

Be Productive – Important vs. Urgent

Eisenhower/Covey Matrix

Assess your own list of tasks or workload and decide which tasks fall into which of the 4 quadrants.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Q1 Do First	Q2 Schedule
Not Important	Q3 Delegate	Q4 Minimise/Don't Do

Eisenhower/Covey Matrix

The Eisenhower Matrix was developed by the 34th US president Dwight Eisenhower to help him prioritise the vast amount of work he had to complete.

The idea of using the matrix to determine the priority of a task in the workplace was introduced by American keynote speaker Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey's system makes use of four different quadrants that allow you to *prioritise* tasks in relation to their importance and urgency, helping you to decide whether you need to address a task immediately or if you can postpone it.

The matrix is separated into four quadrants that are organised by Importance and Urgency.

Quadrant 1 – Urgent and Important

The first quadrant should only contain those activities and responsibilities that require your immediate attention. The space is reserved for emergencies and extremely important deadlines.

Quadrant 2 – Not Urgent but Important

The items found in quadrant 2 do not have a high urgency, but can play an important role in the future. This quadrant is not only reserved for strategic planning, but also to items related to health, education, exercise and career. Make sure that you have scheduled enough time for quadrant 2 activities, in order to avoid them becoming quadrant 1 items.

Quadrant 3 – Urgent but Not Important

The third quadrant summarises items that appear to have a high urgency, but are not at all important. Some of these activities might be entirely ego-driven, without contributing any value. In fact, these activities are obstacles that stand in-between you and your goals. If possible, try to delegate these items or consider rescheduling them.

Quadrant 4 – Not Urgent and Not Important

The fourth and last quadrant contains all those activities that do not contribute any value at all—the obvious time wasters. All the activities contained here are nothing more than distractions; avoid them as much as you can, no matter how entertaining.

How to apply the Matrix?

The objective of using the matrix is to question whether a certain activity allows you complete your priority work or not. The matrix can be applied as a tool that allows you to reprioritise the importance and urgency of your current and upcoming tasks. By sorting the tasks and responsibilities into the appropriate grid you will be able to quickly make decisions about that should get your immediate attention or not.