

Time Management Techniques for Settlement and Integration Sector Practitioners

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A Webinar for Management & Leadership



Territorial Acknowledgment

As a provincial umbrella association, AMSSA acknowledges that B.C. is on the unceded homelands of First Nations who have stewarded this land since time immemorial. We recognize the privilege that we have as settlers on this land, and acknowledge that AMSSA's operations is on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. As an organization, AMSSA is committed to creating a safe space for Indigenous voices.

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Speaker Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Mike Vardy from Productivityist Productivity Services Inc for creating this handout and sharing his knowledge as content expert on the topic.

About the Event

On February 22, 2023, AMSSA's Settlement and Integration Department held webinar on the topic Time Management Techniques for Settlement and Integration Sector Practitioner with speaker Mike Vardy from Productivityist Productivity Services Inc. In this webinar time management expert Mike Vardy provided Settlement and Integration practitioners with strategies and tools to effectively manage their time and overcome common time management challenges faced in their profession.

The webinar recording can be accessed on the [AMSSA website here](#).

INTRODUCTION

As a Settlement and Integration Practitioner, you are constantly dealing with complex issues and juggling multiple responsibilities, which can often make it challenging to manage your time effectively. However, effective time management is crucial to ensure that you can provide the best possible support to the individuals and communities you serve. In this handout, you will find practical strategies and tools that can help you manage your time more efficiently, reduce stress, and improve your productivity. By implementing the techniques outlined in this guide, you can take control of your time and become a more effective and successful practitioner.

In this first section, we'll explore the concept of calendar-driven versus to-do list-driven individuals and provide an assessment to help you determine which category you fall into.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT STYLE: ARE YOU A CALENDAR-DRIVEN PERSON OR A TO-DO LIST-DRIVEN PERSON?

Understanding whether you are driven by your calendar or your to-do list is an important part of effective time management. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, and it's important to recognize which approach works best for you.

If you are a calendar-driven person, you likely rely on your calendar to structure your day, week, and month. You may feel more comfortable with a set schedule and enjoy having a visual representation of your time commitments. On the other hand, if you are a to-do list-driven person, you may prefer the flexibility of being able to move tasks around as needed and prioritize your work in a way that feels most productive.

Knowing whether you are driven by your calendar or your to-do list can help you better understand how to manage your time, set realistic goals, and prioritize tasks. To help you determine which approach works best for you, I've included a quiz/assessment in this handout that will guide you through a series of questions to help identify your time management preferences. By the end of the quiz, you should have a better idea of whether you are a calendar-driven person, a to-do list-driven person, or somewhere in between.

ASSESSMENT: ARE YOU DRIVEN BY YOUR CALENDAR OR YOUR TO-DO LIST?

When you wake up in the morning, what is the first thing you do?

- a) Check your calendar to see what you have scheduled for the day
- b) Look at your to-do list to prioritize tasks

How do you prioritize your tasks?

- a) By scheduling them into your calendar
- b) By assigning them a priority level on your to-do list

How often do you update your calendar or to-do list?

- a) Daily or multiple times a day
- b) As needed, when there are new tasks or changes in schedule

What helps you feel more organized and in control of your day?

- a) Having a detailed schedule in your calendar
- b) Having a to-do list with all your tasks and priorities

How do you like to receive reminders about upcoming tasks or events?

- a) Calendar notifications or alerts
- b) Pop-up reminders on your to-do list app

How do you track your progress and accomplishments?

- a) By looking at your completed tasks in your calendar
- b) By checking off completed tasks on your to-do list

How do you feel when you don't complete everything on your list or schedule?

- a) Anxious or stressed
- b) Motivated to catch up or re-prioritize

How do you prefer to plan your long-term goals?

- a) By breaking them down into smaller, actionable steps and scheduling them in your calendar
- b) By creating a master list and breaking down steps as needed in your to-do list

SCORING

For each question, give yourself 1 point for answer a) and 2 points for answer b). Add up your total score at the end and see which result best describes you:

- 8-10 points: You are a calendar-driven person. You prefer to schedule your tasks and events into a detailed calendar to help you stay organized and in control of your day.
- 11-14 points: You are a to-do list driven person. You prefer to have a master list of tasks and priorities, and assign levels of importance or urgency as needed to help you stay on track.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TASK DECOMPOSITION

As a Settlement and Integration Practitioner, you likely have many projects and tasks on your plate that require your attention. From meeting with clients and stakeholders to preparing reports and developing programs, it can be challenging to manage everything effectively.

One of the most critical skills for effective time management is task decomposition. Task decomposition involves breaking down a larger project into smaller, more manageable tasks. This process not only helps you get a better understanding of the scope of a project but also allows you to prioritize and organize your to-do list.

