

TIME MANAGEMENT¹

by Don L. Long and Harold G. Love

For any arborist, time management is a major responsibility. Time is a major cost item — probably about 50% of an arborist's controllable expenses. It is a major investment item. Many modern business managers estimate the dollar investment in their firm's human resources at 4 or more times the investment in all other assets. It is a highly complex resource to manage. Time involves people, both self and others, with all the challenges inherent whenever people are involved.

Although management of all time — personal and other — is important, management of personal time is critical. Unless an arborist can manage his own time wisely and to the arboretum's best advantage, it is difficult to manage that of others, both within and outside the firm. So, this paper will focus on management of the arborist's time.

To manage your time more effectively, you must know three things: 1) how your time should be used; 2) how your present time use compares with what it should be; and 3) specific techniques for improvement. Let's look at each of these in more detail.

Time Uses

Basically, all working time may be divided into three broad categories. These are:

1. **Non-productive.** The time you spend on the job or at work during which you do nothing which adds to the operation or profitability of the business. An example is a 5 minute telephone conversation with a friend arranging a fishing trip for the weekend. Hopefully, this 5 minutes of time will provide a weekend of pleasure and satisfaction. It is not, however, being used to advance the profitability of the arborist's enterprise. (In addition, this particular example ties up the phone so it cannot be used for business purposes.)

2. **Productive labor.** The time used in such a way that the accomplishments do contribute to the objectives and/or profits of the firm. However,

the level of work performed is below that normally expected for the level of pay or responsibility for the person performing the work. An example is the owner-operator washing the firm's trucks. It's a necessary job and some one must do it periodically. The owner-operator could and should, however, use his time in higher-level activities such as labor scheduling, supervision, sales, management, or bookkeeping. Typically, managers of small businesses do spend a large proportion of their time in productive labor and chores.

3. **Management.** The third broad category of time use is management. Management may be divided into two sub-categories: routine or supervisory, and planning or decision-making.

A. *Routine or supervisory.* Many management responsibilities are of a routine, recurring nature. Daily scheduling of work crews is an example. It is pretty much routine and largely repetitive. Yet it is essential for the success of the firm that it be done daily and be done effectively. While routine management time is largely spent on management responsibilities relative to current firm operations, it is obvious that the way the responsibilities are met does have great impact on the firm's future.

B. *Planning or decision-making.* The time spent on thinking out and putting into practice plans for the future operations and development of the firm. These may include such things as how best to finance the business, how to recruit and develop productive employees, and whether or not to purchase a new piece of equipment.

A manager's time use is schematically shown in Figure 1. Where a particular arboretum owner or owner-manager's optimum time usage pattern should fit in this figure would depend on many things: the size of the firm, the management level of the individual, the individual's experience and background, and many others. Each individual should determine his own proper place in the figure.

