

# **13 TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR OVERWHELMED PEOPLE MANAGERS**



**MARION PARRISH**  
THE ACCIDENTAL MANAGER COACH

# Time Management Tips

Thank you so much for downloading this guide.

These tips aren't necessarily what you might expect to find in a time management guide. But I know, from nearly 30 years' experience of managing people, being an HR manager, and working as a management trainer, that if you do the things in this guide, you'll find you and your team can achieve more, and you, the manager, will feel as though you are actually on top of your job.

The accidental managers I coach all have the same problem.

**How do you juggle managing the people and making sure they are doing the work they should be doing, while also doing your own day job and coping with demands from your own manager?**

When you can't decide which of your million and one priorities to do first, you probably choose the priority you feel most comfortable with – your own day job.

But as a manager, that's no longer your top priority.

Your team is.

These time management tips help you make a start on the four things you need to manage your team effectively.

1. The **background knowledge** you need as a new manager
2. The **routines** you need to put in place to ensure your team are delivering what you need them to deliver, and that you are delivering what your manager needs you to deliver.
3. The **behaviours** you now need to adopt as a new manager.
4. The **skills** you need to be an effective people manager.

I hope you find these tips useful. I'd love to know which you found the most helpful, or how your life as a manager has changed as a result of trying out any of these ideas.

If you need any further help, or you'd like to find out more about the 1:1 coaching I do with accidental managers just like you, visit my website [www.marionparrish.com](http://www.marionparrish.com)

# Time Management Tips

## Knowledge

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### Be clear on your role and responsibilities

Whose job is it to make that decision? Are you sure it's yours, or is it something your manager should be deciding?

You can waste a lot of time doing work you are not supposed to be doing, or find you have fallen short of expectations because you are not doing the work your manager thinks you should be doing.

So make sure you have a job description, and check back regularly with your manager about what they expect from you.

And then do the same for your team.

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### Understand your own manager

Is your manager the type of person who makes decisions quickly, or do they like to have lots of facts and data before they act? The former will probably prefer you to pick up the phone or have a chat about new ideas or problems. Whereas the latter may respond better to a written report or discussion paper that they can think over.

We tend to communicate in the way we prefer to receive information. If you can communicate the way your manager prefers to work, you'll have a much more productive relationship.

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## Understand your HR policies and procedures

HR policies and procedures are the “rule book” for how your organisation manages people.

Your HR policies should be straightforward, easy to understand, and designed to meet the needs of your business.

As a manager, you need to understand the disciplinary procedure and the rules covering misconduct and gross misconduct, absence procedures, and how to monitor and manage people's performance.

You may also need to understand family-related policies such as flexible working, maternity and paternity leave and so on.

You don't need to remember every line of the policy, but you'll probably want to read them a few times so that you can recognise when something happens (a “trigger”) that requires you to follow a procedure or policy.

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## Get Tech Savvy

Understand the technology available in your organisation that can make your life and your team's working practices easier and more efficient.

Use team calendars so you know where everyone is and can handle holiday requests quickly and easily. Find apps that let you work collaboratively on team projects and ensure everyone has access to the most up to date information, or time-tracking apps that will integrate with accounting or payroll software for easier billing and payments.

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## Routines

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### Have 1:1s with team members every month

When you're busy with the day job it's easy to think that meetings with your team are a luxury you can't afford.

But how else do you know what your team members are doing, the problems they are encountering, or what support they need?

Regular 1:1s mean:

- You'll be better informed about what is really happening in the team so you can make better decisions.
- Your team will be more productive because they know what they have to focus on, and
- You'll reduce the number of interruptions or queries you will have to deal with during the month.

See 1:1s as a great way to improve your team members' performance and your own. What could be a better use of your time?

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### Don't forget the team meetings too!

The social aspect of work is often underrated. Teams who meet regularly together will understand the teams' work better, solve problems more quickly, and deal with conflict more effectively than teams who don't have opportunities to get to know each other better.

Team meetings are a great opportunity to make sure everyone receives the same messages, understands the team's priorities, and can work together to improve team performance.

They are also a great way to celebrate success. Especially if you provide the cakes!

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## Have a "me-meeting" each week.

