

Structured Experience 12-4: Where Does the Time Go?



GOALS

The goals of this structured experience are to

- ◆ Illustrate the importance of analyzing where and how we spend time.
- ◆ Explore options for eliminating time wasters and creating more time.
- ◆ Build understanding of the control we have over our days.

MATERIALS

The materials needed for this structured experience are

- ◆ Writing instruments
- ◆ Blank paper for taking notes and writing
- ◆ Participants' printouts of last week's calendar and task list, pages from a planner, or information on a personal digital assistant. *Note:* For this exercise, ask the attendees to bring this information with them to the workshop. You may also want to ask the participants to bring an hour-by-hour log of how they spend their time every day for one week.



TIME

- ◆ 5 minutes for introduction and setup
- ◆ 15 minutes for noting where and how time was spent last week
- ◆ 10 minutes for personal time log analysis
- ◆ 10 minutes for debriefing

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask the participants to take out a sheet of paper, a pen or pencil, and their agenda and calendar or time log.
2. Tell them to list categories of time on their paper, such as meetings, appointments, work on a project, finances, family time, reading, sleeping, and exercise. For the next 15 minutes, they should note how many hours they spent in each category last week. When they

have finished, they can divide each sum by 168 (the number of hours per week) to determine the percentage of time they spent on each category of their lives.

3. When the time is up, ask participants to spend the next 10 minutes considering pockets of time that are not being used, items to cut from their days, whether activities took longer than they thought, whether they are more productive at certain times of the day than others, and whether they have an established routine.
4. Once the next 10-minute period has passed, begin the debriefing.

DEBRIEFING

Debrief the participants for approximately 10 minutes about their observations from their time logs and how they can use these insights to manage time more efficiently.

1. How are most of your hours spent?
2. Is your time balanced? If not, what is being neglected?
3. What surprises, if any, are there about where your time goes?
4. What patterns do you see? What throws off your schedule?
5. What value does this exercise have for managing your schedule?