Management development and managers' use of their time

Titus Oshagbemi
Queen's University of Belfast, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

Introduction

The question "How do managers spend their time?", has an air of näiveté about it. Yet, it is a question which is prompted by many management-related issues such as productivity. The answer to the question is important for a number of reasons. It may reveal, for example, the nature of managerial work. How managers spend their time has in fact been used by many researchers to study managerial job characteristics[1-3].

A knowledge of managerial time allocation has also been used in a limited attempt to get an insight into the contents or the subject matter of managerial work, or of managerial roles[4]. Another benefit of understanding how managers spend their time may be the knowledge gained on the importance which managers attach to aspects of their jobs. This is because time is a limited economic resource and how the manager allocates it is important for his or her productivity and indeed, for organizational success. Managerial allocation of time among several activities can therefore be used to gauge the relative importance attached to those activities.

Finally, without necessarily implying that there is a "right" or "wrong" way of spending one's time, a knowledge of the pattern of managerial time allocation may provide a limited view of some effective and ineffective practices in the management of the executive's time. For example, it is desirable for every manager who wants to be effective in the management of his or her time to first study the pattern of his or her actual time allocations. This helps to see if time is spent on some activities out of proportion with the expected benefits from those activities. In short, to find out if the time spent on certain activities is consistent with the priority attached to those activities.

The balance of this article will present and discuss selected studies of how managers allocate their time. Methodologies and findings will be reviewed. The article will then explore the implications of the findings on how managers spend their time.

Selected studies of how managers allocate their time

There are now many general studies of managerial jobs and managerial behaviour[5-8]. Similarly, there are several suggestions on time management strategies[9-11]. However, empirical studies of how managers spend their time are relatively limited in number. In an intensive literature search employing the facilities of the Institute for Scientific Information Social Sciences Database,

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only a total number of 64 publications were recorded for the 13 years between 1993 and 1981.

By invoking the Social Sciences Citation Index (from the Institute for Scientific Information Social Sciences Database) on "managerial time" and "time management" as key words or words in the title, the list of the publications in Table I was obtained. A scrutiny of the output of the list shows that many of the items do not contain empirical studies of how managers spend their time. Although there were many empirical studies generally, these studies did not contain reported comparable data on the use of managerial time – the time spent by managers on their activities, the time spent at their different work locations, the time spent alone or with groups of people and so on.

The details of selected studies of how managers allocate their time is contained in Table II. The work activity studies not indicated in Table II either did not report the percentage time spent on managerial activities, or the classification used could not easily be converted to comparable data. The information in Table II shows the availability of relevant empirical data spanning the period 1963 to 1990. The details also show that most of the studies were conducted in the UK and the USA. The studies included various types of managers and managers at different organizational levels. They also included managers in different cultural settings and managers in both the private and public sectors.

Summaries of the findings of the studies are contained in Table III to Table VII. Table III shows, from various work activity studies, a distribution of the average weekly hours spent by managers at work. Table IV incorporates data on the time spent by managers on their activities, while Table V contains information on the percentage total working hours which managers spent at

Year	Number of studies
1993	5
1992	12
1991	5
1990	1
1989	5
1988	7
1987	3
1986	6
1985	1
1984	4
1983	6
1982	4
1981	5
Total	64

Source: Extracts from the Institute for Scientific Information Social Sciences Database, April 1994

Table I.
List of publications on managerial time: empirical (work sample) studies only

