



August 19, 2023

Dear Job Seekers,

For those individuals not currently assigned to a training site, we will be allowing at-home training packets to be completed while a new training opportunity is found for you. However, after October 1, 2023 any individual without a training site will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence.

Training materials will be posted to our website at www.vantageaging.org/indiana for each pay. Below are the assignments for August 19 - September 1. At the end of each pay period, you will need to send the completed Summary Questions sheet and training timesheet with the actual hours you worked on the packet (up to 20 per week), either by fax to 330-535-2253 or by email to payroll@vantageaging.org. This timesheet and summary questions are due by Tuesday, September 5th at 5:00 pm.

If you have any questions please call Dustin Henthorne 330-253-4597 ext. 352

Training – Weeks 8/19/23 to 9/1/23

Wake Up and Work

Sincerely,

VANTAGE AGING SCSEP TEAM

SOFT SKILLS SOLUTIONS

Second Edition

Wake Up & Work!

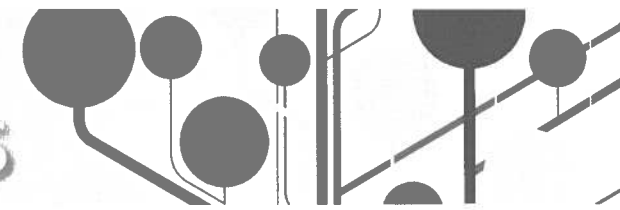
Keys to Self-Management



Ann Cross &
Martha Lanaghan

CAREER SOLUTIONS
JIST
A DIVISION OF KENDALL HUNT

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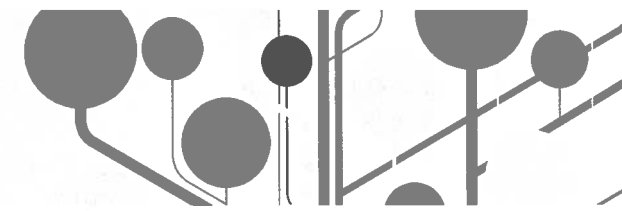
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PREFACE



Today’s job seekers face tougher challenges than ever before. Only the most skilled job seeker can keep up with the ever-changing workplace. Technology is transforming how we work in dramatic ways, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic forced companies large and small to quickly adapt to new ways of doing business. This change contributes to what some people are calling the “fourth industrial revolution.”¹ Just as each of the past three industrial revolutions (the steam engine, mass production, and digitization) required workers to adapt their skills to keep up, this technological revolution is forcing us to rethink what we do and how we do it.

Having the newest computer skills or knowing how to provide remote customer service is only part of what new technology demands of workers. Employers today want more than someone with the necessary job-related skills. They are interested in your ability to do the things computers cannot do—in your uniquely human, interpersonal, “soft” skills. **Soft skills** are the personal attributes that enable you to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people. Simply put, they are the skills an employee needs to get along and work well with others.

A recent survey found that dependability and reliability are the soft skills employers desire most. These skills were noted by 97 percent of respondents, and professionalism was overwhelmingly listed in the top 10 skills employees need to succeed.² Professionalism encompasses multiple soft skills, including (but not limited to) communication, time management, self-management, leadership, problem-solving, and teamwork skills. It is also essential to professional success to be able to excel in a diverse workplace, where people look, think, experience, and interact with the world in a wide variety of ways.

The *Soft Skills Solutions*, Second Edition program will help you learn about and practice soft skills that will set you apart from others in your field.

1. Klaus Schwab, “The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What It Means and How to Respond,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 12, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2015-12-12/fourth-industrial-revolution>.

2. Society for Human Resource Management, “SHRM/Mercer Survey Findings: Entry-Level Applicant Job Skills,” 2016, <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/PublishingImages/Pages/Entry-Level-Applicant-Job-Skills-Survey-/Entry-Level%20Applicant%20Job%20Skills%20Survey.pdf>.

The *Soft Skills Solutions* Second Edition program includes the following books:

1. *Stepping Stones to Success! Goals & Attitude*
2. *Navigate Workplace Challenges! Emotional Intelligence & Critical Thinking*
3. *Wake Up & Work! Keys to Self-Management*
4. *Make Yourself Heard! Professional Communication Skills*
5. *How You Act & Dress Matters! Professional Etiquette & Image*
6. *Set the Tone! Equity, Diversity & Inclusion*
7. *Demonstrate Your Value through Collaboration! Teamwork & Motivation*
8. *Play Nice & Stay Employed! Workplace Relationships & Conflict Negotiations*
9. *Lead with Integrity! Leadership & Ethics*
10. *Step Up Your Game! Innovation & Creative Problem-Solving*

Each title concentrates on specific soft skills to help you reach skill mastery. Whether you are a new job seeker, a person reentering the work world, a recent college graduate, or a longtime employee, completing these exercises to master these important soft skills will help you now and for the rest of your life. Even the most seasoned professionals will benefit from refreshing their soft skills from time to time.