You may not even realize that some of the items on your to-do list or calendar are actually projects masquerading as tasks. Without breaking these down into smaller pieces, it can be difficult to know where to begin or how to allocate your time effectively.

It's common to resist breaking down projects into smaller tasks, thinking it will only make your list longer. However, by breaking down a project into its smallest components, it becomes more visible, and you can approach it with more clarity and focus.

Without task decomposition, you run the risk of underestimating the time and resources required for a project, causing delays or missed deadlines. It can also lead to feelings of overwhelm and stress as you struggle to keep track of everything on your plate.

On the other hand, by breaking down projects into smaller tasks, you gain a better understanding of what is required, which can help you plan and allocate your time more effectively. You also increase your sense of control and reduce the likelihood of missed deadlines, helping you feel more productive and accomplished in your work.

EXERCISE: TASK DECOMPOSITION

1. Choose a task from your to-do list or calendar that seems overwhelming or unclear.
2. Write the task down on a sheet of paper.
3. Ask yourself, "Is this a single action item, or is it actually a larger project?"
4. If the task is a project, write down the larger goal or outcome that you are trying to achieve.
5. Break down the larger goal into smaller, more manageable tasks that will help you achieve the outcome.
6. Write each task down as a separate item on the sheet of paper.
7. Review the list of tasks and see if any of them can be further broken down into smaller sub-tasks.
8. After completing the previous steps, ask yourself if the list of tasks is still overwhelming or unclear.
9. Come back to the list once you've learned more about attention paths and see if you can further break down the tasks or rearrange them to be filtered in a more effective manner.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CAPTURING AND THE CAPTURE CODE

Effective time management starts with capturing everything. As a settlement and integration practitioner, you have many tasks, projects, and important details to remember on a daily basis. Trying to remember everything can lead to a lot of unnecessary stress and anxiety. Therefore, it is essential to capture everything, no matter how small, as it comes to your attention.

The Capture Code is a set of rules that can help you effectively capture all the things you need to remember or accomplish. The rules are as follows:

Have a system: Use a tool or system that works for you to capture everything. This could be a notebook, a digital tool, or a combination of both.

Write it down: Whenever something comes to your attention, write it down immediately. Don't rely on your memory to capture it later.

Use verbs: Use verbs when you write down a task or an action item. This helps to make it clear what needs to be done.

Be specific: Be as specific as possible when capturing a task or an action item. This helps to avoid confusion or misunderstandings.

Capture everything: Capture everything that comes to your attention, no matter how small. This helps to ensure that nothing important is missed.

Review regularly: Review your captured items regularly to ensure that nothing falls through the cracks.

By following The Capture Code, you can ensure that nothing important is forgotten or overlooked, and you can feel confident that you are staying on top of everything that needs to be done.

THE CAPTURE CODE

1. Always carry a capture tool with you, such as a notebook or a note-taking app on your phone.
2. Don't rely on your memory to keep track of everything. Write down every idea, task, or thought as it comes to you.
3. Be specific and use verbs when capturing tasks. Instead of writing "laundry," write "do the laundry."
4. Capture everything that comes to mind, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.
5. Set aside time at the end of the day to review your captured items and move any tasks to your to-do list or calendar.
6. Regularly clear out your capture tool to ensure that you don't miss anything important, and transfer any unfinished tasks to your to-do list or calendar.

ATTENTION PATHS

Attention paths are modes or categories of tasks that allow for more focused and efficient use of attention. They are often based on different dimensions, such as time, resource, energy, activity, or theme. Attention paths are used to help individuals batch tasks that share similar characteristics, resulting in more flow and less friction in their work. By understanding attention paths, individuals can better manage their time and attention, avoid getting sidetracked, and stay on track to accomplish their goals.

THERE ARE FIVE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ATTENTION PATHS

Time-based paths: These are tasks that are linked to a time range you believe it will take to complete them. Use variations such as short timeframes (5 minutes or less), medium frames (more than 5 minutes but less than 15), and longer frames (more than 15 but no more than 30 minutes). Hint: If you believe a task will take you longer than 30 minutes, ask yourself if it can be broken down into smaller tasks.

Resource-based paths: These are tasks that require a specific resource, such as a person, place, or thing.

Energy-based paths: These are tasks that require a specific level of energy, such as high energy for creative work or low energy for routine tasks.

Activity-based paths: These are tasks that are part of a larger activity, such as preparing for a presentation, conducting research, or planning an event. Verbs are your friend with this attention path.

Theme-based paths: These are tasks that are related to a particular time theme, such as daily, weekly, horizontal (hourly), or monthly themes. Themes are spaces where you'll dedicate an overarching focus to something in the above time frames. For example, Monday might be a day where you give your overarching focus to Administrative tasks and from 8am-10am weekdays could be where you give your overarching focus to Deep Work.

