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Management of time , a New Responsibility for Executives

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MANAGEMENT OF TIME A New Responsibility for Executives

By ANGELOS A. TSAKLANGANOS

Introduction

In the complex business environment that exists today, executive responsibility can no longer be allocated only to the limited traditional administrative resources: manpower, money, materials, and market behavior. These traditional resources assumed a total dedication on the part of the management to organizational needs and requirements. Unfortunately, the era of limited executive commitment has passed away forever. What has since developed is an extended sense of involvement on the part of management, not only in various organizational situations which were previously ignored, but also in several external affairs requiring administrative attention.

The responsibilities of executives were historically limited by the extent of existing technology and the social environment of the time. However, today's executive must deal with new areas that were heretofore non-existent. The rapid rise of scientific management as well as computer technology requires that executives devote increasing time to the acquisition of skills and techniques that although once non-existent, are now part of the "state of the art." Further, the concept of the "good corporate citizen," the company that works socially in the overall environment, is a new area that means time must be devoted to community projects and even environmental pollution. These demands did not exist before the 1960's, but their urgency today cannot be disputed. Time must be spent on them, and this takes away from the precious time available to executives. Such new developments are the product of the extremely technological and socially conscious period that now confronts each executive.

The varied pressures on executive effectiveness have made executive time a most strategic and crucial asset. Executive time has become even more crucial in recent years due to the rapid rate at which changes have occurred. These changes are manifested in technology, (i.e., data processing and communications) as well as in the attitudes of people and the economy itself. This multiple attack on executive time underlines the extreme urgency of preparing suitable guidelines for the conservation and utilization of time, delegation of work and responsibility, and the gradual removal of all trivial data from the executive desk.

This relative shrinking of time available to each executive for various segments of his managerial sphere points to the dichotomy between executive and private citizen that has always existed but is

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now more pronounced. As the demand on an executive's time increases, there is a corresponding decrease in time available for home life. This is a prime generator of conflict and its resulting pressure on the executive.

The purpose of this paper is to develop several meaningful guidelines for the optimal use of executive time. The variety of pressures that face an executive is outlined, and then three basic approaches for the best management of executive time are presented. These general guidelines can be applied to all types of businesses, and arranged so as to fit the individual needs and requirements of a company.

Variety of Pressures

Management of time has two distinct dimensions. The first deals with those pressures on executive time which originate from *within* the organization. The second concerns those demands which originate from forces *external* to the business firm.

These pressures—society, job, family, and personal—which surround the contemporary executive are both more intense and more numerous than they were in the past. The reasons for heightened executive tension are found in increased business complexity, greater stress on inter-personal relations, greater size of organizations, and the vulnerability of the business firm to practically all outside pressures, and pressure groups. Irrespective of the level at which the executive is functioning, he finds his job enlarged and extended beyond the traditional requirements of his work by:

1. Receiving and writing more letters
2. Receiving and making more telephone calls
3. Receiving more visitors
4. Attending more conferences and meetings
5. Receiving more data
6. Possibly supervising more people and possibly being supervised by more people
7. Reading more (technical journals, etc.)
8. Finding members of his family are more demanding
9. Having his number of friends and acquaintances increased
10. Having his personal ambitions and objectives increased.

This addition of size and requirements to any executive job, regardless of level, is a product of the 1960's emphasis on corporate structure. With the rise of large corporations in the early 1960's (IBM, Xerox), and the merging of firms to form conglomerates (ITV, National Brands), the absolute size of the individual corporation has increased so that executives at all echelons must be prepared to manage product-lines, personnel, and money.

Whether or not an executive is successful is not relevant here. Regardless of his title, salary, or position, the modern executive is engulfed by an increasing volume of paper work, unproductive as-

semblies, and frustrating personal experiences.

He continuously observes that his time is spent on work which is neither organizationally productive nor conducive to greater personal satisfaction. Caught in the mainstream of "Parkinson's Law", "Bureaucratic organization", and even "Executive family syndrome", he is faced with a situation which cannot be resolved by a complacent and passive approach. A major departure from established patterns of work and personal relationships, as well as a need to be detached from personally performing minute details, must be coupled with a re-orientation toward whatever is more important, crucial, and essential. Unless a fundamental change is effected in the attitudes and thinking of the executive, the pressures converging on him from different directions will continue to multiply. If these pressures *do* continue to multiply, then the amount of non-productive time will categorically increase until the possibility of total breakdown of efficiency becomes a reality.

A reduction of this bureaucratic and social pressure is possible if the absolute amount of time spent by the executive is better organized. That is, the total work time in the office and at home should not increase as the level of income of the executive rises. Executives should not have to take home work from the office, stay late or arrive early, but rather learn to use their time more efficiently.

This type of work behavior by the executive causes pressures which lower efficiency at work and create pressures in the home. As the executive becomes preoccupied with his problems at work, time spent with his family will decrease. The modern family, meanwhile, demands more participation in household affairs by the father. His poor social and familial performance will create pressures from his wife and children which, in turn, will lessen his efficiency at work. This type of conflict is cyclical in nature, the increased pressures at work will add to the problems at home, and the cycle will continue. Since many executives' families tend to live in suburban areas, commuting time also shortens family time, and exerts an added pressure on the executive.

In summary, we may assume that there is a direct relationship between the authority and responsibilities of an executive and the number of marital difficulties he may encounter. Thus it is necessary to work out a formula for the optimal utilization of executive time.

Three Basic Approaches

There are three different approaches to effective time-management. They are:

1. Increasing the amount of available time
2. Doing more work in the available time
3. Doing only the important work in the available time.

