

Effective time management

*What matters are the countless contributions of
the unknown people, they lay the foundation for
the great changes that then go down in history.*

*(Howard Zinn, quoted by Noam Chomsky in Requiem for the
American Dream).*

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V o r w o r t o f t h e o b j e c t i v e r

When the author and I started the project of translating into German in the summer of 2021, we were in the second Corona summer in Germany as well as in the Netherlands. The first year of the Corona pandemic had already brought many changes: less travel, more video conferencing, more flexibility in working hours and more opportunities for home office. At the same time, however, there was also more mixing of work and private life, more need to coordinate work and family at home, to supervise children, and to continue to be available for work at all times. In short, with all this flexibility, significantly more time management is required.

We had initially considered producing a 4th Dutch edition in parallel, in which we would incorporate these Corona-related changes. But in the fall of 2021, many companies turned their backs on the home office again, while in parallel the infection figures shot up everywhere. It seems simply impossible at this point to predict which changes will stay and which will roll back. The only thing we can be sure of is that time management will continue to be crucial. And that the boundaries between "work" and "life" are becoming increasingly difficult to defend. Therefore, this book should help the reader to shape his own priorities and the use of his own "time of life". There is a new section at the back of the book on the current challenges during the pandemic, which is not (yet) included in the Dutch edition.

Furthermore, where possible, we have sought sources for the German-speaking world in order to make the reference to local conditions in the translation more tangible. Likewise, where available, we have consulted the German translations of the cited and suggested literature. Where these are not available, the Dutch- or English-language publications continue to be listed in the bibliography; perhaps this will help one or the other reader. Thus, some sections differ somewhat from the Dutch original.

We are of course happy about suggestions and comments!

Hemmingen, January 2022

1 Internation

1.1 Time management up to date

Once again, I'm sitting surrounded by books. This time to read about time management in times of Corona. After all, the third edition of this book dates back to 2017, when there was no Corona, no pandemic. Sure, we all already knew something about viruses, about Ebola or SARS, and also about other global problems such as climate change, excessive nitrogen pollution or the growing gap between rich and poor countries and the resulting social unrest in most countries. But in 2017, the world still looked quite manageable and, on a day-to-day basis, was no comparison to the crisis we are dealing with today.

At that time, I had still asked my editor why I should revise the book for the third time at all, and was looking for what had changed. "Why revise?" my editor replied. "Because the book is something like a foundation. Something that gives people a foothold in this rapidly changing world, and because this book has focused on work-life balance since the very first edition."

Now, in 2022 and thus in the third year of the pandemic, the question does not arise for me: Corona has brought so many additional demands that require time from us - looking after children because school is cancelled; visiting parents in the nursing home, but first organizing a test; meeting friends, but in small groups, when are we going to accommodate them all - while for many the home office blurs the boundaries between working time and free time. What falls behind when the children have to be looked after and the boss calls at the same time, because something as simple as procuring Euro pallets currently requires extra organization and thus extra time? Do the urgent issues push aside what is important to us in life? And at the same time, the situation in the intensive care units makes us aware once again that the time of our lives is limited. There is no Sunday bonus for them, no extension due to the crisis.

Today, more than ever, we need to be in control of the time of our lives.

A little review. Why? Even though humans, with their ancient emotions, are not made for rapid change - our genes change...

We have to cope with these changes - which only extend over hundreds of thousands of years. In order for us to go through life balanced and happy, we have to make good use of the time we have in our lives, we have to make our own decisions about it, and we have to live consciously. Therefore, with the increasing speed of change, effective time management becomes even more important. It was already in 1997, it became more so in 2007, even more urgent in 2017 and today, with Corona in our lives, especially so.

The first book was published in 1997, the time of "what do I want?", of .com and the dotcom bubble, of unprecedented prosperity (in the West), of enormous technological changes and of "busy, busy, busy, no time", or "busy, busy, busy".

The second, revised edition was published in 2007. We still didn't have time, but our language had gained so many words through all the technical possibilities that the same story could be told again in today's words. For example, we deleted "fax" and put more emphasis on dealing with e-mail and stress, which is now called Mindfulness. During this time, we also noticed that emotionally intelligent people were much more successful than people with only a high IQ. We peppered our emails with emoticons. And we began to question too much "me." What were our values, anyway?