Try to complete one book from the *Soft Skills Solutions*, Second Edition program per week. Although it may be helpful to begin with *Stepping Stones to Success! Goals & Attitude* followed by the other titles in the program, these books are stand-alone pieces and can be used in any sequence.

Program Features

Each *Soft Skills Solutions*, Second Edition book introduces skills necessary for success in the workplace and explains their roles in employment success. The program provides self-assessment activities to identify and address your individual needs, and application activities to challenge you and allow you to practice your skills. The text also includes margin tips and informative sidebars to point out key information.

You will encounter these interactive features:

- Thinking Breaks
- Self-Assessment activities
- Apply the Skills activities

Thinking Breaks Part of learning a new skill is being able to apply it to your own experiences. These thought-provoking questions require reflection and honesty. Answering them will help you identify your personal opinions and beliefs relating to a specific aspect of employment success.



Self-Assessment activities The self-assessment activities help you assess your current soft skill levels and provide brief snapshots of your strengths and weaknesses. The more honest your answers, the more accurately you will be able to identify areas for improvement.

If the assessment section indicates that your skill level is high, you should still practice the workout, and challenge yourself to attain skill mastery by mentoring or teaching that skill to another person. Attempting to teach others how to successfully master a skill is the ultimate test of your knowledge.

The self-assessment tool is for your own personal use. After you have identified areas in which you would like to improve, practice these exercises and continue to seek out ways to strengthen your competencies in your daily life.

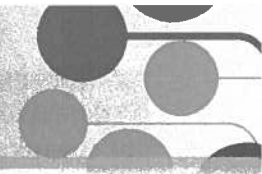


Apply the Skills activities After skills are introduced and explained, Apply the Skills activities challenge you to use these skills. Complete these exercises daily until you've achieved mastery of the professionalism skill you are studying. Some of the activities require working with a partner or mentor. For others, working with a partner or mentor is simply recommended.

When choosing a study partner, seek out a supportive person who wants to see you succeed. Above all, your partner should be honest with you about your current skill level. Your ability to do the same for your partner is essential to your partner's success as well. You will share equally in your progress and take an active role in each other's individual success, so choose wisely.

Having a mentor is ideal. Your mentor should be a professional in a position of authority with whom you have a positive relationship. For example, you might seek out a teacher, boss, friend who is a manager or executive at a company, career services advisor, student advisor, human resources manager, current employer, or parent.

Employment success largely depends on your ability to identify and address areas in which you need to improve. To accomplish this, be willing to receive feedback from others. If you are not able to receive this kind of feedback easily—and if you get upset, angry, or defensive—then seek the help of a trusted expert who can help you learn to give and receive constructive feedback before beginning the program.



OBJECTIVES

Completing this book will allow you to

- Utilize effective time management skills (Section 3.1)
- Create a manageable to-do list (Section 3.1)
- Implement strategies for practicing good time management (Section 3.1)
- Explain the difference between *reliability* and *accountability* (Section 3.2)
- Identify and employ the six traits of personal management (Section 3.2)

How far you get in your career often depends on how well you manage your time. **Time management**, or how well you stay on task, could be the single most important professional skill to master. Time management skills allow an employee to be dependable, reliable, and trustworthy—all critical traits of valued employees.

Effective time management also helps in your everyday life. It helps you meet deadlines and be more productive. Successfully managing your time also improves relationships because it enables you to honor commitments and keep promises.

Since you can't increase the number of hours in a day, making the most of your time is an essential skill to develop and practice.

Consider this scenario: Mary and Bob were both equally qualified as salespeople for a pharmaceutical company. Both had experience, know-how, and winning personalities that made others want to work with them. However, Mary often missed deadlines and broke promises made to others, which, over time, started to wear on her coworkers (who often had to make excuses for her), her clients (who were often inconvenienced by her), and her manager (who had to closely watch over her to make sure her work was getting done). Eventually, despite being one of the company's top performers, Mary was let go because of her poor self-management. No one could count on her.

Bob, on the other hand, did not produce as many sales as others in the department, but he continually received high praise from his coworkers, clients, and manager for his ability to deliver on his commitments and build trust in his relationships. He was eventually promoted to manager because of his ability to self-manage. Self-management is a trait that becomes more crucial as you move up the corporate ladder.

3.1 Understanding Time Management



Self-Assessment—How Well Do You Manage Your Time?

