

Career Headlines



Self-Managing Your Goals and Priorities

To manage priorities means to decide which things need to be done in what order. To reach your long-term goals, you must establish priorities. Otherwise, minor diversions will keep getting in the way of more important things.

Two main criteria for setting priorities are urgency and importance. They are not the same.

- Something that is urgent requires immediate attention — do it right away.
- Something that is important, but not needed right away, can wait — finish urgent priorities first.

The following four categories of urgency and importance will help you make decisions about long-term goals:

Category A: Urgent and Important — Everyone agrees that tasks in this category need to be done right away and well. These are top priorities.

Category B: Important but Not Urgent — Most long-term goals are in this category. They include things like graduating from school, finding a job, and starting a family.

Category C: Urgent, but not Important — Some phone calls, meetings, and personal appointments fall here. They need attention, but are not truly important.

Category D: Neither Urgent nor Important — Daily activities such as opening your junk mail, making coffee, or downloading the latest music fall into this category.

Unfortunately, many people spend a lot of time on Categories C and D and neglect Category B. So we make little progress toward our long-term goals and we feel frustrated and dissatisfied.

Action: Which category (A, B, C, or D) do the following actions fall into?

1. Helping a displeased customer
2. Stamping the mail
3. Going to lunch
4. Returning a phone call from your boss
5. Removing a spot from your shirt
6. Meeting with a coworker about next month's plans
7. Calling a friend to check in on last night's date
8. Making plane reservations for tomorrow's last-minute trip
9. Opening today's mail
10. Emailing a coworker the agenda for next week's meeting



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