Then came the smartphone. Suddenly, we were connected to anyone, anywhere in the world, and could find all the information we needed on the Internet in no time. In 2008 came another unprecedented banking crisis, followed by a global recession. Again many questions, was our capitalist system actually right? Was the technology over our heads, were the technically possible banking products still right when the bar of due diligence of the banks was applied to them? How could this have happened? Could it happen again? Will there still be banks in some time? New words gave these feelings a name: we live in a VUCA world, volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous: rapidly changing, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, unclear.

Since 2007, social media have stormed our lives, opening up previously unknown technical possibilities. The political landscape has also changed dramatically. Trust in politics declined. Intolerance increased and continues to increase. Nationalist parties are gaining strength throughout Euro- pa as an expression of great displeasure. The paradox of these times is that we in the Western world generally have more and more money at our disposal, but less and less time to enjoy it. And we are not

once happier than 50 years ago. Doesn't that call for a different view of "time"? Hence all these books around me. I want to work over it. To pass on my knowledge and thus a different view of things.

And then, in the early 2020s, we were inundated by something previously unheard of, a virus that literally and figuratively took our breath away. We mere mortals had no experience of this. At that time, I offered to look after my grandchildren for 14 days because the schools were closed. Naively, I thought that everything would go back to normal after that. You yourself probably remember well what your first reaction was?

While at first we thought, "grit your teeth and get through it", soon we will all be vaccinated and then there will be light at the end of the tunnel, today we know that we will have to live with the virus. It remains dark and the end of the tunnel is not in sight, neither with COVID -19 nor with the other crises. In his new book, *Embracing Chaos*.¹ Professor Jan Rotmans talks about a period of unrest of certainly 15 years.

I just got back from a long walk by the sea. Walking helps to clear my head. The Netherlands is now in a lockdown again, the second year a Christmas season without family visits, without the usual Christmas. The weather is gray and a fine niesel rain makes water drops on my jacket and scarf and also washes my hair with a gray veil. What would I have normally done right before Christmas, without Corona? Shopping, making lists, making beds for the visit, cleaning the silver cutlery, buying and decorating the Christmas tree, making sure there is a present underneath for everyone. Christmas is not only beautiful and sociable, but also pressure and stress. A time that does not always make it easy to focus on what is important.

The sea looked calming, a steady alternation of incoming and outgoing waves, of ebb and flow. I stood for a while and watched the movement. Gray air, gray water, merging invisibly somewhere on the horizon.

Thoughts come and go.

What a wonderful summer we had in 2021! Warm days, often too hot, even some days with more than 40 °C. Our youngest grandson, just six years old, came from the beach on one of these days with a very red head, threw himself into a chair, totally tired, and exclaimed: "I'm so hot, I'm totally exhausted!"

¹ Original title "Omarm de chaos", so far unfortunately only published in Dutch.

ben!". I replied, "You mean totally dried up?". "No, totally dried up."

I'm not just thinking about all the heat records. Too much water also comes to mind. The floods in the summer of 2021 in Germany, in Belgium and in Limburg in the Netherlands. The homes washed away, the deaths, the hardship caused by raging rivers. What a grief for the people who had lived in the supposedly safe places.

Is there still time management in such situations? How do we make sure that we don't go down with them?

Where is our world headed? The Dutch author, poet, and actor Ramsey Nasr recently described² recently described what will happen if we do not radically turn the tide. The minimum would be a moderate rise in sea level of half a meter. This would mean that 25% of the Netherlands would be under water, especially the large cities in the west. What would remain of Bremen, Hamburg, Kiel or the North Sea islands such as Langeoog or Sylt? And what if the temperature were to rise another half a degree? In the extreme, six meters higher sea level in the next decades. If working hours for many are already dictated by urgent material shortages during Corona, what will it look like if all European ports are under water?

