

## The Secret to Getting Things Done

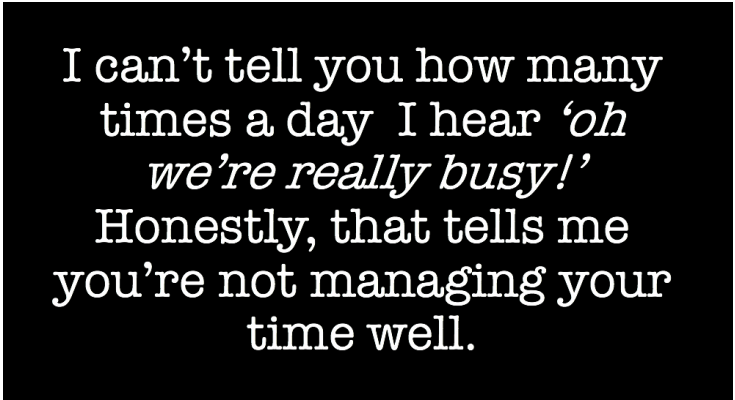
Does a correlation exist *between the number of team members and what's accomplished*? **Absolutely not.**

Oftentimes we feel that some people seem to have more time in their hands because they seem to accomplish more things in a day compared to us. Then reality strikes: we all have the same 24 hours a day, but some are able to do more. If you haven't read this book as a team, Stephen Covey's **7 Habits of Highly Effective People** is a must.

If you've read the book, you probably remember **Habit #1 - Be Proactive**. In short, that means: "You have free will so use it. Do something. No excuses."

**Habit #2 is: Begin with the End in Mind.** This habit is about establishing goals, but it is also about mapping out where we intend to end up. We all know more than ever that we can make plans, but then something totally unforeseen like COVID-19 can show up. But even when we get derailed, knowing where you are headed will get you back on track much quicker than if you had no vision.

Now we're on to **Habit 3: Put First Things First**. This habit could be summarized like this: Now that you know you control your own thoughts and actions (Habit 1), and now that you have short term and long term goals in mind (Habit 2), you need to put first things first and accomplish those goals efficiently by minimizing your procrastination and distractions. Most of the time, we confuse every task and demand, as urgent and important, hence we label ourselves "busy" and cut out on time for **more important things**.



I can't tell you how many  
times a day I hear '*oh  
we're really busy!*'  
Honestly, that tells me  
you're not managing your  
time well.

Covey suggests that a good way to evaluate our daily activities is by breaking them down into four quadrants along two axes. One axis measures "importance" — is the activity important when it comes to your goals or not. The other axis measures "urgency" — how pressing is the activity. Here is an illustration of the

four quadrants that arise:

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	<b>I</b> <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>	<b>II</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Prevention</li><li>➤ <i>Production capability</i> activities</li><li>➤ Relationship building</li><li>➤ Recognizing new opportunities</li><li>➤ Planning</li><li>➤ Re-creation</li></ul>
Not Important	<b>III</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Interruptions</li><li>➤ Some 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 &amp; rework</li></ul>	<b>IV</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Trivia</li><li>➤ Busywork</li><li>➤ Some mail</li><li>➤ Some phone calls</li><li>➤ Time-wasters</li><li>➤ Pleasant activities</li></ul>

### ***The killers to productivity are quadrants III and IV.***

**Quadrant III** consists of busy work— things that suck up our time but don't really move us closer to our goals. These things should be minimized, or even eliminated. These are the '*poor planning on your part doesn't constitute an emergency on my part*' variety of tasks. . The phone always seems urgent. Until you answer it. Email can be the same way. Anything that interrupts momentum and keeps you from focusing on the vision of the practice falls into this category. Hopefully all personal phone calls are routed through a voice mail system or handled via cell during lunch. PUT YOUR CELL PHONE AWAY. In the event of an emergency, family can call the office line. Yes, this goes for doctors, too. Now that we can get emails, texts, social media notifications, etc, our personal cell phone can be such a huge distraction. As for practice-related email, choose a time during your day in which you will address them, rather than as they come through. Choose wisely and work more effectively.

**Quadrant IV** is the laziness quadrant — the things we do when we really don't want to work at our goals when we know we should. Trivial time wasters that should be minimized like, Reading social media feeds, junk mails, and mindless diversions. These may be de-stressing for you, but they can be addictive. Even 'busywork' – those easy diversions that keep us busy but happen to be easier to do than things that require more brain power or might be uncomfortable. (I should note quadrant IV is not having fun or unwinding after working hard; Covey insists that is actually very important. Rather quadrant IV is lollygagging about when we know we should be working.)

**Quadrant I** the “fires” in life that require our urgent attention. These urgent AND important things find their way on top of our list because any delay or passivity can cause chaos. Maybe the case came back with the wrong shade or a patient is upset about their bill. Every practice seems to have a chief ‘firefighter’ – the one everyone goes to when there’s a problem. The firefighter isn’t necessarily the doctor. Maybe it’s the front desk person, or ‘office manager’. Or maybe it’s just a self-delegated firefighter that seems to have their nose in everyone’s business or might even just be a control freak. We need to learn to manage these things with **quick but not impulsive decision-making**, and **quick but not hasty action-planning** which could in fact mean delegating to the best person, not necessarily the chief firefighter.

(Note: Covey thinks that lots of people love to live in quadrant I because it makes them feel important and useful. He calls it the “urgency addiction”. You know the type — always frazzled and running around like a chicken with its head cut off...)

**But the key to true productivity is Quadrant II.** This quadrant consists of all those things we know we should be doing but we put off anyway (like pondering/praying, planning, reading books about growth, etc.). These things are often neglected because though they are important, because they don’t seem urgent, we put them off. In your personal life it would be things such as exercise, financial/retirement planning, preventive medical procedures, proper sleep, etc. In your practice these some of these things are **relationships (taking time to get to know your patients and see things from their perspective), planning, minimizing the impact that insurance has on your practice, marketing/promotion, team communication, vision sessions, and skill-building (roleplay/videotape)**. Sometimes we are drowning in the Quadrant 1 issues so much that we have no energy, time nor resources for Quadrant 2. But the highly effective people know that the lasting and sustainable productivity in the practice is fueled by prioritizing these things which enrich our lives, as well as our patients’.

*Interestingly enough, the more we focus on Quadrant 2, the less Quadrant 1 fires there are to put out.* We can also find ourselves getting trapped in quadrants 3 and 4 and end up getting burned-out. Learn the art of focus and commitment even on things that don’t seem urgent.

The key to being efficient and productive is to take the time we are devoting to quadrants III and IV and put it into quadrant II. Once we begin to spend more time in Q2, we discover that Q1 begins to shrink and there are fewer fires!

### **Try this –**

1. For the next week journal the actual tasks that require your time and energy in your role at the office – don’t simply write down your job description - instead be mindful of as many things as possible that actually fill your days for the next week.

2. Once you've made the list, identify things on your list that fit into each quadrant in your practice

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
I M P O R T A N T	I	II
N O T  I M P O R T A N T	III	IV