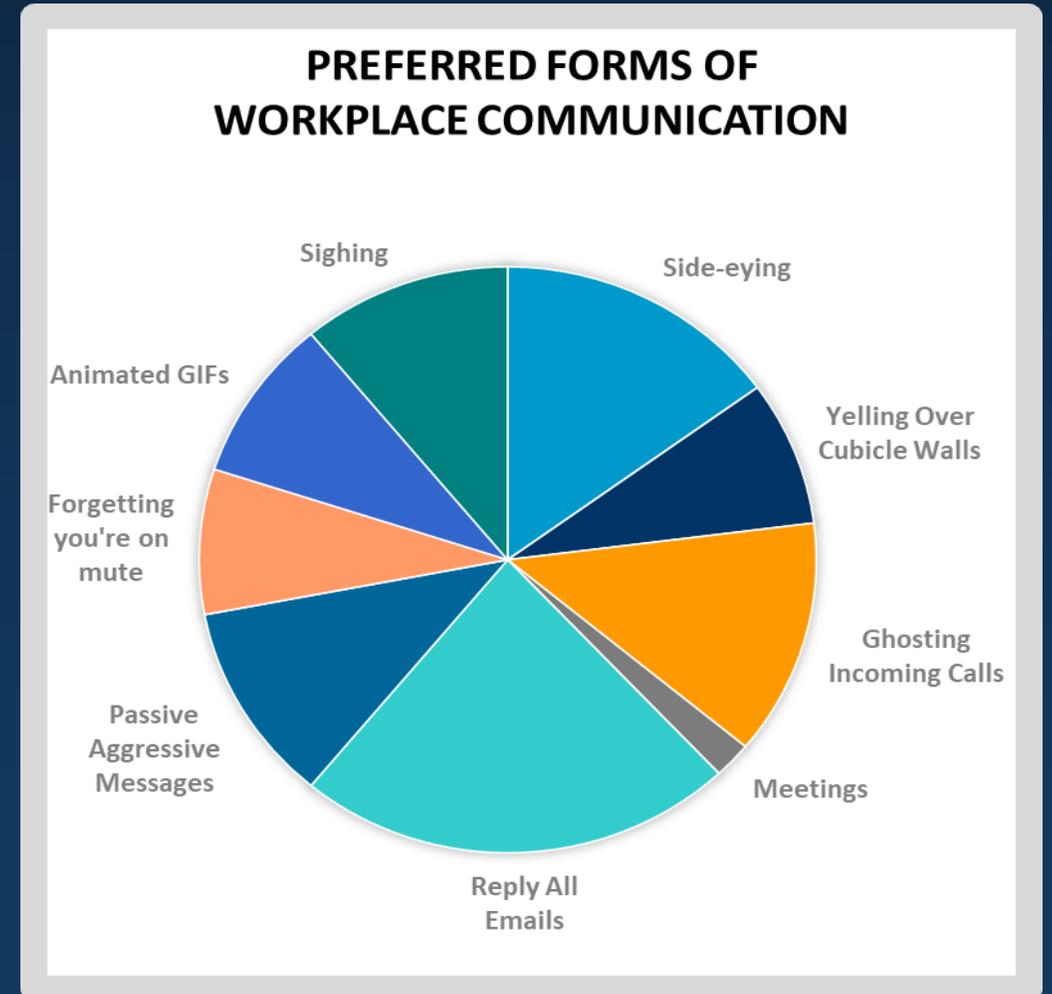# Ticking Time Bomb of Telework: Communication & Time Management Strategies