Authors	Date	Sample
Copeman *et al.*[12]	1963	58 managing directors in UK
Luijk[12]	1963	25 chief executive officers in Holland
Brewer and Tomlinson[13]	1963-64	six middle level managers in six UK firms
Hinrichs[14]	1964	232 middle level managers in one USA company
Horne and Lupton[15]	1965	66 middle level managers in ten UK firms
Thomason[16]	1966	30 middle/low level managers in seven UK firms
Perkins *et al.*[17]	1967	24 college presidents in 24 USA colleges
Mintzberg[4]	1973	five chief executive officers in five USA firms
Cohen and March[18]	1974	42 college presidents in 42 USA colleges
Pitner[19]	1978	three superintendents
Kaplan[20]	1979	six chief executive officers
Kurke and Aldrich[8]	1979	four chief executive officers in four USA firms
Duignan[21]	1980	eight superintendents
Willis[22]	1980	three school principals
Snyder and Gluek[23]	1980	two chief executive officers
Kmetz and Willower[24]	1981	five school principals
Sproull[25]	1981	five chief executive officers
Martin and Willower[26]	1981	five school principals
Bussom *et al.*[27]	1981	ten police chiefs
Morris *et al.*[28]	1981	ten school principals
Larson *et al.*[29]	1981	six superintendents
Oshagbemi[30]	1988	26 heads of units in eight Nigerian universities
Oshagbemi[30]	1988	12 heads of units in nine UK universities
Stewart[1]	1988	160 senior and middle level managers in UK
Martinko and Gardner[2]	1990	41 principals in 41 USA schools

Table II.
Details of selected studies on how managers allocate their time

Authors	Average total weekly hours
Copeman *et al.*, 1963[12]	44
Luijk, 1963[12]	60
Horne and Lupton, 1965[15]	44
Mintzberg, 1973[14]	40
Cohen and March, 1974[18]	55
Kurke and Aldrich, 1979[8]	44
Oshagbemi, 1988[30]	43
Stewart, 1988[1]	42

Table III.
Findings of selected studies of the working hours of managers

different work locations. Tables VI and VII contain the findings of selected work activity studies of the percentage total working hours spent by managers with different groups and with officers at different management levels.

Authors	Deskwork	Meetings	Phone calls
Copeman *et al.*, 1963[12]	40	41	5
Brewer and Tomlinson, 1963-64[13]	30	51	6
Hinrichs, 1964[14]	26	50	6
Horne and Lupton, 1965[15]	24	54	9
Thomason, 1966[16]	25	48	NR
Mintzberg, 1973[4]	22	69	6
Pitner, 1978[19]	15	55	8
Kaplan, 1979[20]	23	63	9
Kurke and Aldrich, 1979[8]	26	62	8
Duignan, 1980[21]	20	49	11
Willis, 1980[22]	23	61	7
Snyder and Gluek, 1980[23]	23	58	6
Kmetz and Willower, 1981[24]	19	49	8
Sproull, 1981[25]	NR	67	11
Martin and Willower, 1981[26]	16	54	6
Bussom *et al.,* 1981[27]	24	50	8
Morris *et al.,* 1981[28]	7	73	7
Oshagbemi, 1988[30]	44	49	1
Oshagbemi, 1988[30]	43	32	1
Stewart, 1988[1]	36	44	6
Martinko and Gardner, 1990[2]	21	43	6

Note:
NR stands for not reported

Table IV.
Findings of selected studies on the percentage total working hours spent by managers on their activities

Authors	Own office	Other units	Home	Other organizations
Luijk, 1963[12]	85	NR	NR	NR
Horne and Lupton, 1965[15]	52	33	4	11
Mintzberg, 1973[4]	52	17	NR	NR
Cohen and March, 1974[18]	35	12	16	36[a]
Kurke and Aldrich, 1979[8]	57	28	NR	NR
Oshagbemi, 1988[30]	50	30	10	11[a]
Oshagbemi, 1988[30]	45	36	11	8
Stewart, 1988[1]	51	24	2	9[b]

Notes:
[a] Due to rounding errors, figures may not necessarily total 100
[b] The reported figures do not total 100
NR stands for not reported

Table V.
Findings of selected studies on the percentage total working hours spent by managers in different work locations

As a prelude to the discussion of the findings, the primary methods used to study how managers spend their time will be highlighted and the advantages and the disadvantages of each method stated. This is to explain and justify the approach of our substantive review which comprised only studies based on managerial work activity. Data collected using indirect data-gathering methods such as the questionnaire or the interview, were not included in our review. This is because we believe that they are not as accurate as those based on the more direct methods such as the diary or observational methods. Only empirical studies were reviewed.