If you feel as though your time is not your own, and your days go by in a whirl of urgent problems and dramas caused by others, it's time to take control.

Book at least 2 hours each week in your diary to work on the important tasks that you never seem to get the time to tackle.

During that time, divert your phone to voicemail or another team member, switch off your email notifications, and make it clear to the team you must not be disturbed unless there is a genuine emergency.

Plan at least one important task each week that you will tackle, and start crossing those projects off your to do list.

This one is a real gamechanger.

But the secret to making it work is to choose a time for your "me meeting" that is usually quieter (Monday morning probably isn't the best time!) and actually use the time for your own chosen tasks.

If something crops up, ask yourself if it really is more important than the task you had planned to do. And aim to move your me-meeting to another slot in the week, rather than cancel it.

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## Behaviours

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### Remember: Workers work, managers manage

If you manage a team you can guarantee they will try to suck you into a lot of problems that your team should be dealing with themselves.

Sometimes this is a sign of lack of confidence by the team member. They ask you because they don't know or aren't sure of the answer. That's fine, as long as you are educating or reassuring them. But if you find yourself taking on the task yourself, that's a big red flag.

Team members should be doing the job they are employed to do, while you, as their manager, should be teaching, coaching, advising, supporting or making decisions that are outside the scope of the team member's role.

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### Tackle people issues quickly

Nothing drains the energy from a team more than someone who is being disruptive or not pulling their weight.

Be really clear about your expectations in terms of performance, attendance and conduct, and act immediately when someone falls short of your standards.

You will usually be able to nip problems in the bud with a quick word at the right time. Ignoring problems will allow them to fester, grow and become more difficult, time-consuming and expensive to deal with.

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### Keep better records

Having records of conversations with your team is a great way of helping you track performance improvements, remember what was said about issues previously, and plan peoples' development.

And if things aren't going well, records give you the evidence that you have been fair and reasonable and have given people coaching and opportunities to improve, so it's not your word against theirs.

Make a record of what was discussed and agreed at every 1:1, and get into the habit of following up informal conversations with a quick email summarising what was said.

It's important to log both the positive and negative conversations you have had, and to refer back to them regularly so you can acknowledge improvements or know when it is time to take more formal action.

# Time Management Tips

## Skills

### Listen with both ears!

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You might like to think that you can listen to your team member while typing an email or looking for an important document, but all the research tells us you just won't do any of those tasks as well as if you just concentrated on one thing at a time.

If your team think you don't listen, they will stop bothering to tell you things. And that won't end well.

So focus on giving your team member your full attention when they speak to you. Put your phone down or turn away from your computer. Look at them. Summarise what they said to check you understood. And follow it up in writing!

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### Manage conflict confidently

It's going to happen, no matter how well everyone seems to get on or how little interaction they have in their roles. Healthy teams disagree on things from time to time.

Conflict is very likely in the early days of managing a team, as people get used to you and how you work. It's not a sign of failure so don't think you must be a terrible manager if your team are arguing.

But equally, now you are the boss, you need to make sure healthy conflict doesn't spiral into something more toxic.

Be careful to show you have listened to both sides. Look for common ground. Try to help team members to reach agreement together, but if they can't, step up and make the decision yourself.

Be confident to stick with your decision, but flexible to change your mind if the information available to you changes.

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## Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Your team aren't mind-readers.

They have no idea how you want a job to be done unless you tell them exactly what you want.

Don't assume that "they must know, they are professionals" or "they'll be insulted if I tell them how to do their jobs".

They won't.

They'll be relieved they now know exactly what your expectations are, because that will help them focus their efforts on the things that are most important to you, and stop them worrying about what you think of them or whether they are good enough..

So, be very clear what you want them to do.

Get them to explain back to you how they are going to tackle the job, so you can clarify any misunderstandings.

Use email to confirm instructions so they have a checklist to work to.

And make yourself available to answer questions that crop up as they get on with the task.

Most employees say communication needs to be improved in their organisation - but they rarely ever complain that their manager communicates too much.

If you'd like more support to implement any of these tips, or to help you improve other aspects of managing people, please get in touch.

[marion@marionparrish.com](mailto:marion@marionparrish.com) 07902 903086