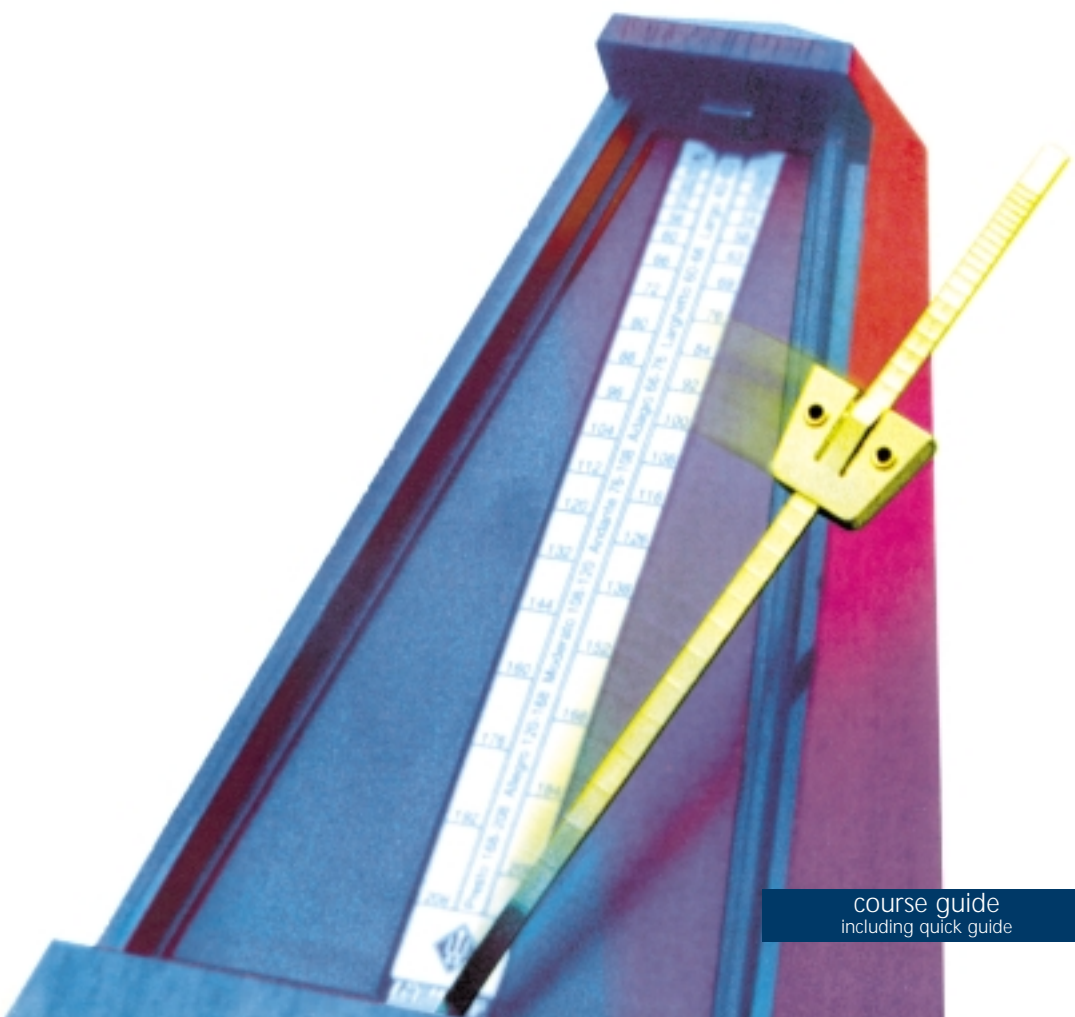




MELROSE

Making time



course guide
including quick guide

Making time

course guide

Written by: Chris Carling

Technical Adviser: Pat Mitchell

Produced by

Melrose Film Productions, 6-7 St Cross Street,
London EC1N 8UA

Tel: 020 7400 4800 Fax: 020 7400 4900



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About the pack

Introduction

In the 1960s there were fewer than a dozen books on time management. Today there are over a hundred, not to mention articles, diaries, planners and other time management systems. This suggests an insatiable appetite for help with managing time.

One reason for this growing need may be that people at work are under increasing amounts of pressure. Another may be that there is no single magic solution to the problem of how to organise yourself and your time. Individuals have different temperaments, different attitudes to time, and operate under different constraints.