Anne Bagay   ~   Jennifer Aguirre   ~   Shannon Cardoza
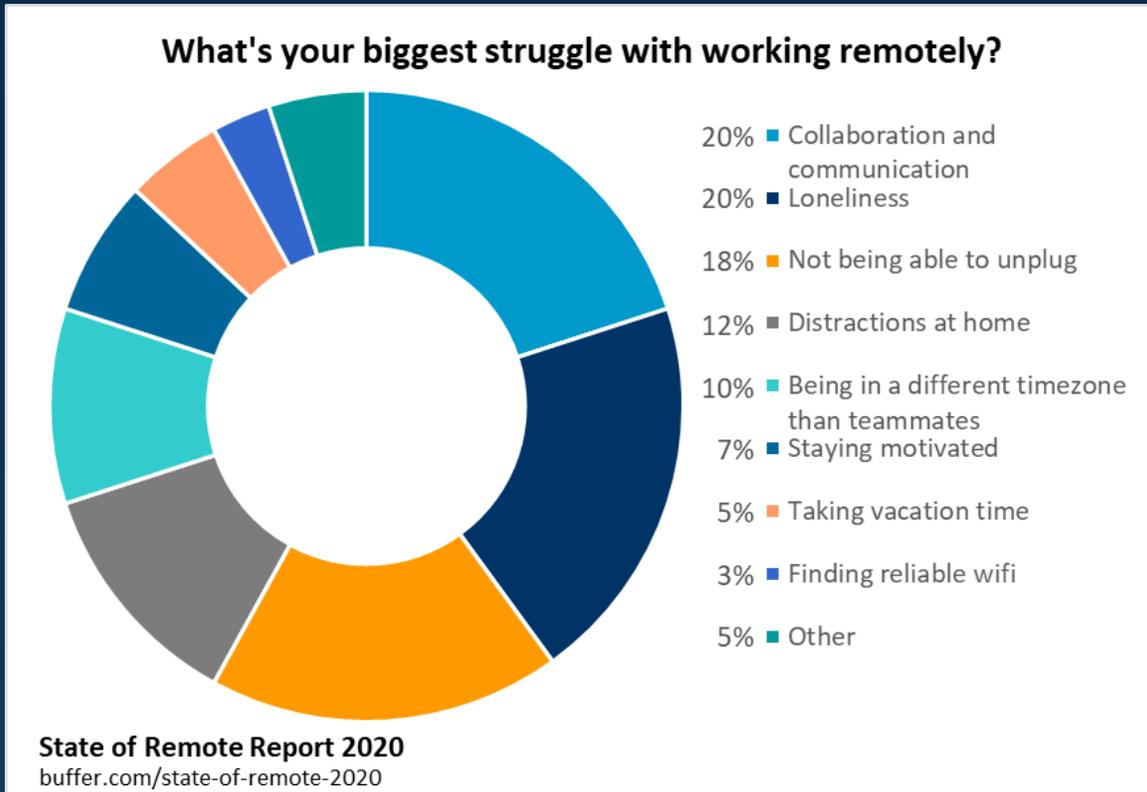
Cost Estimator Associates
Quantech Services, Inc.
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PREFERRED FORMS OF WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

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Communication Strategies: Changes with Telework

What's your biggest struggle with working remotely?

- 20% Collaboration and communication
- 20% Loneliness
- 18% Not being able to unplug
- 12% Distractions at home
- 10% Being in a different timezone than teammates
- 7% Staying motivated
- 5% Taking vacation time
- 3% Finding reliable wifi
- 5% Other

State of Remote Report 2020
buffer.com/state-of-remote-2020

- **Statistics:**
  - It is estimated that 22% of the workforce (36.2 Million Americans) will work remotely by 2025 - Upwork's Chief Economist Adam Ozimek, 2020
  - ~86% of corporate workers believe ineffective communication causes workplace failures - Salesforce Canada, 2014
  - Employees waste nearly 15% of their total work time on inefficient communication – Workplace Productivity and Communications Technology Report, Mitel 2022
  - ~70% of communication is non-verbal (body language, eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice) – Professor of Communication Science, Dr. Hull, 2016
  - More than 70% of workers experience unclear communication from their colleagues in a digital environment – Harvard Business Review, 2021

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Communication Strategies: Telephobia

- With the rise in telework, it is increasingly important to have effective communication

- **Telephobia** is defined as a form of social anxiety that results in a reluctancy or fear of taking phone calls
  - **76% of millennials** and **40% of baby boomers** have anxious thoughts when their phone rings – Face For Business Survey, 2019
    - Interrupts what you're doing / time consuming
    - Fear of saying something wrong or freezing up
  - Phone calls can be daunting due to the lack of social cues including gestures, body language, and eye contact

When someone calls me instead of sending an email

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Communication Strategies: Telephobia

- "Ultimately, the fear of talking on the phone can have disastrous results for productivity or job mobility." – BBC Journalist Renuka Rayasam

- Picking up the phone helps mitigate miscommunication at a much faster rate than email alone
  - The **average email response time is over 12 hours**, and people delay responding to 37% of emails that require an answer – EmailAnalytics CEO, 2022

- **How to mitigate telephobia:**
  - Make a list of the people you need to speak to
  - Create an outline and notes for the phone call
  - Recognize you are the expert on your work
  - Practice!

I can't tell what they're thinking!

This silence is awkward…

What if I say something wrong?

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Communication Strategies: What is my Communication Style?

