

**Time Management in Institutions  
– A Managerial Approach –**

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**Abstract:** This paper tackles the subject of time management in institutions, based on a general view from a managerial perspective. Based on several representative works for management, among them some bestsellers in the subject of time management, it treats subjects like definitions of Working and Managerial time, their characteristics and subdivisions, time managerial generations, advantages and disadvantages of planning and different approaches to time management in different organizational structures.

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Nowadays, managers pay much more attention to the problems related to Time Management, which represent major factors determining both production and people's life in general. Since human lifespan has increased due to the unprecedented development of living standards, and payment offers a scale of unprecedented variety, just as leisure does, managers' attitude toward time has become more important than ever. Especially in the Anglo-Saxon cultural area, strongly oriented towards success and results, a considerable number of books have been published in this field,<sup>1</sup> which refers both to personal and organizational time management.

Unfortunately, sources on time management are few, and those foreign and Romanian studies that discuss this topic treat it as a secondary issue, together with other subsidiary subjects, such as the level and quality of output (measurements by FW Taylor, Mr. and Mrs. Gilbreth, "the parents" of ergonomics, Fayol, etc.), organization (Max Weber), or the motivation of human resources (Elton Mayo, Herzberg). Though the ideas of these classics are included in current management textbooks (in the academic circles of Cluj, Dumitru Purdea works, Codruța Osoian, etc.), there are very

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<sup>1</sup> From these, we must mention a few: David Allen, *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*, (Penguin, 2001), Stephen Covey, A. Roger Merrill, Rebecca R. Merrill, *First Things First: to Live, to Love, to Learn, to Leave a Legacy*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), Neil Fiore, *The Now Habit: A Strategic Program for Overcoming Procrastination and Enjoying Guilt-Free Play*, (Los Angeles: Tarcher, Revised Edition, 2006), Alan Lakein, *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life*, (New York: New American Library, 1973), Don Aslett, *How to Handle 1,000 Things at Once: A Fun Guide to Mastering Home & Personal Management* (Pocatello, Idaho: Marsh Creek Press, 1998), etc.

few articles to focus primarily on issues of time management.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the book market has a very large number of works by those authors who offer “recipes” for success based on individual attitudes and behaviour. These works, known as bestsellers, have a large impact on the public, are written in a style accessible to common people, easy and fun to read, and rely more on the author’s personal experiences and real or invented examples, to the detriment of the methods truly scientific. However, their value as sources should be respected, even if these presented models, bestsellers must be treated with criticism, and with some scepticism, because a model which was successful in the case of one individual is not certain to work in the case of another person with different values, skills and attitudes.

Our study intends to present a few aspects of this problem. Even though, after 1989, managerial studies flourished in Romanian scientific life, the time management problem was not emphasized, and only a few case studies related to the problem of consuming these resources were written. The issue can be approached in several ways, such as ergonomic, sociological, health (individual health, professional illnesses, etc.) or even from the perspective of Comparing Management. Generally speaking, this research line is treated only in part, in the mirror of its relations to other subjects such as the quantity of work, or condition of human resources. In the following pages, we propose to make a short summary of different approaches to Working Time, its characteristics and its division in literature, both Western and Romanian, presenting some additional comments to complete the main theories.

### **Time definitions of and theories regarding organizational time**

Beyond the existence of other definitions, time, considered from the point of view of economics, is a production resource. We shall mention a few of the following general definitions:

- Absolute time of the world, understood according to Newton’s definition
- Relative time of the world, as Popper defines it, and which starts from a dynamic approach
- Biological time, which represents the existence time of biological entities, both physiologically and psychologically
- The time of civilizations, which in turn can be approached from at least two points of view: that of the philosophy of history, represented in Spengler’s and Toynbee’s works, as well as that of comparative management which approaches the problem from the point of view of the differences in perception of the various organizational cultures.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From among those, which however exist we must mention the following: Mark Aguiar and Erik Hurst, *Measuring Trends in Leisure: the Allocation of Time over Five Decades* (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2006); Ildikó Ékes, “Az atipikus munka és jövője” (Atypical Work and Its Future), *Munkaügyi Szemle* 1 ( 2009): 66–71; Mária Frey, “A munkaidőrendszerek rugalmassá válása” (Time Management Systems Becoming More Flexible), *Közgazdasági Szemle* 2000: 1008–1026; John Hassard, “Aspects of Time in Organization”, *Human Relations* 2 ( 1991), 105+125, etc.

