

Manage Tasks, Not Time

Learn to Prioritize

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Whether you're designing an all new course or revising and preparing an existing course for a new semester, it's a lot of work. And work equals time, right? Yes, but that we're not all necessarily organizing our to-do lists in the most useful way. Instead of allowing the clock to dictate how much work you can get done in an hour, consider prioritizing your work according to how the course needs to be built or revised.

When sitting down to a long list of tasks, business psychologist Tony Crabbe suggests that working according to the task and not the time we have allotted to complete the task is more successful.¹ Part of that success is due to the fact that our attention is more focused on completing the task, not on the dictates of time. Knowing what your course needs and when it needs it can help prioritize that list of tasks, and help you focus on completing tasks as necessary.

For example, one critical element of all coursework is establishing the contemporary context--why does the coursework matter? What do people do with this stuff? The answer to those questions evolves as disciplines evolve, and creating a forum for sharing up-to-date information with your students as the semester progresses can be helpful. In a face-to-face course, sharing this type of information is a fairly intuitive part of standing in front of your students and talking to them. In an online environment, however, it may feel less natural to address your students conversationally, or to include information in your course that isn't directly related to assessment. Instead of front-loading all of the content into an online course, then, it is helpful to create a reminder for yourself to, say, make an announcement every Monday to your class that includes updates in the professional work, a "link roundup" of the best course-related information you find on online.

That's a fairly detailed example of just one of the ways to prioritize your task list: "I will create one weekly post devoted to non-mandatory but discipline-relevant information to share with my students." This example is also task management on a larger, long-term scale.



Faced with three months to develop a course from scratch will create a different type of task list. The UAF eLearning Course Design Process infographic² is a helpful at-a-glance way to keep in mind what elements of a course need to be addressed, and part of the instructor's job is to prioritize the development of those elements. It's important to determine the course readings, for example, before getting lost down the rabbit holes of possibility related to creating assignments.

Crabbe's argument, ultimately, is that when we're watching the clock, work begets more work. But when we prioritize our work according to tasks, then we naturally use our time more wisely.

¹ <http://qz.com/447193/time-management-is-only-making-our-busy-lives-worse/>

² <https://iteachu.uaf.edu/online-training/develop-courses/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://lifehacker.com/focus-on-task-management-rather-than-time-management-1719924368>

<http://www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/why-time-management-totally-backfires.html>