DISC Communication

Dominant - Looking for results
Focuses on problems and challenges
Faster paced, task focused

Influencer - Looking for interaction
Focuses on people and contacts
Faster paced, people focused

Steady - Looking for stability
Focuses on pace and consistency
Slower paced, people focused

Conscientious - Looking for facts
Focuses on procedures and constraints
Slower paced, task focused
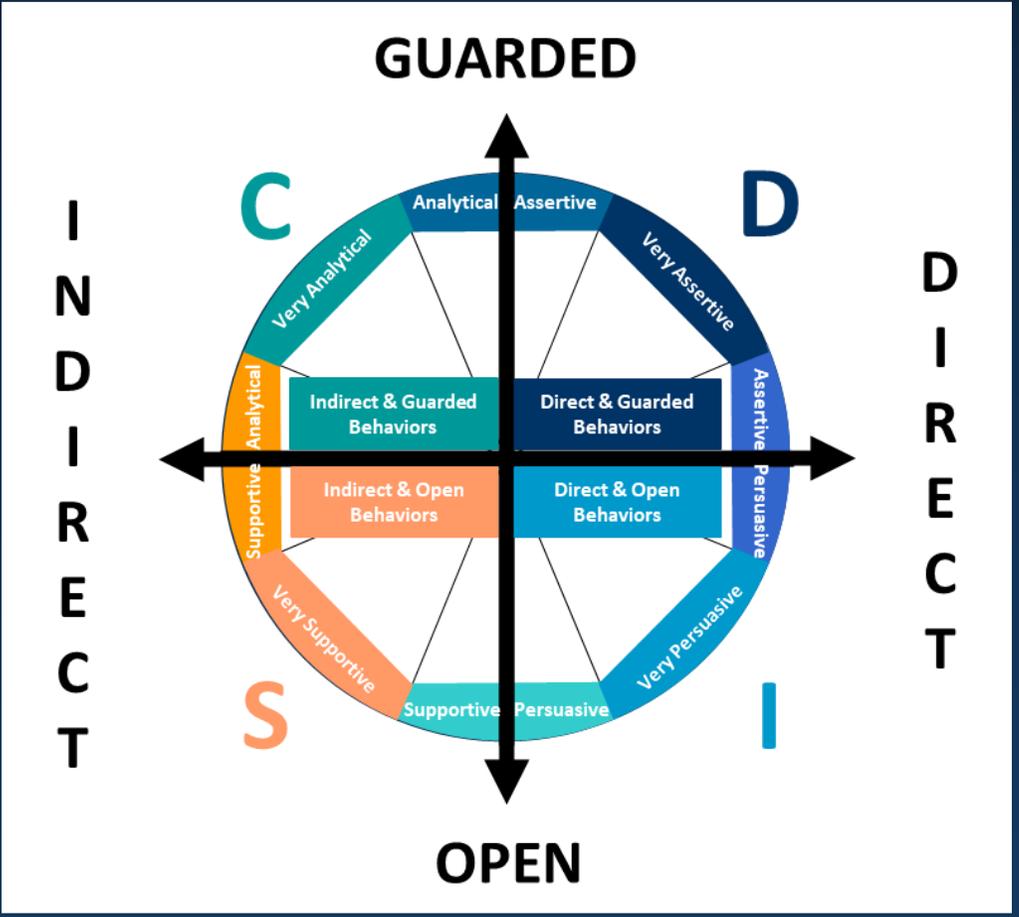
Know yourself so you can determine how to improve

https://www.atlassian.com/blog/quiz/quiz-workplace-communication-style

Communication Strategies: Navigating Others Communication Styles

- ***Identify preferred forms of communication***
  - Email may not be the best option – text/IM, phone call, video call, Screen/Document Sharing
  - Utilize multiple methods to follow-up, but don't overwhelm
- ***Individuals' communication styles change the way they receive and process information***
  - <u>Task oriented</u> individuals may respond better to getting straight to the point with information
  - <u>People oriented</u> individuals may find it rude if pleasantries are ignored
  - Identify the <u>**primary focus**</u> of each person's communication style to tailor the information you provide
    - Ex. Dominant – focus on challenges and are direct; communication should focus on issue resolution
    - Ex. Steady – focus on pace; provide consistent communication, have delivery cadence with this person

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Communication Strategies: The 7 C's of Communication

7 C's of Communication

Conciseness – Keep to the point and keep your message short and simple

Courtesy – Your message should be polite, professional, and open

Concreteness – Provide detail, but not too much detail, reduce distractions from main point

Consideration – Make sure your message flows well and is laid out logically

Completeness – Ensure the recipient has everything they need to understand

Correctness – Make sure your message is accurate and grammatically correct

Clarity – Be clear about the goal and purpose of your message

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Communication Strategies: Worst Case Scenario with Kevin

