

5 Qualities of People Who Use Time Wisely by John C. Maxwell

Want to tame time? Here's how to maximize the precious minutes we get each day.

Time is precious.

Ask the coach whose team is behind in the final seconds of a game. Ask the air traffic controller in charge of scheduling takeoffs and landings at a major airport. Ask the news reporter who has just received a breaking story from the AP wire. Ask the cancer patient who just learned he has only two months left to live.

Time management is an oxymoron. Time is beyond our control, and the clock keeps ticking regardless of how we lead our lives. Priority management is the answer to maximizing the time we have. Our days are identical suitcases—all the same size—but some can pack more into them than others. No one has a magical ability to make time, but if our lives have direction, we can make the most of the moments we have been given.

Time stewardship is perhaps a leader's greatest responsibility. In the words of Peter Drucker, "Nothing else distinguishes effective executives as much as their tender loving care of time."

How do we maximize the precious minutes given to us each day? Learn and emulate the five characteristics of people who use time wisely:

1. They are purposeful.

People who use time wisely spend it on activities that advance their overall purpose in life. By consistently channeling time and energy toward an overarching purpose, people can most fully realize their potential.

We cannot reach peak performance without a peak purpose. Purpose enlivens all that we do. In fact, I believe the two greatest days in a person's life are the day they are born and the day they discover why. Uncovering purpose helps to refine passion, focus efforts and sharpen commitments. The cumulative result is to amplify achievements.

2. They are committed to values.

People who use time correctly underscore their values with the time they spend. By acting in accordance with their beliefs, they find fulfillment. Failure to identify values leads to a rudderless existence in which people drift through life, uncertain as to what they hold dear. Clarity of values is like a beacon of light, guiding the way through life's twists and turns.

When extended to an organization, values inspire a sense of broader purpose. They make work worthwhile. In an organization, if vision is the head and mission is the heart, then values are the

soul. Values endow day-to-day operations and transactions with meaning.

3. They are attuned to their strengths.

People who use time correctly play to their strengths. By doing so, they are most effective. People don't pay for average. If your skill level is a two, don't waste substantial time trying to improve because you'll likely never grow beyond a four. However, if you're a seven in an area, hone that skill, because when you become a nine, you've reached a rare level of expertise.

As Jim Sundberg says, "Discover your uniqueness; then discipline yourself to develop it." You are blessed with a unique set of skills and talents. Find them, refine them and let them carry you toward success.

4. They are choosers of happiness.

People who use time the right way choose happiness by prioritizing relationships and recreation. While choosing happiness may seem simple and obvious, far too many people are trying to prove themselves and validate their worth. These people chase after power and prestige, and along the way their friendships wither, their family is ignored and they skip vacation after vacation. In the end, any success they earn is a hollow and lonely achievement.

Family and friendships are two of the greatest facilitators of happiness. Prioritizing time to cultivate relationships is a hallmark of a healthy leader. Likewise, scheduling leisure combats stress and allows us to delight in the hobbies that bring us joy. In the end, happiness is an inside job. We are wise to surround ourselves with family, friends and fun, but ultimately we determine our internal response to the people and circumstances in our lives.

5. They are equippers.

People who use time properly equip others in order to compound their productivity. They realize the limitations of individual attainment, and they build teams to expand their impact. By developing an inner circle of leaders and investing in them, wise time-users multiply their influence.

Equippers recognize that legacies are carried on by people, not trophies. They pour themselves into the lives of others and watch the ripple effect of their leadership spread through those they have taught and mentored. Equippers seek significance over the long term, which causes them to have a vested interest in the success of their successors.

As much as we would like, we can't find more time—it's a finite and constantly diminishing resource. But we can learn to spend time wisely.