Using attention paths can help you prioritize your tasks and make more efficient use of your time. By grouping similar tasks together, you can reduce the time it takes to switch between activities, which can increase your productivity and reduce stress. Additionally, attention paths help you avoid procrastination and keep momentum going, as you can work on tasks that match your current level of energy, focus, and resources.

One of the biggest advantages of using attention paths is that they can help you avoid the pitfalls of traditional time management techniques. For example, if you rely solely on due dates, you may find that you are constantly rushing to meet deadlines, even if the tasks themselves are not very important. This can lead to a sense of overwhelm, stress, and burnout. Similarly, if you focus solely on priority levels, you may find that you are spending too much time on low-value tasks, simply because they have been labeled as urgent or important.

Attention paths can help you avoid these problems by allowing you to approach your tasks in a more flexible and adaptive way. Instead of rigidly adhering to deadlines or priorities, you can choose to work on tasks that align with your strengths and preferences, and that fit into your overall schedule and goals. For example, if you know that you work best in the morning, you can prioritize tasks that require a lot of energy during that time. Or, if you know that you are most productive when you have long stretches of uninterrupted time, you can group together tasks that require similar resources and work on them in batches.

Another advantage of attention paths is that they allow you to work on multiple projects simultaneously, without losing focus or momentum. By organizing your tasks by mode-based living, you can group together tasks that relate to a particular project or theme, and work on them in a focused and productive way. This can help you avoid the trap of multitasking, which can lead to decreased productivity, increased stress, and a lower quality of work.

Finally, attention paths can help you stay motivated and engaged in your work. By focusing on the modes of living that you find most fulfilling and rewarding, you can tap into your intrinsic motivation and achieve a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment in your work. This can help you stay focused, resilient, and committed, even in the face of challenges and setbacks.

To get started with attention paths, it is important to first identify the modes of living that are most relevant to your work and goals. This can be done by reflecting on the types of resources you need, the times of day or week when you are most productive, the level of energy you have at different times, the types of activities that energize or deplete you, and the themes that are most important to you. Once you have identified these modes, you can begin to organize your tasks and projects in a way that aligns with them, using verbs to activate each task and ensure that it is actionable and specific.

The 5 different attention paths - Time, Resource, Energy, Activity, and Theme - form the acronym TREAT. This is fitting because when you use them, you treat yourself, your work, and your life better. By dividing your tasks into these different attention paths, you can allocate your resources and attention more efficiently, avoid distractions, and focus on tasks that need to be completed. This can lead to a better work-life balance, more productivity, and a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day. So remember to TREAT yourself, and utilize these different attention paths to make the most of your time and resources.

EXERCISE: USING ATTENTION PATHS

1. Write down the project you want to work on. (Better still, use one you've already applied task decomposition to.)
2. If you are starting fresh, then decompose the project into smaller tasks.
3. Next to each task, write down the attention path(s) you want to assign to each (Time, Resource, Energy, Activity, Theme). You can use up to three different attention paths, but I recommend no more than two.
4. Start working on tasks, using the attention path that you'd like to begin with (or feel as if you need to begin with).
5. After completing tasks using that path, repeat step 4 using a different path.
6. Throughout the process, be aware of any distractions or disruptions that may divert your attention, and use your attention paths to stay focused.

MANAGING THE 3DS: DISRUPTION, DISTRACTION, AND DIVERSION

In addition to understanding the different attention paths and how they can help you optimize your time management, it's also important to be aware of common time management challenges that can derail you from achieving your goals. The three main challenges that can take you off course are disruption, distraction, and diversion, commonly known as the 3D's. Disruptions are unexpected events or situations that take you away from what you intended to do. Distractions are external factors that prevent you from focusing on your tasks, and diversions are the most significant of the three, as they take you completely off track and derail your progress.

By using attention paths, you can create a system that helps you minimize these challenges and stay on course. Instead of being completely derailed by a diversion, you can recognize it and quickly get back on track by identifying which attention path it falls under and redirecting your focus accordingly. By being aware of the 3D's, and using attention paths to mitigate them, you can stay focused and productive, even when unexpected events occur.

THE TRAITS OF DISRUPTIONS, DISTRACTIONS, AND DIVERSIONS

Disruptions

- Often unexpected
- Out of your control
- Can completely halt progress on a task or project
- May require immediate attention
- Can be external or internal
- Make you susceptible to diversion

Distractions

- Often voluntary or self-imposed
- Usually within your control
- Can take your focus away from the task at hand
- May not be urgent
- Can be external or internal
- Make you susceptible to diversion

Diversions

- Result from disruptions or distractions
- Can be brief or long-lasting
- Often lead to a loss of productivity
- May take you away from your original task or project
- Can be external or internal

ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES FOR EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT

Establishing boundaries is an important part of effective time management. When we set boundaries, we create a clear and defined space for ourselves, and we communicate to others what is acceptable and what is not. Boundaries help us protect our time, energy, and focus, allowing us to stay on task and achieve our goals.

