

First Things First By Stephen Covey

First Things First teaches you how to properly set priorities. It focuses on making the distinction between what's "pressing" and what's actually important, and looks at techniques for quickly and regularly identifying those which are important. We all strive to do the things that are important to us, but we're often distracted by things that are "pressing" – things that have to be done *right now* that aren't necessarily a part of the central values of our life.

1: How Many People On Their Deathbed Wish They Spent More Time In the Office?

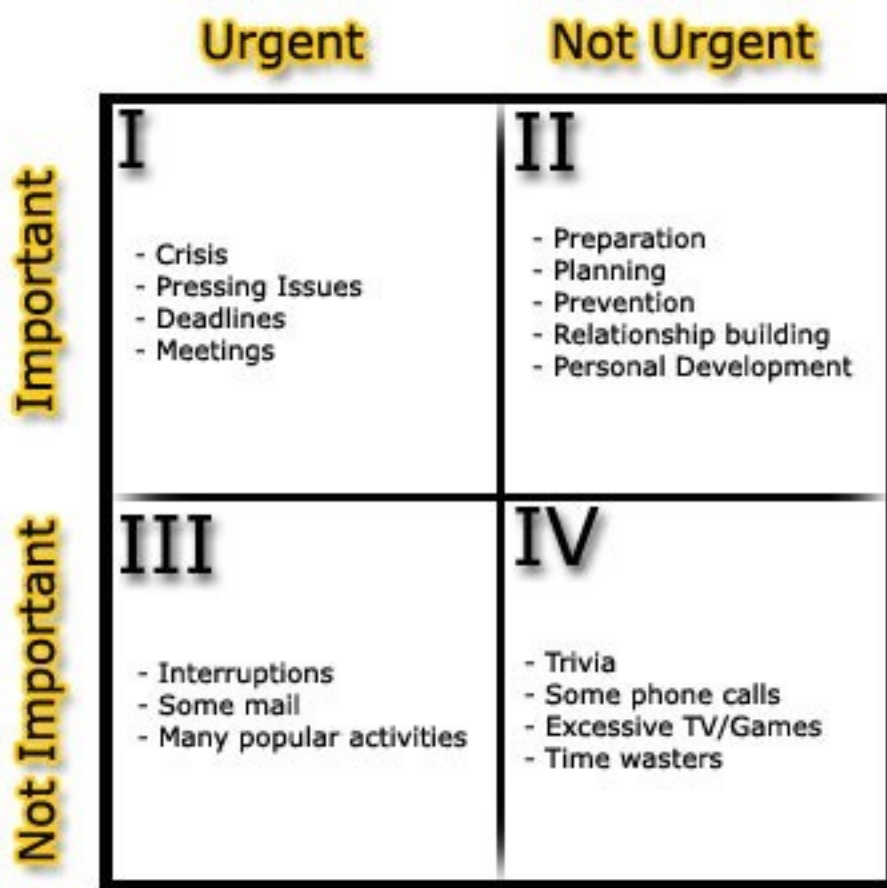
The problem with busy people is not that they lack getting things done. It's just that they're not getting the most important things done. The issue for those who produce a lot of output does not lie between the "good" and the "bad" but between the "good" and the "best."

Clock & Compass: The clock represents things like our schedule, commitments, appointments, goals, activities — how we manage our time. The compass represents the visions and priorities we have, the principles we follow, and the direction we feel we should go. We must direct our life by the Compass.

2: The Urgency Addiction

We often allow ourselves to be driving by the urgent, not the important things. Urgent things put stress in our lives, but they also give us excitement, leave us with a feeling of accomplishment and success, and by golly we get good at it. Urgency in its own right is not the problem, but when the important things get left out.

Quadrant I activities are those that are both urgent *and* important. These are those "fires" that need to be put out.



Quadrant II activities — By learning to focus your time on important things that are not urgent — you'll be spending less time in Quadrant I.

