



"There are times for speed, and times to be slow;
we have breaks and times when we wait.

People who can't take breaks are in bad shape!"

Time Management expert, Karlheinz Geißler, on our ability to "switch off".

If you can't steal it, where will you get it?

Three questions about time management answered by ...
Karlheinz Geißler, Professor of Economics and Time Management expert.

Glossary

acceleration (noun): the act of speeding up, moving faster

optimize (verb): to make something as effective as possible; making the best possible use of something

performance peak (noun): you are at a performance peak when you are working at your very best, when you are most effective and efficient; a high point of efficiency

performance trough (noun): you are in a performance trough when you are not very efficient or effective at carrying out your tasks; a low point in working efficiency

perfunctory (adjective): something that is routine and not difficult, that you can do quickly without much care, effort or attention

priority (noun): something that is more important than something else, that you should devote your attention to first

simultaneously (adverb): at the same time repeated, or happens again and again

Quickly answering emails in the middle of a telephone conference. Is this an effective way to manage time?

Karlheinz Geißler: It is ultimately a question of an individual's own quality standards. Emails approached in this way can't be expected to be in-depth or of good quality. If we try to distribute our attention across various tasks **simultaneously**, we should be aware that each of us only has 100 percent attention. If you divide this up, you'll no longer be able to give anything your 100 percent. So if you decide that you need all of your attention for both the telephone conference and for the emails, doing both at the same time will not be effective. Effectiveness is also a measure of the quality expected of a given task.

I have a lot of work, so I need a lot of time: where do I get this time?

Geißler: Quality requirements also play an important role here: demanding tasks require a lot of time. The best way to master our work is to sit down with supervisors or

colleagues to establish a **priority** list. This will give you an idea of the quality and time requirements associated with each task. And then it's also important to know your own **performance peaks** and **troughs** so that you can plan accordingly.

But be careful about expecting too much from the time you have available: in some cases twice as fast may mean twice as bad. You can't necessarily do things as quickly as you want. Meetings are a good example of how **acceleration** doesn't always work. Imagine if everyone spoke twice as fast - we'd never understand anything. On the other hand, everybody can **optimize** the time they spend doing routine tasks through practice, training and optimizing individual organization.

You believe that our lives are characterized by "a variety of time". What do you mean by this and where are the boundaries?

Geißler: Time is experience, and therefore life itself. There are times for speed, and times to be slow; we have breaks and times when we wait. This is what I mean by a variety of time that makes up our lives. A person is happy when he or she has all of these types of times in his or her life. Speed and hectic rushes are just as much part of life as slowing down and relaxing.

The major challenge here is to successfully combine the individual types of time: **perfunctory** tasks can be completed more quickly; in-depth tasks require time. Everyone must learn how to develop a sense for recognizing and mastering our options. The bottom line is you



About:

Karlheinz A. Geißler, born in 1944 in Deuerling/Oberpfalz, Germany, is Professor Emeritus of Business and Human Resources Education at the Universität der Bundeswehr (University of the German Armed Forces) in Munich, Germany.

He writes about time management for various publications and recently published a book, "Zeit - verweile doch..." ("Time - why not wait a while ..." - exists only in German). Professor Geißler is an expert advisor on time management, and structures his own day like a "Swiss cheese" - with fixed structures and plenty of holes in between.

can save time by choosing to pass up some of the options offered to you. This includes the insight that you can't experience everything in a single life. Human life is limited.

Questions by Kerstin Müller