- Kevin sets up a meeting with the IPT **without identifying expected attendees**, so only half the team shows up

- Kevin **does not come with a prepared list of questions** or topics, so he wings it and leaves out most of the topics

- Kevin **does not take notes**, so he must build his estimate based off memory, resulting in errors and off-base assumptions

- Deadline and **expected deliverables are not established** during kickoff meeting, so Kevin does not build briefing slides, despite an ASP scheduled

- Kevin sends the estimate spreadsheet to the cost approval chain **without reviewing with the IPT**

☒ **Clarity**

☒ **Completeness**

☒ **Correctness**

☒ **Concreteness**

☒ **Courtesy**

Result: estimate is NOT approved, and Kevin must start over!

Why waste time say lot word when few word do trick?

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Communication Strategies: Best Case Scenario with Dwight

- Dwight sets a meeting with the IPT that **provides details on next steps**, and IMs the project manager to **ensure all POCs are in attendance**

- Dwight prepares and **sends over a list of questions**, including deadlines and expectations for deliverables

- Dwight takes **detailed notes** during the meeting and immediately **sends a recap** to ensure consensus with the IPT

- Dwight **establishes regular tag-ups** with the IPT to build the estimate, and review the product prior to final submission to the cost approval chain

- When there is a concern over input from a SME on the IPT, Dwight schedules a call, respectfully voices concerns, and **documents the final decision**

- Dwight presents slides with the non-technical audience in mind, removing details on simulation calculations to **not draw focus away**

☑ **Clarity**

☑ **Completeness**

☑ **Correctness**

☑ **Courtesy**

☑ **Consideration**

☑ **Conciseness**

Result: estimate is approved, and Dwight moves to the next project (like helping Kevin…)

DETERMINED
WORKER
INTENSE
GOOD WORKER
HARD WORKER
TERRIFIC

DWIGHT SCHRUTE

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Communication Strategies: Conclusion

- Communication issues are increasingly prevalent in a tele-work environment

- Know your own communication style as well as the style of those you are communicating with

- Utilize the 7 C's to avoid misunderstandings before they happen

- Use multiple forms of communication when necessary, but allow appropriate response time

- Hold kickoff meetings; define expectations, timelines, and required support early

- Communicate throughout the estimating process, do not be afraid of the phone

- Discuss your inputs and results with your IPT before your estimate moves to leadership

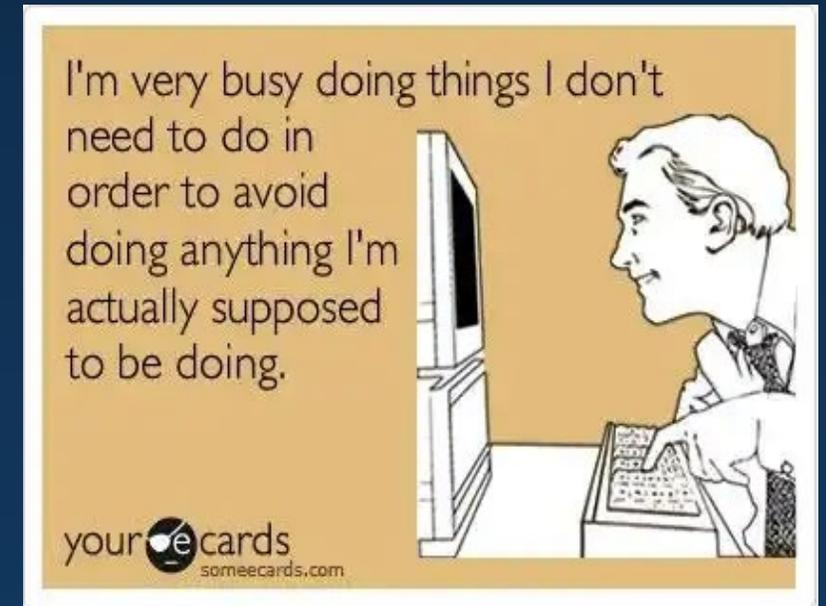- Just sending your reports to the IPT does NOT count as delivering your estimate

Communicate with your IPT early and often (not solely through email)