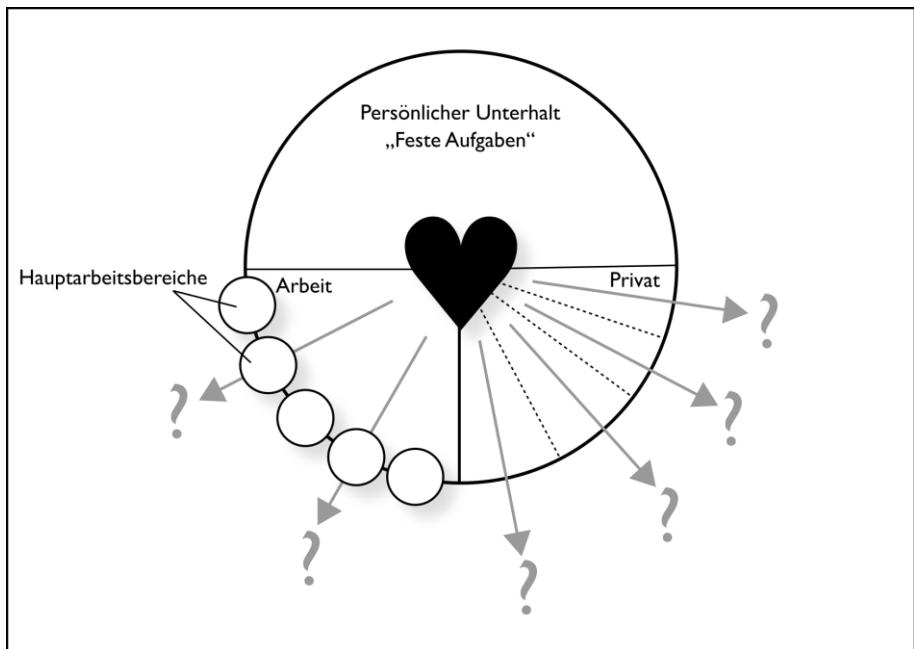
I hope it goes well. In sociology, this is called a self-denying prophecy. That's a prediction that doesn't come true because we make different choices with different results than the prediction had assumed. In other words, the opposite of a self-fulfilling prophecy, which comes true because we do nothing about it.

I am a grandmother. I think about my children and grandchildren. About their future. What choices can I still make? What choice do I have to make? What will you do?

That's exactly what this book is about. Time management means making decisions every day about what we do - and what we don't do, at least today.

What do I have to pay attention to when I make a decision? From the point of view of evolution, life always has priority. Nature provides for offspring, we know that at least since Darwin. In the sociology of happiness, one's own family, one's own marriage, is what is most important to people you ask. In second place is financial security, the way you spend your money.

² In "De Fundamenten" (2021).



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deserve. The model in figure 1.1 is a representation of this. It creates an equilibrium. This 168-hour model is the heart of this book.

What awaits you now in this book

With this book I would like to share my experiences and those of the participants of my trainings with you. Experience that I have gained in over 40 years in dealing with time differently and managing it. I have been able to pass on this form of time management all over the world.

What feedback do I hear all these years? The result of many workshops on this topic was:

- greater awareness and self-(knowledge)
- A more satisfactory balance between work and private life
- by up to four hours of more effective and meaningful work each day.

Knowing what you want and what you need, being yourself and connecting with others are the themes of this third edition of *Effective Time Management*. Well sorted, flexible and relaxed, you can stand strong "on two legs". One leg stands for your work, your talents, with which you earn money. The other leg stands for you as a link between the generations, your relationship, your family, your friends and your family.

de and your roots. On these legs we walk through the world, through our society, always leaving a footprint...

How is the book divided? In the following chapter, "How does it normally go?", I address the most commonly heard bottlenecks in time management. And I offer some explanations for them.

Chapter three is where the change process begins. Here we look at what you and I actually have at our disposal to successfully change the way we deal with time.

Chapter four deals with the question of what "giving life meaning" actually means to you, in the short term and also in the long term. This involves three interrelated questions:

- *"Who am I and what do I want?" to gain self-knowledge, to feel one's own longings and dreams, and to get a clear view of one's own goals.*
- *"What do I need, what do I crave, what do I love to do?" to get to know what your real needs are, what makes you happy and what makes you unhappy. And what you no longer want to do.*
- *"What do the people I care about, the people I live with, need, and how can we realize our desires together?"*

All three questions are aimed at gaining self-knowledge and taking responsibility for having the "time of your life". You will also be better equipped and therefore more relaxed to talk to others about their needs.

