perfony

# MANAGE YOUR PRIORITIES LIKE A SUPERHERO

# Edito

**It is legitimate for anyone who wants to manage their time well to know how to prioritise at work. This will often be the hallmark of organised team members who work smoothly, because they know how to categorise and prioritise their actions rather than just piling them up in an endless 'To Do List'.**

**The time wasted due to this lack of prioritisation is a real plague in our organisations. However, there are tools, methods and tips to help you and your staff manage your priorities better. To find the right priority management solution, you must first be willing to accept change. The solutions are often easy to implement and help to increase efficiency.**

**The purpose of this ebook is to help you make the right choices by asking the right questions about successful priority management right away.**



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Improving priority management and productivity has become essential for companies. Using tools, methods and advice is a simple way to achieve better priority management at work and increased efficiency. Discover the solutions that will help you better manage your priorities.

Lionel Pasco - CEO of Perfony



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# WHAT METHODS TO BETTER MANAGE PRIORITIES AT WORK?

In order to have a good management of priorities and not to make mistakes in the order of the actions to be treated, here are some more or less known methods, which will help you in your daily organisation. It is then up to you to choose the one that suits you best, or even to create your own priority management methodology.

## RANKING BY RATING

For this method, as for all the others we will see, the starting point is to create a list of tasks or actions to be carried out.
Each task or action is given a score, between
1 to 5 or 1 to 10, depending on the organisation and the person, taking care to explain to the teams whether "1" means the highest or lowest priority. This is a simple convention, so it is essential that it is shared by everyone.
The actions are then sorted according to their rating to see which ones should be dealt with first.
Note: it is of course possible to set a high limit and thus give priorities of 100 or 1000, but at this point it quickly becomes impossible to find one's way around as it will quickly become a permanent bidding war.

## THE A-B-C-D METHOD

This method is very simple and requires you to first list the actions and tasks to be carried out.
Then, for each of them, we question ourselves and give it a letter grade: "A", "B", "C" or "D".

- **Class "A"**: the most important tasks and actions for which there is also a certain degree of urgency.
- **Class "B"**: important or slightly less important tasks and actions or important but not urgent actions.
- **Class "C"**: tasks and actions that are not urgent or blocking, but which will be essential for the completion of the project.
- **Class "D"**: tasks and actions that are not indispensable, those with little added value. It may be necessary to question the relevance of maintaining them.

It is then possible to re-sort each category by assigning a due date for each action, which will allow you to sort them simply to know at a glance the next task to be completed, while being certain not to make a mistake.

## THE NERAC METHOD

This method is particularly interesting because it also allows you to improve your time management, since it takes into account the time needed to complete an action or task.
It takes the form of a table with 5 columns:

- **N - Note**: fill in the names of all the actions in this column, line by line, as in a usual "To Do List". Note all tasks and actions without distinction.
- **E - Estimate**: for each task, you should then estimate the time needed to complete it.
- **R - Reserve**: plan a realistic time slot for the task. This is one of the key points of this method: be able to anticipate that beyond the time needed to complete the task in the strict sense, you must foresee that you may be interrupted.
- **A - Arbitrate**: now order the actions according to their degree of priority. You can simply give them a score from 1 to 10 according to their priority, or you can also use one of the other methods seen in this article.
- **C - Check**: validate the completion of the listed actions. Make sure they are in order, on time, etc. Once it is validated, you can remove it from your table.

## THE MOSCOW METHOD

The MoSCoW method is not very different from the previous ones, as we will not be concerned with the urgency of the actions but only with their importance. The capital letters in this acronym are the initials of the 4 categories to classify the tasks.
- **M for Must have**, which groups together actions that are essential to the project,
- **S for Should have**, which stands for important but not essential actions,
- **C for Could have**, which are actions that can help the project but are not blocking it,
- **W for Won't have**, which are actions that are not essential to the project.

This method therefore assesses the priorities in relation to the impact of each action on the project.
It is important to check and update your prioritised action plan regularly as actions evolve.

