Sizing your working week

Introduction

Work and accountability go hand in hand. Whether it's being accountable to yourself, others, or both, it sets up a natural tension between the why, what, how and when of work. Time becomes the rub. Rethinking time as a human construct that you can leverage rather than lament, is the start of a new relationship with it. It's a bit like re-designing your house in a way that creates new space from the same footprint by thinking differently.

Introducing constraints like a finite amount of time to do what is most important, leverages thinking and problem solving for different and better outcomes – it forces you to learn how to prioritise. As you slowly prioritise, things calm down and time frees up.

Some general principles about time

- It is a precious resource.
- There will always be more demands on it than the amount you have.
- You can do anything with the time you have, but you can't do everything.

Setting a time envelop

One useful way to build in constraints is to establish reasonable working hours. The following is a practice exercise for this series:

1. What are your contracted hours per week (this is not about working to rule☺)?
2. How much time are you typically working per week?
3. If more than your contracted hours, agree on what you think is reasonable and enter the start and finish of each week in your calendar to reflect this (colour code it as a visual cue*).
4. If the same, find time to accommodate this series within that envelop.

Working within your time envelop

Using the completion of this series as practice (adapt for a one-off topic):

1. Consider how long you want to take to complete the series (over how many weeks)?
2. Agree on the number of hours you will work each week on each topic (watch the video, read, and reflect on the worksheet and applied practice)
3. Overestimate (1.5 – 2) the time needed, to accommodate the unexpected
4. Diary this time into your calendar using colour as a visual cue

Working your energy

1. Think about a time in your working day when you have the most energy and the day in your working week when you have the most time.
   - Enter the time you want to spend on this work in your calendar at those times.
   - You may need more time for some sessions than others. Adapt as you go.

If you are already working to a realistic time envelop:

1. What if you reduced that time envelop by four hours each week (still delivering on your commitments)?
2. What might you do more of, less of or get rid of to achieve that?

Session time tips

- Copy the email and or worksheet into your weekly calendar entry. This avoids wasting time searching for it when the time comes to do the work.
- *Colour code key entries, so your brain recognises previously agreed important work and spends less time resisting when you come to start.

Further reading

For further reading, please click here.