<sup>2</sup> For time definitions see: Raluca Nagy, *Managementul timpului* (Management of Time) (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2004), Constantin Cuciș, *Timp și temporalitate în educație. Elemente pentru un management al timpului școlar* (Time and Temporality in Education. Elements of Time

The time of economic production, or economic time, constitutes the theme of our study.

Production time is a resource, a production factor displaying characteristics which set it apart from the rest of the factors. According to one of its definitions, it is a resource which people need in order to achieve a certain goal. At the same time it is an infinite, but irreplaceable source, and when it is wasted it is forever lost. It also cannot be substituted or replaced.<sup>1</sup>

The main theoretic characteristics of time as a production resource are the following:

- Its double nature: it is a resource, but also an indicator of efficiency.
- Through the diversification of the activities, it became a symbolic element, a social indicator, a sign a social status and responsibilities, which cannot be consumed anywhere and anyhow.<sup>2</sup>
- One can notice a tendency to use it efficiently, through organization. The most important elements in the process of organization are the approaches to dead-lines and complex tasks.<sup>3</sup>
- Along with the technological evolution, the increasing speed of production processes, as well as the diversification of problem-solving techniques the duration of time has decreased considerably in the favour of free time, and in certain sectors it is still decreasing.<sup>4</sup>
- Its value lies in its unique character, and in its irreplaceability: it cannot be bought or sold, its expansion cannot be changed, it cannot be stored or saved, manufactured, reproduced, or modified.<sup>5</sup>
- It is inexorable: it flows in one direction, at a constant pace.
- It is inelastic: there is no possibility to change it.
- It is atypical because it cannot be compared with any other resource.
- It is allocated, generally, in an equitable way.
- It is indispensable in the sense that the accomplishment of any task or work requires a certain volume of time to be consumed.<sup>6</sup>

According to a theory presented by Carmen Aida Hutu, Professor at the Technical University in Iasi, and also the author of an organizational management course, time in an organization can be the following:

- Monochronic, in which case time is linear, segmented, and tangible, and all activities develop in a strict order, one by one, with a single event taking place at one point in time. In this case moving on to the next activity often depends

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Management in Schools) (Iași: Polirom, 2002), Irina Pincovski, Mihaela Mihai, *Managementul timpului* (Management of Time) (București: H. G.A., 2001).

<sup>1</sup> Nagy, *Managementul timpului*, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Cucoș, *Timp și temporalitate...*, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Kate Keenan, *Ghidul managerului eficient—Cum să îți organizezi timpul* (The Management Guide to Making Time) (București: Rentrop & Straton, 1998), 6.

<sup>4</sup> Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber, *Noua artă a timpului împotriva stresului* (The New Art of Time Against Stress, Le nouvel art du Temps) (București: Elena Francisc Publishing, 2004), 47.

<sup>5</sup> Pincovski, *Managementul timpului...*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Iulian Ceașu, *Dicționar enciclopedic managerial* (Encyclopaedic Managerial Dictionary) (București: Academia de Management, 2000), vol. II, 933.

on the accomplishment of the previous one. In order to measure time and management in this instance, agendas, programs, and plans are used. In the European cultural environment, this approach is more characteristic to the organizational cultures of Northern countries.

- Polychronic, in which case the involved individuals handle multiple activities simultaneously, while planning is often neglected. In this case the program is subject to change depending on the urgent needs that arise, as well as on the perception of the priorities. In Europe this is characteristic to Mediterranean cultures.<sup>1</sup>

The science which studies the organization of work is called ergonomics. Ergonomics includes the organization and definition of working time, with all its subdivisions. The following types of working time are presented by Management Professor Dumitru Purdea in his exceptional book:

The structure of production time is determined by the operations and work processes which take place in a certain period of time. The work processes can be cyclic or not cyclic. Cyclic processes are characterized by periodic repetition, and the not cyclic ones are repeated randomly or are not at all repeated.<sup>2</sup>

According to Purdea's definitions, the subdivisions of working time are the following:

- Working Time (WT) is the time span at the disposal of an individual or group of individuals.
- Productive Time (PT) is that subdivision of time, the most important one, in which the actions required to accomplish a task are performed. It is part of the official working time along with the non-productive time.
- Productive time has three components:
  - Preparation time and closing time. It is the time spent by the individual to prepare the site, as well as to bring it back to its initial state after the task has been accomplished.
  - Operational time is the time in which the individual performs or supervises the performance of the actions necessary for the accomplishment of the tasks. This, in turn, has two other components: main time and secondary time.
  - Main time is the time in which the individual performs or supervises the performance of the tasks. It is optimized and it cannot be reduced under a certain amount, without negatively affecting the final result.
  - Secondary time is composed of those intervals in which no actual tasks are performed, but only supportive operations meant to aid the realization of the main tasks.

In industrial production, operational time, both main and secondary, has three subcomponents, defined according to the nature of the work: manual work, mechanical-manual work, and supervision work.

The third component is that of the time allocated to the maintenance of the working place. This is the time spent maintaining the machinery and the tools, as well as keeping the working space well-supplied, organized, clean, and neat. Its subcomponents are the technical maintenance time, and the organizational time.

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<sup>1</sup> Carmen Aida Huțu, *Cultură organizațională și transfer de tehnologie* (Organizational Culture and Technological Transfer) (București: Editura Economică, 1999), 92.

<sup>2</sup> Dumitru Purdea, *Organizarea ergonomică a muncii* (Ergonomic Organization of Work) (Cluj-Napoca: Risoprint, 2003), 29.

Unproductive working time is represented by the intervals of interruptions in the executant's work regardless of their nature, or the intervals during which actions unnecessary for the realization of the tasks are performed. It consists of three subdivisions:

- Official interruption time: rest and physiological needs
- Interruption time caused by technology and the organization of work
- Unproductive working time is the time spent by the executant doing actual work, but work which is not necessary for the accomplishment of the tasks.

Unofficial interruption time consists of the interruptions caused by unpredictable causes. These interruptions can have a subjective or objective cause, can be dependant on the executant or not.<sup>1</sup>

Further we will elaborate on the relation between working time and free time. From a managerial perspective, free time exists to the detriment of working time. If the value of working time is measured in a salary per hour, then the higher the salary the more expensive the free time is, and vice-versa. If working time is not compensated accordingly, then free time is more appreciated by the individual.

Here follows a formula of the relation between time and income.

$$F = Tc \times Pl + Tw \times w + y, \text{ in which:}$$

F = total income

Tc = volume of free time, expressed in hours

Pl = price of free time

Tw = the quantity of working time, expressed in hours

W = hourly wages

y = income obtained outside work<sup>2</sup>

The latest tendencies of our society as far as the regulation and efficiency of working time are concerned, are the following:

- Efforts are being made in most institutions to diminish the amount of wasted time, as well as creating opportunity for time to be allocated for what is truly important for the realization of the tasks.
- Despite the fact that some organizations put a strong emphasis on the actual time spent at the working place, regardless of the efficiency rate, the working community being responsible for this – it is believed that should someone leave work early s/he has not performed well –, the mentality that productivity and efficiency are more important than the actual time spent working gains more and more popularity.
- In some cases, people enjoy their work so much that they willingly work in several places, or spend more time at their working place. Their dedication is sometimes compensated financially and sometimes not. Often this practice can be beneficial from a professional point of view. If this practice becomes extensive it can lead to people being over-worked, it may increase the stress, may cause tensions and the loss of motivation. The work process has to be organized in such a way that the worker can leave work in a positive frame of mind. For most

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 27–33.

<sup>2</sup> *Kultúra-Gazdaságtani tanulmányok* (Culture-Economical Studies), eds. Katalin Daubner, Sándor Horváth, Katalin Petró, (Budapest: Aula, 2000), 29.

people nowadays, whether they admit this fact to their superiors or not, work represents a means for achieving certain direct or indirect personal objectives.

