Continuous Improvement Toolkit

Importance Urgency Matrix

1 2
3 4
Importance Urgency Matrix

“We live in a time pressured world where it is common to have multiple overlapping commitments that all require immediate attention now”

“Urgency is no long reserved for special occasions, they are an everyday occurrences”

“How can one manage the flood of responsibilities, do excellent work and maintain a positive frame of mind?”
Importance Urgency Matrix

An effective method for organizing priorities

A 2-dimensional chart
Importance Urgency Matrix

Also called . . .

Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Principle

Covey's Time Management Grid

A 2-dimensional chart
Importance Urgency Matrix

Used to prioritize **work** activities as well as **personal** activities.

Can be used when the team is having a conflict and unable to manage the work effectively.
Importance Urgency Matrix

All tasks can be evaluated in terms of importance and urgency.

They are then placed in the appropriate quadrants of the importance-urgency matrix.
Importance Urgency Matrix

**Quadrant 1**
Important activities that require immediate attention

**Quadrant 2**
Activities that are important but not urgent

**Quadrant 3**
Activities that are not really important, but someone wants it now!

**Quadrant 4**
Activities that are neither important nor urgent
Importance Urgency Matrix

- **Important**
  - Do First: Manage
  - Do Soon: Focus

- **Not important**
  - Delegate: Push back
  - Drop: Avoid

- **Urgent**
- **Not urgent**
Importance Urgency Matrix

Quadrant 1

For important and urgent matters

A problem may arise when *unexpected* activities arises

Or when activities *become urgent* due to procrastination or poor planning
Importance Urgency Matrix

Quadrant 1 - Examples

- Deadlines at work
- Projects at hand
- Performing urgent repairs
- Paying urgent bills
- Medical emergencies
Importance Urgency Matrix

Quadrant 1 – Examples

- Unexpected activities arises
- Procrastination and poor planning
- Leave some time in your schedule
- Be proactive
The **important activities** that you should spend most of your time on

Exceptionally important when it comes to **personal development** and growth

Finding ways to expand them is the main goal from using this matrix
Importance Urgency Matrix

Quadrant 2

Often under used

You should spend more time here
Importance Urgency Matrix

Quadrant 2 – Examples

- Planning
- Prevention
- Research

- Personal development
- Leadership driven activities
- Continuous improvement
Athletes, entrepreneurs and other people of great achievement **find time** for this quadrant

Help you achieve your personal and professional goals
Importance Urgency Matrix

Quadrant 3

Unimportant activities that are done with a sense of urgency

Most of these activities are draining and time consuming
Importance Urgency Matrix

Quadrant 3 – Examples

- Most emails
- Some phone calls
- Some meetings
- Frequent interruptions
- Unwanted conversations
- Agreeing to do something because you can’t say “no”
Importance Urgency Matrix

Quadrant 3

Push back, **delegate**, or at least don’t get caught up with these activities.

Arrange **regular meetings** with those who interrupt you often.

Keep your phone on **silent** when you need to focus.
Importance Urgency Matrix

Quadrant 3

Try to have **time slots** when you are available, so people know they can speak with you them

Learn how to say No
The area that most of us get caught up in

These are the activities used for **taking a break** from important and urgent activities
Watching TV and playing video games can be a relief at the end of a long day!
Importance Urgency Matrix

Quadrant 4

Limit the time you spend in this quadrant.

Otherwise, you lose control of your future and may decrease your chance for success.
Importance Urgency Matrix

How to Use the Importance-Urgency Matrix

Begin by your personal or job-related activity list

Draw the importance-urgency matrix on a paper (or on a flip chart if you are working with a team)
Importance Urgency Matrix

How to Use the Importance-Urgency Matrix

**Sort** all the activities in the appropriate quadrant

Manage and focus what’s on the first two quadrants, and pushback or ignore what’s on the last two quadrants
**Importance Urgency Matrix**

**Example – Professional Life**

- **Important (Urgent)**: Meetings, Major deadlines, Customer calls, Customer emails
- **Important (Not urgent)**: Preparation, Planning, Prevention, Coaching, Networking
- **Not important (Urgent)**: Some meetings, Interruptions, Personal calls, Many emails
- **Not important (Not urgent)**: Junk emails, Gossiping at work, Internet surfing
# Importance Urgency Matrix

## Example – Personal Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not urgent</th>
<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Not urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family calls</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>Family gathering</td>
<td>Social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A crying baby</td>
<td>Family gathering</td>
<td>Daily planning</td>
<td>Social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A family breakfast</td>
<td>Daily planning</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A kitchen fire</td>
<td>Reading a book</td>
<td>Interruptions</td>
<td>Interruptions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Not urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet chatting</td>
<td>Video games</td>
<td>Social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related calls</td>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>Excessive TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A neighbor visit</td>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>Excessive TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruptions</td>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>Excessive TV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>