Methods for finding out how managers spend their time

There are both direct and indirect approaches used to study how managers spend their time[30]. The indirect methods have been, for a long time, the more popular approach. Essentially, they consist of merely asking the manager to estimate the time he or she spends on various activities. This can be done either through questionnaire administration or through an interview with the manager concerned.

The advantages of these methods are that they are fast and amenable to easy analysis. Usually, many more managers can also be contacted if the questionnaire is used than if the work activity approach is adopted. The geographical distribution of managers tends not to be a problem and indirect

Authors	Alone	Subordinates	Colleagues	Superiors
Mintzberg, 1973[4]	NR	37	NR	5
Cohen and March, 1974[18]	25	29	NR	6
Kurke and Aldrich, 1979[8]	NR	37	NR	13
Oshagbemi, 1988[30]	41	7	26	NR
Oshagbemi, 1988[30]	39	16	22	NR
Stewart, 1988[1]	34	26	20	8[a]

Note: [a] The reported figures do not total 100. This may be due to the exclusion of the figure for outside contacts
NR stands for not reported

Table VI.
Findings of selected studies of the percentage total working hours spent by managers with their workers

Authors	Alone	One person	Two or more people
Perkins *et al.,* 1967[17]	28	25	48
Cohen and March, 1974[18]	25	35	40
Oshagbemi, 1988[30]	41	22	37
Oshagbemi, 1988[30]	39	20	41
Stewart, 1988[1]	34	32	34

Table VII.
Findings of selected studies of the percentage total working hours spent by managers with different group size

methods are generally cheaper than direct methods of investigation. The primary problem with the findings from indirect methods is their reliability and validity. Managers' estimates are usually inaccurate and research has shown that some managers do not know how they spend their time[31, p. 17]. While some managers overestimate the time spent on certain activities, other managers underestimate the time spent on different activities. In addition, many inconsistencies are found when a comparison of managers' estimates are made on the same activities.

One problem in relation to estimates is the unreliability of memory. Here, the evidence seems to suggest that some guesswork may be involved. This is because after some duration of time, memory may fail, and recall may differ from fact, assuming the manager knew the facts initially. This is especially so if figures are involved[32, p. 12; 33, pp. 9-10]. In addition, managers can easily be biased in the figures they supply and unconsciously they may attempt rationalizations of their estimates. For these reasons, data obtained from work activity studies generally are regarded as superior to those obtained from indirect research methods.

The direct methods of collecting information are of two main kinds – the diary and structured observation. In the diary methodology, the researcher designs a simple diary which the manager fills in as he or she completes the day's activities. This is normally done for a period of one or two weeks, although it could be completed for a longer duration. After completing the diary, the researcher analyses the time allocation for different activities, where these took place, with whom, and so on. Instead of the manager filling in the diary, using observational methodology, the researcher actually stays with the manager during the course of the latter's work activities and records the manager's time allocation on different activities. In this way, it is thought that the possible sources of errors in the diary may be minimized, and some measure of standardization of the resulting data obtained.

Generally, the advantages of work activity methods are those of greater reliability and validity. However, they have the disadvantage of greater cost in terms of money and effort. It is more costly to design and produce the diaries, and researchers' observational time is usually very expensive. In addition, the sample size obtainable from work activity studies is generally much smaller than that usually obtained from survey and interview methods. This is because it is often difficult to get co-operation from managers when adopting the work activity methodology in research projects. Because of this factor, work activity studies, where they are intensive (within one organization) are usually not extensive (many organizations) as well. Only a few organizations or managers can usually be covered. One of the other critiques of work sampling is that it cannot illustrate the strategic meaningfulness of what managers are doing. Notwithstanding the limitations, the findings of work activity studies are usually accorded greater validity because they represent reality and not distortions of it. For example, a very popular study of managerial allocation of time was based on only a sample of five chief executive officers[4].

In the review of how managers in general spend their time, which is provided in this study, only studies employing the more direct methods shall be referred to. These studies are those adopting the diary and the structured observational methodologies. It should be noted that although we have mentioned only the major direct and indirect research methods, there are many variants of these which continue to be invented and used[34-36]. For example, activity sampling may be used instead of complete diary recording, while observation may be structured or unstructured [37].

