

Time Management: 7 Characteristics of Effective Planners

Student Success Center
Eastern Illinois University



1. **They break projects into realistic tasks with manageable deadlines.** They establish steps that will lead them toward the completion of complicated projects, generate realistic deadlines from the completion of these steps, and work to meet these deadlines. They give themselves “false due dates” to keep themselves accountable for progression towards the completion of a project. They write their tasks down and cross off activities once they are finished to give themselves a sense of continual accomplishment.
2. **They operate in two time horizons.** They utilize an assortment of short-term and long-term planning aids. They use both calendars and action lists to plot out activities according to due dates. They have daily objectives to move them toward the completion of multiple tasks and they continually review long term goals so they don’t lose sight of the forest for the trees.
3. **They begin projects early.** They give themselves the time and freedom to brainstorm about the best alternatives to accomplish their objectives. Starting early on tasks gives people the opportunity to gather information, ruminate over the matter, collaborate with others for assistance, and modify plans for convenience or effectiveness. They are honest with themselves about how their plans are going and they are willing to modify plans for better results.
4. **They seek advice from others.** They eagerly accept input from anyone in a position to assist them or offer them information. They will review others’ materials, converse and correspond with expert sources, and consider others’ ideas as they chart out a course of action.
5. **They delegate whenever possible.** Even the most energetic people can’t do everything themselves. Effective planners delegate tasks to those they can trust to get things done, and they monitor the activity without micro-management. If you’re going to waste time micro-managing, you may as well perform the activity yourself and not insult a colleague or subordinate. Effective planners also inform people involved as much in advance as possible about any role they may have in the activity to allow them time to plan ahead.
6. **They have a plan “B.”** They remain flexible and persistent. They anticipate obstacles. They are proactive rather than reactive, and thus can shift to other plans to ensure that the overall goal is accomplished. They remain persistent in the face of adversity by considering other avenues of approach when encountering barriers. They “Never say Die.”
7. **They realize that “No” is sometimes the appropriate response to a request.** An effective planner has the ability to say, “I will get back to you on that, let me think about it overnight” or “No, I cannot do that” if there is uncertainty about whether or not the request can be fulfilled. When unable to carry out a request, a professional can still be of assistance by providing direction or offering alternatives to the person seeking help.

Brought to you by the EIU Student Success Center

Academic Consulting ❖ Academic Intervention ❖ EIU ❖ Supplemental Instruction ❖ Tutoring Services
1302 9th Street Hall