### Timing of work and its theories

Planning is a basic function of theoretical and practical managerial science. Planning has a certain role in the management of working time, contributing to the efficiency of the activity. In one of his books, Jean-Denis Menard analyzes the calculation processes of time, comparing the benefits and drawbacks in the following table:<sup>1</sup>

Calculated time benefits	Disadvantages
There is a common reference system for collective action, which guarantees punctuality, the keeping of commitments and respect for other people's time	Obsession with the reference system in any situation: may cause inflexibility, the same thing is asked from everyone, regardless of the circumstances and situation.
One feels that time is flowing: one seeks progress and to achieve something useful in life.	There is a subjective feeling of loss of time. One feels that things slip by and that one divides one attention in too many directions, to no avail.
Consciousness of time limits and lack of time, sense of economy.	One becomes obsessed with the loss of time and becomes stingy with one's time.
The worker's time is linear and s/he is well aware that it has a predictable end; one's life time inevitably ends in death.	Time is linear, but one prefers not to think about it. Action is a subterfuge that prevents him to focus on this issue.

As we have seen, Menard's approach is comparative based on the analysis of the phenomenon from a single point of view, considering time planning processes in a theoretical, generalized, uniform way, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of the same components. However, other theories have emerged, concerning the planning process from several different points of view; or at least approaches have many points of departure, ideas being developed in parallel, they intersect, or they merge at the end of the process in a broader, synthesized perspective. Below, we shall present two theories of organizational time in management theory: the theory of comparing "old" methods with "new" ones, and the theory regarding Generations of Time Management.

*Old-new comparison* is a method often used in conducting various analyses in the field of social sciences. In their classical meaning old means the methods used in the course of time, it has a conservative connotation, and new means change, reform, even if the introduced methods have been used somewhere else as well. According to the comparison made by Raluca Nagy, old-style management methods differ from new management techniques in the following way:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Denis Menard, *Cum să ne administrăm timpul. Noțiuni-cheie, situații reale, soluții concrete* (How to Manage our Time. Key Concepts, Real Situations, Concrete Solutions, Savoir gérer son temps) (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 24.

<sup>2</sup> Nagy, *Managementul timpului*, 70.

Time Management-old	Time Management-New
Authoritarian decision making	Teamwork and decisions based on mutual agreement
Cold and distant management	More interaction, especially among members of smaller groups
Isolation	Pleasant breaks, team spirit
Keeping people away to avoid business disruptions.	Interruptions perceived as breaks, as a positive aspect of the management.
Compliance with a predetermined and inflexible set of priorities	Change and flexible view of priorities.
Work is determined by the clock.	Life is balanced in all its aspects
The belief that only work is important, everything else is secondary, and should be done only during the individual's leisure.	The belief that families and human relationships are just as important as work.

About values catalogued in this table we shall talk more below when we deal with various issues of organizational culture and the attitude towards working time shown by the members and the management of an organization. Nevertheless, we must also talk about another theory, very fashionable in the world of management science, the theory of the generations of time management.

In his book devoted to the topic of time management, theologian and economist Stephen R. Covey talks about three generations of time management. In his opinion, for the first generation, certain times of passage and deadlines are really important which it respects, otherwise letting things happen in their normal, natural course. Representatives of the second generation different plans and time measuring tools (calendars, work plans, different prediction plans) are important. And the representatives of the third generation are characterized by maximizing processes such as planning, the control and preparation of priority lists.

The attitude of the first generation is flexible, they prefer to have a relatively casual schedule, they like to do what they want, what they believe is important, namely only activities they are motivated in, what they believe needs to be done. They often forget to perform important activities which are unpleasant for them, or which they do not consider important, even if their environment and bosses have a different opinion.

The second generation is usually ready to face challenges that may arise along the way; most often they have a very high sense of responsibility towards the final results and the undertaken tasks, and they plan their activities according to these. They often fall under the *tyranny of planning* at the expense of human relations.

The third generation was, in Covey's view, the one who had the most developed and performing attitude, who has made major achievements indeed, because it approaches problems from the perspective of control and efficiency. But erroneous paradigms can lead to major, even fatal problems. As a conclusion, the author states that the appearance of a fourth generation is necessary.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen R Covey, *Managementul timpului sau cum să ne stabilim prioritățile* (The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People) (București: Edit. Allfa, 2000), 17–18.