The time spent by managers at work

Findings from some past studies seem to indicate that managers typically work long hours. For example, Carlson[38] in his study of Swedish managing directors, found that the top executives work an average of 10 hours per day, with variations from 8.5 to 11.5 hours. Copement *et al.*[12, p. 22] from his study of 25 Dutch top executives, also found that the reality of time demands on managers is such that, for managers to execute their tasks responsibly, they would need at least 60 to 70 hours weekly. Usually, the figure is considerably higher. Cohen and March[18] similarly found from their analysis of the working hours of 42 American college presidents, that the managers worked on average for 60 hours a week, including the work done at weekends. Without doubt, 60 hours is a long week.

However, the major contribution to the notion of the excessively long working week seems to have come more from estimates and from the results of survey studies rather than from work activity studies. For example, Mansfield *et al.*[39,p.11] in their survey of 1,058 British managers reported that some managers in their sample estimated that they worked for more than 70 hours a week. Indeed, over 40 per cent of the 1,058 managers reported working for longer than 50 hours a week. Similarly, McCall *et al.*[31] in their review suggest that some managers reportedly worked for up to 90 hours a week.

Yet, the conclusion from our review of many work activity studies would suggest that managers do not on average work much longer than 45 hours a week. (See, for example, the studies reported in Table III which appear to buttress the above opinion.) The discrepancy between 45 hours and the higher figures cited earlier shows the difference between survey results and the typical results from the more reliable work activity studies. The details of the studies of how managers spend their time are provided in Table II. It should be stated however, that the information on Table III relates only to the net working hours spent by managers excluding work at weekends. The time spent, for example, in non-working lunches was excluded from the working hours reported. One problem encountered in trying to report how many hours managers actually spend working, is the difficulty of comparability between researchers' figures, as researchers often adopt different definitions and classifications. The problem of comparability of findings is compounded by the fact that while some researchers report gross, others state net working hours without providing means for easy conversions.

Average working hours should, however, be interpreted with caution as these often do not reveal variations. Yet, the variability in working hours by managers could be substantial. Even in the case of the same manager, different working hours may be obtained from one week to the next. For example, in some diary studies, some managers put in up to 11 hours of work on some days but less than seven hours on other days.

Some explanations are usually given for the differences in the total working hours spent by managers. These include the position of the manager in the organizational hierarchy, with the suggestion that managers at higher levels tend to work longer than those at lower levels. However, some people do not agree to this suggestion. Rather, they believe that probably the reverse is true in real life! Another popular explanation relates to organizational peculiarities, especially the feature of size. The suggestion here is that managers who work in large organizations spend relatively more time than those who work in smaller concerns. The explanation given for this is the increased channels of communication or committee numbers which usually result from an expansion of an organization. On the other hand, managers in smaller concerns may be responsible for a wider range of activity than those in larger ones.

Differences in the type of jobs have also been given to explain variations in managerial working hours. It is argued that executives such as sales managers, who travel a lot, or those who are involved in practical jobs outside their offices, usually total a relatively high number of working hours a day. We believe that one of the most important explanations for the length of the manager's working hours could lie in the individual manager's work motivation and work habits, especially how the manager manages his or her time. Effective time management skills could, in our opinion, explain a large part of the reason for a short or a long working day.

Some university teachers, for example, have personal motivation to excel in their areas of research for various reasons. Consequently, they put in many hours of work. Similarly, owner managers are often motivated to work long hours. The motivation is strengthened by the conviction that they are working for themselves. However, some of their excessively long working hours may be explained in terms of their poor working habits, lack of professional management skills and, in particular, how they manage their time.

The activity level of managers suggests that managers are busy and that they work hard. The question which must be asked, therefore, is why managers work such long hours? As we have seen from the preceding discussions, there are many possible explanations for this. Some would say, however, that the answer to this question is fairly obvious: managers work long hours because they have to attend to a high volume and wide range of activities. Yet, in our opinion, a relevant explanation would take into consideration the issue of how managers manage their time. We believe that with better time management efforts, managers may be able to work for fewer hours and typically achieve more. The time spent in acquiring better time management skills is certainly not a wasted effort.

