

Harvard Business School's Time-Box Tool

Why Time Box?

Time-boxing is an effective tool for managing time; you can keep an eye on your big-picture time allocations and your to-do list. Plus, the more you work on estimating how long tasks take to accomplish, the better you are at estimating, and the most effectively and accurately you can plan out your days.

How to Time Box

- **Create a to-do list.** Choose those tasks you want to accomplish in a given time period. Include goals, necessary tasks and personal activities.
- **Break your list into categories** Group tasks by functions such as strategy or daily operations.
- **Record your time.** Keep track of what you do and how long it takes for one full week. Identify what you finish and what you don't. Then look back: are you spending your time on the right activities?
- **Build your time-estimating skills.** Be realistic about how much time each activity will take. Setting time parameters helps you stick to your schedule and make your time more productive.
- **Allow for some wiggle room.** Build a little leeway into your schedule. Over- rather than underestimate. Remember that change happens, and you should have a schedule that can accommodate it.

| Schedule for Monday and Tuesday mornings: | | |
|---|---|---|
| Time | Monday | Tuesday |
| 8:00 am | Task: Research strategic plan. Actual Time spent: | Task: Research SP; Call Joe. Actual Time spent: |
| 9:00 am | Task: Monday staff meeting Actual Time spent: | Task: Follow-up on new leads. Actual Time spent: |
| 10:00 am | Task: Plan to designate invoicing task. Actual Time spent: | Task: Meet with Joe about his sales figures. Task: Review CVs for admin. position. Actual Time spent: |
| 11:00 am | Task: Return phone calls and emails. Actual Time spent: | Task: Work with Jane. Actual Time spent: |

redpoint BUSINESS COACHING