



# The Well-Practiced Manager

Professional Development  
Resource for  
Boston College Managers  
and Supervisors

Fall 2016

## From the Director:

### Dear Colleague,

It's always interesting to watch as the incoming students adapt to life in college. After so much structure in high school, they have to learn how to manage a new level of freedom as they balance their school, work and social activities while meeting a variety of short and long-term deadlines.

It's the challenge we continue to face even after years of being in the workforce. There is always a large number of demands and a need for balance. Many of us would like to accomplish more in a day than is possible. And we are bombarded with any number of distractions. While we may not be able to get it all done, there are techniques that can help us do better. We are outlining a few in this newsletter and hosting a time management workshop on November 9th ([www.bc.edu/empdev](http://www.bc.edu/empdev)) to explore these issues in depth.

We can't manufacture more time, but we can learn to use the time we have more effectively.

Wishing you all the best this semester,

*Bernie O'Kane*

**Bernie O'Kane**  
Director, Office of  
Employee Development

## Time Management Techniques to Improve Productivity and Reduce Stress

Jane starts the day armed with a hefty to-do list and a solid dose of determination. She plans a quick check on her email before launching into writing a proposal. She ignores a spectacular sale notice from her favorite store and pauses just briefly on a Facebook notice about a post on someone's new dog. As she starts to answer an email from her supervisor, the phone rings. It's a colleague with an urgent issue. While she's on the phone, she gets a text from another colleague requesting information.



Jane will get no further than opening up the proposal document before she has to run to a meeting. After the meeting, there will be even more things added to her to do list, more questions to answer and more problems to solve. She will have checked off very few items from her list and not started the proposal.

Sound familiar? One of the most popular refrains in American offices is "There aren't enough hours in the day." It's true. We're more connected with emails, texts and mobile phones and that means more potential interruptions. We're also on the Internet more often where the goal of most everyone else is to get our attention.

*continued*





*continued from reverse side*

Additionally, we're often taking on more than we can realistically accomplish. Between trying to do too much and having a hard time focusing on tasks, we end up being busy but not getting done what we really want or need to accomplish.



## Set Priorities

**If we are going to make better use of our time, then we have to make good choices about what we work on.** Otherwise, we end up doing the urgent things, but not the things that are important but not urgent.

**To start, make a comprehensive list of all the projects on which you are working.** Then, make an exhaustive list of all your upcoming tasks including recurring and one-time items. It can be helpful to include deadlines and a note about how long the task might take.

**Next, prioritize those projects and activities.** Some are higher because there is a deadline while others should be higher because they are important even if they don't have a specific time urgency. Setting priorities will help you determine what should get your attention and when.

**For each day, make a short list of the tasks you want to complete.** Of these, choose three that will be your highest priority. Be realistic with yourself about what you can accomplish.

**When you are working with others, you need to talk with them about their priorities for you.** This is especially true when you are working for or with several people who may not be aware of competing demands.

## Set Boundaries



**Once you have your priorities, you need to focus on getting those things done.** The problem often is that we try to do too many things at once, says Pam Kristan, who will be leading the *ABCs of Sustainable Time Management* workshop on November 9th. She teaches a system using time boundaries.

**Kristan recommends using a timer (you can use your cell phone) set for no more than 45 minutes to work on one project.** This makes it easier to avoid distractions because you have dedicated the time to this one thing. It can make it easier to avoid procrastination because you know there's a limit to how much time you will spend.

**During that time, concentrate on completing next steps rather than finishing the project.** You may not get it all done, but you will be closer. If at the end of the time, you aren't done, make a note of what you did and what comes next. Then, move on to a different project.

**If you're not sure of what you need to do next, you may need to set the timer for a 15-minute session to make a plan.** You can also use a 15-minute pre-work session to determine what the next steps are for a particular project.

**When it comes to distractions, look at what you can put off or group into one work session.** Rather than checking email constantly, for instance, set up certain times. Some people can manage by checking their email just twice a day while others may need more frequent sessions.



**Managers can help by encouraging their staff to find focus time and respect the time boundaries.** They should encourage workers to set aside chunks of time and avoid interruptions.

**With planning and strategy, we may not be able to get it all done, but we can get more done. And, we can accomplish more of the important things.**



*Editorial Services provided by  
Jennifer Powell, The Excellent Writers  
excellentwriters.com*

*Graphic Design by  
Tania Fine Helhoski, BirdDesign  
www.birddesignstudio.com*

## Employee Development Office

Department of Human Resources • 129 Lake Street  
617.552.8532 • [employee.development@bc.edu](mailto:employee.development@bc.edu) • [www.bc.edu/ed](http://www.bc.edu/ed)