

**THE
EMCEE
LIFE**
presents

5 Steps to

Better Time Management

Excerpts from book:
Refresh Refocus
Rebuild, The Art of
Perfecting the Vision

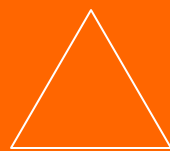


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Step One

**Assess How You Spend
Your Time**



Step One: Assess How You Spend Your Time

The following snippet is from Ch. 2 of Refresh Refocus Rebuild, The Art of Perfecting the Vision

Time is the most valuable commodity we have. It is the one thing that we can never get back. Yet, we all fall short of using our time wisely. We can sometimes be so focused on the future—whether a much-anticipated life event or simply the end of the workweek—that we do not capture the moments at hand. There is value in being in the moment! Sadly, time gets devalued in lieu of things that can be replaced such as money and possessions.

To improve the use of your time, it is helpful to take inventory of how you have been using it. One way to quickly evaluate this is to ask yourself, “Am I getting the results I want?” If not, then that is a good indication that you are not using your time as efficiently as possible. An alternative (and slightly more extensive method of evaluating your time) is to make a list of how you are using it. The following is an example of a day broken down by activities. Notice that all 24 hours are accounted for.

Workday		
Activity	Time Slot	Total Hours per Day
Get ready for work	6:00 – 7:00 a.m.	1
Drive to work	7:00 - 7:45 a.m.	0.75
Work	7:45 – 3:00 p.m.	7.15
Drive home	3:00 – 3:45 p.m.	0.75
VARIES	3:45 – 7:00 p.m.	3.15
TV time	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	2
Prep for bed	9:00 – 10:00 p.m.	1
Sleep	10:00 – 6:00 a.m.	8
TOTAL		24

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Exercise #2: Time Check

Now, it is your turn! Think about your daily routine. What does that look like? If you currently work, try to use a workday instead of an off day. If your schedule varies from day to day, then simply pick a day and list the activities that you feel are most prevalent during each time slot. If you do not know what you do for certain time periods, then leave the slot blank or write "I do not know" or "VARIES." This should cover a 24-hour period.

Activity	Time Slot	Total Hours per Day

Were you able to account for how you used all your time? You may have discovered that you were not as aware of how you used your time as you thought you were. For our purposes, time in which you have not designated a specific use will be considered "wasted time." The

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fundamental reason for this is that there has not been assigned any measurable value to that time for your life. In the example, the time slots that are associated with going to work serve the purpose of producing income; however, the time slot labeled "VARIES" would be considered wasted time, since this does not designate a specific function. On the other hand, if this individual were to replace "VARIES" with "Leisure" then this would no longer be considered wasted time because a specific function would have been designated. If either 1.) you cannot remember what you do during a certain span of the day or 2.) you do multiple unrelated things for an unspecified amount of time (i.e., VARIES) then this should be considered wasted time.

It is important to note that how you spend your time is either affecting you positively or negatively. In general, wasted time is affecting you negatively because you are not placing value on your time by assigning it a purpose. On the contrary, when you are intentional about using your time, you subconsciously place value on that time; furthermore, you are empowered to consciously embrace the activity you have allotted time for, whatever it may be. Finally, when you can clearly see how much time you spend on something you can begin to measure the impact it has on your life. That is, you can measure if you are spending too much or too little time to produce the results you want. We will go more in depth with this facet of assessment in a later chapter.

From Exercise #2, did you see time slots throughout your day in which you could be using your time better? If so, what were they? As we move forward, make sure you give some thought to how you are spending your time. Remember, to value time you must first be able to see it clearly. After that, you must then allocate it towards the things you want. When you start doing this you will begin to be more conscious of how time is wasted, and you will then be able to limit those time wasters.

Step Two

**Write Out Your Routine
Weekly Activities**



Step Two: Write Out Your Routine Weekly Activities

The following snippet is from Ch. 7 of Refresh Refocus Rebuild, The Art of Perfecting the Vision

Now that you have the foundation for planning, we will establish the planning process. We will begin with weekly planning. The first step to planning your week is filling in your routine items (e.g., work, sleep, getting the kids to school, watching your favorite television show, etc.). These are items that occur on a weekly basis at a set day and time. The following is a simple example of routine items on a weekly schedule.

Continued...