Making time recognises not only that different individuals may come from very different starting points but also that people often have very good intentions. Most people do have some kind of a system. They try hard to be organised but often still end up chasing their tails.

By addressing these issues, **Making time** can help people in any organisation see why they continue to have time management problems and how they can tackle them in a lasting and effective way.



Aims

The **Making time** pack has two main aims:

- To help users become more aware of their own attitudes to time and problems with time management
- To provide users with practical help and guidance to make them more effective managers of time

Audience

The pack is aimed at staff at all levels in any type of organisation. It will be particularly helpful to those who:

- Are responsible for organising their own time, particularly if they have no-one to delegate to
- Work in teams – team members with time management problems can affect the performance of the whole team



Contents of the pack

The Melrose training pack, **Making time**, consists of:

▶ Video

An 18 minute drama illustrating the approach to time management of three individuals. One is a good time manager, while the other two, in different ways, have problems in organising themselves and their time. As the story unfolds, these two see why they have time management problems and how they could each make more time.

The learning points are summarised in a separate video sequence (the Summary – 2½ minutes) following the main drama.

Also included is a short Skills file (2½ minutes) dealing with handling interruptions and being assertive. The Skills file contains 'how not to' scenes from the main drama followed by 'how to' versions of the same scenes showing how the characters might have handled the situations more effectively.

▶ Course guide

This is aimed at helping trainers, or anyone intending to run a training programme using **Making time**. It provides detailed notes for running a one hour and a half-day training session including all the necessary handout and OHP masters.



► **Workbook**

A personal workbook containing activities to help self-study users make the most of the video and associated Skills file.



Synopsis of the video

The video tells the story of three characters working in different departments of the same company, each with a very different attitude to organising themselves and their time. All three have to perform essentially the same task in the same length of time – they have each been asked to produce one section of an information pack needed for an important presentation. They approach fitting the task into their busy schedules in very different ways and with differing degrees of success.

Characters

The three main characters are:

Carl who works in the PR department. Carl is creative, an ideas person who enjoys spontaneity and hates routine. As he would be the first to admit, he is disorganised. He spends a lot of time on the sides of his work he enjoys and not enough on the tasks he finds tedious or difficult. These he puts off or tries to offload on to someone else. Carl is good with people and this enables him to get away with things most of the time. In this story, however, his luck runs out as he cuts things just a little too fine.

Tina, a management accountant, is an achiever, always ready to take things on. She thinks she is highly organised with her life revolving around her personal organiser. Though always busy, Tina is bad at prioritising – she cannot easily distinguish between what is urgent and what is important. Whereas in principle she should be the one who meets the deadline easily, in practice, things turn out somewhat differently.



Bruce is in the Marketing Department reporting to Julia, the Marketing Director. Like Tina, he used to work long hours and hardly saw his family. But an ultimatum from home forced him to review his priorities. He has since learnt to manage his time, becoming good at planning his days and prioritising his tasks – this enables him to meet the deadline with time to spare. Having learnt the hard way how to manage his own time, however, Bruce is impatient with those who cannot manage theirs.

Outline of the story

Background

Bruce's boss, Julia, has been talking to a new distributor who could help turn round the company's fortunes in one of their regions. Top level representatives from the distributor are coming in for a meeting and Julia wants to impress them. As part of her presentation she wants to give them a specially prepared and designed information pack. She has a meeting with Bruce together with Carl from PR and Tina from Accounts at which each agree to provide a different section of the pack. This meeting takes place on Monday. The deadline for the contributions is the following Wednesday at 4pm – ten days ahead. Bruce is responsible for coordinating the contributions and getting them to the designers who have agreed to turn the job around quickly.

Action

The action takes place on Thursday morning, the day after the deadline. Bruce is angry. He met the deadline but Carl



left his contribution – a company profile – until the very last minute. Because it was so rushed, Bruce had to spend two hours on it himself before it could go to the designers. Tina met the deadline but her figures were incomplete. She had a final section to finish which, when she does send it over to the designers, turns out to be two pages longer than they had allowed for. It looks as though the information pack will not be ready for Julia's meeting.

