

Time's Fun When You're Havin' FLIES: A Gentle Reminder to Invest Your Time Wisely

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They say, "Time flies when you are having fun." Actually, time flies even when you are not having so much fun. Most people that I know tell me that finding time for the "important things" is their most pressing management problem. It must be true. An entire industry has developed around time management. You can spend from hundreds to thousands of dollars on calendars, planners, organizers, software, hardware, seminars and courses to manage your time. These are all useful tools for controlling the myriad of demands on every minute of every day.

However, these same tools may actually make your real management problem even worse! I am convinced that for most people the real management problem is investing enough critical time in dealing with the fundamental long-term issues that we face in our organizations and lives. Most time management tools concentrate so much on shuffling every minute of every day to accommodate the thousands of meetings, memos, and reports addressing short-term priorities that they actually prevent us from managing truly important long-term issues.

Don't get me wrong! I like such tools. They are useful. However, they are only useful as aids in accomplishing meaningful long-term time management. So -- I offer a gentle reminder to help you get your time really under control.



Graphic by Graham Brown

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FLIES: Use this whimsical acronym to remind yourself to:

Focus on very few long-term goals.

Based on your organizational and personal mission statements, identify three to five long-term critical goals. Make them simple, clear and measurable. Envision a three- to five-year time frame for accomplishing the goals. Openly share these goals with your supervisor, colleagues, family and other stakeholders in you and your organization. Many times, their "buy-in" will make the difference in your ultimate success in pursuing and completing these objectives.

Lay out your own detailed strategic plan to accomplish these goals.

This requires working backward from the goals to identify key steps and dependencies that must be managed. There are plenty of planning tools to help you with this process. The important step is to invest your time in this personal long-term planning. Again, make your plan known to those people close to you so they understand what you plan to do and why. How are you (and they) going to know what is most important in the short-term if you are not clear about your intentions for the long-term.

Implement your plan immediately.

This is critical. Don't let today's priority or this morning's crisis keep you from initiating your long-term strategy. If you don't implement immediately, the chaos of day after day will squander your time, preventing real long-term accomplishment.

Evaluate your progress every day.

Each day, hold yourself accountable to your mission, goals and strategic plan. No one else will! Be objective. Be critical. In the hustle and hassle of each hectic day, ask yourself, "What have I done today to execute my strategy?" This will help you set better priorities for the many other demands on your time.

Stay on course, no matter what immediate priorities appear to be important.

I'm not advocating rigidity. Obviously, your plan must adjust to your progress and to environmental changes. However, we live in chaotic times, and many short-term challenges appear more important when viewed with short-time vision than they are when understood with long-time insight. So keep your long-term goals and strategies always in view.

The pace of life and business is increasingly hectic. It is increasingly more difficult to deal with the daily demands on our time. It is increasingly more challenging to recognize that time is our most important human resource.

So, Remember... Time's fun when you're havin' **FLIES**

Dr. Forrest C. Greenslade is a scientist, manager, writer and speaker, who has learned a lot about growing meaningful careers and decisive organizations. His latest book, *The Simple-Minded Manager: Cutting Through Your Work-Life Chaos* is for managers and people who strive to be managers in today's complex work-life environment. He can be reached at: greenslade@intercare21st.com.

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INTER: Between; Mutual; Reciprocal. **CARE:** To be concerned or interested; to provide needed assistance or watchful supervision; to object or mind; to wish, be inclined or desire. **Synonyms:** charge, custody, keeping, supervision, and trust. The central meaning shared by these words is the function of watching, guarding, or overseeing.