In the previous figure, each blank box represents an hour of available time. Therefore, we can quickly make a rough estimate of available time by counting the boxes. This weekly schedule allots 8 hours of sleep per night (10 p.m. – 6 a.m. on weekdays and 12 a.m. – 8 a.m. on weekends). That is 56 hours per week. By subtracting 56 from 168 (total number of hours in a week) we get 112 hours. That is, there are 112 hours left after deducting the hours that are allotted for sleep. By subtracting the other routine items, we calculate the available time. Referencing the figure, the following is a list of the other routine items and the total time they account for per week:

- Get ready for work (5 hrs.)
- Eat breakfast/watch news (5 hrs.)
- Drive to work (5 hrs.)
- Work (30 hrs.)
- Lunch (5 hrs.)
- Drive from work (5 hrs.)
- Watch evening news (5 hrs.)
- TV show (2 hrs.)

Continued...

- Weekend breakfast (2 hrs.)
- Wash clothes (2 hrs.)
- Get ready for church (1.5 hrs.)
- Drive to church (30 minutes)
- Church service (1.5 hrs.)
- Drive home from church (30 minutes)

TOTAL: 70 hrs.

Subtracting 70 from our remaining 112 hours leaves us with 42 available hours. Therefore, we have approximately 42 hours that can be assigned to other items. Notice that this perspective is different from what you did in Exercise #2 in Chapter 2. In that exercise you simply took inventory of how you were already using your time. Here we are only concerned with listing the routine items to see how much available time there is to assign items to. This is the foundation for being intentional with every hour of your time. Of course, this is not an exact science since each day will have its own level of unpredictability. Nonetheless, this is a starting point for maximizing your time.

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Exercise #15: Weekly Routine Items

Fill in a weekly schedule of your routine items, such as “work” and “time with children” and calculate your available time.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							

Continued...

Number of available hours (total number of empty blocks): _____

Is this more available time than you thought you had? What are some things that come to mind for how you could be using this time?



Step Three

Establish Your Needs



Step Three: Establish Your Needs

The following exercise is a snippet from Chapter 5 of Refresh Refocus Rebuild, The Art of Perfecting the Vision

Now I want to paint a picture of how prioritizing can have a positive compounding effect. Consider these proven, practical examples of cause and effect: Physical fitness improves our mental faculties; getting adequate rest and eating healthy foods increase energy for mental and physical endeavors; taking the time to budget grants us peace of mind and helps us determine how we can spend our time; spending time with loved ones and serving our community gives us a sense of belonging and fulfillment. All these things together enhance our lives by helping us be more focused, balanced, and productive. Therefore, when prioritizing, we must establish the “small” things that affect our health and well-being.

The “small” things should encompass items that you both need and desire to do. It is a good practice to list these things by category to help you clearly see what you value and, thereby, prioritize them throughout each week. The following is an example of this.

Category	Need 1	Need 2	Need 3
Physical	Morning jog	Log nutrition per meal	Get adequate rest
Mental	Leisurely reading	Morning prayer	Write
Spiritual	Morning Bible reading	Fasting one meal	Write books
Familial	Incorporate movie time with wife	Implement learning enrichment activities for kids	Increase insurance policy
Financial	Review budget at beginning of week	Increase income by \$1,000 per month	
Social	Call friends and family	Write blog	
Professional	Write blog	Establish trademark	Start publishing company

Continued...

The above figure is a snapshot of my conglomeration of needs at one point in time. Notably, there was one recurring item: “write.” You may have some items that come to mind more than once because they relate to multiple categories. You will find that this typically indicates that these items should be high on your priority list. When I started writing my first book it was a goal; however, through prioritizing my writing I realized over time that it was something I needed in my life to establish balance. Therefore, I began to prioritize it in my daily routine. Subsequently, that has made it easier for me to consistently make progress in my writing endeavors.

You may find that you can establish your “needs” without lending too much thought. While these things may change a little from week to week, or month to month, just a little careful consideration can help you gain clarity on the items that your week should entail. This is how you can ensure that you are focusing on the things that truly matter to your overall health and well-being. You do not need to list things that you already routinely do well. This is more so for things that you would like to remind yourself to focus on. As some of these things become a routine part of your life you may find that you no longer need to list them. Furthermore, as you put this into practice, you will gradually be able to identify your needs with increased clarity.

Having three needs for each category is more than enough, but it is okay if you do not list any needs for some categories. Furthermore, there will be some areas of your life that you will have to consciously prioritize. Feel free to create your own categories. For instance, if you have a tough time remembering to keep up with tasks for your home or car, then you may want to add a category called “maintenance.”

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Exercise #12: Needs

In the table below, list your various needs. Try thinking of both 1.) the things that you would like to practice weekly and 2.) the things that require your immediate attention. Furthermore, you should be able to answer “why” you listed each of these needs; that is, each need should have a clear cut, positive impact on its respective category in your life. Furthermore, if you have not established weekly routine activities for leisure, then I recommend that you include these activities within their respective categories in your table.

