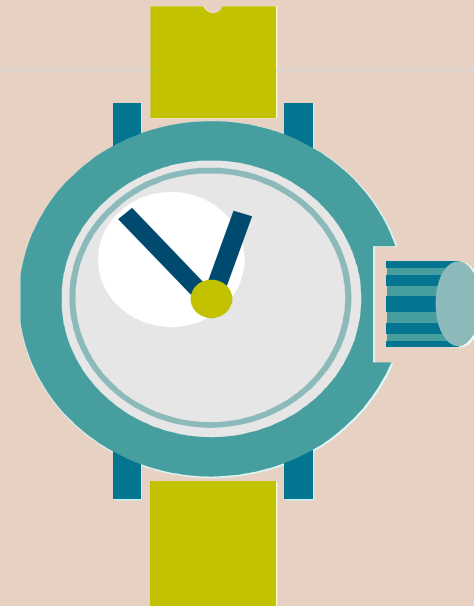

The simplest time management tool

6 list

Writing in the Verb - Noun - Purpose format

Applying this





Time Management – 04 The simplest tool

6 list

The simplest and most effective time management tool there is

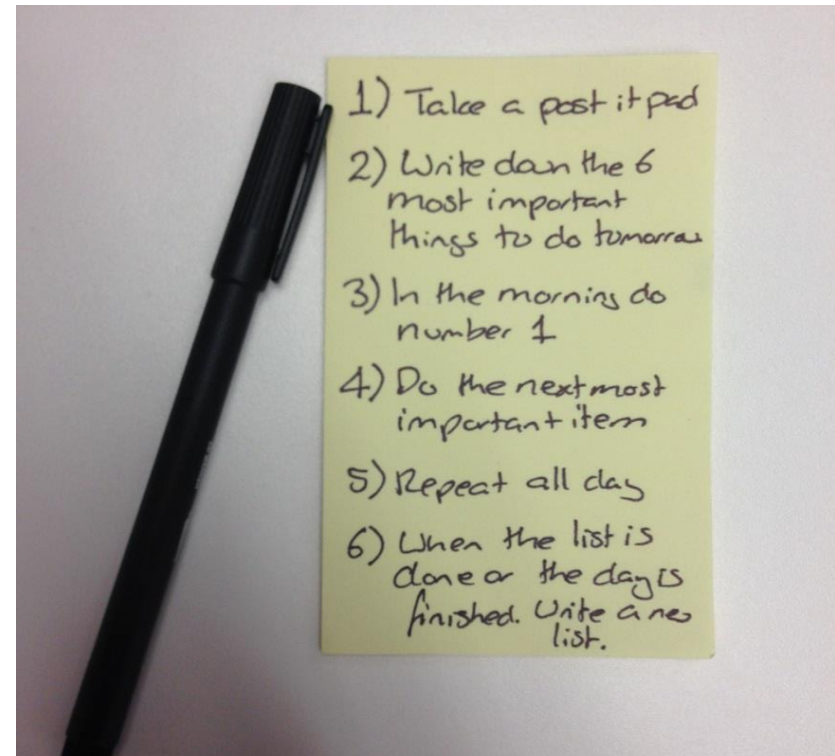
There are various versions of this story, but each has the same core tale to it. In the early twentieth century a management consultant called Ivy Lee was working for Charles Schwab the CEO of Bethlehem Steel.

Charles Schwab supposedly said something along the lines of “We already know what we should be doing. If you can just show us a way to get it done better, I’ll pay you anything you want.”

Ivy Lee responded along the lines of – **“Get a piece of paper and on it write down the 6 things you have to do tomorrow – then prioritise that list and put it in your pocket.”** He continued with **“Tomorrow, first thing, take out the list – check that the prioritisation is still correct – and work on item one until it’s done or you’ve done with it.** Distractions will arise. Ignore them. Work on number one until it is done. Then move on to number two, then when that’s also finished, number three, and so on. At the end of every day, make a new list. **Don’t worry about the things that don’t get done. You will know you have been doing the most good possible for your company, and if you can’t get all items done using this method, you couldn’t get them done using any other system, either.** Once you’ve had time to prove to yourself the value of this, have your people try it out as well. In fact, try it out as long as you like. Then, you can send me a check for whatever you think it is worth.”

Some months later Schwab, having shared the ideas with his team, sent Lee a cheque for US\$25,000 saying that it was the best time usage tool he’d ever learned.

That’s about US\$300,000 in today’s money.



Time Management – 04 The simplest tool

Writing in the Verb – Noun - Purpose format

This is the simplest trick in the world, but will make your task list clear and understandable.

It comes from process mapping methodology, but is equally useful for individual tasks.

All you need to do is make sure when you write down your tasks you write

- The action you are doing
- What you are doing it to
- The reason you are doing it

Notice the difference between these task lists.

