



Urgency vs Importance - How Do You Prioritise?

When I ask people how important is it to prioritise our work most will say -

“Very Important”

Yet when I ask how do they prioritise most will say that it is based on **urgency**, who is yelling the loudest, who is applying the most pressure or which deadline is looming the largest. When we prioritise like this the work is telling us what to do and we are responding to the demands of others and their priorities and deadlines.

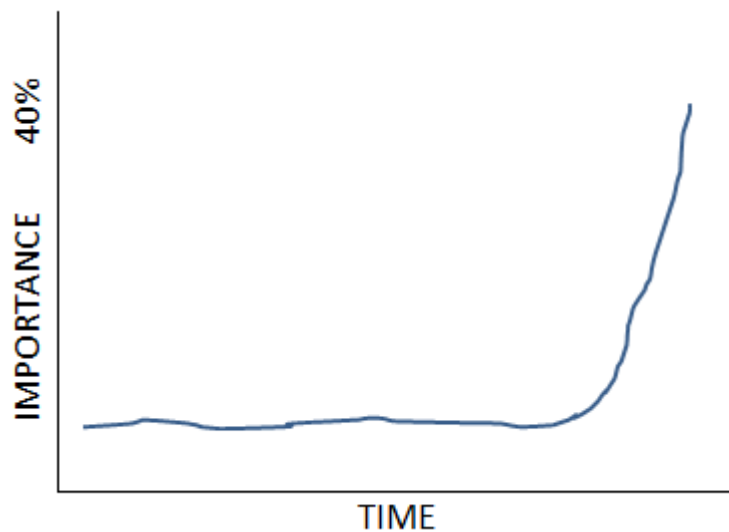
How did we learn to prioritise

Most of us learnt to prioritise at a young age back at school. Think back to when you were at school (this may take a little effort for some of us) and the History/English teacher set you an assignment on the first day that is due at end of term and is worth 40% of your marks, remember those?

When did you work on it?

I bet for most of us it would be in the last week, days or (in my case) hours before it was due. We knew it was important as it stood for 40% of our marks but we prioritised it as unimportant as we had **“plenty of time”** on

our hands to do it. If we look at the diagram below we can see that we prioritise like this. **Importance** rises as **Time** passes.

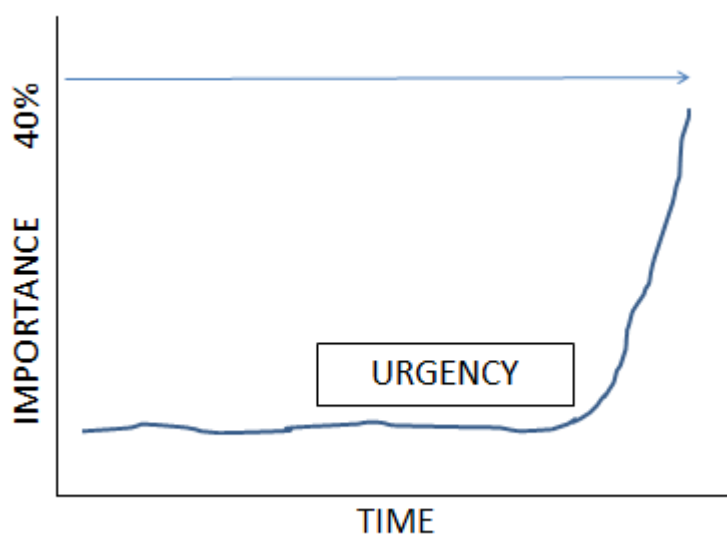


Importance/Time

Does that look like how you prioritised? As time passes so the priority increases until we reach the “**have to do it**” stage.

But is this true?

When the teacher set the assignment at the start of term the assignment was worth 40% of our marks and that didn't change all the way through the term, so in fact the **Importance** was always going to be associated with 40% of our marks. What the next diagram shows is that it isn't importance but **URGENCY** we have graphed.



Importance/Urgency/Time

As can be seen the **Importance** doesn't change but the **Urgency** increases as we run out of **Time**.

So how does this apply to our work?

Of course this also applies to how we manage our workload we leave the work that has time on its side till the priority is driven by deadline urgency. So one of the first steps in prioritising is to move from an urgency agenda to a importance agenda and then to work within the time available to us. If we have a clear understanding of how important this work is, and when it is due, we can assign time to it so as we can chip away at it over the time period to the deadline.

Call to action

Take back control and prioritise what is important to you. If we place our work in one main location, the Calendar say, and use this to assess the priority of all the work on our schedule we can adjust our focus to what is **Important** thus becoming more proactive in our decisions. Having this power to assess priorities now puts us in control, we are the decision makers not our work.

Because we are now setting out what has to be done and when we are going to do it we can also see the impact of new or changing priorities. When a deadline changes we can quickly assess, what will that mean for me? how will it impact on what I have planned to do? If new demands are made on us we can see, how will we fit this in? What will it mean for my other work? It also gives us a platform to discuss with others, if needed, if we have clashing priorities. What has to give way? What has the higher priority judged against other work?

Take back control and prioritise from what is important to you

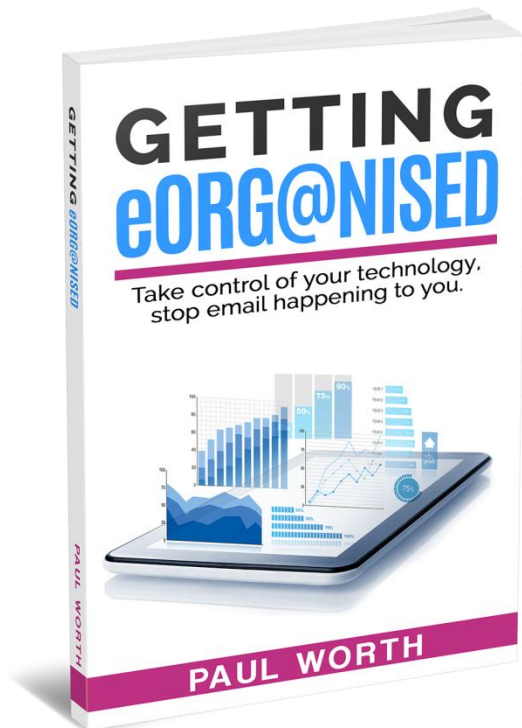
Once we know what the priority of our workload is we can then take control of planning out how we will achieve it.

Love to hear your thoughts.

Till next time. Cheers, Paul

PAUL WORTH is a productivity expert with over 20 years of experience in email management, through his productivity program “eOrganising”, he

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