# The Time Management Matrix

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Tasks can be categorized as urgent/ not urgent or as important/ not important. Obviously these are sliding scales rather than black/ white categories but the following table maps the type-cases.

|  | Urgent | Not urgent |
|---|---|---|
| **Important** | **Quadrant 1**<br><br>• Crises<br>• Pressing problems<br>• Deadline-driven projects | **Quadrant 2**<br><br>• Prevention<br>• Relationship building<br>• Recognizing new opportunities<br>• Planning, recreation |
| **Not Important** | **Quadrant 3**<br><br>• Interruptions, some calls<br>• Some mail, some reports<br>• Some meetings<br>• Proximate, pressing matters<br>• Popular activities | **Quadrant 4**<br><br>• Trivia, busy work<br>• Some mail<br>• Some phone calls<br>• Time wasters<br>• Pleasant activities |

In "First Things First" by Stephen Covey with Roger Merrill and Rebecca Merrill- there is an interesting statistic worth mentioning. Where does most of your time go? High performing organizations, they say, spend 65-80 % in Quadrant 2 activities as against a mere 15 % by typical organisations. Likewise, high performing organizations spend only 15 % in Quadrant 3 activities as against a much higher 50-60 % by typical organisations.

Many of us fall into the "urgency" trap and lose sight of the tasks which are more important to us. Former President Eisenhower is supposed to have said*: "What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important".*

How you prioritize what you do has a direct impact on how you'll be.

Different people tend to focus on the different quadrants with the following results:

|  | **Urgent** | **Not urgent** |
|---|---|---|
| **Important** | **Quadrant 1**<br><br>• Stress<br>• Burnout<br>• Crisis management<br>• Always putting out fires | **Quadrant 2**<br><br>• Vision, perspective<br>• Balance<br>• Discipline<br>• Control<br>• Few crises |
| **Not Important** | **Quadrant 3**<br><br>• Short-term focus<br>• Crisis management<br>• Reputation – chameleon character<br>• See goals and plans as worthless<br>• Feel victimized, out of control | **Quadrant 3 and 4**<br><br>• Total irresponsibility<br>• Fired from jobs<br>• Dependent on others or institutions for basics |

Based on Covey S R (1989) *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*; Simon & Schuster