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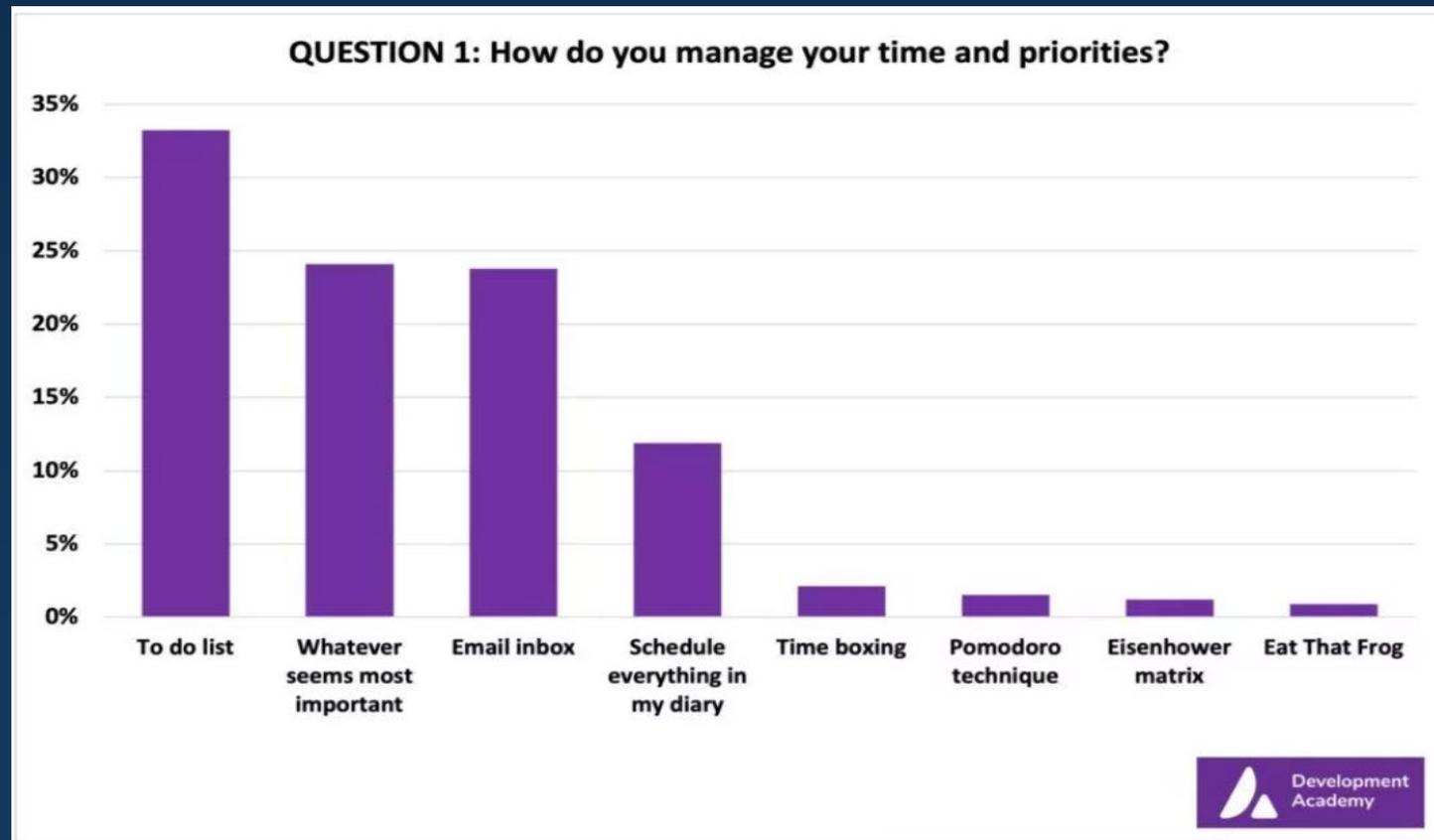# Time Management

Time Management: Overview

- "The process of planning and controlling how much time you spend on specific activities"

- Manage the events of your life in relation to time
  - Only so many working hours, the better you manage them, the more you will get done while *feeling* less overwhelmed

- <u>Statistics:</u>
  - Employees work the hardest from 9 AM to 12 PM – Traftt, 2020
  - Of every 8 phone calls, 1 will be repeated due to missing information – Traftt, 2020
  - The average worker spends 3 hours per day on unforeseen (often useless) tasks – Brian Tracey International, 2020
  - Workers underestimate the time a task will take by almost double – Taftt, 2020
  - Only 18% of workers use an effective time management system – Acuity Training, 2022

I'm very busy doing things I don't need to do in order to avoid doing anything I'm actually supposed to be doing.

your ecards
someecards.com

Time Management is very well researched, use that to your advantage!

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Time Management: What is it?

- 82% of people do not use any type of time management system; instead, they rely solely on to-do lists, whatever comes up, and their email inbox (spoiler alert: it's not a good thing) – Acuity Training, 2022

QUESTION 1: How do you manage your time and priorities?

