

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



779 Simplifying the Eisenhower Matrix

It was designed by a President of the United States to help him deal with all of the things trying to take bites out of his day, and is likely the most famous and most utilized strategy in the area of time optimization. It should be THE answer for everyone who seeks to be more productive. Yet, so many people struggle with it. I'm Jerry Roberts, and today we sort it out to help you buy back time. That's next on The Extra Point.

Time optimization is the goal of almost everybody. Even leaders of the free world have trouble getting the most out of every day. One did something about it. In the 1950s, President Dwight Eisenhower came up with a tool that is now referenced as the *Eisenhower Matrix*. Author Stephen Covey modified it some 30 years later, calling it *First Things First*.

In its simplest form, you divide tasks and events into four categories. Quadrant 1, Urgent and Important; Quadrant 2, Non-Urgent and Important; Quadrant 3, Urgent and Non-Important; and Quadrant 4, Non-Urgent and Non-Important.

To use the matrix properly, all we have to do is recognize everything that comes our way as one of those and have a plan to deal with it. I can tell you, the vast majority of people who try it love the simplicity, but have trouble with making it work because decisions are involved.

Makers of a productivity app called Todoist took a look at the matrix, and added some language that might help. Each of those four quadrants gives us a directive.

Urgent and Important, DO the Important and Urgent tasks first. Non-Urgent and Important, PLAN for these. Covey advised that this category is the one that decides the winners in business, career, and life.

Urgent and Non-Important, DELEGATE these if

you can, or do them when you've finished the urgent and important things. Non-Urgent and Non-Important should be ELIMINATED or done when everything in the first three categories is completed. Let's add some real-world tasks here and see how we do.

Urgent and Important will include: Finishing a report or project that has a deadline, the boss hands you a job that must be done right away, a family member's car breaks down, picking up a sick child at school, and responding to important emails. These are deadline-driven tasks or things beyond our control. These things we do first. However, if our day is loaded with them, eventually this drains us of energy and is "burnout city," leading us to social media, etc., just to unwind.

Non-Urgent and Important are: Strategic planning, maintenance projects, professional development, networking, exercise, developing a successful morning routine, spending time with the family. Covey called this category "the sweet spot" of time optimization. Here we find opportunities and growth. We do our best and most important work here. By spending more time in this quadrant, we will actually reduce the number of pressing things we deal with.

Urgent and Non-Important: Scheduling your work and activities, responding to less important emails, and meal preparation. Generally, these tasks are time-based, and need to be done so we can accomplish something important. We schedule work so it can be done more efficiently, and the same goes for meal prep.

Non-Urgent and Non-Important activity might be: Watching TV, reading and posting in social media, playing video games, hanging out at Home Depot and dreaming of all the things you could do, some of which might actually be important, even if they're not always urgent.

(Con't.)

We have to be careful with these activities because they have the potential to steal large chunks of time.

The Eisenhower Matrix will deliver results for us, but there are three challenges to making it work.

1. The tendency to lump anything we see as urgent into the important category as well. "Urgent" happens to all of us, but winners in the time game know how to separate the important from the non-important.
2. Not spending enough time in Quadrant 2, Non-Urgent and Important.
3. Stubbornly refusing to give up at least some of the time spent in Non-Urgent, Non-Important activities.

It takes a little time to master this, but it will put productive hours back on your schedule if you do. To squeeze more value out of every day, look up the Eisenhower Matrix, and put it to work for you.

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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