Covey's theory had a great echo, the author himself continued to develop the idea in one of his next books (Stephen R. Covey, Roger Merrill, Rebecca Merrill, *First Things First*, 1994). In what follows, we shall present the analysis and ideas of a Romanian author, Irina Pincovski,<sup>1</sup> regarding the issue of the generations of time management, which provides a further development of the above mentioned idea of management generations.

In her book, *Time Management*, the author makes a short survey of the first three generations, characterizing them according to her views. According to this analysis, and seen through the mirror of their instruments, the first generation is at the same time the least developed, their tools being regularly consulted notes and lists, as well as the rough planning of the activity. The second generation is characterized by using indexes, tables, calendars and work agendas, recently in electronic form, to keep a better record of ongoing activities. The characteristics of this second generation are:

- the work is planned;
- personal responsibility;
- the achievement of the goals is followed
- high level of efficiency.

In comparison to the other two generations, the third generation is the one, which represents the current state of management thinking; it focuses on the need to become more efficient, to do everything in as short a time as possible. This generation's way of thinking has brought about important new ideas, such as:

- identification of values;
- setting goals;
- specific rules on short, intermediate and long terms;
- prioritization of tasks.

As compared to these three generations, the fourth approaches the field through the idea that the individuals' problem is not to administer their time (as working time), but to administer their own life. The differences between the third generation and the fourth are best presented by the following table:

<b>Generation III</b>	<b>Generation IV</b>
Control	Cause-effect relation
Efficiency	Effectiveness
Relative Values	Principles
Administration of tasks	The management and administration of life
Priorities focused on emergency	Priorities focused on importance
Chronological time (the Chronos)	Quality time (Kairos)
Competition with time	Harmony with time
Competence	Character and competence
Rigid system	Flexible system
Satisfaction of desires	Satisfaction of real needs
People are sacrificed for the sake of planning and results	People are considered more important than the work itself

<sup>1</sup> Pincovski, *Managementul timpului*, 19–22.



Human relations are transactional	Human relations are transformational
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In order to present a complex vision, the author does not consider the issue from the generational perspective, but also from the perspective of individual approaches to the problem, identifying eight types of approaches, which are strictly connected with the generations. These approaches, in her view are the following:

1. The “organizational” approach. Perhaps, due to its structure, at least formally, this is the most complex approach, and is manifested mainly in three areas, which would be:

- organizing things by ordering objects and spaces;
- organizing tasks by ordering and systematizing item of the agenda;
- organizing human resources by establishing personal tasks, a process in which delegating tasks and up-to-date information have a great role.

This approach passes on from the individual to the organizational level, and considers processes in terms of the organization as a whole.

2. The individualistic approach focuses on the protection of personal. It is especially characteristic to those who feel overwhelmed by the demands of others, and who cannot cope with the volume of tasks, waging a private battle with the system they belong to. They use the following techniques in this fight:

- isolation;
- drawing back from the middle of events;
- delegating tasks to others.

3. The “achievement” approach is characteristic to those who set their goals and focus all of their efforts to achieve these. The techniques used by them are generally the following:

- detailed planning for the short, medium, or long term;
- setting goals;
- self-motivation;
- inner wish to create positive attitudes.

4. The ABC approach. This approach works by classifying tasks in three categories: the issues in category A are considered very important, those in category B, important, and the ones in category C unimportant, or normal, routine. We must note here that this approach is very popular in the United States among politicians (of whom we must mention Bill Clinton) and leading businessmen. This approach was elaborated by Alan Lakein in his book *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life* (1973).<sup>1</sup>

5. The “technological” approach. This approach relies on the assumption that work based on an appropriate tool (calendar, timetable, etc.) will lead to a better management of the available time and applying it leads to greater efficiency in the activities.

6. The “skill” approach is based on the idea that time management is essentially a skill that can be a talent, but it can and should be acquired.

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<sup>1</sup> Other works by Lakein are: *Give Me a Moment and shall Change Your Life: Tools for Moment Management* (Kansas City: Andrews & McMeel, 1997), *It's about Time & It's about Time* (Bantam Books, 1975).

7. The “let yourself be carried by the current” approach transposes into the field of work the fatalistic thinking, oriental values and beliefs according to which life is controlled by its natural rhythm, which is very difficult or even impossible to change, and people must not fight against fate, but must adapt themselves to circumstances, accepting them as they are, gaining by this spontaneity and serenity.

