



Continuous Improvement Toolkit

World-Class Performance Tools for Business and

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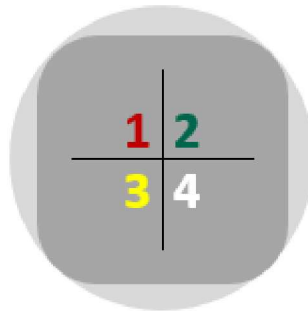
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Importance Urgency Matrix

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

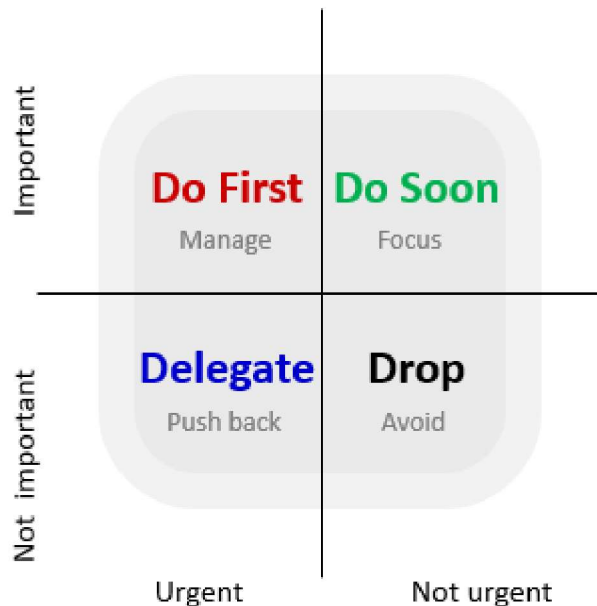
Urgency is no long reserved for special occasions, they are an everyday occurrences. How can one manage the flood of responsibilities, do excellent work and maintain a positive frame of mind?” (Stephen Covey)



The **Importance Urgency Matrix**, or the Eisenhower’s Principle, is an effective method for organizing priorities. It is a [two-dimensional chart](#) that is used to prioritize work activities as well as personal activities. It can be used when the team is having a conflict and unable to manage the work effectively. All activities can be evaluated in terms of importance and urgency. They are then placed in the appropriate quadrants of the matrix.

The importance urgency matrix consists of **four quadrants**:

- **Quadrant 1** is for important activities that require immediate attention.
- **Quadrant 2** is for activities that are important but not urgent.
- **Quadrant 3** is for activities that are not really important, but someone wants it now.
- **Quadrant 4** is for activities that are neither important nor urgent.



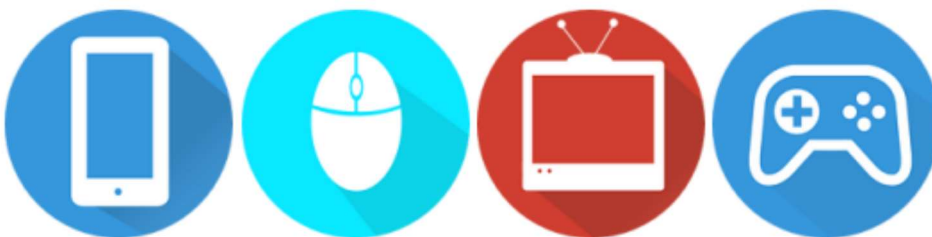
Quadrant 1 is for important and urgent matters. A problem may arise when unexpected activities arises, or when activities become urgent due to procrastination or poor planning. It is recommended to leave some time in your schedule to handle the unexpected activities. Be proactive and avoid procrastination and taking more time than needed doing the work. Some examples of activities that are found in this quadrant are: deadlines at work, projects at hand, medical emergencies and performing urgent repairs.

Quadrant 2 is the area that you should spend most of your time on. It is exceptionally important when it comes to **personal development** and growth. It also includes activities

such as planning, prevention and leadership driven activities. These activities are often under used, and finding ways to expand them is the main goal from using this matrix. Athletes, entrepreneurs and other people of great achievement find time for this quadrant.

Activities in **Quadrant 3** are unimportant and are done with a sense of urgency. Most of these activities are draining and time consuming. Examples of activities that are found in this quadrant are: some emails, some meetings, some phone calls, frequent interruptions, unwanted conversations and doing something because you can't say "no". Push back, delegate, or at least don't get caught up with these activities.

Quadrant 4 is the area that most of us get caught up in. It includes those activities that are often used for taking a break from important and urgent activities. For example, watching your favorite TV show or playing your favorite video game can be a relief from important work. The key here is to limit how much time you spend in this quadrant. Otherwise, you will lose control of your future and may decrease your chances for success.



There are many tools that can help you to manage your activities in terms of urgent, important, both or neither. The simplest way is to use this [template](#).