Finally, the last, fifth chapter addresses the specific question "how do I achieve this?"

The book is structured to serve two functions for you as a user: it serves as learning material and as a reference work. In day-to-day use, you need to quickly find again what you as a reader found useful. Therefore, each chapter concludes with a checklist that also serves as a summary.

Finally: I have written this book not only for entrepreneurs, managers and consultants, but for everyone who is looking for ways to manage their time optimally. And as in the original Dutch edition, there are also some English words here, because I simply found them more appropriate.

2 Whether normal work?

In this chapter, you will first read about the complaints I hear most often from very busy people. I group these together under the term reactive management. No one is going to be happy with that, though, because eventually it catches up with them. I then also explain to you war- um that happens, limiting myself to the explanations that help you understand the times we live in, our "Zeitgeist."

2.1 Reactive management

*The complaint I hear most often from participants in courses on time or self-management is, "I'm running around after all kinds of things all day, and it seems like I'm always busy doing things for other people. Someone else kicks something off and I react, **have to** react to it."*

Reactive management, in other words. They react instead of acting and determining their own actions. This is based on the assumption that the other person knows exactly what has to happen. You play the cog in the whole, but you can't stop the clock and you can't get out of it. People are calling for you all day long: Colleagues with questions, unannounced visitors, a phone that won't stop ringing, the unstoppable "ping" of email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram... And when you get home, the pattern seems to continue: Now it's your partner, it's the kids... They want something or you don't even see them because they're hidden behind their computers. My grandson of only three years then, who lives in New York, recently said, "No mommy, not now, go away, please, me and my iPad need space."

Is a generation growing up here that loves its smartphone more than real people? With a new word: the iGen? Another new word: smom- bies. That's a fusion of SMS and zombie. These are people who only have eyes for their smartphone, don't look up or around, and are thus a danger in traffic to themselves and others. Our legislation had to be adapted to this: forbidden at the wheel.

And indeed, through Big Data and the algorithms that have been unleashed on us

The computer's ability to perform calculations, solve problems, and make decisions - a methodical sequence of steps - is precisely mapped. Large amounts of data that capture each of our steps in the virtual world, so that there is actually a risk that the computer knows us better than we know ourselves. And others, whether Google, Facebook, or whatever giant with commercial interests, can bombard us with the information we most want to hear, as it confirms what exactly we think. They tempt us with games, made to tie us to the screen and make us addicted.

This is how we end up in an "echo chamber," an information platform where we only hear what confirms our own opinion. Manipulation is then the next step.

"More and more information is coming to light about how Russia bombed the public opinion of the American public. Not only were emails stolen from Democrats and published via Wiki-leaks, but fake news was spread via Facebook, targeted precisely at those voters who might still have been in Trump's camp, in small states where small shifts still mean the difference between victory and defeat. It is becoming increasingly clear that this played a role in the U.S. election that brought Trump to power" (James Henry in Trouw, a Dutch national daily newspaper, November 2, 2017).

We live in a global world, but we expected our democracies to be strong enough to resist this manipulation. But they won't be unless we take action ourselves and determine the world we want to live in and the world we want to leave to our children and grandchildren. Almost half of young people under 25 in Germany fear that war could break out in Europe (Shell Youth Study 2019). And stress also seems ubiquitous, as the Deloitte Millennial Survey 2021 shows: in Austria, for example, 34% of Millennials say they feel anxious or stressed most of the time³. On a scale of 0 to 100, only 27% (A) and 20% (D) of Millennials and 27% (A and D) of Generation Z feel optimistic about the future. Is the world - objectively - really that bleak, compared to perhaps the years 1916-1945? Where does this feeling of youth come from? Yes, where be-

³ In 2020, for example, the figure in Austria was still 49%. The sharp drop in numbers is associated with the forced deceleration by Corona. Presumably, many Millennials and most GenZ are also not yet in the home office with executive positions, at the same time as children who are also at home because school or daycare are closed.

do you get your information? Do you read a newspaper, watch the news, or just hear about how the world is doing via Facebook?

