



On Time Management

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The other day I happened to attend a presentation by a fairly well-known management consultant on Time Management. The consultant, during the hour-long presentation, gave some very salient advice on how to use time wisely and how to control interruptions and distractions (including social media which jarred some of the millennials then attending and led to some heated exchanges).

However, it occurred to me looking back on my experiences in attempting to manage organizations, that I have done a very bad job in managing my own time as evaluated in the light of the advice from the consultant. Instead of managing to be time efficient and to minimize disturbances in my forward progress, over the years, I have managed people, actions, and events instead, allowing them, and even encouraging them to interrupt the forward progress of my then current schedule.

In short, people take actions that create events.

The manager's job is to influence people to take actions which lead to events beneficial to the organization. None of this depends on the manager's time efficiency.

Beneficial events might include such things as a successful new product introduction, the establishment of a new branch, completion of a unit reorganization, penetration of a new market. These are the kinds of things which successful managers work toward. Typically the progress toward these kinds of events are marked with fits and starts, interruptions, crises, changes and modifications.

These interludes provide the astute manager a chance to reaffirm, more clearly mark out, and, if necessary, modify the set of actions necessary to reach a beneficial result. He also may use his influence to generate among his team, increased commitment to his vision of the desirable outcomes. The wise leader uses these disruptions to his advantage, reinforcing and redirecting based on his assessment of each situation.

A successful manager must be able to navigate through this sea of chaos to achieve the event(s) he has in mind. Interruptions and crises are the marker posts on the path to completion which must be incorporated in the span of the manager's attention. The manager that eliminates these from his personal focus will rarely achieve his organization's objectives.