

Time Management For Councillors

Councillors face multiple demands on their time, these helpful tips are aimed at supporting you to effectively manage your time to avoid unnecessary stress or anxiety.

Top Tips

1. Work out your goals

Advice from an Occupational Health Therapist: "Work out who you want to be, your priorities in life, and what you want to achieve in your career or personal life. That is then the guiding principle for how you spend your time and how you manage it."

Once you have worked out the big picture, you can then work out some short-term and medium-term goals, helping you to plan and focus better.

2. Make a list

To-do lists are a good way to stay organised. It could be a single to-do list, a daily or weekly plan. The aim to help you prioritise and avoid losing track of tasks.

Make sure you keep your list somewhere accessible. If you always have your phone, for example, keep it on your phone.

3. Focus on results

Good time management at work means doing high-quality work, not high quantity: concentrate not on how busy you are, but on results.

Be mindful that an extra hour on something late at night when you're tired, may not be as effective as ten minutes the following morning.

4. Have a break

Lots of people do not take a break for lunch, but that can be counter-productive.

Taking a 30 minute break from your work will help you to be more effective in the afternoon. You could go for a walk, step outside or do some exercise to energise you.

Planning your day with a midday break will also help you to break up your work into more manageable chunks.

5. Prioritise important tasks

Tasks can be grouped into four categories:

- urgent and important
- not urgent but important
- urgent but not important
- neither urgent nor important

People with good time management concentrate on "not urgent but important" activities. That way they lower the chances of activities ever becoming "urgent and important". Dealing with too many urgent or leaving things to the last minute so they become urgent, can be stressful.

6. Practise the 'four Ds'

One study found that one in three office workers suffers from email stress. Making a decision the first time you open an email is crucial for good time management.

- Delete: you can probably delete half the emails you get immediately.
- Do: if the email is urgent or can be completed quickly.
- Delegate: if the email can be better dealt with by someone else.
- Defer: set aside time later to spend on emails that require longer action.

Useful Tools:

There are plenty of online tools you can use to organise your workload, and share with your teams if you wish. These include **Remember the Milk**, **Microsoft Outlook Tasks**, **todoist**, **Trello** and **Microsoft Planner** on Office 365.

If you would rather plan on paper than why not use a simple Kanban consisting of three columns: To do, In Progress and Done. Every week (day or month depending on your timetable) review your 'In Progress' List and put a dot on those that remain in the column. The dots provide a useful reminder of how long the task has been ongoing.

Source: Based on guidance from NHS Choices, November 2018:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/Time-management-tips.aspx>

Other sources:

Life hack: <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/featured/20-quick-tips-for-better-time-management.html>