

# Time Management Conundrum in Rapid-Fire World



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*Our org chart has so many vacancies that our senior people have to fill multiple roles. And, in some cases, they're even unaware of all their managerial responsibilities! Does, this situation sound familiar? If so, you are not alone. Many organizations are reeling in the turbulence of exponential change and relentless transition in today's rapid-fire world.*

Increasing velocity is the hallmark of today's economy. How to meet urgent "must do" priorities that seem to exceed the capacity of the organization? What about unforeseen priorities, which arrive with a thud on one's desk? Attempts to resist change and ignore this rapid-fire reality is not an option. Successful managers look beyond the daily time pressures towards the future. Time - to strategize, to engage with stakeholders, to create and to execute - is the most precious asset. Effectively managing time, however, is not a new issue. The Roman philosopher Seneca once noted: It is not that we have so little time, but we waste so much. Pointless activities distract from achieving longer-term goals. Effective and innovative time management, not surprisingly, is the **number one priority** of a growing number of my clients.

Today's business realities require the setting of realistic longer-term priorities - and sticking to them - among pressing activities competing for attention. In coaching clients to improve their time management, I focus on setting the priorities which are not just urgent but once achieved will make a positive difference.

This coaching process starts with the identification and recording, in a customized journal, of each task, staff meeting, business trip and event in their calendars. Clients then classify each item in one of three categories:

- Makes a Difference (MAD)
- Important (IMP)
- Trivial (TRIV)

Time consuming in the short-term this exercise is an investment in enhanced long-term performance. Once completed clients appreciate how little time is actually spent on truly significant issues versus merely urgent (often trivial) ones. They also understand who they are spending their time with: superiors, colleagues, direct reports, clients, and for how long. Arriving at the right balance between addressing **MAD** activities and the delegation of other tasks is usually achieved. Successful management depends on getting this right. It involves embracing the principle: Don't add before subtracting. And having the self-discipline to say **no**, as required.

But what happens when the number of meaningful priorities exceeds the ability to effectively manage them? One useful approach is to prioritize the **MAD** tasks based on investing in what will get the biggest return, over the longest time.

For executives struggling to successfully cope with turbulence of exponential change, this approach may seem almost utopian. Though a multitude of pressing decisions must be actioned immediately, running an organisation is not a sprint - it is a marathon. The most effective executives are those who understand this reality.

At the Bonar Institute, we support organizations in the Time Management Conundrum of a Rapid-Fire World.