## PARETO'S LAW OR 80-20 LAW

This is the application of the Pareto principle to work organisation.
According to the extrapolation of the Italian economist's observations, 80% of the results are the fruit of only 20% of your actions, which implies that you can sometimes spend 80% of your time generating only 20% of the results...
To use this law to better manage your priorities, you must start, as is often the case, by making a list of all the actions to be taken and, according to their number, determine which 20% of actions will produce the most results. These are the actions that need to be addressed first.
When these are completed, the list should be updated with new tasks and actions and the question asked again as to which ones will produce the most results.

## THE COMPARABLES METHOD

The final suggestion for learning to prioritise your actions is the comparables method, an empirical solution that works very simply.
As in each of the previous situations, it starts with a list of your actions, the simplest possible one.
Action by action, we will compare the second action on the list and ask ourselves if it has priority over the first. If it does, it is placed on top. If not, it remains below.
We then look at the third action and ask ourselves if it is more important than the first action.

# The Eisenhower matrix

## THE HISTORY OF THE EISENHOWER MATRIX

Dwight D. Eisenhower was a General in the United States Army, who became the 34th President of the United States of America. For the subject at hand, namely priority and time management, he is best known for the following quote: "What is important is rarely urgent and what is urgent is rarely important".
For the sake of truth, it should be noted that this quote is not from Eisenhower himself, but from J. Roscoe Miller, whom the General quoted during one of his own speeches.
This sentence and the observation it made led him to set out his priority management method based on the two characteristics of urgency and importance, in the form of a two-entry matrix, now known as the Eisenhower Matrix, which is an indispensable tool when one is confronted every day with a large number of tasks to be done and decisions to be taken, with responsibilities as important as those of a General or a President.

Before being elected President of the United States of America, Eisenhower had a long career in the military, where the effectiveness of his priorities in conflict could mean life or death for him or the troops he led.
Dwight D. Eisenhower fought in many battles but is remembered for his major role in World War II.
Eisenhower's high responsibilities and successes prove that we can trust his method of priority management; the Eisenhower Matrix.

In order to properly understand the definition of the Eisenhower Matrix, we must first understand what is meant by 'urgent' and 'important'.
- **An urgent task** needs to be done immediately. A delay in its completion is likely to cause problems for the whole project in which it is involved.
- **An important task** will help to achieve its objectives and gain value. Failure to do so makes it impossible to achieve the objective.

The Eisenhower matrix is very well known in the professional world because it places priority management in a temporal dimension.
It is therefore a tool that helps to determine which actions should be carried out first.
The matrix is presented in the form of four quadrants which are
- **Important and Urgent**: actions to be taken immediately
- **Important and not Urgent**: actions that need to be planned
- **Urgent and not Important**: actions to be delegated
- **Not Important and not Urgent**: actions to be eliminated

This matrix is visually represented by two axes, a horizontal one that will indicate the urgency of the tasks and a vertical one that will indicate the importance of the tasks, all this embellished with four quadrants.

# COMMENT UTILISER LA MATRICE D'EISENHOWER?

The Eisenhower matrix was designed to help us answer the following question:
***How can I manage my time effectively by determining my priorities correctly?***
To know how to manage your time and priorities and thus be more efficient, thanks to the Eisenhower matrix, you first need a short explanation of each part (or quadrant) of the matrix: Do - Plan - Delegate - Delete.

**Do** (important and urgent): The tasks that will be present in this quadrant are the most important tasks that must be done quickly. These are the tasks that are crucial to the project and that allow the objectives that have been set to be achieved.
Once a task is assigned to this quadrant, it should be done by the next day at the latest.

**Plan** (important, but not urgent): Tasks in this quadrant are those that enable the project to move forward but there is no deadline for doing them. They are important, but not urgent. A very large number of tasks fall into this quadrant, such as emails, developing an action plan, training, etc.
If an action falls into this quadrant, it must therefore be planned in time so that its completion does not encroach on more urgent tasks. The planning of tasks in this quadrant should be done over the following weeks.