The implications of the findings would suggest the need for managers to concentrate on skills which would tend to free them from their usually very high level of activities without sacrificing quality of performance. For example, effective delegation and supervisory skills would be advantageous in making the manager a more effective user of time. The findings also highlight the need for proper training and development of workers who can oversee effectively the operations of their organizations, leaving managers relatively free to concentrate on strategic functions. In this way, managers would not only be more productive in the use of their time, but organizations would also tend to be more effective in the realization of their goals.

The time spent on different managerial activities

In the last section, we discussed how long managers work. It is also useful to know how managers apportion their time among their various activities. While classical notions of managerial functions state that managers plan, organize, lead, co-ordinate and control[40], empirical studies have questioned the utility of such generalized assertions in favour of enumerating the work characteristics of managers and, as much as possible, the content or subject matter of these activities[1,4].

Unfortunately, it is not possible to obtain similar activity classifications from all researchers. This is because the subject or focus of interest of a study usually affects the particular activity classification which may be used. Nevertheless, from various studies, many researchers have used some popular ways of activity classification. They differentiate between activities performed on the desk – paper work or desk work – and activities involving discussions between two or more people – meetings. The latter can be scheduled or unscheduled. Telephone conversation is also another common activity identified by several researchers. Of course, there are other activities such as travelling or tours, or computing which are peculiar to only a few studies.

A summary of the average percentage working hours spent by selected managers on various activities is provided in Table IV. It can be observed that managers spend about half of their total working hours in meetings. This could be periodical, pre-arranged or emergency meetings between managers or between managers and non-managers, occurring within or outside organizational premises.

The figures in Table IV suggest that if a substantial savings in time could be realized by managers, it would come in large measure from procedures designed to reduce the number and especially the duration of meetings. It will also come from running meetings more effectively and, in particular, making them goal-oriented.

It would be helpful to distinguish between scheduled and unscheduled meetings to find out where the greater amount of time goes. From the available studies, the percentage working time spent in scheduled meetings was, with one exception, consistently higher than the corresponding percentage working time spent by managers in unscheduled meetings. However, the number of the latter meetings was usually higher than the corresponding number of scheduled contacts. In some studies, such as those of Mintzberg[4] and Kurke and Aldrich[8], there were

remarkable differences between the percentage scheduled and unscheduled time spent in meetings. In Mintzberg's study, for example, 59 per cent of the total working time was spent in scheduled meetings while only 10 per cent was spent in unscheduled meetings. These figures compare broadly with those of Kurke and Aldrich which were 50 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. In other reported studies, however, the differences between the time spent on scheduled and unscheduled meetings could be very small. For example, in Lawrence's[41] study, the figures obtained were 22 per cent and 20 per cent. Similarly, in Choran's[42] research, a figure of 21 per cent was obtained for scheduled meetings and 15 per cent for the percentage time spent in unscheduled contacts.

Other information presented in Table IV includes the percentage working hours which managers spend on desk work activities. Obviously, desk work functions will include all paper work such as that involving reading, writing, dictating, figure work and other related activities. The information from Table IV shows that managers on average spend about a quarter to a third of their time on these activities. Obviously, this is another area where, perhaps, substantial savings in time could be achieved if a manager's skills in dealing with these activities were improved. Some managers typically have bulging in-trays containing a variety of issues to be attended to. Often these matters remain on their desks for several days. It is felt that some of such work could probably be delegated – especially the non-urgent variety.

Finally, the information in Table IV reveals that managers spend some 6 per cent of their total working time on the telephone either giving or receiving information. While this percentage is not considered particularly high, the disturbing influence of the telephone is indeed a cause for concern as it hampers concentration. In the consideration of the telephone activities therefore, it is perhaps the frequency, rather than the time spent on it that should be the focus of the manager looking for ways of managing his or her time more effectively. This is because although the percentage working time spent during telephone conversations is relatively small, the frequency of the telephone interruptions is usually very high.

Effective time management strategies would tend to focus on minimizing the disruptive effects of several frequent and unplanned telephone conversations. The effects of telephone interruptions could be serious particularly for managers such as research workers who may need a high degree of concentration for considerable periods of time.