NOTE: The following questionnaire is adapted from the article “How Good Is Your Time Management” from MindTools.com.³

For each of the questions, refer to the following scale and ask, “Do I do this always, sometimes, or rarely?” Respond to questions as you actually are (rather than how you think you should be).

Question	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
1. Do you work on high-priority tasks first?			
2. Do you complete tasks early or on time?			
3. Do you set aside time for planning and scheduling?			
4. Do you know how much time you spend on the various jobs you do?			
5. Do you prioritize interruptions effectively so they don't pull you away from critical tasks?			
6. Do you use goal setting to prioritize your tasks?			
7. Do you leave extra time in your schedule to deal with the unexpected?			

continues...

3. “How Good Is Your Time Management?,” MindTools.com, accessed September 2, 2020, http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_88.htm.

Question	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
8. When you are given a new assignment, do you analyze its importance and prioritize it accordingly?			
9. Do you manage deadlines and commitments without becoming overly stressed?			
10. Do you protect your time when you are working on a deadline (by posting a do-not-disturb sign on the door or having calls go directly to voicemail)?			
11. Do you keep your keep your time spent on social media and phone apps to less than one hour per day?			
12. Do you confirm your priorities with your boss?			
13. Do you know whether the tasks you are working on are high, medium, or low value?			
14. Before you start on a task, do you check that the results will be worth the time put in?			

Use the following scale to add up your points for each of your answers and record your total in the box that follows.

Tally Your Score	
Always = 5 points	
Sometimes = 3 points	
Rarely = 1 point	Total Score:
61 to 70 points: You're managing your time very well. Still, complete all of the activities to see if there's anything you can tweak to become even more effective.	

continues...

51 to 60 points: You're good at some elements of time management, but there's room for improvement elsewhere. Focus on the serious issues in the following sections, and you'll most likely find that work becomes much less stressful.

50 or fewer points: You need to fundamentally improve your time management skills. The good news is that you have a great opportunity to improve your effectiveness at work and your long-term success! Strive to address your weaknesses by completing all of the activities.

Self-Analysis

In the space below, identify the area(s) of time management you would like to improve:

Time management helps you prioritize and organize your day and make the best use of the time available. Time management includes three concepts:

- **Prioritizing:** Identify the most important tasks and decide and how much time to dedicate to each one, so that the right time is allocated to the right activity.
- **Scheduling:** Assign specific time slots to activities per their importance.
- **Avoiding procrastination:** Utilize each moment effectively because time is limited.

Identify and Prioritize Your Work

The first step in managing your time is to identify everything that you need to accomplish. This is the first draft of your to-do list. When you have your list, work to prioritize, or rank, the tasks so that the most important task is identified. You should organize all tasks into one of four categories: urgent, important, necessary, or marginal. This way, you won't get caught scrambling to finish a critical task as the deadline approaches.

How would you define the terms urgent, important, necessary, and marginal?

Urgent work is work that must be accomplished first in order for anything else to happen. For example, if you run a restaurant, purchasing food for the restaurant is an urgent matter. Without food in a restaurant, nothing else can happen. When defining urgent work, ask yourself, "Is there anything more important than this task that has to be completed right away?" The key to urgency is it needs to happen right away or first thing.

It's common to consider all your tasks "urgent." Do your best to avoid this belief because it will make prioritizing your work nearly impossible.

Important work has to be completed in order to get the job done but doesn't have an immediate deadline associated with it. In the restaurant example, scheduling the servers' shifts must get done and has a deadline, but doesn't have to happen immediately for work to continue (you could always take orders yourself). Therefore, this task is important, but it doesn't necessarily have to happen first thing.

Necessary work is important but not tied to any other task, nor is it work that must happen right away. In the restaurant example, cleaning the bathrooms throughout the day is necessary, but it can be done with some flexibility, and if it doesn't get done, all other work can continue on as needed.

Marginal work describes secondary or unimportant tasks that may not even need to be done. Completing these tasks may get noticed, but *not* completing these tasks will not be noted. For example, having neatly displayed napkins on each table is an excellent touch and may help to improve the reputation of a restaurant, but if it never happened, no one would notice its absence.



Apply the Skills—Identify Your Tasks

Consider the tasks that you need to complete today. Organize them by listing them into one of the four categories that follow: urgent, important, necessary, or marginal.

Urgent

Important

Necessary

Marginal

After identifying your to-do list, set goals. Your goals may be broad (complete the to-do list by the end of the day) or narrow (spend 15 minutes or less on each urgent task).

Goal Setting and Objectives

When you know where you're going (your goal), you can then figure out what exactly needs to be done to get there. Without proper goal setting, you may find yourself wasting time and losing focus.