14   https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/tests/career/time-management-skills-test

Time Management: Common Mistakes and Why They're Bad

Common Mistakes

- **Procrastinating**
- **Multitasking**
- **Distractions**
- Not enough rest
- Lack of organization
- Rigid planning
- Trouble prioritizing
- **Taking on too much**
- Perfectionism
- Thriving on "busy"
- **Not delegating**
- Not taking breaks
- Ineffectively scheduling
- Being bad at estimating time
- Not setting personal goals

Why is it a Problem

- Waste of time
  - Your time
  - Your company's time
  - The customer's time
- May cause missed deadlines
- Poor work performance
- Increased stress and anxiety
- Not feeling accomplished
- Feeling like work is out of control
- Work-life balance may become out of proportion
- Burnout

How do we improve?

- Review how you currently use your time – where do you need improvement the most?
- Employ a time management technique that best matches your productivity style
  - Pareto Analysis
  - Pomodoro Technique
  - Eisenhower Matrix
  - Eat That Frog Technique

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Time Management: Better Strategies – Pareto Analysis

- Developed by Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto in the 1900's after observing the imbalance of land ownership in Italy

- **How to use** the Pareto Time Management Method
  - **List** the tasks you must complete (can be daily or weekly)
  - **Identify** how you will accomplish each task
  - **Assign** a score to each task (higher numbers are more important)
  - **Group** tasks together by method of accomplishing
  - **Add** up the score of each group
  - **Act** and work on the group with the highest score first
- **Works best for:** problem solvers and analytical thinkers
  - Way of thinking goes hand-in-hand with agile processes, great for individuals working in this environment
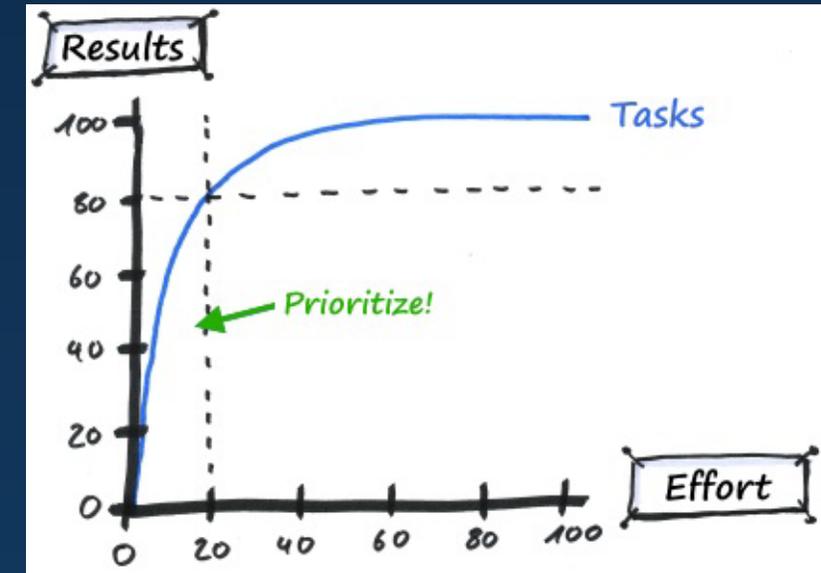
20% of actions are responsible for 80% of outcomes

Time Management: Better Strategies – Pomodoro Technique

- Created by entrepreneur and author Francesco Cirillo

- **How to use** the Pomodoro Technique
  - **Choose** a task you need to get done
  - **Start a timer** for an interval of your choosing (many start with 25 minutes)
  - **Focus** on the task at hand
  - When the timer rings, **take a short break** (3 to 5 minutes)
  - **Repeat** these steps until the task is complete
    - Once you have completed this process 4 times, you can take longer breaks (20 to 30 minutes)
- **Works best for:** creative thinkers and those who frequently feel burnt out