8. The “recovery” approach is characteristic to individuals who perceive large gaps in the environment, possibly in their own personality and it is often manifested in behavioural disturbances (for example a perfectionist who could delegate tasks to subordinates, but will not do so to avoid their being gone imperfectly). They wish to correct the perceived shortcomings, real or imaginary, through additional efforts.

The relation between the eight approaches to generations of time management is reflected in the following table:

<i>No. Approach</i>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Characteristic generation</b>
	Reduction or elimination of the loss of time.	Becomes a purpose in itself and not a measure for achieving more important goals. Gives the illusion of productivity, however only the illusion, because it is not materialized under the form of a final product.	II, III
	Personal responsibility is assumed for the time spent and the achieved results.	Cultivates a strong independence, which leads to the deterioration of interhuman relations.	II, III
	Clarifies the system of values. Creates proper environment for fulfilling objectives.	Creates lack of balance by focusing time and energy exclusively on achieving certain goals.	II, III
	Prioritize tasks according to their importance.	Priority is often represented by urgency, circumstances or other people’s wishes and needs. By this, non-urgent but important tasks can be neglected.	III
	Increases productivity and individual capacity.	Creates the illusion that power lies in using an instrument.	II, III
	Develops skills necessary to achieve goals.	Creates the illusion that efficiency lies in skills.	II, III
	Develops a more harmonious living in accord with natural rhythms.	It lacks the force of a clearly defined approach.	I, IV

	Identifies the nature of bad habits regarding time management.	Does not offer concrete ameliorative solutions."	I, IV
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Of course, Pincovski's rather complex approach is not the only interpretation existing on the market of management science works. Recently, a new approach has appeared, the fifth generation, which can be exemplified by Charles M. Savage's *Fifth Generation Management: Dynamic Teaming, Virtual Enterprising and Knowledge Networking*, 1996. This discusses the issue through a self-disciplinary approach, but also empathic at the same time, thought being given to careful, detailed planning, interpersonal relations and flexibility in implementing the program. It is likely that in the future, with the major changes which have taken place in work culture in general, the sixth, seventh and eventually even further generations will emerge at least at the level of theories. Any practitioner who is in a decision making function ought to be familiar with them, but we must not forget that the theory can be applied only if it can have beneficial results in the given circumstances.

### **The manager's time, the performer's time, and "time killers"**

Timing is essential for saving these resources. However, not all ideas are successful, and the applied methods do not always bear fruit. Kate Keenan sees two major factors as the key of success in programming time: the approach to deadlines and the tackling of complex tasks.<sup>1</sup> If working time is poorly organized, this causes all sorts of negative consequences such as failing to finish the undertaken work in time, employees being mentally and physically fatigued, employees feeling unfulfilled, tendencies of absenteeism, and taking refuge in various random activities. But neither is a success when the plan itself is good in theory, but its implementation is obstructed by certain adverse conditions such as poor physical and mental condition, the intervention of some major but unpredictable forces and some activities which take the workers' time. In what follows, we shall treat the problem of the loss of working time both from the perspective of the manager who is able to plan his/her own work, and that of the contractor whose programme is determined by his superiors.

Julian Ceausu's encyclopaedic managerial dictionary determines 20 main causes which may make managers to lose time, namely:

1. The work day not being planned;
2. Lack of clearly set objectives;
3. Not delegating tasks;
4. Delegating tasks without verifying the final results;
5. Working only under pressure;
6. Working in a rush and dashing everywhere;
7. Postponing for tomorrow or next week what is not liked;
8. Lack of self-discipline;
9. Wasting time in meetings;
10. Meetings not being previously prepared;
11. Too much importance given to preparation, exaggerated insistence on knowing all the details before deciding;

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Keenan, *Cum să îți organizezi timpul...*, 32.