The first approach suggests that the executive stretch his working hours as far as possible. This could result in severe depression,

fatigue, and lack of efficiency.

The second approach is work and methods oriented. It requires a mechanically oriented mind—increased reading exercises and so forth. There is an absolute limit to this type of training. At its extreme, it could make the executive an efficiency expert and methods manager rather than improve his decision making, human relations and managerial traits.

The third approach suggests that a scale of priority be assigned to the management of time. It also denotes a commitment toward only essential and conceptual matters, rather than toward massive details of an operational nature, which must be delegated elsewhere. This approach necessitates an action-oriented strategy. Its application can develop an integrated personality in the executive. However, this alternative is not an easy one to follow. In order to be functional it requires a *preparatory phase, educational training, and a generally enlightened organizational climate.*

Strategy for Action

The *preparatory phase* will require establishing key guide lines to identify both internal and external pressures, and determine the best means to cope with them.

The dimension of internal pressures should include considerations of the following nature:

1. Determination of work load
2. Limit on inter-departmental relations
3. Establishment of proper rules, procedures, and policies to be followed
4. Schedules should be adhered to
5. Organizational structure should be updated
6. Meetings, conferences, internal memos should be revised and minimized
7. Forms must be streamlined
8. Delegation must be religiously exercised
9. No executive should have to become his own subordinate
10. Emphasis should be placed on conceptual treatment and not operational and/or functional areas
11. Recruitment of qualified secretaries and assistants
12. Supervision, by an expert, of incoming work which is passed to the executive's desk
13. Computerized information storage and retrieval work
14. An executive sabbatical period
15. Use of conference telephone calls
16. De-emphasis of the "Executive portfolio syndrome"
17. Reorientation of compulsory worker, fatigued worker, and escapist worker.

The dimension of external pressures should include the following considerations:

1. Lid on public relations, visitors, and guests

2. Using printed form letters and not personalized replies (however, not to conflict with behavioral or public relations principles.)
3. Transacting business informally with outsiders
4. Curbing *excessive* time spent on purposeless social, communal, and externally generated activities
5. Reading abstracts and books as opposed to entire books, reports, or articles
6. Encouraging briefing sessions
7. Increasing emphasis on vacation and family travel for executives
8. Family counseling.

The second phase of educational training prepares executives to effectively reorganize their time by exposing them to:

1. Modern administration concepts
2. Behavioral and social science approaches
3. Training in areas such as better interpersonal relations
4. Awareness of time and its monetary value
5. Visits by outside speakers and consultants.

Employees on all levels within the organization will benefit from the third phase of enlightened organizational environment, which must include the following areas of consideration:

1. A generally sympathetic top management
2. A quality and quantity conscious management
3. A management willing and ready to adapt to change
4. A personal atmosphere, rather than one which is highly artificial and paternalistic
5. An emphasis on non-functional and aesthetic office design, furniture, and decor, rather than a rigid environment.

These three areas of strategic action cut across a number of inter-related and inter-disciplinary functions of administrative management. They deal with both on-the-job and off-the-job considerations. These are suggested with a view to making executives aware of their main asset—TIME—and its relative importance in view of the increasing pressures and demands on it.

Planning and Control of Executive Time

The planning and control of executive time, which is done in much the same way for any organizational goal, is a method that can be used effectively to optimize any of the three approaches to time management. Planning increases the amount of time by foreseeing how much time will be needed in which areas. It most certainly optimizes the amount of work that can be done in a span of time, because the needs are projected and arranged to the executive's best advantage. Further, the control aspect of a time plan will help insure that the projected amounts of time are indeed spent on the most important projects.

This programming of executive time, like any plan, would have a distinct length of projection. Executive time could be programmed

mensions of time are controlled where possible, then the direct pressure on the executive can be reasonably reduced.

In many firms, emphasis is placed on the premise that more time should be devoted to research and education, and development and promotion. Research and education can be defined as research on existing and new products; on new methods of production, organization, and management, as well as education of personnel and executives, using training programs, lectures and scholarships. Development and promotion include all these activities which will bring new customers, new projects; expand the existing market; or create new markets. Activities which will make the firm, and its products, known to a wider public also contribute to its expansion and growth. Less time should therefore be devoted to administration and production. Administration is the routine office function of any executive (i.e. correspondence, telephoning, meetings, etc.) and production is the actual assembly, supervision, and quality control of the products that the corporation markets.

In summary, the job of the executive is to plan, and review plans when the objectives of the company cannot be met by the existing plans. Executives should not deal with operational or implementational planning, nor with the actual control in the firm. This control must be planned as automatically as utilizing a cybernetics approach. Executives should deal with planning only to effect the saving and better allocation of time. This will result in the achievement of optimal allocation of executive time.

In conclusion, optimal allocation of the executive's time can be achieved only by utilizing their time more for planning. This can readily be seen in the flow chart in Exhibit # 1.

Essential Focus

Management of time is an important administrative objective. This concept is relatively new since the severity of executive pressures and tensions is in itself a relatively new phenomenon. It should be placed on a high priority by every manager, since its proper treatment can increase effectiveness for the executive and create an overall integrated organizational environment. This paper has attempted to show the importance of this new phenomenon of time management by discussing the various functions that make up the planning and scheduling of time. By reviewing the variety of pressures that face executives both in the office and at home, a strategy could then be formulated to best utilize the executive's time. Further, an example was presented to describe graphically the dimension that time exhibits. Thus it can be seen that the major goal of time management is to reduce pressure and increase the effectiveness of executives. In the years to come, with the increasing pace of life, time management must be placed high on the priority list for all executives.