Use as a supplement to other time management strategies

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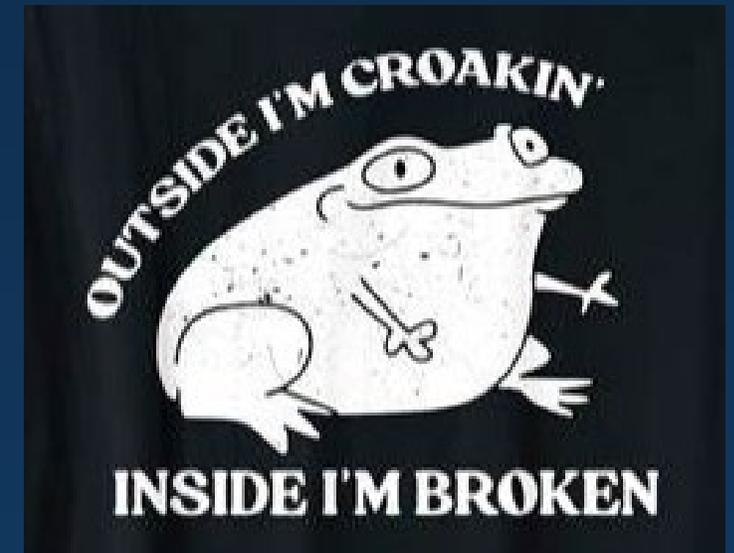# Time Management: Better Strategies – Eisenhower Matrix

- Popularized by a quote by President Dwight D. Eisenhower

- **How to use** the Eisenhower Matrix

  - **Do** (Important and Urgent)
    - Tasks with deadlines or consequences
    - Anticipate and plan (~2 weeks out)
  - **Schedule/Decide** (Important, but not urgent)
    - Unclear deadline, lead to long-term success
    - Plan for appropriate time to complete
  - **Delegate** (Not important, but urgent)
    - Need to be done, but don't require your skills
    - Delegate or reschedule
  - **Delete** (Not important and not urgent)
    - Simply a distraction, ignore or cancel them if possible

- **Works best for:** people in leadership positions and critical thinkers

Important tasks achieve your goals, Urgent activities require immediate attention & often achieve others' goals

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Time Management: Better Strategies – Eat That Frog Technique

- Technique named after the famous "Eat a frog" Mark Twain quote

- Start your day with your worst task, then it will be done, and the rest of the day won't seem so bad

- **How to use** the Eat That Frog Technique
  - **Determine** what tasks need to be completed that day
  - **Write** them down
  - **Set a deadline** for each task
  - **Compile a list** of what you need to do to complete each task
  - **Organize** the list in order of difficulty
    - The most difficult are typically the most important
  - **Act** – If you have multiple frogs, eat the worst one first
  - **Repeat d**aily

- **Works best for:** abstract thinkers and people striving for a long-term goal

"Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day"

Time Management: How Better Strategies Help

- **General productivity**
- Complete work of a higher quality
- More energy and motivation to accomplish required tasks
- More free time
- Relate more positively to others
- Feel better about yourself
- **Streamline decision making**
- Improved self discipline
- Better workplace relationships
- Less stress and anxiety
- **Avoid burnout**

Time Management: Conclusion

- Time management isn't easy, at work or in everyday life

- Know yourself, what you currently do, and what you could do better

- There is a ton of research out there, so use it

- Everyone is different, so everyone will use different strategies

- A combination of strategies is often better than just choosing one

- Find what works well for you and implement it

- Effective time management strategies developed at work will inevitably flow into your personal life