And what does time management have to do with it? It seems as if the information you are bombarded with and the information you are asked to provide are endless. Everything is equally important and is presented as such. Everything had to be done yesterday. There is no time to take a breath. There is no longer a rhythm to the day, to the week. We are becoming increasingly sick of it. Help!

21 The dictatorship of the urgent

Quite often there is talk of the dictatorship of the urgent. This dictatorship of the urgent means that what is happening at that moment always has the highest priority. The immediate is the most important thing. A call that comes in is answered and dealt with immediately. Every visitor who comes by, whether customer or colleague, is attended to in a customer-friendly manner at all times. You only notice that other things are left undone or not dealt with at all when you go home and think: Oh dear, no, there was still something to do. Totally forgotten. There was so much to do again today...

What usually gets left behind are the really important things, such as long-term planning, the vision you wanted to work out, the new approach you wanted to try out for a customer inquiry, and your own career development. We'll leave your private life out of it for a moment.

22 The myth of the busy manager

We're all in this together. Being busy is becoming more and more of an excuse. After all, what do you say on the phone when asked, "How are you?" We all know the managers and employees who apologize every day for not keeping agreements, for forgetting promises, or for being stuck in traffic. They have created a myth for themselves: the myth of the busy manager. "If I'm busy and show myself busy, surely those around me can see that I'm working hard and that they shouldn't be a burden to me with all sorts of silly questions and this and that? Don't nag, hurry up! Hop in the car, make a few phone calls on the way, send the messages." The core seems rather: If I work hard, am busy, then I count, am important. If you decide otherwise, then you get to hear remarks like the courage-

ter with a part-time job who is only available for the company for three days, "So, going on vacation again nicely?"

One of my participants, a manager, aptly described the meaning of "busy" as follows: "I got into my position to think. When I sit down quietly at my desk with my hands behind my head and really get things together to come up with a plan, the people who meet me in that position call out to me: 'So, have a nice rest?' or 'You must have nothing to do!'"

28 Be unhappy

Reactive management has another side. We are so busy that we no longer stop and ask, why am I doing what I am doing? Who am I making happy? Is what I'm doing actually making me happy myself? Am I living my own life or just the expectations of others?

There are researchers who are worried. We may be richer in the West, but we're no happier than we were maybe 50 years ago. We see more depressions, more alcoholism and more suicides than back then. "Burn-out" is increasingly causing more absenteeism: Health insurers see a 23% increase between 2011 and 2019, and these are, after all, only the workers who actually go to the doctor and take sick leave (Badura, 2021).

Lately, even in coaching sessions after time management trainings, I noticed that almost half of the participants burst into tears when real attention was paid to how they were feeling. The coaching sessions took place about two weeks after the first workshop day. An- lass was asked what they had wanted to do with the content of the course and then what they actually did. Often in the workshop, they cited their supervisors or workload as reasons for not having enough time. In coaching after coaching, the insight came that they were so sad because they had experienced trauma with not enough time to process it. It might have been a colleague, a parent, or a brother who had died, a burnout that had shattered illusions to pieces. There was no time to talk about it, either at work or in private. They felt lonely, angry and misunderstood by those around them. After two one-hour coaching sessions, the participants regained a sense of control over their work and re-established meaningful relationships with the people around them.

How happy are we?

What is the basis for happiness? I used to ask the participants in every workshop: What is the most important thing in your life? Family and friends always came first. In good second place: gaining meaningful experiences.

How would you answer this question?

Another study concluded that the big seven listed below are the things people actually strive for. With the exception of health and income, all of them concern the quality of our relationship with other people (Layard, 2005).

The big seven factors that determine our happiness are: family

- *relationships*
- *financial situation*
- *work*
- *social environment*
- *health personal*
- *freedom philosophy*
- *of life.*

The Netherlands doesn't score badly when it comes to being happy. According to the United Nations World Happiness Report 2021, it has moved up from 6th to 5th place. Germany does even better, moving up from 15th to 7th place. Switzerland and Austria have both dropped one place to 4th and 10th, respectively. Finland defends 1st place! What these top countries have in common is caring, freedom, generosity, honesty, health, income and good governance. That is, caring, freedom, generosity, honesty, health, income and good governance and leadership at government, administrative and corporate levels. The U.S. was still in third place in 2007, but by 2021 it had slipped to 14th place, with increasing corruption cited as the most important cause. There are also countries that often score poorly in this annual survey. These are mainly countries in Africa and Asia, such as Togo, Burundi, India, Yemen, Malawi, Rwanda and Tanzania. Zimbabwe is at the bottom.

