

Plan Better

– Get More Time



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There are many temples and sanctuaries in the old imperial city of Kyoto, Japan. Throughout history, the Japanese have made pilgrimages to Kyoto in order to pray, meditate and find peace and a sense of presence and closeness to the surroundings. Close to one of the temples, there is a beautiful temple garden with 15 large and small natural rocks positioned in such a way that they form a peaceful unity. What is interesting about this is that regardless of where you position yourself in order to admire the rocks, you can never see all 15 rocks at the same time. The philosophy behind the placement of the rocks is that, as a human, you must learn to accept that you cannot do everything at the same time. You must learn to be content with less than the complete picture. Thought-provoking!

In our hectic lives, many of us tend to want to do everything. We try to get all tasks done at work and answer all emails, phone calls and enquiries as quickly as possible. We join important social and collegial events. After work, things may be busy as well: family, friends, work for various clubs or societies, and exercise. To top it off, there may be a house, garden, pets, continuing education and active holidays.

In other words, we try to see all 15 rocks at the same time.



This book is about how to:

- Handle the most important time-wasters, such as procrastination, inexpedient handling of emails, more or less accidental meetings, noise, interruptions, telephone tyranny, and mess.
- Use planning methods, such as SMART goals, PrioBoards, Mind Maps, Gantt charts, the DUE CARE model and electronic calendars.
- Use situational delegation – even with individuals who don't necessarily report directly to you. Which tasks **MUST** you solve? Which can you delegate? Which should you delegate?
- Become your own stress manager.
- Turn apparent chores into star moments.
- Get in touch with your dreams and pursue them.

And last but not least, how to break old habits.

In the following, you can read how IT and digitalisation manager Erik Sørensen of the City of Viborg visualised his tasks and established a perspective on his job, and was thus able to enjoy it again.

Like rings on the water

“I was going from one meeting to another. It was all so interesting and, as the IT and digitalisation manager, I was invited to a whole lot of meetings. The piles grew on my desk and I could tell that I was feeling stressed.”



That is how Erik Sørensen, IT and digitalisation manager with the City of Viborg, with responsibility for 28 staff and an endless number of projects, puts it. When one of Erik's middle managers had attended the planning course “Taking Charge of Time and Resources”, he returned to Viborg with a renewed perspective and many great ideas for planning in the department. That was the beginning of a joint course for all the leaders – and for a joint project that aimed at focusing on better planning in the IT department.

The group was well prepared prior to the course. Amongst other things, they had established what they wanted to get out of the course and agreed on joint follow-up meetings. “On the course, we were given simple tools to establish an overview of our tasks. For example, the Mind Map was a fantastic tool that everyone in the group took to their hearts,” says Erik. “However, the most useful tool for me personally was the prioritisation combined with realistic planning of time consumption. I purposefully set about recording how much time I was spending on various meetings during the week. The very recording of the time spent on preparation, transportation, the meeting itself and the subsequent processing was a useful exercise for me – a real eye-opener. After that, I prioritised ruthlessly and decided which meetings and tasks I could delegate to my middle managers.



Erik took the “PrioBoard” tool to his heart (see page 55). In fact, he developed the idea to include his shelves as well. After thoroughly sorting the piles on his desk, the papers related to various tasks are now placed in one of the sections on the shelves according to the following principle: red tasks have a tight deadline and high priority; yellow tasks are of high importance but have a less tight deadline; green tasks are of less importance and have a less tight deadline. As opposed to the original “PrioBoard”, the last section on the shelves is not reserved for tasks that are waiting to be completely removed; instead, this section is for incoming mail, magazines, etc.

Meetings can no longer be held on Fridays, which are now dedicated to follow-up and, not least, planning of the week ahead. I probably have just as many meetings today as I used to, but the planning has given me an overview and a more satisfactory everyday life.”

Erik is still a busy man with many projects. In his spare time, he coaches girls’ handball, which also requires structure. “For example, I have had great success using Mind Map to plan a whole exercise session based on e.g. foot feints, after which there is a correlation between warm-up, exercises, practice sessions and theory. I bring a single Mind Map page with the whole plan – and, in a way, it helps bring more calm and a more comprehensive overview to the practice.”

Erik still works on keeping his plan in mind: overview, ruthless prioritisation and focus on making the joint planning with the entire management group spread like rings on the water. “We have established pairs who continuously help each other optimise the planning and setting of new goals. This gives really good energy and great results for the department,” says Erik.