

What Former President Dwight D. Eisenhower Can Teach You About Time Management

August 22, 2021 6 min read

This story originally appeared on Calendar

Dwight D. Eisenhower was the 34th President of the United States of America. He was elected in 1953 and was elected for a second term in 1956. He would serve as President until 1961. He accomplished a number of things during his presidency, including the Federal Highway Act of 1956 and effectively ending the Korean War.

It's worth noting that one of Eisenhower's longest-lasting accomplishments didn't come from his presidency, although it did influence his service. As a general in the US Army and in other military leadership positions, Eisenhower developed a system that helped him to prioritize his daily task list. This effective prioritization made him a better leader for both the military and his country.

The Urgent-Important Matrix, also known as the Eisenhower Matrix, will help you prioritize your task list and increase your daily efficiency and productivity. Let's break down how it works and how you can implement it in your own life:

The Eisenhower Matrix works by dividing tasks into four quadrants. The rows and columns help you determine which tasks should go where. The columns represent **urgent** and **non-urgent** tasks, while the accompanying rows indicate **important** and **non-important** tasks. Combined together, you get these unique

quadrants:

Quadrant 1: Do

The first quadrant contains all of your most important tasks for the day. This is the cross-section between urgent and important, so naturally, this is where your attention will primarily be focused. Next, this is the 'do' quadrant, meaning these tasks must be done as soon as possible.

Your previously designated deadlines will go here, especially the ones that don't have any flexibility. That will include meetings with clients, scheduled flights, or fixed editorial deadlines. Tasks of this nature will get your attention first thing every morning.

Unplanned tasks can often creep their way into this quadrant, and you must be ready for them. For example, if your entire office loses internet, you'll have to make room for this emergency in your schedule by shifting your priorities on the fly.

Quadrant 2: Decide

Some people will confuse important tasks with urgent ones. This second quadrant will help you keep the two apart. While these tasks are certainly important to you, they can be scheduled in their own due time instead of being forced into available spaces in your Calendar.

For example, maintaining your physical health is important, but it might not have the same urgency as a project deadline with a set due date. So take the time here to add times to go to the gym into your Calendar. This will help you ensure that you're making time for your physical health without letting it become a stressful endeavor.

You can use this quadrant to schedule more intentional time

with your family, time to pursue a personal hobby, or even read a leisurely book to unwind in the afternoons.

Quadrant 3: Delegate

Some tasks are urgent but not quite as important as those tasks that fill up quadrant number one. These are the tasks that you should delegate if possible to someone else. For those in a leadership capacity, this is a particularly important quadrant to focus on. Many leaders can get so wrapped up in the details that they spend too much time cramming quadrant one when they could be pushing some tasks off into quadrant three.

Just think about the types of assignments you would pass on to an assistant or a department lead. For example, scheduling appointments in your Calendar might be urgent, but won't be as important as the meeting you're on your way to attend. The responsibility of scheduling can be delegated to a secretary instead.

Quadrant 4: Disregard

Here lies the final quadrant of the Eisenhower Matrix. These tasks are neither urgent nor important and, as such, should be forgotten. Some will call this the 'don't do' section or even the 'delete' section, as you have three other quadrants of far more important tasks to worry about first.

Some of these tasks won't even make it onto your Calendar, such as scrolling through social media or taking a nap. These tasks just aren't important or urgent in the grand scheme of things, even if they can be enticing. Part of why the Eisenhower Matrix works so well is that it shifts your attention away from these distractions to more productive projects.

Everyone will have a different matrix depending on their occupation, seniority, and choosing to prioritize their own tasks. However, here are a few steps you can take to get started:

List Out Your Tasks

Kick things off by listing every single task you hope to accomplish in the coming days. List out important deadlines, goals, and appointments. Feel free to add even the smallest items to this list, as you're going to be sifting through it later.

As you're getting used to using a matrix to prioritize your task list, don't worry about which quadrants everything belongs in just yet. Instead, focus first on making sure you have all of your tasks laid out in front of you so you can determine how to organize it all.

Start at the Top

Now that you have your to-do list straightened out, it's time to draw out your Eisenhower Matrix. You can draw one in a notebook or use an online program such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets to do this. Your matrix will consist of four squares forming a larger square together.

Quadrant one, the 'Do' quadrant, will be positioned in the top left corner. Quadrant two will sit directly to the right, with quadrant three positioned directly below. The fourth and final quadrant will take up the remaining spot in the bottom right corner.

Once you've finished the simple drawing, start filling each quadrant with the tasks that fit. Start with the urgent and important tasks first, and slowly work your way down through all the quadrants. As you get more familiar with how the

matrix works, you'll better organize your tasks in such a manner.

Keep it With You

The Eisenhower Matrix isn't a set-it-and-forget-it model unless you have an impeccable memory. As you're getting started, keep your matrix with you so you can refer to it throughout the day. This can be easily done if you're tracking it online and can access your matrix from any electronic device.

This is an important step since there will be times when your matrix might need to be adjusted, as was mentioned previously in the case of an unplanned crisis. Additionally, referring to your matrix often helps ensure that you're adhering to the parameters you set for each task.

Now that you have a feel for how the Eisenhower Matrix is constructed, it's time to put it to work. Give it a test run during the next week to get a feel for how prioritization changes your approach to work and affects your productivity.

Image Credit: pixabay; pexels; thank you!

The post What Former President Dwight D. Eisenhower Can Teach You About Time Management appeared first on Calendar.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/380914>