

### **3. The Duration of Tasks**

Finding out how to use our time is a good way to start changing our time habits to make better use of it. By examining what we actually do, what we should do and what we believe we do, we will obtain information and a view about the use of time:

– What we think we do. Before registering tasks and describing functions and operations that we should perform, we must establish a guide of what we think we do.

– What we actually do. Usually, we use time according to acquired habits, many of which we are not aware of, since these habits are relatively automatic conduct guidelines. In order to discover these habits, we can make a daily record during a period of time, writing down the activities we perform and the time we use to perform them. The results will probably inform us that we run activities that we think take less time than we believe.

Now we can establish a baseline that allows us to establish which habits we must change and which we must reinforce, because it is assumed that not all are bad or wrong. To do this, we must define our objectives and determine, exactly, where and how our time is being wasted, to be able to plan the activities, scheduling time in a more appropriate way.

#### **3.1 Baseline**

Establishing a baseline consists of knowing how time is used and which circumstances prevent using it well. The necessary requirement to start managing time well is to begin analyzing one's situation. For that purpose, we must implement a process of observation and description of events to establish a starting point, a baseline that provides information about the problems, their frequency, intensity and duration.

By reflecting on our daily work we will be capable of obtaining a fairly good picture of how we develop time management. Establishing a baseline allows us to:

- Quantify the time spent on the different tasks.
- Identify the difficulties.
- Consider the goals to achieve.
- Analyze the changes to be made.

#### **3.2 Internal observation**

The aim is to highlight all those personal aspects that can influence the way we act. Once we have established the aspects that determine in part how time is managed, we must proceed to evaluate it. The internal observation process consists in deliberately paying attention to our behavior in order to obtain information about it in a systematic and precise way. This process is executed in two parts:

- To observe what interests us and what forms part of our actions.
- Record information obtained through observation.

### 3.3 Personal record

The way of collecting the information obtained when observing the problematic situation, in this case, the difficulties in managing time; this is an instrument for collecting information.

There are different instruments for recording; the simplest is "pencil and paper". It consists in writing down on record sheets the observed behavior and the circumstances surrounding it. The choice of one record sheet or another will depend on the information that you want to obtain.

The steps in a process of personal registration are as follows:

- Design the record sheet with the elements you want to evaluate.
- Perform the internal observation of those aspects defined as subject matter of evaluation.
- Write down the information obtained.

The design of the record sheet should contain the following characteristics:

- Allow recording the circumstance to be observed the moment it occurs.
- Be quick and easy to use.
- Simple and easy to fill in.

The aspects that are often subject matter of evaluation in a record sheet are:

- Type of activity.
- Frequency of the activity.
- Duration of the activity.
- Interruptions.
- Other disturbance factors.

The most appropriate moment is immediately after the appearance of what is defined as the subject matter of observation; this way we can be more objective and avoid oversights or mistakes. The period of internal observation will depend on the variability of the observed situation with regard to its frequency and duration. If the frequency or duration are low, the registration period will be longer.