As the three of them wait anxiously in Bruce's office for word from the design studio, Bruce demands to know what went wrong. If he could meet the deadline with all he had on, why couldn't they? Through a series of flashbacks we see Carl and Tina's efforts to meet the deadline – and the different obstacles that got in the way. Gradually they begin to see ways in which they could have handled things differently.

Carl only plans for a day at a time – when a deadline seems a long way off he tends to put it out of his mind. We see that even when he decided to do the company profile on a particular day, he was easily distracted by interruptions and by other jobs he was more interested in. When he finally put his mind to the profile he came up with some good ideas – but it was too late to include them. His desk was so cluttered he spent part of the very short time left to him before the deadline hunting for the material he needed. The result was a rushed job with Bruce having to pick up the pieces.

Tina is different. She does plan ahead scheduling all her tasks in to her personal organiser. Tina scheduled a slot for this job – but got herself involved in a job for Adam, her boss, that seemed urgent. She then rescheduled but was



interrupted by Adam who got her to do a job for him that he didn't actually need straight away – but she only found that out later. When she finally did get on to the information pack she found that one of the people she needed information from was on holiday. That meant she was late with the final section of her figures – putting the whole project in jeopardy.

Though equally busy, Bruce met the deadline comfortably. He did so by having his priorities clear – this was an important job that had to be done at all costs. Once he'd made his plan for the day he stuck to it – and when it took him longer than he expected to write his part of the pack, he rapidly reorganised, making sure first that he did those things that would otherwise hold up other people.

The main drama ends with news from the studio on whether or not they can get the information pack ready in time. This is followed by a short summary scene as Carl and Tina walk away from Bruce's office. They reflect on what they have learnt from looking back on how they handled this deadline, each taking away the lessons most relevant to them.



Main learning points

The main learning points fall into three categories:

- Planning and prioritising
- Dealing with people
- Ways of working

This is the order in which the learning points are discussed by the characters in the video. The main learning points are:

► **Planning and prioritising**

- Get priorities clear – and keep them in mind
- Plan the day – and stick to the plan
- Set realistic deadlines
- Look ahead to possible problems

► **Dealing with people**

- Deal decisively with interruptions – know how to say ‘no’
- Act assertively
- Limit phone time
- See others as a source of support

► **Ways of working**

- Do the difficult things first
- Cut the clutter
- Complete one task before going on to the next
- Concentrate on a limited number of tasks
- Build in thinking time
- Be conscious of time



Key issues

‘There just aren’t enough hours in the day’

This is how it can feel when you are constantly busy. But, as Bruce points out, whether you keep your head above water depends very much on how you use the time you do have. He is in a strong position – he had as busy a schedule as Carl and Tina yet he managed to meet the deadline, showing it can be done. In practice, the more demands that are made on you, the more vital it is that you control time rather than always rushing to beat the clock.

‘If something’s urgent, you have to do it straight away’

One of Tina’s problems is that she does not consider the difference between what’s urgent and what’s important. Instead she just keeps taking things on, even jobs that aren’t hers. She believes she sets priorities, yet when she has to make a decision between the task on her schedule and another that appears urgent, she does not go back to her priorities to help her decide. Bruce sums it up: ‘Did you ask yourself – is it more important to take on this job of Adam’s before he even asks me, or that I get on with the important job that’s on my schedule?’

‘The deadline seemed a long way off’

Like many people, Carl finds it difficult to plan far ahead. Most people have a daily plan, or at least they make one on the day, perhaps by looking through a miscellaneous ‘To do’ list and deciding what they will tackle. The trouble with this strategy is that jobs with deadlines that



seem comfortably far away are likely to be put off. Even if they are scheduled in, they are prime candidates to be pushed aside if something else comes up. As happens to Carl, the result can then be that the deadline is suddenly upon you and the job that seemed to have plenty of time has to be rushed.

'If a job's for another department, it goes to the bottom of the pile'

Those who work in cross-functional project teams will recognise this problem. People often find it difficult to see a job that falls outside their main area of responsibility as really important. One of the reasons neither Carl nor Tina gave the information pack the priority it warranted was because it was a job for another department. The reality was, however, as Bruce reminded them, the presentation they were contributing to was critical for the future of the company.

