

Four Quadrant Diary Planner

Being successful in any role requires consideration of where and how you will spend your time. Only spend your time internally with your team and you might risk missing important external perspectives – such as the views of your customers, clients or competitors. Spend the majority of your time sitting in meetings debating your problems and perhaps you'll miss a reflective moment when you might have a breakthrough idea. Spend your entire time looking outwards to others best practice and perhaps miss a practical opportunity to improve your own.

Reacting quickly to the environment and situation around you is important, however, common sense suggests that looking at problems, opportunities and everyday activity from multiple angles is likely to be of positive benefit. As the saying goes 'if you want to change your life, change your diary' – or more specifically, how and where you spend your time.

There are lots of different ways to spend your time at work. Here are just a few:

- ◆ In team meetings
- ◆ In private reflection time
- ◆ In a one-to-one with a colleague or your line manager
- ◆ Collaborating with others outside of your immediate team
- ◆ Talking to customers
- ◆ Talking to suppliers
- ◆ Attending corporate briefings and communications
- ◆ Actively doing the job
- ◆ Resting or taking a break
- ◆ Attending meetings where your presence is simply 'required'
- ◆ Joining conferences, training or networking events

When starting a new job, refreshing your energy on a job you have been doing for sometime or when things aren't going to plan, it's often a good idea to take a look at exactly where you (or your team) are spending your time.

You can simply work through a long list of different activities such as the one shown above and consider whether this is good use of your time. More usefully you can compartmentalise time and activity into pre-selected and meaningful categories. Here is one configuration you might like to consider:

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| Personal Time | You time, personal space, time for reflection, alone time, recovery time, rest time... |
| Team Time | Time with others, in team meetings, in one-to-ones, doing activity together, collaborating with colleagues... |
| Organisational Time | Time required of you by others (where you have no choice in whether you participate) – corporate briefings and communication, mandatory training... |
| External Time | Outward looking time, time with customers, clients, the community, governance bodies, external third parties... |

Here is another, simply using a colour code:

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| Green Time | Internal connecting time – team, one-to-ones, colleagues... |
| Blue Time | Creative time – reflection time, inquiry time, creative time, time to innovate and consider best practice... |
| Red Time | Active time, time to be hands on, practical, interaction time, time concentrating doing the job |
| Orange Time | External connecting time - customers, clients, third parties, media... |

To understand how wisely you (or your team) are spending your time, look back over your diary or outlook calendar for a minimum period of 2-3 months and work out what you have been doing and for how long.

How is your diary weighted? Is it over weighted in one or two areas? Is it evenly spread out? Does one single area dominant?

What might this say about your use of time?

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What are the strengths of this balance?

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What might be the risks?

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What would you need to do to rebalance, or tip the scales one-way or the other?

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