

★ Making the Most of a Precious Resource: Time

Sarah Bond would like readers to keep in mind that her article on 21st Century time management is both aspirational and factual!



When it comes to managing time efficiently, my intentions do not always match my reality. I recall the anonymous quote that defines different parcels of time: *“To realise the value of ONE YEAR, ask a student who failed an exam... To realise the value of ONE MILLISECOND, ask the person who won a silver medal in the Olympics.”*

The following is my chronological approach to time management based on a 12 month cycle.

1. Annually: Dating my Wall Planner

After the Christmas holidays I make a date with my wall planner. It’s when I draft New Year’s resolutions, and define my personal and professional goals. Family gatherings, special occasions, sporting goals, holidays, training dates, conventions, GST returns, ACC levies and everything else go up on the wall where I can see them every working day.

2. Monthly: Setting up the ‘Not Negotiables’

At the start of each month, thanks to Kerry Spackman I update my [Winner’s Bible](#) and check in on my goals from last month. Then Geoff and I determine our “not negotiables” – or NN’s – for the month. These are events that HAVE to happen, which need the rest of life to be organised around. So far this year our NN’s have centred on Geoff’s surveying assignments and exams, visiting my niece, Dad’s 70th birthday, large client projects and Toastmasters competitions.

Making sure that we check in with each other and understand what is on the horizon has helped both of us keep sane, and balance out our life together. In our combined reality there are certain weeks where one of us does all the cooking and the housework just doesn’t get done and it is ok because we know it will be done properly next week.

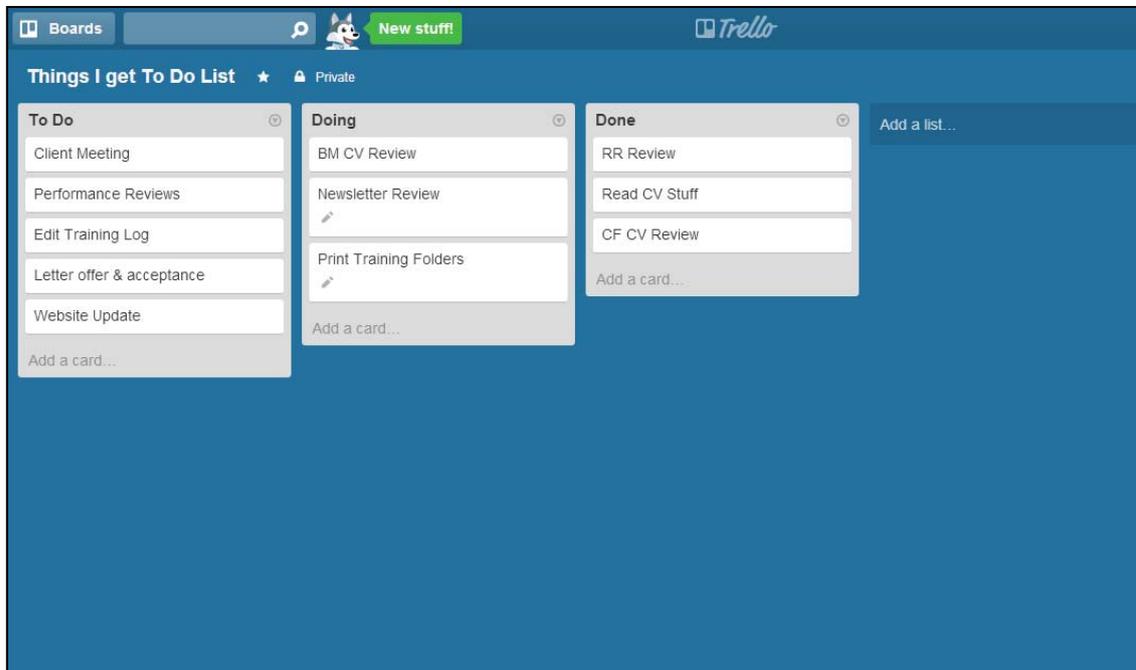
When I’m working with executive clients who are verging on burnout, setting the intention to have a “NN” meeting with the people who are close to them is one of our first priorities. Believe it or not, the feedback from clients has been that this monthly ten minute meeting is one of the most effective and simplest stress management strategies they managed to put into practice.

3. Weekly: Sunday Night’s Golden Hour

In my last article on [staying up to date in an ever changing world](#) (Autumn 2014) I wrote that for one hour every Sunday I check my calendar, set up my Social Media Marketing schedule and prioritise my weekly tasks. As well as all my work meetings, I also set up three visits to the gym and at least one long bike ride or walk.

I am a huge fan of Gmail’s calendar, as I can access it on all my mobile devices and I can’t live without Trello – www.trello.com. Trello is an online programme that is accessible from all my mobile devices and allows me to organise projects and tasks. At a glance, I can see the things

that I need to schedule into my calendar, what I'm working on and what I have achieved. For a major project, I can create a specific project dashboard and for every day I have my general lists: 'Things I Get To Do, Things I'm Doing and Things I've Done'. I can create cards and then move them from list to list. Below is a completely made up example that I put together as an illustration.



My personal preferences for communication and learning are visual/kinaesthetic, so been able to see my 'Boards' and actually move the 'Cards' around works well for me. Also, I can update what I am doing at any time as long as I have WiFi and I don't end up with scrappy piles of paper that keep getting lost.