Whether you set personal goals or have a boss who sets your goals for you, it is

important that you think about what the goal will require for you to achieve it.

For more information on goal setting, read the *Soft Skills Solutions* text *Stepping Stones to Success! Goals & Attitude*.

Effective Planning

Now that you have a rough to-do list and a goal for yourself, plan your day by preparing a specific to-do list for that day. Jot down the important activities that need to be done in a single day and consider how much time should be allocated to each activity.

You may not need to do everything on your own. Whenever appropriate, utilize others to help you complete your tasks, but make sure they have time in their own schedule to avoid falling behind on your project. Just remember that when delegating tasks, consider the other person's abilities and reliability and assign tasks accordingly.



Apply the Skills—Time Management Exercise: Part I

Think of a project you would like to complete, such as organizing an event (for example, a birthday party), writing a report, or reorganizing a work area. Describe the project below.

Project to complete:

continues...

Using the worksheet that follows, record all the tasks required to accomplish this project. After you've written down all the tasks related to the project, use the following scale to rate the importance of each task. You will use this information to complete Parts II and III of this activity later in the text.

- U = Urgent: Needs to happen before anything else can happen
- I = Important: Critical to complete the goal but not urgent
- N = Necessary: Must be done to complete the project but neither important nor urgent
- M = Marginal: Would be nice to do but isn't necessary to complete the goal

"To-Do" Tasks	Rating
---------------	--------

continues...


Scheduling: Setting Deadlines


After you know your goals and priorities, you need to create a schedule that will keep you on track. A schedule will help keep you focused and organized. A schedule will also help you avoid unnecessary stress.

If deadlines already exist for your tasks (for instance, in a work assignment), strive to complete the tasks ahead of the assigned deadlines. Don't always wait for your superiors to ask if the work is done; instead, take ownership of work and turn it in on time or ahead of schedule without being asked.

The first step to scheduling your time is determining how long each task will take. In some cases, such as "picking up invitations from the printer," you'll know exactly how long the task will take based on your research or experience. In other situations, you'll need to estimate the length of time needed.

Also, think about spending the *right time* on the *right activity*. Develop the habit of doing the right thing at the right time because work done at the wrong time is not of much use. For example, if you've allotted two hours to complete a task that may require help from a specific person, you need to make sure that person is available.

 No one can set deadlines for you better than you can, and much of time management comes down to effective scheduling of your time.

 You not only have to schedule priority tasks but also leave room for interruptions and extra time for those unexpected events that otherwise wreak havoc on your schedule.

Otherwise, you may end up waiting for someone else and taking longer to complete the task. Or if you have to make calls to a business for the purpose of conducting research related to a task but have scheduled phone calls before most businesses open, you'll start your day off immediately falling behind.



Apply the Skills—Time Management Exercise: Part II

Using the to-do list you created earlier, re-record the tasks in their correct order of importance in the chart below. Once you have listed all of your tasks, estimate the time needed to complete each one, and identify this time in the column marked "Time Needed." After you've determined the amount of time needed to complete each task, assign a date/time to work on and complete the task. Record this information in the following chart.

"To-Do" Tasks	Time Needed	Date/Time
---------------	-------------	-----------

continues...

"To-Do" Tasks	Time Needed	Date/Time
---------------	-------------	-----------

continues...

"To-Do" Tasks	Time Needed	Date/Time
---------------	-------------	-----------

Managing Interruptions

Managers get very little uninterrupted time to work on their priority tasks. They have to deal with phone calls, information requests, questions from employees, and a whole host of events that crop up unexpectedly. Some do need to be dealt with immediately, but most others can wait to be managed.

1. *What interruptions do you often encounter during your day?*

2. *How do you typically handle these interruptions?*

After you have identified your to-do list, goals, and schedule, the next thing you need to do is plan for and manage interruptions. This means understanding and anticipating distractions and additional requests that take up your available time.

One way to manage interruptions is by alerting others that you are unavailable for a period of time. This could include closing your door (if possible) or placing a sign outside your workspace. These simple actions let others know that you don't want to be interrupted.

At the very least, posting notice that you are unavailable will alert your coworkers to interrupt only in the event that the issue at hand is very important and/or urgent.

Another way to manage interruptions is to turn on your email auto-responder and let calls go to voicemail while working to complete your to-do list. You can simply write, "Your email is important to me. I will be unavailable to answer

emails or take calls from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. today; however, I will respond to your email or call by 2 p.m. If the matter is urgent, please contact Tyree.” This automatic reply will help senders know that their email isn’t being ignored and allows them to go about their own work with a reasonable expectation of when to expect a response.