Category	Need 1	Need 2	Need 3
Physical			
Mental			
Spiritual			
Familial			
Financial			
Social			
Professional			

What items of importance to you have you been overlooking? What significant insights did you gain from this exercise?

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If we were to really get down to the core of our psychological needs, we would all realize that our priorities should be synonymous with our needs. Therefore, if ever in doubt, you now have a solid strategy for establishing priorities. This table can be used as a reference and, at any given time, should be modified as necessary to reflect the priorities that make you most efficient. In the coming chapters we will focus on turning these priorities into actions that contribute to your progress.



Step Four

**Establish a Weekly
Plan of Action**



Step Four: Establish a Weekly Plan of Action

The following exercise is a snippet from Chapter 7 Refresh Refocus Rebuild, The Art of Perfecting the Vision

In Chapter 4 we defined goals. Now, let's clarify obligations. Earlier in this chapter you began to fill in your weekly schedule with routine activities such as "work" and "picking up the kids." Therefore, while these activities are explicit obligations, they do not need to be included in your Action Organizer. Rather, some of the actions that you will input into your organizer are those actions that are required to meet the demands of your existing obligations. For example, your job may require a set of specific responsibilities in which you need to allot an approximate amount of time during your workday to ensure efficiency. Conversely, several hours of preparation apart from the time constraints of your workday may be needed to satisfactorily fulfill a job responsibility. Additional examples of obligations might be "spending time doing homework with the kids" or "volunteer work." In summary, the obligations recorded in your action organizer fall into two categories: 1) things that help sustain your quality of life and 2) specific duties that relate to the things you are expressly responsible for.

While some obligations may provide a sense of fulfillment, you want to ensure that they don't consume too much of your available time. Remember, goals are the transformational tools for your life. You must ensure that you allot time for working on your goals. Optional obligations, such as volunteer work or helping a friend, should be judiciously weighed for their benefits versus the demand on your time. Therefore, you will need to establish a healthy balance between obligations and goals. Notably, the two can work in synchrony. Where possible, you will want to choose obligations that will help you develop your goals. Therefore, when you are fulfilling those

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obligations, you are essentially spending time working towards your goals as well. For instance, you might be able to find volunteer work that develops the skills you need to meet a specific goal you have.

After you have listed all your actions then you will need to allot time for each. This is where you will prioritize your actions and may even eliminate some of them. In general, long-term goals and obligations should take precedence. They should be planned at the most opportune times of the day. By virtue of the nature of short-term goals to demand your time, you should look for creative ways to interweave those goals into your schedule. As you are arranging designating time slots, you may find that you need to eliminate one or more short-term goals. The following is an example of an action organizer.

Long-term Goals & Obligations		Short-term Goals		Ancillary Goals & Tasks	
Action	Time per week	Action	Time per week	Action	Time per week
Make phone calls and send emails for work	2 hrs.	Prepare presentation for upcoming workshop (1 week)	8 hrs.	Get gifts for birthday party (3 days)	2 hrs.
Study for certification classes	7 hrs.	Workout to lose 15 pounds (6 weeks)	3 hrs.	Research how to set up a blog (1 month out)	2 hrs.
				Research and apply for jobs (2 months out)	1 hr.
				Pray for 30 minutes four times	2 hrs.
				File taxes (2 weeks out)	3 hrs.

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The sum for “time per week” for the actions in the previous figure was 30 hours. Of course, this is only an approximation. Some actions may take you longer or shorter to complete than the time you allot. The most important thing to remember is that you are trying to fit these actions into your available time (which you calculated in Exercise #15). For instance, if this action organizer was for the same individual used in the example at the beginning of this chapter, then the 30 hours set for his or her actions would easily fit into their available time of 44 hours.

Once you allot time for your actions you must then fit those actions into your weekly schedule. It is like a puzzle! Referencing the example from the beginning of the chapter and looking at the figure below, we can see an example of how the 8 hours allocated for preparing a presentation in the Action Organizer might be distributed over the course of his or her week.

6	Watch news	Watch news	Watch news	Watch news	Watch news		
7		TV show					
8	Prep for pres.		Prep for pres.	TV show	Prep for pres.		
9	Prep for pres.	Prep for pres.	Prep for pres.	Prep for pres.	Prep for pres.		
10	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep			Sleep

The remaining actions can be scheduled accordingly, and any excess available time can be distributed to various actions listed in the action organizer. This excess time could also be used for tasks that an individual cares about but has not prioritized, such as helping a friend with a home project. As you can see, planning your available time can help you take more control of your time as well as get more accomplished.