12. Trying to do several things at once;
13. Leaving tasks unfinished;
14. Overloaded office and poor ranking system;
15. Perpetuation of a routine which has become ineffective.
16. Adopting fashionable solutions without investigating whether they are convenient;
- Adopting an unverified solution and the habit of implanting it experimentally;
18. The inability to say “no”.
19. Accepting all visitors without a previous appointment;
20. Discussions with the staff during coffee-breaks.<sup>1</sup>

According to Trevor Young, expressed in his bestseller which discusses the issues of project management, the impediments of effective time management are:

- poor communication;
- unexpected guests;
- too many meetings;
- office gossip;
- updating files and records;
- changes without explanation;
- delays;
- excessive attention given to details;
- continual updating of records;
- unclear objectives;
- lack of tools to implement a project;
- bureaucracy;
- strong functional limits;
- unclear responsibilities;
- lack of information;
- too many revisions to the project;
- seeking data and information;
- changing priorities;
- necessary crises;
- the executive being indifferent;
- excessive zeal,
- lack of support for an idea;
- adapting resources;
- political and power games;
- creating the crisis.<sup>2</sup>

If the manager is responsible for the plans to be implemented, the executor is the person who is told what to do, without too much scope for making decisions. In some ways, this is more convenient; on the other hand, the performer is often forced into those traps which the manager usually avoids, such as:

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<sup>1</sup> Ceașu, *Dicționar enciclopedic...*, 93.

<sup>2</sup> Trevor Young, *Cum să devii un bun manager de proiect* (Successful Project Management) (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2002), 121.

- Performing tasks one does not like, executing them therefore unenthusiastically and in poor quality, the main motivation being to avoid unwanted consequences, and not to perform quality work.
- The impossibility to avoid unnecessary work or to double efforts, because orders from above.

A performer, in order to be effective both in carrying out tasks and in managing the time intended for this work, must realize the following things:

- to understand why that particular work must be undertaken;
- to be aware of the amount of time necessary for the work, and also of the deadline for completion.

Usually it is a motivating factor for the performer that the manager shows interest in the outcome; eventually s/he is involved partially in its realization.

We must add that the factors listed above by the mentioned authors may indeed represent “time killers” if they effectively disrupt the smooth operation of certain productive processes. However, there is often another side of the coin, and in these cases, the “time-killer” is a way to relax, to renew one’s forces and work capacity, and even though, mathematically speaking, it reduces the productive work time, it will make the work of the individual in question more efficient and concrete results will improve.

### **Working time management in contemporary organizations**

Now we are going to discuss, based on processes and phenomena well known in present day society, three different ways in which organizations manage working time. These result from the profile and activity of the organization and the realities of organizational culture as well as its priorities. We identified, in general, three different types:

**1. The organization with strictly fixed working hours.** In the case of such an organization usually there are simple rules whose observance is mandatory. In this case working time has a beginning and an end which does not change over a predictable period and it is mandatory for everyone in the organization to respect the limits, be the organization a small store with 2–3 employees or a factory with several thousand people. Great emphasis is placed on control, delays or interruptions of the work process for personal reasons are undesirable and often punished. Often, within the regular working time the amount of the unproductive time exceeds the volume of the productive time, production or performing some work activities, in accordance with job requirements, not being not as important as to ensure the capacity of an immediate response of the human resources if needed. It is especially characteristic to those units and institutions which carry out public relations and deal with customers – public institutions, shops. In this case the employee is obliged to be available for the clients and customers during the entire time prescribed by the regulation, even if most of the period the latter do not require this. This model is also encountered with those organizations where important goods or even lives can depend on the employees’ discipline: railway transportation, army, police, fire department, etc. In most of these cases salaries are paid on the basis of performance because the volume and level of the human resource’s activity depends mostly on the unpredictability of external factors, and employees often do not do what they like, but what they have to, what is requested of them. This model is applied in most industrial production units; it must be mentioned, however, that in these cases there is an indicator of production, the employees having the obligation to produce a given quantity of goods during their regular working hours, and if they do not do so,

they either remain over the program or the equivalent of the unaccomplished work is deducted from their salary.