- Proper time management reduces stress

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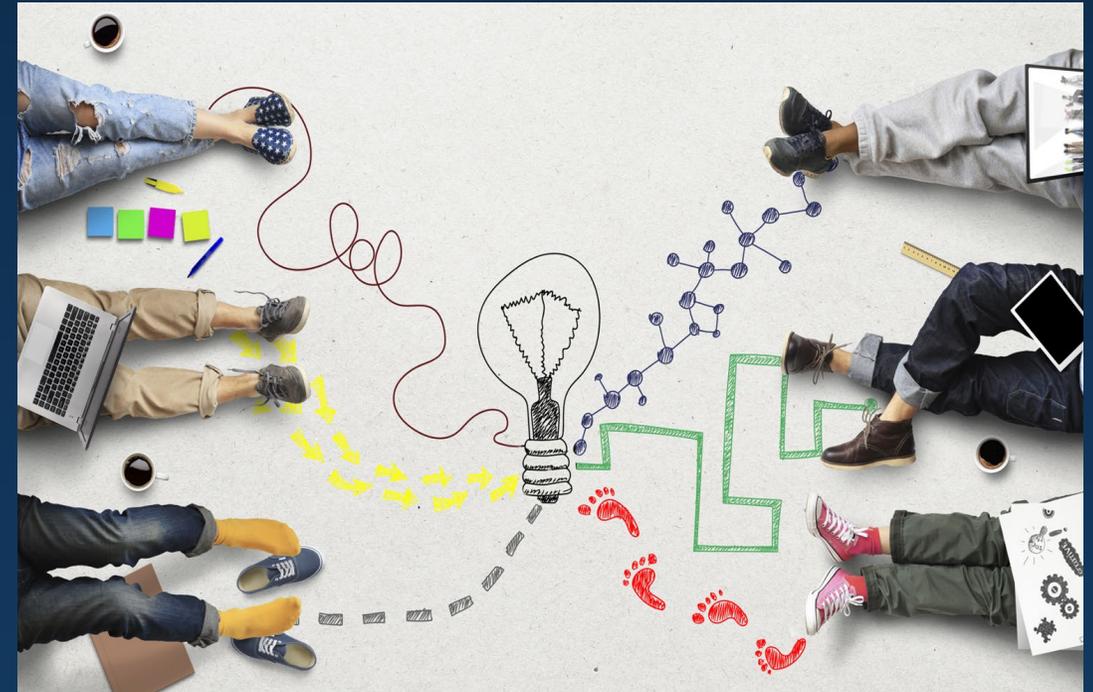
Life Update with Kevin and Dwight
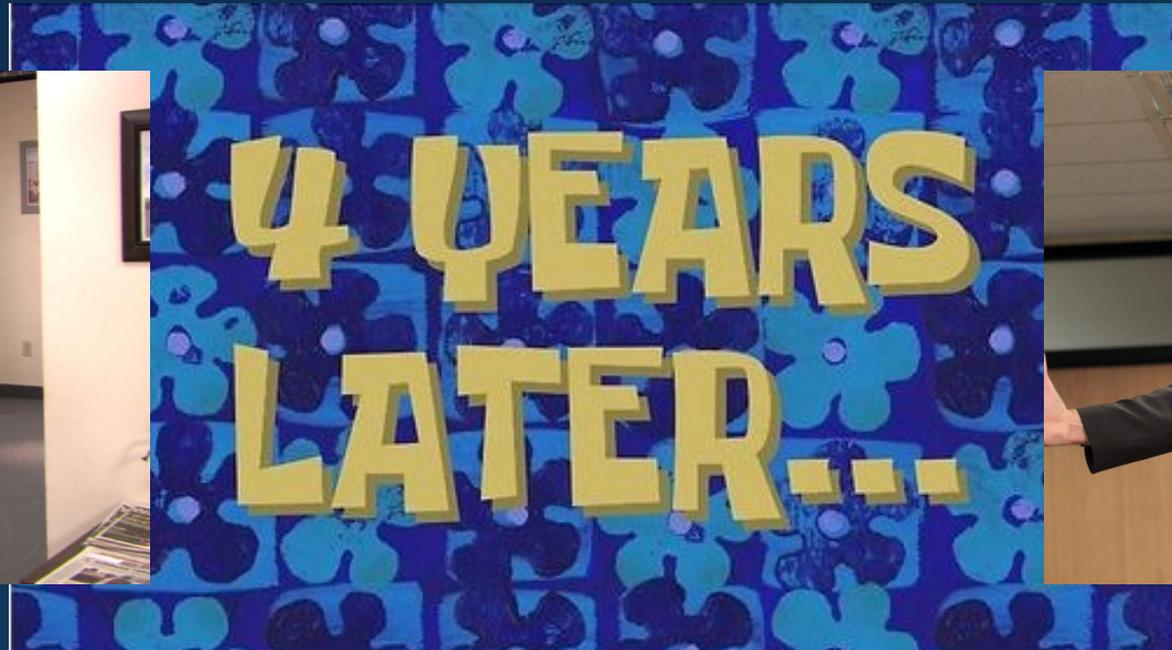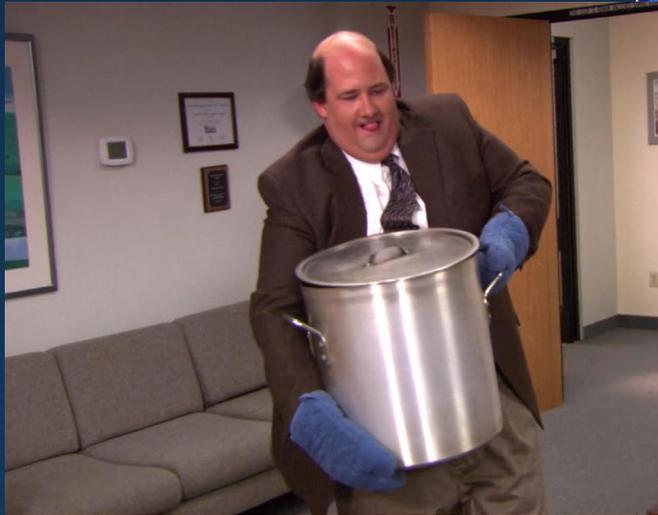
Communication & Time Management – Questions?

Questions?