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Exercise #19: Action Organizer

Below you will organize the actions you set in Exercises 16, 17, and 18.

Long-term Goals & Obligations		Short-term Goals		Ancillary Goals & Tasks	
Action	Time per week	Action	Time per week	Action	Time per week

The action organizer is not meant to encompass all your tasks—there will be items that come up every day throughout your week that you did not plan for. However, it is meant to help you design as much of your time as possible to be worked routinely into your weekly schedule so that when those immediate daily tasks spring up you can more easily work them into your day while still making consistent progress with the things that are important to you. Whether you realize it or not, the ability to command where your time goes is an integral aspect of daily

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fulfillment. You may not be doing all the things you want to do, but staying focused, establishing balance, and being productive will help you embrace each day with optimism and gratitude. And, if you continue with this practice, before you know it you will be manifesting your ideal work week. Now, let us see what your weekly schedule looks like!

Exercise #20: Weekly Scheduled Actions

Incorporate the actions you set in Exercise #19 into your weekly schedule. To do this, revisit the weekly schedule of your routine items (Exercise #15) and fill in the open slots with the actions from your action organizer. Remember, you want to make sure that the time you specified in your action organizer for each action is accounted for on your schedule. You may find yourself shifting things around a bit, and you may have to even remove some actions for the time being. But this is your canvas, so you need to make it work for you. Try to fill in all time slots. (You may want to use a pencil in case you need to erase.)

Step Five



**Transfer Your Weekly
Schedule to a Daily
Agenda**



Step Five: Transfer Your Weekly Schedule to a Daily Agenda

The following exercise is a snippet from Chapter 8 Refresh Refocus Rebuild, The Art of Perfecting the Vision

It is extremely important that you start each day with an agenda. (I will go as far as saying that this is the single most important concept of time management.) By transferring the actions from your completed weekly schedule (Exercises #20) to each respective day of the week you will ensure that most of your actions are routine, and you will reduce the tendency to act on impulse. In many cases, impulse can lead to unplanned time that does not incorporate your priorities. Not having to feel like you are constantly reacting to immediate tasks every day can save you a lot of mental energy that can be used towards being more efficient. Each day will require you to evaluate what needs to be done, and there will likely be some items that come to mind at the beginning of (and throughout) the day that you will need to work into your daily agenda, such as “stopping by the store.” To help you organize these action items, you can record them to the right of your agenda as they come to mind. This will make it simple for you to incorporate them into your agenda by writing them again in a designated time slot or simply drawing an arrow from a task over to the time slot.

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The following is an example of a daily agenda.

<u>Agenda:</u>	<u>Tasks:</u>
6:00 – Prep for work	Send email reply to business
7:00 – Eat and watch news	Stop by store
8:00 – Drive to work/Call mother	
9:00 – Work	
12:00 – Lunch/Call father	
1:00 – Work	
4:00 – Drive from work	
5:00 – Nap	
6:00 – News/Eat Dinner	
8:00 – Work on presentation	
9:30 – Prep for bed	
10:00 – Go to bed	

Notes:

Continued...

We will reference this example throughout this chapter. Foremost, notice that the agenda is broken down into three sections: Agenda, Task, and Notes. The agenda section encompasses what you will transfer from your weekly schedule. As you transfer your weekly schedule to each respective day, your daily agenda is where you will incorporate more detail. For instance, if you allotted a time each day on your weekly schedule to call family then on your daily agenda you might specify exactly who you are calling that day. The Tasks section encompasses both 1.) tasks from your action organizer that you may not have fit into your weekly schedule as well as 2.) those items that arise at the beginning and throughout the day. Finally, the Notes section is where you will record things that come to mind that are not of immediate attention that day.

While your natural inclination may be to write down everything that comes to mind in your Tasks section, you should designate this section for only those things that you “know” can reasonably be done that day. The reason for this is that the more things you can mark as “completed” off your list of tasks the more productive you will feel. Furthermore, this can have a psychological effect of helping you value your time even more. On the contrary, the more things that you do not follow through with, the easier it will become to not hold yourself to the standard of structure that you set. Having a “Notes” section at the bottom of your Daily Agenda can help you stay more focused by providing a place to write down random thoughts or important information quickly so that you do not get overwhelmed or waste time thinking about things that are not expedient to your productivity for that day. In essence, this acts as a place of daily storage for items that you do not need to focus on that day but also don’t want to forget about. Since it can be tough not to immediately try to tackle everything that comes to mind, doing this is a skill that will take practice. The following are some additional ways that may help you maintain efficiency throughout the day.