Quadrant III can easily be mistaken for Quadrant I activities. But these activities — if they are important at all — are only important to someone else and should be avoided. (interruptions, some mail, etc)

Quadrant IV is the quadrant of waste. We shouldn't be spending any time here at all. These aren't necessarily recreational things, because recreation is an essential Quadrant II activity. (Time wasters)

3: To Live, to Love, to Learn to Leave a Legacy

After moving from an urgency paradigm to one of importance, you may have wondered what exactly these "first things" are and how can you put them first in your life?

The fulfillment of the four human needs and capacities: The four needs that Covey is referring to here are represented by the title of this chapter, "to live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy." The need to live equates to our physical needs such as food, clothing, shelter, economic well-being and so on. The need to love is our social need to interact with others. The need to learn represents our mental need to continually develop and grow. And finally, the need to leave a legacy is our spiritual need for meaning, purpose, and contribution. Each one of

these needs is essential to quality of life. When one or more are lacking in our lives they effect all the others.

4: Quadrant II Organizing — The Process of Putting First Things First

There are essentially six steps to planning which should be done on a weekly basis:

- 1. Connect With Your Vision and Mission**
- 2. Identify Your Roles**
- 3. Select Quadrant II Goals in Each Role: Ask yourself: “What is the most important thing I could do in each role this week to have the greatest positive impact?”**
- 4. Create a Decision-Making Framework for the Week**
- 5. Exercise Integrity in the Moment of Choice**
- 6. Evaluate: look back on what you’ve accomplished and where improvements can be made — applying those improvements to the planning of the next week.**

5: The Passion of Vision

If we aren’t living a mission that is based on true principles and values, then we might be “*climbing the ladder of success only to find that it’s leaning against the wrong wall.*”

Your mission should integrate seamlessly with all the significant roles you fill in life. And finally, it should inspire you.

Chapter 6: The Balance of Roles

Some of our roles are complementary: we can meet 2 goals in one activity:

Example:

Take for example two of my roles — “personal development” and “husband”. If this week my goal in the “personal development” role is to exercise, and my goal in my “husband” role is to spend some quality time with my wife, I could combine the two and, say, go play tennis with my wife. By transcending the “either/or” mentality of choosing one role over another — thus creating a win-lose scenario (one role is worked on while another is neglected) — and instead seek to combine roles synergistically, you save tremendous amounts of time and create win/win.

7: The Power of Goals

Set goals to keep in mind these five characteristics of effective weekly goals:

- 1. They’re driven by conscience.**

Effective goals are in harmony with our deepest selves. It's something we feel, deep inside, that we need to do.

2. They're often Quadrant II goals.

By choosing Quadrant II goals, we are focusing on what's important — not urgent — in our lives.

3. They reflect our four basic needs and capacities.

Most of us pursue goals that are time-bound and tangible. This leads to imbalance and severely limits our quality of life. Effective goals are not only about what we want to have in the physical dimension, but should also include spiritual, social, and mental components as well.

4. They're in the Center of Focus.

Center of concern - center of influence - center of focus.

But the most effective use of our time and energy is found in the Center of Focus — which is at the center of both the Circle of Concern and the Circle of Influence. This includes all the things we're concerned about, which are within our ability to influence, and most importantly are aligned with our mission.

5. They're either determinations or concentrations.

8: The Perspective of the Week

Covey suggests to set aside a time in the week — preferably in a place that's conducive to introspection and contemplation — and map out your plan for the coming week ahead. In our planning each week, we should include the following:

1. Balanced Renewal

2. Be sure to plan a time in the week for re-creation and renewal.

3. Synergy among our Goals

4. Schedule your Priorities

Weekly planning involves scheduling your priorities. You don't fill every time slot with scheduled activity, but rather put the most important things down first, only then adding whatever else it is that we need to add.

Chapter 9: Integrity in the Moment of Choice

Asking ourselves: "What's the best use of my time right now?" help us to clarify what the best choice for us to make in the moment really is.

Act with Courage. Emerson said, "That which we persist in doing becomes easier to do, not that the nature of the thing has changed, but that our ability to do has increased."

Chapter 10: Learning from Living: Evaluate

It's the first step in the cycle of evaluate -> organize -> and act.