**Delegate** (urgent, but not important): In this quadrant we will find tasks that are urgent, so with a short time limit, but not very important. Thus, since they need to be done quickly, but the stakes are low, they should be delegated to other trusted people who will have the bandwidth to handle them quickly.

**Delete** (neither urgent nor important): In this last quadrant you put tasks that have little interest in being done for either you or your colleagues. These tasks do not directly help to meet your objectives and have little impact on the project. It is therefore advisable to eliminate them as far as possible in order to avoid wasting time.

The Eisenhower matrix allows you to express your action plan graphically and offers a simple but highly effective visualisation that helps you to manage your time and priorities at work.
By using it you will be able to focus on the tasks that have the most impact on your project and your objectives.

Like all methods, the Eisenhower matrix has its limitations because it is a simplified representation of your complex reality.
Its first limitation is the need to understand the difference between urgency and importance.
It is also a demanding method, as it requires you to take the time to analyse your actions and to come back to them regularly.
Finally, you have to be careful about the number of tasks you put in each quadrant, as it is not realistic to assign all your actions to the first quadrant.

# What advice do you have for managing your priorities better?

Here we present 9 ideas for managing time and priorities. It is then up to you to bring this new dynamic to life, to continue to integrate good practices and to add solutions to your toolbox of the good manager.

**Respect the 2-minute rule**: "Any task or action that takes less than 2 minutes must be carried out immediately.
Because planning such a short action is likely to take you almost as long as doing it, and not planning it is taking the risk of forgetting it. So you have to do it right away.

**List your actions**: Choose the medium you want: on paper, on your smartphone, in an Excel sheet or dedicated software... do as you like, but write down your actions!
Without a list, it is impossible to know what to prioritise. So as soon as you have this list, you can then prioritise your tasks according to their degree of priority.
Don't forget to update the list as often as possible so that you don't get lost in your work.

**Eat the frog**: It's a funny idea to eat a frog! But it's a great habit for efficient time management and can be explained as follows: in all the actions you have to do, there are always one or two that take longer and/or are more painful than the others. "Eating the frog" means starting your work by doing these actions first.
By dealing with them as soon as possible, you will be rid of them. This is a powerful weapon against procrastination.

**Learn to say "no"**: Because we are human and not machines, because our days are only 24 hours long, it is impossible for us to do everything. However, for fear of disappointing, for fear of appearing incapable or even for the desire to do the right thing, we too often accept actions that will be extremely difficult to carry out.
In short, be strong, learn to say "NO". Even a robot that can make 100 movements per hour will refuse a charge of 101 movements.  Be careful, however, because saying "no" must be done with restraint.

**Doing one task at a time**: Contrary to what you might think, multitasking is not a quality at work. The only real consequence will be a decrease in the quality of your actions.
Stay focused on one thing at a time, finish it, then move on to the next action.
Once you focus on one action, you will get it done faster and it will be of better quality.

# What advice do you have for managing your priorities better?

**Provide for focus time**: When you are constantly interrupted, it is impossible to move forward properly. To carry out a task, you need to dedicate yourself fully to it, as we have just seen.
Set aside some "focus time" in your diary, moments dedicated solely to you and your work. This "focus time" will be your most productive time of the day, depending on your individual chronobiology.

**Eliminate distractions and remove alerts**: Even outside of Focus Time, or because such a time slot is not possible, it is imperative to eliminate anything that can interfere with concentration.
This starts, of course, with the big time wasters of all categories: social networks! Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, but also LinkedIn and others, are the worst enemies of your efficiency.
We also recommend that you turn off your email alerts or other more or less instant messaging systems.

**Plan breathing moments in the day**: Because we are not machines we cannot stay focused for three or four hours on the same action with the same level of acuity. This is why it is important to take breaks.