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HOW PEOPLE USE WORKING TIME

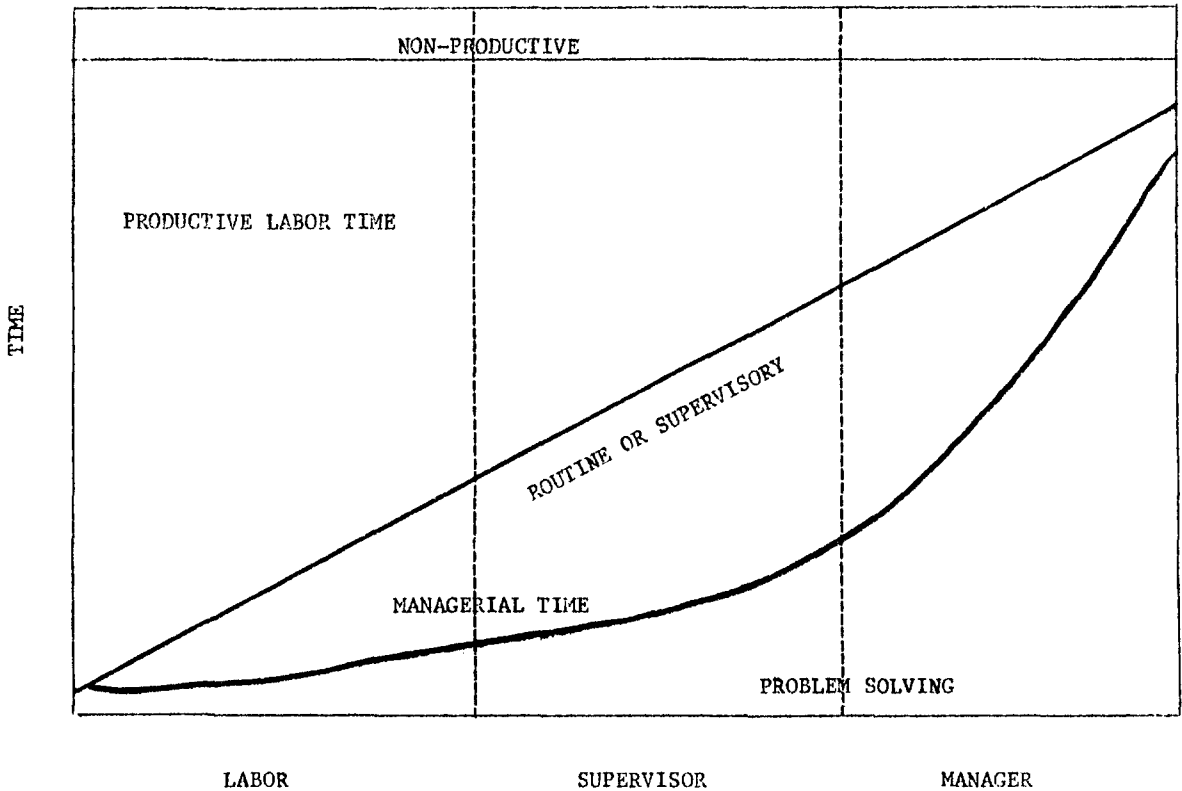


Figure 1

Time Usage

It is important to know how your time should be used. It is equally important to know how you actually do use it. One technique frequently followed for determining time usage is the Time Use Diary. A simple way to keep one is to record on a daily calendar the beginning and ending times for each activity during the day. At the end of the day, the time uses may be analyzed and the third column filled. A morning's record for an owner or manager of a firm might look like this.

Time	Activity	Type of time use
8:00-8:09	Gave crew instructions	Supervisory management
8:09-8:16	Took call from potential customer	Prod. labor
8:16-8:58	Talked to salesman about new chemical	Planning management

8:58-9:15	Signed checks	Prod. labor
9:15-9:46	Worked on Accounts Receivable	Prod. labor
9:45-10:10	Enroute to check on crew	Supervisory management
10:10-10:16	Stopped to chat with friend	Non-productive
10:16-10:31	Enroute to check on crew	Supervisory management
10:31-10:50	With crew foreman	Supervisory management
10:50-11:02	Enroute to Bank re note due	Planning management
11:02-11:56	With loan officer	Planning management
11:56-1:02	Lunch	—

Several days of such diaries give the arborist an adequately accurate breakdown of how he presently utilizes his time. Comparison of this breakdown with his own personal "optimum" time usage breakdown (how he should use his time)

tells him how nearly he comes to achieving the "optimum." Through analysis of these diaries, an arborist also can make decisions on where to shift time from one major activity to another and from one usage to another in order to achieve more effective time utilization.

Time Usage Improvement Techniques

There are literally hundreds of specific techniques which may be applied to obtain better use of time. It is well, though, to keep in mind that unless time saved through applying such techniques is put to productive use there is little benefit to the firm. Three major techniques of time management, which could return significant time use benefits to the firm, are:

1. **Increased delegation:** This is something managers almost without exception may do. To be effective, however, delegation must be well thought through and planned. A simple set of criteria which may be used to evaluate delegation possibilities is:

When to delegate

when someone else can do it better than you
when you might do poorly because of limited time

when a subordinate can do the job well enough for the time and cost involved

when cost, time, and risk are small, and it will develop a subordinate

when the job is repetitive

when not to delegate

when no one else can do the job satisfactorily

when your prestige is needed

when you wish to set an example

when it is confidential or beyond the authority and responsibility of a subordinate

when you need to become familiar with the job

2. **Employee training and development.** Well-

trained employees who know the why's, what's, when's, and how's of their jobs are efficient employees. Time and money spent on employee training and development usually is investment with high returns in productivity and so in profits to the firm. Such training and development should, however, be planned and conducted according to the long-run personnel needs of the firm.

3. **Commitment to organized records.** Few people like to keep records. Yet many managers use large blocks of time in remaking decisions, searching for records of past decisions, and working at cross-purposes because of inconsistent decisions simply because they do not maintain adequate records in an organized way. Time spent on developing a management information system, putting it into operation, maintaining it, and using it is an excellent managerial investment.

Summary

Time is a major investment item. Time is a major expense item. Efficient time use begins with the manager. To most effectively utilize the time available, an arborist must know how he should be using his working time and how he presently does use this time. He then can make informed decisions on what time-use changes he can or should make and what techniques will best help him make these changes.

Don L. Long, Extension Economist, Marketing Department of Agricultural Economists Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Harold G. Love, Extension Professor of Ag. Economics Department of Agricultural Economics University of Kentucky Lexington, Kentucky 40506