'I should be able to shuffle things around'

Carl set aside Monday afternoon to do the company profile in time for the Wednesday deadline. But when a more interesting prospect arose – a meeting with an advertising agency to brainstorm ideas for a new campaign – he was only too ready to 'shuffle things around'. Nothing wrong with that except that he had very little room for manoeuvre – he was going to be out all day Tuesday. Since he had no real idea how long the job was going to take, he couldn't really know whether leaving it to Wednesday morning was realistic. The lesson Carl learnt was that if you are going to 'shuffle things around', you need to look ahead and plan exactly when you are



going to fit them in – particularly if the task is as important as this one.

‘It wasn’t really my fault’

Tina was held up because Alastair, whose figures she needed, turned out to be on holiday. She protests that this is not her fault. But Bruce points out that if you need information from someone else, particularly someone in a different department, you need to ask well in advance. One way of saving time later is to look ahead to possible problems so they don’t take you by surprise.

‘You can plan till you’re blue in the face but if you keep getting interrupted...’

For many people, the best-laid plans are blown apart by the demands of other people – who interrupt or phone or ask you to take something on at short notice. Bruce suggests that to deal with this problem you need to make sure you keep control of your time. This could mean putting people off till a time more convenient to you. But you can still be helpful. When saying what you can’t do, you can also say what you can do. Carl, for example, could have said to Nick: ‘I can’t discuss this now, how about lunchtime?’

‘But it’s not easy when it’s your boss’

It can be more difficult to be assertive with those more senior, particularly if, like Tina, you see yourself as the one your boss can always rely on in a crisis. Bruce has problems with his boss too. Julia is always coming up with bright ideas, expecting him to drop everything to take them on. That’s why, he says, you need to be



assertive – for your own sanity: ‘You have to spell it out – if I do this, I won’t be able to do that... talk about what needs to take priority...’.

‘You need to be supportive but still keep control of your time’

Dealing decisively with other people doesn’t mean shutting them out, treating them as though they are the enemy threatening your time. We need other people – as Carl knows very well. That’s the way he operates, by exchanging favours. What Bruce tries to get him to realise, however, is that if you have an urgent deadline on an important job, doing someone else a favour just has to wait. ‘You can be friendly... polite... and still remember your priorities...’. Other people are a valuable source of support, but you still need to keep control of your time.

‘Do you always put off things like that’

Carl is a classic procrastinator. If he can put something off, particularly a job he’s not too keen on, then he will. People like Carl often say they can only really get going on a job when the deadline is uncomfortably close. This might be acceptable if it meant they always met their deadlines. But in this case, it is Bruce who suffers from Carl putting this job off until the last possible moment. ‘So do the difficult things first,’ Bruce advises. ‘Get them out of the way’. That way they don’t weigh on your mind and you can use your energy for the things you really enjoy.

‘Staying late just equals long hours’

These days Bruce doesn’t stay late unless he absolutely has to. He’s learnt what Tina hasn’t – that you can often



get more done if you give yourself less time. If you feel you can always stay late to finish a job, then you are likely to work less effectively and allow yourself to be interrupted. If you know you have to get the job done by the end of the working day, you will take positive steps to make sure you succeed.

‘Focus on what you can actually achieve’

Tina prides herself on scheduling everything in but she is unrealistic in not leaving time for the unexpected or for tasks taking longer than she thinks. She starts jobs and then has to leave them part way through and consequently doesn't get the energy boost that comes from crossing a job off as complete. Bruce encourages her to concentrate on fewer tasks, and to complete one thing, as far as possible, before moving on to the next.

‘Even a short break helps. Gives you some thinking time’

If you fill every minute, you are simply exhausting yourself, using up energy all the time without taking the breaks necessary to recharge. Bruce takes a lunch break even though he has an important task to complete – because he knows that by taking time out he will do the job more effectively on his return.

‘Everyone has the same amount of time’

It's easy to think that the problems you are up against are unique – no-one else faces the demands and pressures you do. Yet, as Bruce points out, everyone has the same amount of time. You have choices about the way you organise yourself. The aim of the video is to help viewers make the best choices for them.



Skills file

The Skills file focuses on dealing with people. Three flashback scenes from the central section of the video are repeated (Nick interrupts Carl to discuss Barry's leaving party; Adam interrupts Tina and gets her to take on extra work; Carl embarks on a long phone conversation).

These 'how not to' scenes are each followed by a 'how to' version which shows how the character could have dealt more effectively with the interruption and kept control of their time.