**2. The organization focused on results and achievements.** These organizations live in the current of market dynamics, of competition and the desire of self-fulfilment. Working time is important in this case too, but often timesheets and attendance books are purely formal. Duration of compulsory presence at workplace is reduced as much as possible, being required only when it is actually necessary – hearings, using the infrastructure, etc. – instead the conscience and ambition of the members is reckoned with. Payment can be performance or time based in the former case salary is in strict compliance with the employee's actual achievements. In these cases, the organization may often impose a minimum standard of achievement for the employees (e.g. two scientific articles per year in a research institute, a minimum number of contracts per month for an insurance broker, etc.). It applies to educational institutions, especially in the case of higher education, and to those economic sectors which require those working in the field to have rather more flexibility and ambition for self-fulfilment than a modelled behaviour conformed to general rules (journalist, administrator in charge of raw material supply, driver, insurance broker, travelling salesman, sales agent, negotiator, etc.). We must mention, however, that this model does not apply to all the employees of such an organization, the administrative and auxiliary staff having the same obligations as in the case of the first type of organizational culture and, at least formally, some legal provisions have to be respected (preparation of time sheets, periodic evaluations, etc.). Even in the case of those who benefit from this more flexible attitude, there is a tendency to standardize and control the activity to a certain degree, even if there is no loss in terms of results.

**3. Managerial hybrid approach,** which could have as a motto *Quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi*. In these organizations, in most cases, there are strict rules of the first type, but there is a tendency to adopt values belonging to type II organizational culture. This model can or cannot be successful depending on the person and the position in question. Usually, these organizations have a strict hierarchy; their distance from the power position being significant, the working community having no legal power or moral responsibility to hold a person in a leading position responsible for misconduct. Within these organizations with written and rigid rules and regulations, these are strictly enforced only on the lower levels, bosses being usually above the rules. And this thing does not manifest only in terms of time management, but at all other levels related to the work of that unit. For example, it is regarded as absolutely normal for employees to print an academic course for the son of the President or Director, the same is allowed to the secretary "within moderate limits" and if the doorkeeper is caught in the same activity, his salary is cut and he is lectured on institutional morality.

This latter type of organizational culture is common in all official activity domains, though this fact is being denied. It is more common in those societies where class and hierarchic differences are large and often even institutionalized. This type of management is generally undesired, but it does not necessarily lead to bankruptcy. It rather depends on the qualities of top management. If management is competent, if it ensures good wages and a certain status to the employees, they may overlook the internal deficiencies of the organization.

**4. The organization in which atypical work is practiced, and its appropriate management style.** This type of organization is a recent creation, and offers great

dynamism, but also a changing process, usually providing very few guarantees. In recent years, such organizations were analyzed by more specialized studies.<sup>1</sup> These organizations as a rule have shorter working time than eight hours a day, often discussing the working time with the employees, their personal priorities being taken in consideration. The majority of the contracts end on a well-defined term, and it is in the employer's power to extend the contract or not after the term expires. In many cases, for example that of web designers, continuous presence in one's work place is not required, results being more important than the formalities. However, in those cases when certain formalities are required, these must be complied with stringently.

This type of organization is the creation of market economy. It is in a continuous change, but while the processes of production and sales are conducted with safety and profitably, the immediate future is uncertain and oscillating due to various factors. The advantages of this system are that it provides a wide range of possibilities. Among its disadvantages I must mention that it offers far fewer social guarantees. The role of managerial planning is more important than in the case of any other traditional type of organization. The manager must have situational thinking, having to optimize the use of the available resources.

Obviously, this short study cannot discuss comprehensively the problems that can arise within organizations. It is unable to do so not only because of its limits, but also because at the present moment there is no universal, widely applied method. Nevertheless, being familiar with extant ones can only be helpful. Because today both possibilities and obligations have reached a variety so far unprecedented in human history, and life span has increased significantly, but to a much lesser extent – at least in terms of human subjective perception – than and personal opportunities and obligations, there is an increasing interest in individual time management. For this reason, a series of publications of different quality have appeared on the market of management books, containing many new ideas and approaches, unknown to the present moment; most of these approach the problem from the point of view of human resources, rather than of organization. We consider at the same time that this line of inquiry will become in the near future one of the most important branches not only of management, but also of other social sciences, making possible both theoretical developments and the elaboration of smaller case studies on concrete, well defined statistical populations. These may bring results which can be put to practice and may improve these practices in everyday life.

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<sup>1</sup> For example: Ildikó Ékes, “Az atipikus munka és jövője...”, or Mária Frey, “A munkaidőrendszerek rugalmassá válása”