Of course, Tyree has to agree to be your backup, and you will need to allow time to return calls and answer emails when you are finished with your tasks.

Lastly, leave time in your schedule to allow for the interruptions. If you have a day scheduled without any gaps in time left for interruptions, you’re likely to fall behind and get off track. Leave 15 to 30 minutes between each task to allow time to handle pressing matters that arise through the course of any normal day.



Apply the Skills—Time Management Exercise: Part III

Review your list of tasks and the dates/times you’ve assigned in the table in Part II. Identify whether you’ve allowed time for interruptions. If not, add time between each task to allow for interruptions. Make any necessary changes to your schedule.

After you’ve completed all these steps, and if appropriate, plug these tasks, dates, and times into a day planner or other time management tool.

As you complete each task in its order, record the “actual results” of how long each task took and the date you completed it in the chart that follows:

Tasks	Actual Results
-------	----------------

continues...

Tasks	Actual Results
-------	----------------

Reflect on what worked, what didn’t work, and what you learned and experienced as a result of following a detailed list. Note your observations below.

What worked: _____

What didn’t work: _____

continues...

What I learned:

Evaluate how well you did and reward yourself for accomplishing your goal!


NOTE: If you find it didn't go well, seek out the advice of a trusted advisor to help you brainstorm ideas or problem solve to find solutions so that you can successfully complete the project.

Avoiding Procrastination

Most interruptions that you will encounter at work are external, meaning they come from an outside source. Procrastination, however, is also a type of interruption, but it comes from the inside and is something you bring upon yourself. **Procrastination** is the act of delaying or postponing something. Often people procrastinate on tasks they do not enjoy, but they may also avoid completing difficult projects, boring projects, or projects that don't seem as urgent as others.

One problem with procrastinating is that it wastes valuable time. Instead of checking your email again, why not finish that project you've had lying around for the past few weeks? Another problem with procrastination is that simple tasks become more urgent when a deadline arrives. You may make avoidable mistakes if you rush through the work.

So how can you avoid procrastination? One helpful method is to follow your task list and scheduling plan closely, and to recognize when you start to drag your feet. You can't prevent yourself from procrastinating on a project if you don't immediately recognize that you are avoiding the work.

 Procrastination often happens when people become overwhelmed. They may have too much work, and because they don't know where to begin, they put off the assignment until something drastic happens to force a change.

1. *What tasks are you guilty of postponing or avoiding?*

2. *How do you procrastinate? Do you check email or go online? Find other work to do? Take a break and allow yourself to get distracted? List the ways you fill your time when you are avoiding a task.*

3. *Does your procrastination affect your work? If so, how?*



Apply the Skills—Anticipate the Tasks You Usually Avoid

Review the list of tasks you need to complete on pages 6–7. Go through and highlight the tasks you find tedious, boring, unimportant, OR consider which tasks and projects you typically avoid or postpone and identify any similar tasks on your list. Record these tasks in the that follows:

continues...

As you work through your tasks for the day, pay close attention to the tasks listed above and do your best to tackle them efficiently.

Time Management Killers

In addition to procrastination, which can throw off your entire schedule, there are a number of other reasons that your time management strategy can fail. Most common is a failure to take action toward fulfilling your time management strategy! Beyond this, there are some common pitfalls to be aware of. When you understand the factors that work to thwart your best efforts to be highly effective, staying on track becomes much easier.

Social Media You have the ability to access social media at work using a number of devices (computers, smartphones, tablets, and so on). Social media sites are time killers and are very good at stealing your attention away from your important work.

Worrying Trying to predict the future actually takes up a lot of our time. Realizing that worrying is a huge waste of time is the first step to curing yourself of this time killer.

Repeating your work Rereading the same information more than once, not taking good notes and having to go back for clarification, and not saving your work as you go are all examples of time killers related to repeating work.

Open-door policies Being available all the time reduces your efficiency and your team's. Senior executives in large corporations don't do it—so neither should you. If you would like to have an open-door policy, consider setting specific hours of availability, allowing times for interruptions within your schedule.

Long to-do lists Although checking off tasks on your to-do list makes you feel like you're accomplishing a lot, you may become a victim of list clearing instead of goal achieving.

Lack of organization Simply put, your time is drained because of unrecognized chaos.

Hoarding useless information This time killer is mostly related to email, but all forms of clutter and information overload make for poor time management.

Time Management Summary

Keep in mind that time management is a learned skill that takes practice. Think of it like practicing free throws in basketball: the goal is to make the basket over and over again in practice so that when game day comes, muscle memory takes over and you hit the shot automatically without having to think about it.

Time management works in a similar way. With continued practice, you'll find that creating well-organized to-do lists becomes automatic, and you'll refer to them as a road map to success.

