumental. Only after developing my own personal mission statement addressing my values and passion, was I able to plan each day using Covey's "Time Management Grid" effectively to feel accomplished at the end of the day.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

In conclusion, the action research process has provided me an effective tool to utilize as a time management system and even more importantly has provided me the sounding board to be reflective as a servant leader in the area of time management. As an administrator, I have learned that I want to solve problems for people and take care of issues and concerns immediately regardless of the urgency and importance. I realize that about myself as a leader and now picture the grid as a tool to be in charge of managing my time according to the quadrants with the foundation of my decision making grounded by my values and passion.

Throughout this process and change in my overall operating, my teachers have shown me that they don't expect me to solve everything for them and certainly don't expect me to address their needs immediately. This in itself has been a mind opening realization for me as a leader. I now ask them to e-mail me or write me a note and I now feel comfortable waiting to address issues that are not important. As leaders we know one of the most important responsibilities we have is to ensure student learning and mastery of the standards. Whittaker (2012) discussed the necessity for building leaders to establish a pattern of being in classrooms to observe to reinforce teacher's best work. Before the action research project, I found my classroom visits decreasing from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. In learning to be comfortable in waiting to address certain unimportant needs, I have found that I am in classrooms more and that I do feel more accomplished at the end of the day as I know student learning is high on my value and passion list and some say, the most important responsibility we have as leaders.

From the action research cycle, I now utilize the time management, four quadrant grid to plan my day instead of a list of unorganized tasks. I also have my personal mission and vision statement encompassing my passion and values posted in my office for daily guidance and reassurance when making decisions. Two quotes that I now feel empowered by, include: "You don't need more time, you just need to decide", said by Seth Godin (2013) and "Either you run the day or the day runs you...", said by Jim Rohn.

In considering next steps and future practice as a leader, I want to examine how I can foster the development of the use of the identified time management system with other staff led areas of improvement. For example, what would it look like if our school improvement and collaboration teams utilized this time management grid to guide their action plan each year. And as a leader, I also begin to wonder how this learning could affect my leadership to build the capacity of teacher leaders.

References:

Covey, S. R.(2013).The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change. New York : Simon & Schuster

Godin, S.(2013).Urgency and Accountability are Two Sides of the Innovation Coin. Retrieved from http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2013/05/urgency-and-accountability-are-two-sides-of-the-innovation-coin.html

Pappas, J.(2017).You Don't Need More Time — Priorities & Choices. Retrieved from <http://juliapappas.co/time-choices-priorities/>

Pappas, J.(2017).Time Management: The Power of Asking Why. Retrieved from <http://juliapappas.co/time-management-power/>

Whittaker, T.(2012). What Great Principals Do Differently. New York, New York: Routledge.