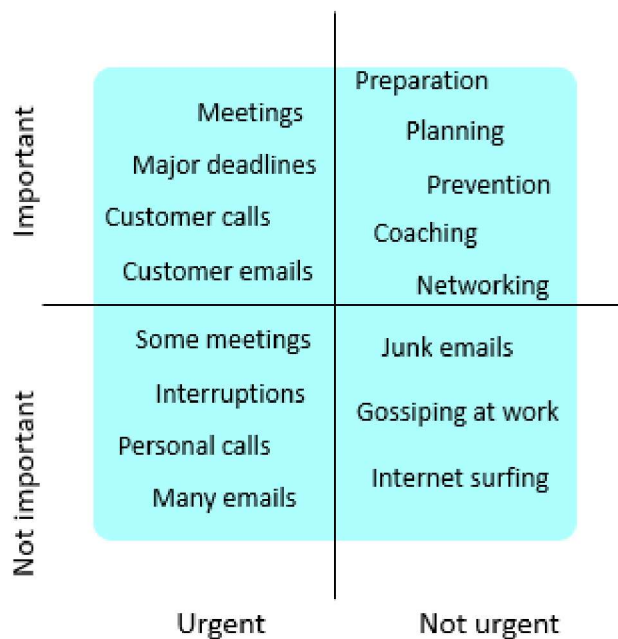
How to Use the Importance Urgency Matrix

The following steps describe how to organize your activities using 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).
- Sort all the activities in the appropriate quadrant.
- Manage what's on the first two quadrants, and pushback or ignore what's on the last two quadrants.

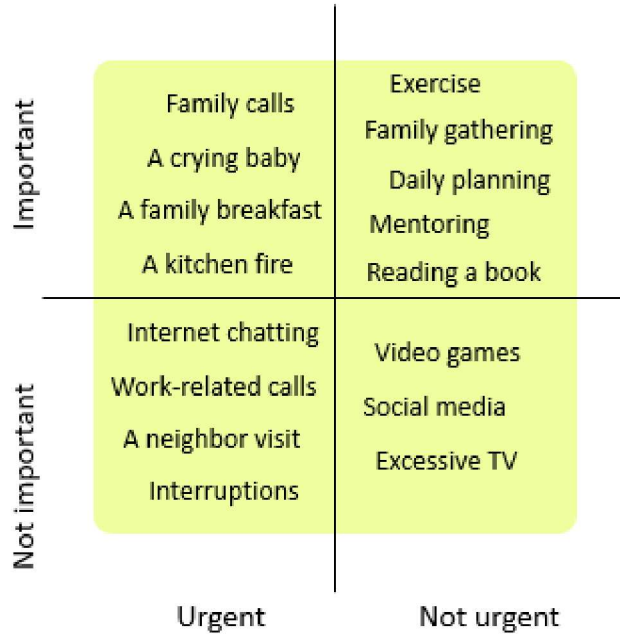
Example – Work-Related Activities

Take your list of job-related activities then sort them in the appropriate quadrant of the importance urgency matrix. The following is an example:

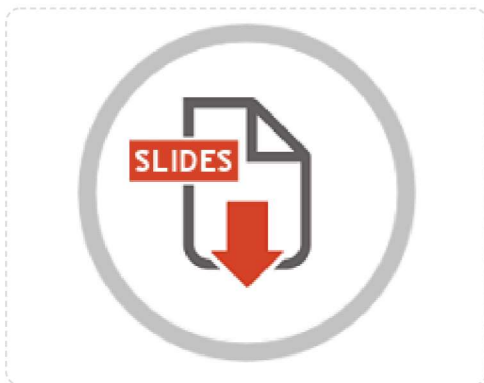


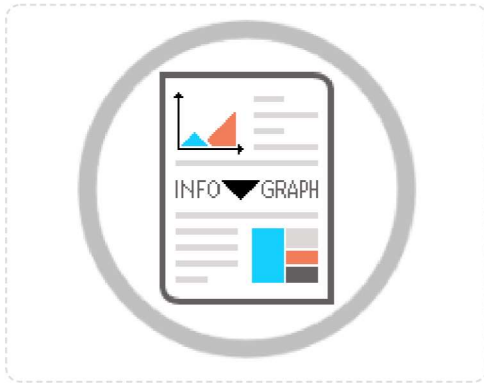
Example – Personal Activities

Take your personal to-do list then sort it into the appropriate quadrants. The following is an example of a personal importance urgency matrix:



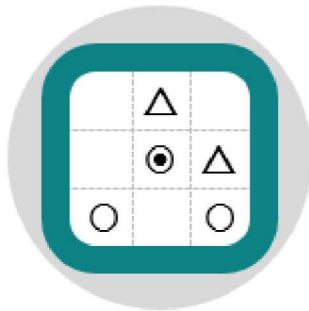
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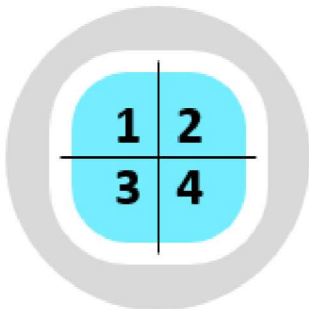


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Matrix Diagram



Four Field Matrix



SWOT Analysis



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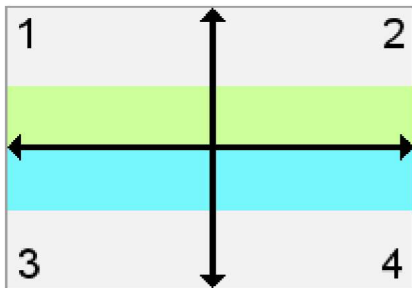
Force Field Analysis



Daily Self-Evaluation

	Day1	Day2	Day3	Day4
BODY	1			1
MIND			2	3
HEART	2	-1	1	
SOUL		1		2

Four Field Matrix



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