Visualize Your Success

Visualizing your own success will help you reach your goals. This concept has been a part of Russian Olympic training for decades. In the 1980s, a study on Russian Olympic athletes was created to test how mental preparation helped with performance.⁴ The study divided athletes into four groups:

- Group 1 trained physically 100 percent of the time.
- Group 2 trained physically 75 percent of the time but included visualization exercises 25 percent of the time.
- Group 3 trained physically 50 percent of the time and mentally 50 percent of the time.
- Group 4 trained physically 25 percent of the time and mentally 75 percent of the time.

Of the four groups of athletes, those in Group 4 performed the best.

Here are some final tips for practicing good time management:

- **Stay organized.** Keeping important files organized helps you retrieve them immediately and will save time. Whether working with paper files or files on your computer, organize them in a way that makes sense to you and, ideally, others.
- **Keep your work area clean.** Do not keep stacks of files and heaps of paper on your desk. Throw away whatever you don't need. Keep your personal belongings such as cell phone, car keys, and wallet in their proper places.
- **Use a daily planner.** Write down and schedule important tasks and meetings. Refer to your planner regularly.

4. Harvey Mackay, "Mental Training and Visualization Can Help You Live Your Dream," last modified January 18, 2013, <http://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/how-to/growth-strategies/2013/01/mental-training-and-visualization-can.html?page=all>.

- **Use a to-do list.** The moment you settle down for work, jot down all the activities you wish to do in a single day as per importance and urgency, remembering to leave space in your schedule for interruptions.
- **Check off completed tasks.** It gives you a sense of relief and satisfaction.
- **Stay focused.** Try to avoid engaging in irrelevant activities such as checking Facebook, texting friends, or mindlessly surfing the Internet.
- **Be punctual and disciplined.** Being punctual helps you complete tasks way ahead of deadline and strive hard to complete tasks on time. Do not keep assignments pending and wait for the last minute.
- **Be reasonable.** No one can work for the whole day without taking a break and remain productive. Do include some time in your daily schedule to socialize a bit, go for a walk, and/or eat lunch.

3.2 Self-Management

As you become more skilled in planning your schedule and completing your tasks, you will also be developing your self-management skills. As you become more organized as a result of effective time management, you'll find that with it comes huge benefits, such as increased responsibility, pay, employment, and often, promotions. However, the benefit that is most important to employers is that through effective time management, you'll learn how to self-manage, which employers tell us is paramount to success.

In an interview for *Money Magazine*, owner of the Dallas Mavericks and celebrity investor on ABC's *Shark Tank* Mark Cuban said, "The people who tend work for me a long time, they understand that the greatest value you can offer a boss is to reduce their stress." "Anybody who reduces my stress becomes invaluable to me," he added. "I never want to get rid of them."⁵

Cuban is talking about solution-oriented people who can self-manage and won't touch drama with a 10-foot pole. This sentiment is shared by leaders of companies big and small and is something that you should always keep top of mind if you want to be a rising star employee!

5. Mike Ayers, "Mark Cuban on the No. 1 Skill He Values in His Employees," August 29, 2017, <https://money.com/mark-cuban-on-the-no-1-skill-he-values-in-his-employees/>.

What Is Self-Management?

Self-management is the ability to complete tasks and be productive without constant supervision or reminders. Self-management is applicable in many aspects of life, not just on the job, but in areas such as raising children, maintaining friendships, and even having a successful marriage or partnership.

In most circumstances, being successful at work requires you to manage yourself and your assignments. In fact, studies show that employers would rather hire a person with excellent self-management skills and little experience versus an experienced worker who may cause personnel problems because of a lack of self-management.⁶ Additionally, having asked hundreds of employers over many years of conducting advisory boards for colleges, we hear time and again that employers value self-management skills over other skills we often consider most important, such as degree level or technical ability to do the job.

Have you ever been late for work or for a job interview? If so, what happened? What do you do when you can see that something needs to be done but it isn't "your job" to do it? If you've been given a week to complete a task but you know it will only take you a few hours, do you complete the assignment right away or wait until just before it's due? How you answer these questions and others like it will determine how well you practice self-management.

You need to possess six key traits to be successful at self-management:

1. Reliability
2. Punctuality
3. Initiative
4. Accountability
5. Organization
6. Commitment

Reliability

Reliability (or dependability) means that people can depend on you. This trait is a key component of work performance. A *reliable* person is also **trustworthy**, able to answer to others and be responsible for their conduct and actions. A large part of dependability is consistency. This often requires you to make an extra effort to show that you can be trusted to complete your work.

