

Tick-tock, Tick-tock...

“Good management begins with good people”

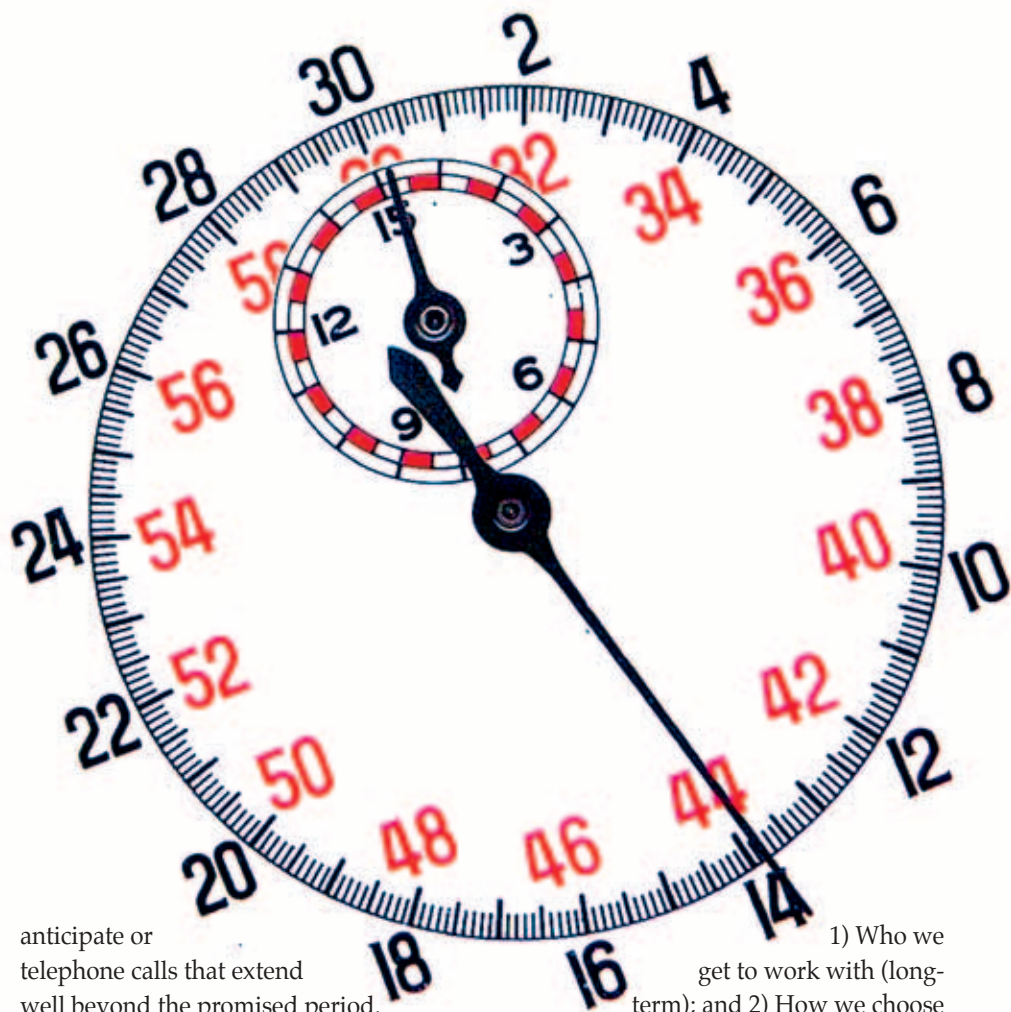
by Dennis Vicars

Webster's American English Dictionary defines *time* as: “1: period during which something exists or continues or can be accomplished; 2: point at which something happens; 3: customary hour; 4: age; 5: tempo; 6: moment, hour, day, or year as indicated by a clock or calendar; 7: one's experience during a particular period.”

The comedian George Carlin had an entirely different take on the idea of time. When asked by a passer-by if he “could give them the time,” his response was, “I can't give you what I don't own.” I'm sure most of us on any given day feel that we don't own our own time. As leaders, we are constantly being brought into situations we did not



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anticipate or telephone calls that extend well beyond the promised period. Directors' lives are a constant turmoil with daily challenges such as: staff illnesses, which create ratio problems; children with knee bruises, requiring ice and TLC; and don't forget the parents who require inordinate amounts of time, both morning and evening.

If we accept the definitions of time presented by Webster or Carlin, it's easy to accept our fate and acquiesce to the notion that the clock controls us. I would propose a different idea on how we view the time issues we all face in our busy leadership roles. Time, not unlike money, gets spent. Money spent is just money. Time spent is your life. Every day, the way we spend our time is the way we have chosen to spend our lives. That concept of time made me realize that I'm the captain of my life and how my life is spent is my responsibility.

As leaders, managers, and bosses, there are only two things we have control over:

1) Who we get to work with (long-term); and 2) How we choose to spend the clock. Granted, there are certain aspects to any job that require us to be in certain places at certain times or attend to specific tasks that might well be out of our control. However, our entire day is not so regimented that we cannot take more command of the clock. I have always found it interesting when people tell me they could not find time to do something, but somehow they always found time to do what they wanted to do. Time is the one thing on earth we all share equally. It does not discriminate and presents us all with the same opportunity. An hour in California is the same hour in Indiana, Germany, or China. They all have 60 minutes in the hour. If the clock is equal for everyone, why do so many of us have difficulty in spending it wisely?

As stated earlier, spending time is spending our lives. Viewing time and life through that lens should place a much higher priority on how we conduct our daily business.

Next, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my day organized to help me be more productive?
- Do I allow people to command my time in unproductive activities?
- Do I have to do these tasks or can I allow someone else the opportunity to grow from the experience and free me up for critical activities that I should do?
- Am I a control freak unwilling to delegate?
- Do I do certain activities that are consistent with my body clock so that I maximize performance while minimizing time usage?
- Do I carve out time in the day where no one is allowed to bother me unless it is a life and death situation to a child, parent, or staff person?
- Do I stay on the phone too long?
- Do I read every email and respond with “thank you” when it is not necessary?
- Do I handle paperwork only once, deciding what to do with it, the first time instead of moving the piles around my desk?
- Do I work on my really important stuff first or do I look for feel good checklist stuff of low priority and little value to my job?
- Do I spend my time where my greatest rate of return will be (i.e., teachers and parents)?
- Do I spend more time doing what is important as opposed to doing what I like to do?
- Do we really need to have a meeting about this?
- Do I really have to do this project or do I just want to do it?
- Do I allow all my employees to help us be more productive?
- Is this the best use of my time right now?

If we can turn around any of the above questions, we have just gained valuable time for our days (and lives). It takes planning, organization, and most importantly discipline. We either condition people who we allow to rob us of time or they condition us. There’s an old saying that if you want something done, give it to the busiest person. I have found that to be true, because they have somehow found a way to spend their time wisely. Better yet, they have found a way to take command of their lives and spend it wisely.