



## June 2018 President's Message *Endless Summer*



***“Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that’s the stuff life is made of.”*** (Benjamin Franklin, [Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1746](#))

Despite his lack of Internet access or email or maybe because of it, Benjamin Franklin was able to accomplish much over the course of his life (1705-1790). He was an author, printer, political theorist, statesman, scientist, musician, inventor, civic activist, and of course, one of America’s Founding Fathers. But how was Franklin able to manage his time to accomplish all this?

To begin, I recommend reading “[The Way to Wealth](#)”. Summarizing 25 years of Poor Richard’s advice, Franklin’s classic essay explores the timeless themes of work ethic, frugality, and the search for a healthy life. You can read an abridged version [here](#), and watch a video on how Franklin structured his day [here](#), but for a deeper appreciation of Franklin’s genius, read Walter Isaacson’s excellent [biography](#).

**“Being successful does not make you manage your time well. Managing your time well makes you successful.”** (From Carnegie Mellon University Professor [Randy Pausch’s](#) presentation on [Time Management](#)).

New and junior APS investigators, if you are fortunate, you will have “protected time” for research. However, you may also have other competing demands on your time including clinical, teaching, and “citizenship” duties (i.e., attending faculty meetings, journal clubs, and scheduled lecture series; peer-reviewing manuscripts for journals; and volunteering for [APS](#) and other professional organizations). When you add to these family, home, and self-care responsibilities, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed and become [burned-out](#).

With fewer scheduled meetings and classes done for the semester, summer feels the ideal time to catch-up with things you have long been meaning to do. Yet no one has infinite time. So at whatever career stage you are in, excellent time management skills will help enable you to achieve your professional goals *AND* enjoy the rest of your life.

What follows are a few concepts I use to manage my time effectively. I’m [not a perfect time manager](#), but I try to follow them and hope you may also find some of them useful:

1. **Apply the [80/20 Rule](#).** The [Pareto Principle](#) or 80/20 rule states that 80% of your results will come from just 20% of your efforts. Focus on creative tasks ONLY YOU can perform (e.g., identify new projects, write grants and key manuscripts, develop and deliver presentations, treat patients).
2. **Create a prioritized “to-do” list at the beginning of your week.** Aim to spend half or more of your time in the creative “Important-Not Urgent” Quadrant

2 of Stephen Covey's [Time Management Matrix](#) (*7 Habits of Highly Effective People*).

STEPHEN COVEY'S TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX		
	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<b>Quadrant 1</b> Crises Pressing Problems Projects with Deadlines	<b>Quadrant 2</b> Relationship Building Planning Recreation
NOT IMPORTANT	<b>Quadrant 3</b> Interruptions Some Phone Calls Some Mail Some Reports	<b>Quadrant 4</b> Busy Work Some Phone Calls Some Mail Time Wasters

- Focus.** Try to complete 2-3 high-priority Quadrant 2 tasks each week (e.g., draft Methods section of manuscript, submit IRB application, upload slides for next week's grand rounds presentation). Refer to your "to do" list daily, especially when you find yourself slipping into Quadrant 4. Limit web surfing and other [procrastinations](#) during work hours.
- Preserve "blocks" of uninterrupted time.** Save your protected time for Quadrant 2 activities that "[drive your economic engine](#)" (e.g., grants and papers, work on co-investigators' projects that support your funded effort). For example, I block-out 3-4 hour slots on my shared Outlook calendar that my assistant first needs to request my permission to schedule meetings or offer my time to others.
- Delegate.** Identify and delegate tasks to preserve time for Quadrant 2 activities. Learn how to decide which tasks to delegate [here](#) (hint: 6 T's - Tiny,

Tedious, Time-Consuming, Teachable, Terrible At, Time Sensitive). Avoid “[\\$10 an hour work](#).”

6. **Write shorter emails.** Deans, chairs, and chiefs tend to write terse, 1 or 2 sentence replies to emails. They don't have time to craft long replies and [neither do you](#). If you find yourself writing a long email reply or are stuck on a long message thread, it may be best to request a telephone call or face-to-face meeting in your reply.
  
7. **Learn when and how to say “No” to requests for your time.** Do you really need to attend that meeting, accept that request to review another manuscript for blinded peer-review, or go on NIH study section this cycle when you are trying to submit your own grant application? Avoid becoming overcommitted. [Learning to say “No” is a part of success](#). Find out how [here](#).
  
8. **Use [interstitial time](#) to handle less important, non-urgent tasks.** Waiting for your computer to boot-up in the morning or is your 11 am appointment is running late? Stuck on hold? Are you a passenger on a long drive or public transportation? Flight delayed? Clean your desk, update your to-do list, unsubscribe from newsletters you are no longer interested in. Catch-up with your professional reading, listen to podcasts for new ideas. Five minutes here, ten there, twenty over there ... it all adds up!
  
9. **Organize your work space.** [Have two computer monitors](#), this is especially helpful for creating slide presentations and writing manuscripts, but [avoid distractions on the second screen](#) that might reduce your ability to focus. Use

your speakerphone to get work done on-hold. Turn-off alerts from incoming email and social media feeds. Have a stapler, note pad, pens, clips, and trash can all within arms' reach.

10. **Educate yourself on teamwork and personnel issues.** Benjamin Franklin certainly didn't accomplish all he did alone and neither will you. The power of teams is a great multiplier. Learn to [work through teams](#) to accomplish goals. Empower your research coordinator or lab manager, provide general directions and monitor progress, communicate informally on at least a daily basis, remove administrative hurdles, and provide the resources needed to support them in moving your projects forward.

Address HR issues early (e.g., hiring, salaries, promotion, productivity, disciplinary actions). Seek the advice of senior colleagues and administrators you trust on potential (or actual) problems early and before they potentially become major time-consuming events (e.g., research misconduct by a disgruntled employee). Read [books](#) and articles about [great teamwork](#) to further improve your skills.

11. **Hire help at home.** Maximize quality time at home with your family. Early in our marriage, my wife and I agreed neither of us were thrilled to clean the bathroom or mow the lawn. If you and your spouse/partner also have full-time careers, you will both benefit from hiring someone to do basic cleaning, yard work, and a nanny for childcare tasks, cooking, and laundry. To quote my oldest brother, "[happy wife, happy life](#)".

12. **"Sharpen the saw."** Time management is ultimately about living a more enriching and fulfilling life. It's about having more fun. We all like the golden

eggs, but it's important to take care of the goose that lays them too! Use the time you save at work to spend more time with friends, leisure activities, hobbies, and exercise. For example, I use my time on the elliptical or treadmill at the gym to watch Netflix since I watch almost no TV at home, listen to podcasts on long walks and gardening, and exercise at the track or gym while my kids are having soccer practice (games I watch from the stands!). I also read a lot outside of work and schedule weekly "date nights" and other activities with my wife and 3 kids.

How do you manage your time? Share it with us at @connectAPS or @APSPresident, or simply email me with your permission to post your comments online at [rollmanbl@upmc.edu](mailto:rollmanbl@upmc.edu)

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