6. Job Center of Wisconsin, "Self-Management Skills," accessed June 2, 2020, http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwd/publications/dwsj/pdf/detj_8960_p.pdf.

Step	What Is Preventing Me from Doing This?	Changes I Need to Make to Be Successful
6. Check traffic conditions before you leave and check the local weather reports for road conditions during bad weather.		
7. Think of a departure time versus arrival time.		

If you continue to struggle to be on time, find a study buddy or accountability partner to work with on this important trait!

Initiative

Initiative is the simple act of doing something without being asked to do it. Mary Kay Ash, the founder of the Mary Kay cosmetic empire, said it best: “There are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened.” Which one are you?

Improving your initiative is easy if you try to spot opportunities and look for ways to make improvements in your environment, whether at home or at work. However, recognizing opportunities is not enough; you also need the self-confidence to take initiative and persistence to keep working even if your initiative isn't immediately noticed by others.

Regardless of your industry or position, showing initiative will help you stand out from your coworkers who are more comfortable just taking orders. Proper initiative can help employers see you as management material!

TIP What can you do if your work goes unnoticed? One option is to keep doing extra work or test a new approach to something and then ask for your boss's feedback (or whoever attention you are trying to gain) on how you did.



Apply the Skills—Initiative Exercise

Apply the concept of initiative by completing the following questionnaire and activity prompt:

1. Name at least three recent times when you went out of your way to do something that wasn't your responsibility to do. (These can be small examples such as putting the dishes in the dishwasher.) Who benefited from your efforts, and would it be difficult for you to continue this positive behavior? Explain.

2. Have there been times in the past month when you could have done more at work to help out, stayed late to finish a job, or done something without being asked, but you didn't? List these *opportunities missed* in the spaces that follow. Then write down who your behavior affected and what you will do differently in the future to improve.

Opportunity missed:

My behavior affected:

How I could improve:

Opportunity missed:

My behavior affected:

continues...

How I could improve: _____

Opportunity missed: _____

My behavior affected: _____

How I could improve: _____

Opportunity missed: _____

My behavior affected: _____

How I could improve: _____

3. What three things can you do this week to improve your reputation as a person with initiative?

continues...

4. List five actions you can take in the next month to show others that you possess initiative. Set a plan in place to act on it by writing down your five actions and specifying exactly what you will do to complete your goal.

5. If you have shown initiative in the past but weren't immediately (or ever) recognized for going the extra mile, did you bring your actions to light in an appropriate way, or did you become resentful and decide you'll never do "that" again? What can you do to make sure your initiative gets noticed in the future?

Accountability

Responsibility and **accountability** are often used together to describe a desired attribute of employees. However, there is a key difference between responsibility and accountability.

Responsibility can be shared by many people. For example, in your workplace, several people may be responsible for checking the printer to make sure it has a steady, uninterrupted supply of paper. Gaining responsibility over time (which is often a sign that you are advancing in your career) is the result of experience and demonstrating reliability and trustworthiness, traits discussed earlier in this text. It is possible to have an increased level of responsibility without having an increased level of accountability.

Accountability, in contrast, cannot be shared. Typically only one person will ultimately be held accountable for the success or failure of

2. **Put your work in order.** Find a system (such as a physical or online filing or stacking system) that allows you to track your work easily and with as little mess as possible. Use your priority list to organize the work (putting urgent tasks on your desk or computer's desktop and other tasks in the filing system).
3. **Adjust your workspace.** Try to keep your workspace clear so you can focus on one task at a time. If necessary, adjust your surroundings to accommodate your filing system.
4. **Keep your space clean.** Don't hold on to papers or items that you have saved electronically (or in another system). Duplicate materials are typically unnecessary and just add to clutter. After you have completed a task, toss all *unnecessary* materials related to that project.
5. **Manage each moment.** Use any spare minutes you may have to file your work and put things in order. This saves time by keeping your workspace clean and manageable.



Apply the Skills—Organization Exercise

Select a project, such as a file cabinet or computer files, a work area, or a room in your home that you've been meaning to organize. This can be something as simple as finding a more organized way to distribute the mail in your home or organize your shoes. After you have identified the project, create a to-do list of what needs to happen or your specific plan of action. For example, if you want to organize your shoes, maybe you'll need to buy a shoe organizer for your closet before you start, or a label maker so you can label the shoe boxes in your closet. Complete your list and check off the tasks as you complete them, making sure to pat yourself on the back for each completed task.

continues...

Analysis

When you are finished with the tasks on your to-do list, determine whether your project is as organized as you require. If not, what needs to improve? Finally, move on to a bigger project until you've organized the areas in your life that need organization.