The findings on the telephone raise interesting implications for current growth in e-mail. Communication via the e-mail would enable a manager to cumulate a day's messages and reply to these during a manager's most convenient period. However, e-mail will utilize written instead of oral communication (on the phone) and there are advantages and disadvantages of both oral and written messages.

The time spent by managers at different locations

As discussed earlier, researchers do not have a common grouping of managerial activities. Similarly, researchers are not unanimous on a consistent classification of the list of the different locations where managers spend their

time. A summary of one classification which has been used by a number of authors is provided in Table V. The findings show that managers in general spend about half of their total working hours in their own offices. Interpreted in terms of hours, it shows that managers spend over 20 hours in their offices every week. This conclusion implies that for a significant improvement in the management of one's time, activities performed in the office must be looked into carefully in order to make them more effective. In fact, the time which managers spend in their offices provides unique opportunities for them to concentrate on strategic issues, among other things. Yet, in view of the variety and the brevity of their activities, it is very easy to waste office hours. If the office hours are not well spent, it will be very difficult to make time up in other units, in other organizations, or indeed at home.

Table V shows that apart from office hours, the time spent in the other units of the organization consume most of the manager's time. Managers spend typically about half the time spent in the office in the other units of the organization. On the whole, therefore, managers spend about three-quarters of their total working hours on the organizational premises. This finding reinforces the opinion that the proper place for official functions is the organizational premises, so that time spent at home in particular, may be free for other personal or family activities. As Fletcher *et al.*[43] argue, however, there are interrelationships between managers' work time and their personal time. Managers, therefore, need to know how to spend their time better, not only in their offices, but also in the other organizational units and at home for optimum effectiveness.

The time spent by managers working at home or working in other organizations, amounts to some 10 per cent each of their total working hours (see Table V). In reality, some managers hardly work at home. For example, more than half of the 160 managers in Stewart's[1] sample did not work at all at home during the four weeks when they recorded their diaries. Not surprisingly, Stewart obtained only a figure of 1.5 per cent of total working hours which her sampled managers spent working at home. However, some managers such as the university teachers and their leaders tend to spend a substantial period of time working at home. In Cohen and March's[18] study of 42 American college presidents, for example, the researchers found that the academic managers spent up to 16 per cent of their total working hours at home.

The time spent working in other organizations would vary depending on the nature of particular managers' functions. Sales managers, for example, would typically spend more time working in other organizations than would other managers. These findings on location raise interesting implications for the current growth in telecommuting.

The duration of managers' activities

One important feature of the job characteristics of managers is the duration of their activities. Managers' days, we have discovered, generally are characterized by a large number of very brief and varied activities. Some of the activities last for a long

period of time. For example, some meetings could last for two or three hours. However, most of the activities last for only a few minutes. Mintzberg[4, p. 242] found, for instance, that 49 per cent of the total activities lasted for less than nine minutes, while only 10 per cent of the total activities lasted longer than an hour.

The average activity duration differs from one study to another. In a study of the university teachers and their leaders, the average activity duration was about an hour, with or without fleeting contacts and interruptions[30]. Similarly, Copeman *et al.*[12] found that a typical chief executive officer was able to spend something over an hour on each activity without major interruption other than casual phone calls. However, Carlson's[38] study showed that his sample of chief executives were being interrupted in their work on an average of every eight minutes. In Mintzberg's[4] study, the average activity duration was only 22 minutes. However, the definition of an "activity" by researchers varies and this may explain, in part, the differences in the results obtained. In a study of teachers and managers in universities, only events lasting five minutes or more were defined as an activity. Otherwise, the incident was merely regarded as a fleeting contact or interruption occurring during a particular activity. In contrast, every incident was regarded as an activity in Mintzberg's study.

Why is the duration of activities important in the management of time? The duration of activities is important because many short and varied activities especially where they occur intermittently hamper sustained concentration, which is desirable to deal properly with some managerial issues. It is perhaps useful to plan one's day so that a period, or a small number of periods, of reasonable time may be available undisturbed. This allows some time for purposeful strategic managing as opposed to responding to events, as they occur, some of which may be trivial and of relative unimportance.

