First Things First
Stephen Covey, A. Roger Merrill and Rebecca R. Merrill
Simon & Schuster,Inc – 1994 – ISBN 0-671-86441-6

Committed people struggle to combine their careers, family life and community obligations.
Everyone is looking for more control on his own life, but experiences that even you can control your choice of action, you can't control the consequences of those actions.

There is big difference between what is really important and how we spend our time. Time management has to do with quantity and speed but not necessarily with solving your problems. The authors use the metaphor of clock and compass. The clock determines how we manage our time, the compass determines how we lead our lives.
And it is the gap between clock and compass that creates our problems.

Classical methods of Time management came in three generations :

1. First generation: reminders, notes, checklists.
2. Second generation: plan, prepare, set goals and deadlines.
3. Third generations: planning, prioritizing and controlling.

These generations helped people become more effective.
But their weakness is that they don't deal with relationships, inner peace, balance and confidence that we're doing the right things well.

The authors develop a fourth generation.

☞ Live, love, learn and leave a legacy.

These four words relate to basic needs such as the physical need, the social need, the mental need and the spiritual need. Each affect our time and quality of life.
So ' *Doing more things faster is no substitute for doing the right things'.*
The four needs are not separate parts of your life and it is where these areas overlap that you will find peace, fulfillment and joy. Fulfilling these four needs is important but you also have to align yourself with principles. Principles are independent truths that govern your live. Truths can be found in literature and in your conscience. An example of a common principle is good social relationships that is based on trust, responsibility and unconditional love.

Most people's life are dominated by urgency and importance. The urgent and important things make us produce things bur the not urgent but important things define the quality of our life.

6 steps give you an organizing system for not urgent but important things :

Step 1: **Connect with your mission.**

What do you want to be and do? What gives life meaning for you?

You need a passion of vision. Vision is defined as the ability to see beyond the present and to create what does not exist.

A strong vision fuels passion and helps you transcend fear, doubt, discouragement and barriers preventing you from accomplishing your goals.

Create a personal mission statement. It is more about detecting your mission than inventing it. Your mission statement is unique and should be empowering.
An empowering mission statements :

- Represents the deepest and best in you.
- Fulfills your gifts and expresses your capacity to contribute.
- Integrate the 4 needs.
- Deals with vision and principle-based values.
- Deals with all your roles in life.

Step 2: **Identify your roles.**

We all have different role at work, at home, in the community and elsewhere. The all come with specific responsibilities and different ways of contributing.
Take time to identify your roles.
Your first role is always 'Sharpen the saw': increasing your skills, abilities and capacities in your physical, social, mental and spiritual life.
Pursue balance in your roles, remembering that each role is interrelated and all connected by principles.

Step 3: **Select your goals.**

Ask for each of your roles following question :' What is the most important thing I could do this week to have the greatest constructive impact?'
Set the goal carefully as their achievement make deposits toi what the authors call 'the personal integrity account'. This account reflects how much trust we have in ourselves. Failing means making withdrawals from the account.

The 4 human endowments (self-awareness, conscience, independency and creative imagination) can help you set achievable goals.

Step 4: **Create a weekly framework.**

Now it is time to plan your week. Schedule your priorities instead of prioritizing your schedule.
Fill your jar first with the big rocks, slip the sand and gravel around. Combine activities in ways that are better if you pursue them alone.

Step 5: **Exercise integrity in the moment.**

Take 3 steps daily :

1. Preview the day
2. Prioritize (urgent / not urgent / important / not important)
3. Distinguish time-sensitive items from the others.

You need to be flexible because unexpected things will happen but you have to keep the perspective. So you will have to make though choices. Following 3 techniques will guide you in making the right choice :

- Ask with intent
- Listen without excuse
- Act with courage

Step 6: **Evaluate.**

Ask yourself at the end of the week :

- What goals did I achieve?
- Was this the best use of my time?
- What challenge did I encounter and how did I overcome them?
- What decisions did I make?
- Did I keep 'First things first'?

- Did I create synergies between roles and goals?
- Did I fail to apply any principles?

Organization can do much more if all people worked together constructively. As independence has its role (the strength you need to transcend roles or the expectations of society and stay focused on principles) it also paves the way to interdependence.

Consider :

- Is it more productive to get a job done quickly and efficiently OR to take the time to teach and empower another to do it?
- Is it more productive to supervise and control others OR to help them unleash their creative potential?
- Is it more productive to schedule time efficiently to solve problems OR to take time up front to clarify them?
- Is it more productive to solve problems OR to build solid and deep relationships?

Conclusion: this fourth generation Time Management is much more people oriented focusing on leadership, spontaneity, transformation, principles and synergy. It helps us leverage our capacities and us and other grow.