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Strategy	Example
Take breaks when needed	Shifting to a different activity when you are becoming restless or less efficient
Change scenery to refocus	Going to a coffee shop to get a fresh start after feeling distracted at home
Reward yourself	Giving yourself a 15-minute relaxation break for completing 45 minutes of studying

As emphasized throughout this book, a major key to being efficient with your time is being intentional. Ultimately, it will not always be practical to perform every action at the exact time that you planned it. The most important thing to understand is that your agenda provides the structure for your day. Being able to clearly see how you can manipulate your day is key to ensuring that you drive results. For instance, you may set aside a time slot of 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. to work on a project but end up getting those two hours in between 2:30 to 3:30 and 5:30 to 6:30. On the other hand, maybe it ends up taking you 2 hours for something you had only allotted 30 minutes to do and then you must adjust accordingly. Whatever the case, if you are aware of how you are using your time and how it is impacting your day, you will be more productive.

As much as possible, you will want to work tasks into your agenda where it is most convenient. For instance, in the example, “stopping by the store” might be something this person can do on the way home. While doing so may seem inherent, the key is maintaining the basic structure of your day so that you can have optimum productivity. I have discovered some very specific techniques that have helped me manage my time to better execute my daily agenda, and have coined these strategies grouping, segmenting, and recentering.

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Grouping

Recall that in Chapter 6 emphasis was placed on the importance of giving the activity at hand your undivided attention. Well, there is an exception to that rule. You will not always need to give certain activities all your attention. You may also remember earlier in the book that I emphasized how available time can be hidden. In the example, “Drive from work” is available time for this individual because he or she can do something while driving, such as “Call mother.” Likely this individual built the latter into his or her weekly schedule and then transferred it to their daily agenda. While this might seem inherent, executing tasks such as this consistently within is critical to establishing a healthy sense of balance and productivity.

Combining

In some cases responsibilities and tasks can be strategically combined to help you maximize your time. For example, considering that I try to regularly engage in a physical workout (task) and spend quality time with my children throughout the week (responsibility), occasionally I will do a workout with them. Since I tend to allot time for both items individually, when I combine them this typically frees up time for me to do something else.

Segmenting

Oftentimes individuals lose efficiency because there is little distinction for which items should be done at that very moment. For example, a typical workday encompasses various tasks; however, for many jobs, those tasks do not warrant a necessary order of action. Yet, in terms of efficiency, a system of action is important. For instance, an individual might want to segment the time slots for “work” into more specific tasks—such as “send emails, make phone calls, finish projects, etc.”—that help them stay focused and be more productive. In doing so, he or she may find that they have available time that they otherwise

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would have wasted. The better you can segment your day the more focused and efficient you will be.

Recentering

Days that play out exactly like you planned them on paper will be few and far between. Sometimes you may even find yourself meandering through activities and not getting much done. When this happens, you can minimize frustration and restlessness by reviewing your daily agenda to identify the most important items that you can reasonably complete for the remainder of the day. Then you should modify your agenda for the rest of your day to focus on those items. I like to call this concept “recentering” because it can help restore a semblance of balance and productivity to what otherwise could feel like a wasted day.

In recentering, you may find that the best thing for the rest of the day (or a period of the day) is “doing nothing.” Since minimizing idle time is a major focal point in productivity, being intentional about doing nothing can be a productive thing—at the least, you are intentionally resting your mind and body. On the contrary, in the case that you determine to get back in gear, you can take the pressure off yourself by setting a starting point that allows you to regain the momentum needed for the next item. For instance, if the time is 4:32, then you may want to start your next task at 4:45 or 5:00.

Exercise #21: Daily Agenda

Based on your completed weekly schedule (Exercise #20) and the tasks ahead for tomorrow, make a daily agenda. Remember, this is where you start transferring your items for the respective day from your weekly schedule to your daily agenda.

Day of the Week: _____

Continued...

Agenda:	Tasks:
Notes:	

In terms of being productive, each day will require you to be intentional and flexible. To help you overcome challenges with focus and time management, you will need to be creative in dealing with those challenges. Find ways to reward yourself for doing well. Constantly evaluate the strategies that work and try to implement them consistently. Ultimately, as you engage in this process of weekly planning and daily scheduling, you will learn more about yourself and will grow in your daily production and fulfillment.

Try the R3 Planner!

Improve your time management and prioritization
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