The time managers spend with different grades of people

Table VI contains data on the percentage total time which some managers spent alone, or with subordinates, colleagues and with higher level managers. The interpretation of the table appears to be that managers tend to spend more time with their subordinates and colleagues than with their superior managers. This suggests the groups to watch out for if managers are to minimize wasting office hours through chats and "personal" social activities.

The time managers spend with different groups of people

Table VII contains the percentage of total working time which some managers spent alone, or spent with one other person, or with two or more people. Generalizations from Table VII are difficult. In Stewart's[7] study, for example, the managers allocated their time more or less equally between being alone or being with one person or with two or more people. In the study by Perkins *et al.*[17], however, the time spent by the managers in meetings with two or more people was about equal to the combined time spent alone and with one person. "Alone" times were in most cases defined to include periods of brief interruptions by persons or telephone conversations with someone else.

Conclusions

The availability of objective and reliable data like those generated by the work activity studies can be a powerful catalyst for improving the effectiveness of time management efforts.

From the available literature, it would appear that some of the time management suggestions are not rooted in conceptual foundations. For example, Adcock and Lee[44] agree that many of the publications focus on gimmicks such as how to save time by not having a chair in the office, or how to dictate in a car to save time. While some of these tips may provide useful suggestions in some cases, their practicality for the majority of managers appear doubtful. This is not to mention the fact that suggestions such as dictating in a car to save time may prove fatal!

Perhaps a more fundamental problem is that available books on time management are invariably not based on the recognition of the nature and the reality of managerial jobs. Thus, books on managers and their time tend to contain a lot of false assumptions, resulting in questionable prescriptive "how to" suggestions. For example, as Webber[45, p. 5] stated, insufficient knowledge of what the manager actually does or what managerial jobs demand, has misled some authors picturing a "cool and rational executive allocating his time in advance of events according to some objective criteria related to organizational goals". The utility of the recommendations of such books are therefore doubtful as the premiss and the assumptions on which they are based are questionable.

Yet, the importance of the effective use of managerial time cannot be over emphasized. Time is important and the only economic resource which is common to all managers. Jones[46, p. 95] observes that executive time has become so critical that many companies now consider it as the decisive criterion for entering new ventures instead of the traditional criterion of return on investment. Therefore, Jones argues that "the minimisation of demands on executive time deserves attention almost equal to that which businessmen now devote to profit maximisation".

It is now a moot point which is the more important resource to manage, time or money? The current thinking seems to suggest that decisions about spending time should be made as carefully as decisions about spending money. Instead of the traditional emphasis on the "time value of money", Jones suggested that attention should also focus on the "money value of time". Unfortunately, while most organizations have elaborate systems to account for every penny spent, the need to manage time as efficiently is not often appreciated. Yet, to a degree, time is money.

The findings of this study suggest that in general, significant improvements in the use of managerial time can be obtained by addressing the following issues at work:

- the management of meetings;
- the management of paper work/ desk work activities;
- delegation and supervision;
- the management of fleeting contacts and interruptions.

This article has discussed the nature and the reality of managerial jobs and how managers spend their time. A summary of how managers spend their time has afforded us an opportunity to make some statements about the nature of managerial work. We have seen, for instance, that not only are managerial functions varied, but also the locations where these are performed, the people managers interact with and the duration of managerial activities. In addition, managers experience different forms of fleeting contacts and interruptions during the course of their working day. This is a feature which may hinder their creative work, if care is not taken. We have also seen, in addition, the complexity of managerial work and we can now perhaps better appreciate the ambiguous role within which managers tend to function. On the whole, there seems to be little uniformity in practical executive functions and, therefore, a conceptual approach to studying managerial time allocation would seem to offer useful ways of tackling the difficulties which managers encounter.

In managing their time more effectively, managers need to consider all the aspects of managerial work which we have examined. They show, for example, that for effective time management, the focus or the emphasis must be on managers' skills in handling a wide variety of activities. By showing the realities within which managers have to operate, these characteristics also indicate some possibilities regarding ways and means for developing more effective time management strategies.

Note and references

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