Without boundaries, we are at risk of becoming overwhelmed and stressed. We may find ourselves saying yes to too many commitments, or allowing others to take up too much of our time and attention. This can lead to burnout, as well as a sense of frustration and resentment. By setting boundaries, we take control of our time and resources, and we ensure that we are able to focus on the things that are most important to us.

When we establish boundaries, we are better able to manage our time and resources, and to ensure that we are spending our energy on the things that matter most. We are able to say no to requests that are not in line with our goals and values, and we are able to allocate our time and resources in a way that is effective and efficient. This allows us to work smarter, not harder, and to achieve our goals with greater ease and satisfaction.

Here are six rules of boundary building to help you protect your time, maintain focus, and accomplish your goals.

THE 6 RULES OF BOUNDARY BUILDING

Identify your priorities: Clearly understand what is most important to you and what you want to prioritize in your life. This will help determine the type of boundaries needed for your time and activities.

Proactively set boundaries: Don't wait for others to set boundaries for you. Take the initiative to set your own boundaries and communicate them clearly to others.

Effective communication: Be clear and direct in communicating your boundaries to others. This helps avoid misunderstandings and ensures others are aware of your expectations.

Consistency is key: Once boundaries are set, it is important to consistently stick to them. This helps others understand that you take your boundaries seriously and they are not negotiable.

Respect your own boundaries: To ensure that your boundaries are respected by others, you must first respect them yourself. This means following through on the boundaries you have set and avoiding activities that violate them.

Regular evaluation and adjustment: Regularly review your boundaries to determine their effectiveness. If necessary, make adjustments to ensure they continue to serve you well. Remember that boundaries should be flexible and adaptable, so don't be afraid to make changes as needed.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

In conclusion, effective time management skills are essential for settlement and integration practitioners who face daily challenges in their profession. By understanding your own work style and employing strategies and tools to manage your time, you can stay on top of your tasks, overcome distractions, and maintain your focus on the most important work. Remember to start by identifying whether you are driven by your calendar or your to-do list and then use task decomposition to break down larger projects into smaller, more manageable tasks. The Capture Code will help you capture all your tasks effectively, while attention paths will help you prioritize your work, stay organized, and maintain focus. Establishing boundaries can also help you protect your time and prevent burnout. By applying these strategies and tools, you can boost your productivity and feel more in control of your workload.

Thank you for taking the time to read this handout and learn more about effective time management for Settlement and Integration Practitioners. Remember, time management is a skill that takes practice and patience, but the rewards of having more time to focus on what really matters are well worth it.

If you're interested in learning more about the TimeCrafting philosophy and process, I encourage you to grab The TimeCrafting Starter Kit for free at mikevardy.com/kit. This kit includes resources to help you dive deeper into the world of TimeCrafting, including worksheets and templates that will help you put the ideas you've learned into practice. Thank you again, and here's to crafting your time!

About AMSSA

AMSSA is a unique province-wide association that strengthens over 80 member agencies as well as hundreds of community stakeholder agencies who serve immigrants and newcomers, and build culturally inclusive communities, with the knowledge, resources and support they need to fulfill their mandates.

OUR VISION

A just and equitable society in which everyone benefits from social and economic inclusion.

OUR MISSION

AMSSA facilitates collaborative leadership, knowledge exchange, and stakeholder engagement to support member agencies that serve immigrants and build culturally inclusive communities.

OUR PURPOSE

AMSSA's purpose is to co-create the conditions of success for our members to build better lives for immigrants and newcomers to BC.

AMSSA's 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan is an impact-driven strategy focusing on four pillars:

- 1 SUPPORT OUR MEMBERS**
- 2 STRENGTHEN THE SECTOR**
- 3 DISRUPT SYSTEMS**
- 4 EXCEL AS AN ORGANIZATION**

WE VALUE

EQUITY and strive to be the catalyst for change which disrupts systems promoting racial and social injustice.

INCLUSIVENESS and work with our members and stakeholders to place voices that have been marginalized in positions of influence, creating space for all perspectives.

INTEGRITY, striving to always work to the highest standards, encouraging innovation, risk taking and leadership; we are always open to new thoughts and maintain accountability in our work.

DIVERSITY, recognizing our own individual biases and engaging members and stakeholders in meaningful ways that promotes inclusion of all voices and perspectives.

MUTUAL RESPECT by respecting what everyone has to offer within their own context of life experiences, opening our hearts and minds to always listening and learning.

COLLABORATION, engaging in equitable partnerships, mindfully exploring old and new ideas to advance the work of AMSSA and our members.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION, engaging in continuous individual and organizational reflection and collaboration.

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