You get:

- Clarity
- Easy to tell if a task is done or not
- More information for prioritising

- Presentation
- Dashboards
- Site Visit
- Safety Talk
- HR meeting
- Site meeting

- Prepare team structure slides for Joe to present tomorrow
- Review the dashboards prepared by Fred for Management meeting
- Visit site to inspect the widgets in zone 2
- Attend Safety Talk to learn about scaffolding
- Prepare for and attend HR meeting re recruiting new planning staff
- Chair the regular site meeting to ensure plan for the week is clear

Time Management – 04 The simplest tool

Focus on why not, rather than how much

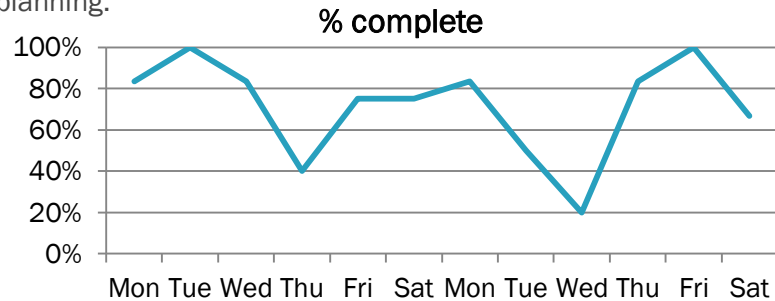
Your list is for just one day. If you are writing it at the end of the day, you are only making commitments for just 24 hours. Less if you write it in the morning.

So how come we can't predict what we can achieve in such a small amount of time?

The temptation when reviewing our task lists at the end of the day can be to congratulate ourselves on how much or little we got done. Hopefully, with just 6 priorities you'll be getting most of it done on most days. Perhaps it's more important to understand why it is we don't get the stuff done we plan to do.

Reliability

If you were to graph the percentage of the tasks you put on your daily list. That would be a graph of how reliable you are at daily planning.



The nature of the kind of work we do means that if you got 100% all the time, you'd probably be under planning or lying to yourself. But realistically you want to be aiming for a consistent 80% with frequent 90-100% completion rates.

What stops you?

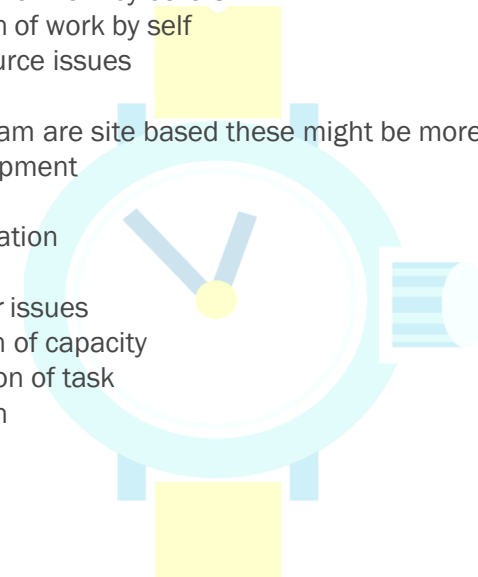
This is where it gets interesting. Try keeping a note of what stops you getting things done. Is it lack of information? Trying to fit too much into the day? Others not doing what they say they will?

If you and your team work in an office job these categories might be useful for you:

- Lack of information
- IT or equipment problems
- Overestimation what I can do in a day
- Underestimating how long a task will take
- Information not received
- Reprioritisation of work by others
- Reprioritisation of work by self
- Illness or resource issues

If you and your team are site based these might be more relevant

- Plant and equipment
- Materials
- Lack of information
- Weather
- People/Labour issues
- Overestimation of capacity
- Underestimation of task
- Reprioritisation





Time Management – 04 The simplest tool

Applying this

The 6 list is the simplest tool you have in your time management toolbox.

Commit to doing this daily for a month and see how it helps with your daily planning and sense of being in control.

1) What difference does prioritising and focusing until you have one task done make?

.....
.....

2) How easy or hard do you find writing the list, prioritising the list and sticking to it?

.....
.....

3) How are you dealing with interruptions?

.....
.....

When you've got the 6 list down to a fine art, or if you find interruptions to be an issue try this:

Every time you are about to work on something else, go to a meeting, check email, Facebook, etc., or do anything else which diverts you from your task, write down what you are about to do.

Yes, it's that simple, write down whatever you do that diverts you from your top priority.

1) How does it feel to be honest about what interrupts you? Is it hard to write down the trivial things? Does the act of writing it down change your behaviour?

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2) What kind of thing interrupts you? How many of those would be foreseeable if you planned ahead?

.....
.....

3) What do you need to change in the way you plan to either prevent the interruptions, or plan ahead for them?

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