Is the pursuit of happiness a disease of affluence? "Probably a concomitant of prosperity, but I wouldn't call it a disease," says Professor Emeritus Ruut Veenhoven, the happiness professor whose life's work is the World Database of Happiness. "We know that in ge-

is in some way shapeable. We live in a society today where you have multiple choices, and people just want to know what those choices are going to do: whether we're going to be happier by having a full-time job or having a child."

What actually determines the measure of happiness in different countries?

"First, the quality of life of the environment is important, for example, sufficient fresh air where you live and work." Happiness, according to Veenhoven, seems to be strongly related to a functioning authority that has well-trained civil servants who are not corrupt. "In many low wealth countries, you rarely find good officials, and there the functioning of the authorities leaves much to be desired. Therefore, prosperity is important for experiencing happiness. In addition, freedom, the presence of mental health care, and gender equality are important for differences in happiness across countries. The more psychologists, the happier a country."

How happy are you? What is your score on a scale of 1-10? You can also compare yourself with others today, via happiness tracking. I quote Ruut Veenhoven again: "You can register on a website like gelukswijzer.nl. Once you have entered your age, education, shoe size, etc., you receive a monthly e-mail and have to indicate how happy you feel that day. Then you see your own score next to that of comparable participants. If you score lower, then more happiness is probably possible for you and it's worth looking at how you can achieve that." (Interview with Ruut Veenhoven CBS and in VPRO Tegenlicht, 2016) In the meantime, there are also many German- and English-language apps for your smartphone that make the same possible, albeit often for a fee - commercialized happiness?

Another study. This time by a woman at the Vrije Universiteit, Dr..

I.H.J Sabelis. Ms. Sabelis is increasingly interested in time, and not just because she is the daughter of a watchmaker. She earned her doctorate with a study of time use among top managers. Why top managers? "Top managers are the 'leaders' of organizations; they have several strands of time and organization converging on them, because on the one hand they have to 'manage' time for themselves, and on the other hand they also have to set the bar for others, give instructions, and thus control time..." (Sabelis, 2002).

Sabelis notes that time receives surprisingly little attention in the management literature. One of her conclusions is that time as a concept is rarely studied, as it is only linear, financial, economic, and time-inspired as the basis for organization and planning gese-.

hen. So one has to "bite one's own tail", so to speak, in order to look at the matter differently and more broadly. Or even more clearly, to take the dimension of "time" seriously means to critically question the fundamentals of organization and management, which is not the intention of most of the management literature. (Sabelis, 2002)

In summary: the problems - and thus the opportunities - at "Time" lie in four areas that together lead to reactive management:

1. Too little time for the important things.
2. Too much time spent on things we consider urgent; we "have" to do everything.
3. We don't yet know well enough, although we are getting better at it, what makes us happy, even if we are not doing badly in our countries.
4. In the management literature still too little look at the "time".

2.2 Explanations

How can we explain this misery? That's what you'll read in this section, which deals with acceleration, individualism, mind without heart and sense, and a number of other things, such as the difference between "place" and "position" as well as the attitude of most companies with regard to "time". This will give you a more comprehensive insight into the topic of "busy, busy, busy". Here I choose the English word "busy" with care, because it describes very well the combination of "busy" and "busy". "under pressure" without automatically meaning "pressure from above", i.e. from the boss. Because we put a lot of "pressure" on ourselves, as we will see in later chapters.

2.2.1 From cave dweller to modern citizen of the world: fast forward

The table below illustrates that we have more to do than ever before. It shows that we have gone through more changes in a lifetime than any generation before us and are therefore in an unprecedented acceleration. Due to the developments of the last ten years, we receive more information in one day than a person in the Middle Ages received in his entire life.