**Organise your day:** The day should start by updating your action list: deleting completed actions and those that have become obsolete, and adding new actions. Then update the priorities of each action. You can use the Eisenhower matrix for this.
Then the agenda is set. Depending on the actions to be done and the meetings planned, block out your "Focus Time" on the one hand and plan your breaks on the other.
Now that you are clear about your day, you can tackle the first action... starting with the "frogs"!

# An effective tool for better priority management

If you want to manage your priorities and your time well, it can be very useful to have a simple and practical tool. Here are the 12 features that you will need and that you must absolutely find in the software you choose.

**Determining what is urgent and what is important:** In line with the Eisenhower matrix, it is important for such a tool to be able to determine which actions are important (to meet long-term objectives) and which are urgent (which need to be done immediately to meet short-term objectives). This will help in several other functions such as prioritising actions.

**Create to-do lists and order them:** The first step in any priority management strategy is to create a list of what you have to do.
It is therefore necessary that your tool allows you to simply create these action lists without going through complex menus and headings.

**Prioritise also in time:**
The "Time" factor is essential in effective priority management because it corresponds to the degree of urgency of an action.
By choosing a tool that allows you to enter a deadline for each action, you can easily identify the actions that need to be carried out immediately.

**Distinguish between to-do's and delegated tasks:** If Eisenhower's advice on good priority management is applied correctly, urgent but unimportant actions should be delegated. But this does not mean that you should lose sight of them.
A good tool will allow you to do this delegation while keeping an eye on them.

**Visualise action plans and be able to sort them:** The objective of a good priority management tool is to enable you to "see what you have to do". You should therefore avoid solutions that do not allow you to display all your action plans.

**Delegate actions:** When you have a tool that is supposed to help you manage your priorities better, it is essential to have a feature that allows you to delegate.

# An effective tool for better priority management

**Redrawing the actions that are too large:** Another difficulty that must be anticipated is the difference in the granularity of the actions, because not all actions have the same time volume. Some actions will take a few minutes, others several hours or days. It is important to be able to break down a large action into a number of smaller actions, which may be tasks or sub-actions depending on the software publisher.

**Identify delays:** A delay in implementation is a symptom. For your organisation to function properly, it is therefore necessary to be able to easily identify delays and to provide an agile solution to bridge the gap.

**Easily handle action plans:** For good time management, it is therefore essential that your action plan is not a fixed list, but that your software allows you to filter and search and then display the results according to your personal criteria.

**Finding hidden, dormant or very old actions:** Just as important as the previous functionality, the search for "hidden", "missing", "dormant" or very old actions must be fast and efficient. A good tool will allow you to bring them up quickly so that no action is lost from sight.

**Access my action plan at any time:** We therefore advise you to choose a tool that is accessible on your computer as well as on your smartphone, ideally as an app. Some are also embedded in Microsoft Office or Google Suite environments and are integrated into task management systems to save you time.

**Analyse action plan data:** Look for solutions that offer reports. With the same objective of visual management, we recommend that you choose a solution that will offer you tools for analysing your activity and ideally create your own reports in the form of graphs.

**One last thing...** Take a look at the publisher's website and see if there is any documentation on the use of the tool or offers of support, training etc. This doesn't mean that you have to subscribe to it, but it is a proof that there is a team behind it that will help you in case of problems.

# "Getting Things Done" or "Pomodoro": Which methods to choose ?

## « Getting Things Done » :

The "Getting Things Done" method is a solution for better managing priorities, developed by the American David Allen. It includes 5 successive phases:
Collect >> Process >> Organise >> Review >> Act.

**Collecting:** The first step is to find all the actions you have to do and make a list of them without prioritising them. The most important thing in this step is not to limit yourself to certain types of actions! You must put everything that comes to mind in order to mentally unload the weight that they occupy.