4. Daily: Managing my "Things I Get To Do Today" List

I hold no claims to being a time management guru, so this section is entirely based on other people's ideas that have worked well for me.

Steven Covey's Jar of Rocks: Dr Roberta Neault, President of Life Strategies Ltd reminded me to put the big rocks in my daily jar first (See jar on the right where everything fits in).



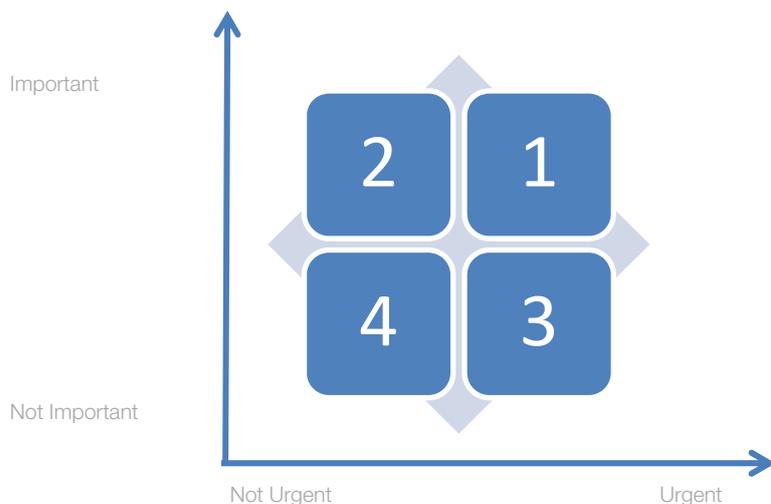
On a 'this is your life' scale, the rocks are the really important things – family, health, friends – things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, life would be ok.

The pebbles are the other things that matter – like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else.

When I put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. It's a very visual demonstration of the need to pay attention to the things that are critical to my happiness.

The same applies to work; in my working day I can normally schedule three big rocks in each day. These are my daily "not negotiables". If for whatever reason I can't get them done, they become top priority the next day.

Stephen Covey: Time Management Matrix. As a sole trader my team is made up of a contracted administrator and bookkeeper. When I am managing my time effectively and balancing working on my business with working for my clients I can't find a better way to sort my life out than to follow my own version of the Merrill Covey Matrix Four Quadrants.



Quadrant 1 (top right) important / urgent items – items that need to be dealt with immediately. Every couple of months, no matter how much I promise I will get it sorted earlier, my GST return miraculously ends up in this quadrant. Helping clients deal with Serious Harm accidents, disciplinary issues and other emergencies also fall into this category.

Quadrant 2 (top left) important / not urgent items – items that are important but do not require immediate attention, and need to be planned for. Covey emphasises this is the quadrant that we really need to focus on for long term achievement, making sure we continue to invest in business/personal development and staying healthy. For me things like connecting with potential clients, following up on training sessions, going to the gym or getting on my mountain bike and keeping up with legislation and industry updates fall into this category.

Quadrant 3 (bottom right) urgent / not important items - items that need to be managed and minimized. These are the time sucks, such as answering emails and phone calls, doing administrative tasks and creating training folders and feedback forms.

Quadrant 4 (bottom left) not important / not urgent items – items that don't have to be done anytime soon, perhaps add little to no value and also should be minimised or eliminated. These are often trivial time wasters, excavating my desk and filing away completed projects paperwork and on the "I hate to admit it list" trolling Facebook and Candy Crush.

5. Crisis Management: Help I'm out of Equilibrium

When I find myself going out of equilibrium (into the crazy zone) there are two processes that I default to:

Map of meaning www.holisticdevelopment.org.nz
Dr Adam Fraser's Third Space

The [Map of Meaning](#) has been developed over the last fifteen years by Marjolein Lips-Wiersma, Lani Morris and Patricia Greenhough. The map "shows the key elements necessary for meaningful work and meaningful living."



My personal process involving the map takes three steps:

1. I look at my Map of Meaning and ask what percentage of time am I spending in each quadrant? My crisis zone tends to be all about being in overload in the Others/Doing zone.
2. I remind myself that perfect balance is a myth; along with the idea of superwoman, as every choice I make means I have to forego something else. The challenge is finding my equilibrium where I feel like I'm at optimal strength. Identifying the smallest change often makes the world of difference!
3. I then list all practical actions that I need to take and schedule them in my diary.

[Dr Adam Fraser explains The Third Space](#) I heard Dr Adam Fraser speak at the 2013 Happiness Conference in Melbourne. He is an educator and researcher on human performance; an author of *The Third Space: Using Life's Little Transitions to Find Balance and Happiness*. Adam believes resilience is absolutely mission critical today because there is so much change and uncertainty in business and life right now.

Adaptability is vital and it's not what you do, it's what we do in between the stuff we do that will create balance, happiness and performance. In the in between events we all need to take the time to:

- 1 Reflect: On how the last event went
- 2 Rest: Shower, walk, sit (whatever gets you relaxed)
- 3 Reset: Choose how you will I show up to the next event

I force myself to leave my office and go for a walk around Queens Gardens in between important client meetings and have turned my car into my mobile "reflection zone". I listen to

music that has no words, make a note in my diary when I arrive at my destination and change out of my work clothes as soon as I get home.

So there we have it, my part statement of fact, part aspirational and hopefully inspirational guide to getting organised and making the most of time. If you have anything to add, please email sarah@employemenow.co.nz.

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 Follow at nz.linkedin.com/pub/sarah-bond/42/765/668

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