Commitment

Arguably the most important single factor in self-management and individual success is commitment. **Commitment** means being dedicated to something (such as an activity, relationship, and so on).

Another word for *commitment* is *perseverance*, which is defined as steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.

Commitment ignites action. To commit to something is to pledge yourself to completing a certain task, reaching a goal, or dedicating time and energy to a certain purpose or way of conducting yourself. It also means upholding your values consistently even if something becomes difficult.

What do you believe is an important value in the workplace? Why?

There are two fundamental conditions for commitment. The first is having a sound set of beliefs. There is an old saying that goes, “Stand for something or you’ll fall for anything.” You must establish a moral code of conduct that is based on honesty and integrity, regardless of the outcome. The second condition is exercising adherence to those beliefs through your behavior.

Many successful professionals are hailed as visionary leaders. On careful inspection, they are individuals who hold firmly to a simple set of commitments, usually grounded in beliefs such as “the best product money can buy” or “the highest possible customer service.” It is the strength of these commitments, religiously followed, that led to their professional success.

One great example of this is Steve Jobs, who was fired from Apple computers, a company he started. After being fired, he remained committed to his vision of creating products that would simplify, enrich, and enhance individuals’ lives through innovations. He never wavered in his commitment and consequently was rehired and named CEO of Apple years after being fired.

Staying committed isn’t always easy, especially when you’ve repeatedly experienced defeat or rejection. This is why it is important to practice perseverance on a regular basis. Ask for help building up the resources you need and reward yourself for what you have accomplished! Self-management and time management take commitment, dedication, and a determination to practice self-control daily.



Apply the Skills—Challenge Yourself with a New Commitment

Think of an activity, skill, or task that was especially difficult for you in the past. Perhaps you always wanted to learn how to play a specific sport, publish an article in a local paper, or meet more people. Identify an activity that you would like to commit to for an entire week.

Commitment: _____

continues...

Commit to working toward accomplishing your goal each day for an entire week. Do not give up. Track your attempts in the space provided for each day of the week.

Sunday: _____

Monday: _____

Tuesday: _____

Wednesday: _____

Thursday: _____

Friday: _____

Saturday: _____

How did it feel to stick with your commitment? Record your thoughts and feelings about this process:

continues...

3.3 Summary

Self-management and time management are learned behaviors that take time to fully master into daily habits. To make your journey more enjoyable, remember these basic truths about the process of learning these important skills. These tips will help you achieve success on the job:

- Expect a learning curve.
- Embrace “impossibilities.”
- Know that change takes time.
- Reward yourself!

Expect a Learning Curve

A learning curve describes the slow and gradual nature of learning something new. It is a part of progress. A learning curve is the sometimes painfully slow process of learning a new technique, concept, or way of doing something that you’ve never tried before.

Knowing in advance that you’ll experience a period of frustration around not getting something right away will help you persist in overcoming the learning curve and is what progress is all about. What is really great about overcoming a learning curve is the ability to see how far you’ve come and to feel good about what you’ve mastered.

Embrace “Impossibilities”

When starting a new technique or difficult job, have you ever felt as though you’re going nowhere fast? This feeling is something that almost everyone has experienced upon starting something new. Understand that at one stage everything was “impossible,” and then people worked hard and made it possible!

Know That Change Takes Time

Achieving worthwhile change can sometimes take many hours, days, weeks, months, or years. It’s important to persist through the discomfort of not being skilled or good enough when starting a task, project, job, and so on. Do away with discouraging thoughts like “It’ll never be good” or “I’ll never get it right.”

Realize that this is a temporary stage and that with hard work and determination you can achieve success. Notice when you’re procrastinating, leaving the less enjoyable for later, or moving onto another, more interesting interesting project, because this kind of action can set your development back a lot. Be honest enough with yourself to know when you haven’t got something right and keep trying, then feel good about yourself when you do finally “get it!”

Reward Yourself!

Achieving things that you had to really work hard on or “pushing” yourself to learn are what set you apart from where you were previously. This hard work is valuable to your development as an employee and a person. Take time to assess how far you’ve come and reward yourself.

Next Steps

Consider all you have learned and answer the following prompts:

1. From my experience, I consider these to be the three most important takeaways:

continues...

AT-HOME TRAINING SUMMARY

QUESTIONS:

August 19- September 1

NAME _____

COUNTY _____

Question #1 - From my experience, I consider these to be the 3 most important takeaways:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Question #2 - I plan to implement the following changes immediately:

Question #3 – I feel I still need to work on the following area(s).

Question #4 – I plan to keep improving by doing the following:

This sheet and your timesheet are due by Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 5:00pm. Fax to 330-535-2253 or scan and email to payroll@vantageaging.org.