**Process:** In the second stage you will "process" this list of actions. That is to say, for each action you will ask yourself:
1. 1. whether it must be carried out in order to achieve an objective
    - Yes, so you continue your treatment
    - No, then you can discard the action.
2. If it is a priority.
    - If an action is not necessary or has no priority, you can cross it out, delete it or archive it.
    - However, if it is a priority you will ask yourself if it can be done in less than 2 minutes or not.
        - Can it be done? Then you should do it right away
        - No? You continue with the method.

**Organise**: In this third step you will organise the remaining actions after the treatment. For each remaining action on your list, you will now judge their urgency and importance, a bit like the Eisenhower matrix. This step consists of dividing the actions into three parts:
- important and urgent actions that should be planned for the next few days
- important but not urgent actions that you can plan for later
- urgent but not important actions that you will be able to delegate.

**Review:** The fourth step is essential for the method to work effectively. Specifically, you need to take a moment to check the progress of the actions. Determine whether they are still in progress or completed and of course you will add the new actions. For this step, it is necessary to check in regularly, i.e. at least once a week, both at the beginning and at the end of the week.

**Act**: Finally, for the fifth and last step of the GTD method, you have the most important thing left: to carry out the actions you have brilliantly planned. As with any change, and especially in personal development, you need to work on adapting your usual way of working so that GTD has an impact on your work.

# "Getting Things Done" or "Pomodoro": Which methods to choose ?

## « Pomodoro » :

"Pomodoro" is a well-known time management technique developed by Francesco Cirillo.
The aim of this method is to create periods of concentration on a single action for a predefined time and to eliminate all distractions.
The "Pomodoro" method is very simple to implement. Here are the 5 points to know to use it.

**First,** plan your day so that you know what you want to do during it. Then plan each task in 25 minute sessions. Have a realistic view of your capacity and do not overload yourself.

**Secondly**, remove all possible sources of distractions in order to prepare your time as well as possible. This is important because the slightest distraction can cause you to lose track of your action and therefore risk exceeding the 25 minutes allotted.

**Thirdly**, start your 25-minute timer and get on with your work. Above all, don't stop until you hear your timer go off, because when it does, all you have to do is mark the action as completed.

**Fourthly**, after this moment of work, allow yourself a short break (about 5 minutes) to free your mind. This break should not be a time to check your emails, go on social networks or on the Internet, because otherwise you may not see the time pass. Once the break is over, start a new work session and restart the timer for 25 minutes.

**Fifth**, after 4 sessions, take a longer break (about 25 minutes) to rest. For example, you can go for a walk, the most important thing is to take your mind off what you have done or are doing.

**Tips**: For all administrative actions such as e-mails, calls, etc., give yourself a specific working period to deal with them.

# "Getting Things Done" or "Pomodoro": Which methods to choose ?




## Two methods, one solution:

The two methods presented above are quite different in the way they work and the levers they use. One will manage actions according to their priorities and control their progress, while the other will rely more on the time spent on an action and mental agility through regular breaks.

There is no one method that works better than the other, your choice must be made according to your way of working. Moreover, there is no obligation to choose between these two methods. They are in fact very complementary. For example, you use the GTD method to sort out the actions you have to do, then you carry out the actions with the Pomodoro method. This solution, if it fits in with your way of working, can save you a lot of time by managing the right actions quickly.

# PERFONY: THE TOOL TO HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR PRIORITIES

## Priority management: why use Perfony?

- Easily create your action plans
- Visualise the progress of your actions and those of your teams
- Analyse your action plan data
- Prioritise, delegate and plan your actions
- Easily manage your action plans
- Gain mobility with MS Teams Mobile and O365 integration
- Simplify your project management with a modern tool

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# Contact

Perfony is a French publisher, born from the meeting of the management consulting and IT worlds, which has set itself the ambitious project of bringing the principles of operational excellence within everyone's reach.

To achieve this, it offers a simple tool that improves the efficiency of teamwork:

- follow-up of action plans,
- traceability of decisions,
- production of meeting minutes,
- compliance with quality requirements...

Perfony is the solution that guides you towards operational excellence.

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