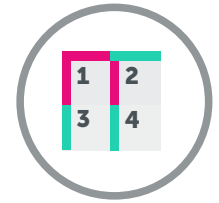


# STRATEGY & TIME PRIORITIES USING COVEY'S QUADRANTS.



The Covey time management grid is an effective method of organising your priorities. It differentiates between activities that are important and those that are urgent.

**Urgency** means it requires immediate attention or it has a specific deadline.

**Importance** means it contributes to your organisation's strategic priorities or your high priority goals.

This approach to time management is about creating time to focus on important things before they become urgent. Sometimes this just means doing things earlier. The real skill is to commit time to processes that enable you to do things more quickly or more easily, or ensure that they get done automatically.

A four-box matrix is used to convey this. Urgency is represented on the horizontal axis, and activities can be placed either in the 'low' or 'high' box. Importance is represented on the vertical axis in the same way.

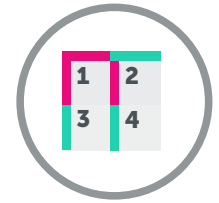
Covey states that the key to success is concentrating on highly important, but non-urgent issues across all the identified roles. These, he argues, are the most important in terms of self-development, but are also the ones that are most commonly ignored.

Urgency is time-related, importance is value-related, but most people respond to urgency rather than importance. Whilst they can coincide, they are not the same and a key point with time management is to deal with important tasks before they become urgent, as it is easier to do the important tasks well when they are not urgent.

By looking at the whole picture, you have the opportunity to balance work and other priorities in your life.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<p><b>1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crises</li> <li>• Pressing problems</li> <li>• Firefighting</li> <li>• Major scrap and rework</li> <li>• Deadline-driven projects.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention</li> <li>• Production capability activities</li> <li>• Relationship building</li> <li>• Recognising new opportunities</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Re-creation.</li> </ul>
NOT IMPORTANT	<p><b>3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interruptions</li> <li>• Some phone calls</li> <li>• Some mail</li> <li>• Some reports</li> <li>• Some meetings</li> <li>• Proximate pressing matters</li> <li>• Popular activities</li> <li>• Some scrap and rework.</li> </ul>	<p><b>4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trivia</li> <li>• Busy work</li> <li>• Some mail</li> <li>• Some phone calls</li> <li>• Time-wasters</li> <li>• Pleasant activities.</li> </ul>

# STRATEGY & TIME PRIORITIES USING COVEY'S QUADRANTS.



## **i** IMPORTANT

This is an interactive PDF and requires Adobe Acrobat reader for you to enter and save your comments.

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## Planning Matrix activity

In this activity, you will identify what to delegate, reduce time on or stop to free-up time.

1. List all the tasks that you currently do (you could do this on separate post-it notes)
2. List all the tasks that you need to do that you haven't already noted
3. Using the Planning Matrix below (or a flip-chart with the matrix drawn on it), place your post-it notes where they currently fit, determining the level of Importance and Urgency for each

- Take a step back and see what this tells you about your current prioritisation and how you spend your time
- Ask yourself the following questions in relation to each quadrant:

**QUADRANT 1:** What action can you take to reduce the amount of tasks? How can you be more planful and strategic?

**QUADRANT 2:** What do you need to spend more time on in future? Where can you add more value in your role by being more strategic?

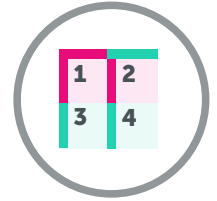
**QUADRANT 3:** What are your main distractions? How can you manage these more effectively? Who do you need to speak to? What can you stop doing?

**QUADRANT 4:** Who can you delegate things to? What can you stop doing?

4. Then, using the template, create an action plan of what you need to Stop, Start and Continue to do.

	<b>QUADRANT 1</b>	<b>QUADRANT 2</b>
<b>IMPORTANT</b>		
	<b>QUADRANT 3</b>	<b>QUADRANT 4</b>
<b>NOT IMPORTANT</b>		
	<b>URGENT</b>	<b>NOT URGENT</b>





# STRATEGY & TIME PRIORITIES USING COVEY'S QUADRANTS.



## Strategic action plan

STOP	ACTIONS	INVOLVE WHO?	BY WHEN?
START	ACTIONS	INVOLVE WHO?	BY WHEN?
CONTINUE	ACTIONS	INVOLVE WHO?	BY WHEN?

### Hints & Tips

-  Determine your long-term goals for your personal and professional life
-  Breakdown these long-term/big goals into a series of manageable short-term goals that will take you towards your end goal
-  Select two or three of your most important goals to focus on every week
-  Focus on activities that will achieve the greatest results.

### Links & References

1. Covey, S, Merrill, R, and Merrill, R. (1994) *First Things First: To Live, to Love, to Leave a Legacy*. New York. Simon and Schuster.