

xxxxxxx Blvd. Suite 1

xxxxx Beach, CA

xxxxxxxxx@hotmail.com

When I enrolled for an online course at Penn Foster, I faced several challenges in the attempt to balance the key areas of my life including my personal life, my full-time job, and my school work. Indeed, I had poor time-management skills at that time. I live with my two daughters, Jane and Joyce, to whom I am responsible for dispensing advice, enforcing rules, and helping with homework. Additionally, I rear pets including a cat and two dogs that require feeding every day. I work as a software developer at my small IT firm in the United States. From Monday to Friday, I leave at 6.00 am for work. My work involves collecting system specifications from clients and developing software applications as per the requirements documented in these system specifications. Currently, I am studying two courses at Penn Foster that include Advanced PC Applications and HTML coding, and an English course. The process analysis focuses on illustrating how I balance my time and manage my schedule to assist other distance education learners to learn to do the same. This paper discusses three indispensable time-management techniques that I started using to balance my schedule. These time-management techniques include the use of planners and calendars, employing a housemaid, and creating a distraction-free environment for studying.

The planners and calendars are two indispensable tools in my work. In my office, I use both paper-based and digital planners when making the work breakdown structures for IT projects. Each IT project brought to my office by a customer requires accomplishment and completion within specific deadlines. For that reason, I use the planners and calendars to set reminders for the deadlines. The digital planners remind me of the tasks ahead of me by sending

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notifications to my phone and email address. Every week I must fill out a planner with appointments, upcoming deadlines, and objectives for the upcoming week. Before I adopted the use of planners and calendars in my work, I wasted a lot of time because I did not know how to prioritize the tasks. Moreover, the deadlines were catching too soon before I had completed the IT projects, making the clients doubt my expertise in software development. Since I adopted the practice of jotting down any events in the planner, I have realized that I am able to prioritize tasks, enabling me to commence working on the most urgent tasks. The customers are happier than before because they pick their IT projects within the stipulated deadlines. Indeed, the technique of incorporating both the calendars and planners in my work has not only saved me a lot of time but also relieved me of the stress and anxiety of deadlines.

Employing a housemaid is another momentous step towards balancing my schedule. Before I employed a housemaid, I was mandated to accomplish several tasks at home including washing the house, cooking for my daughters, dispensing advice and enforcing rules to the daughters, and feeding the pets. Therefore, I was forced to leave work for home early to attend these responsibilities. I remember that I had to pass by the market to buy ingredients for preparing the dinner every day. These household chores were not only time-consuming but also intensive. To get a good housemaid was not an easy task because I had to look for one from one of the companies that offer housekeeping services in the United States. However, GreatAupair assisted me in hiring a trustworthy, hardworking and affordable housekeeper. GreatAupair offered me a housekeeper who meet all the qualities I was looking for, including pet sitting,

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tutoring, and childcare. Essentially, the housemaid came to relieve me of most of the responsibilities at home such as helping my daughters with homework, cooking, washing the house, and feeding the pets. Currently, I have little responsibilities at home, enabling me to engage in other important tasks including evening business meetings and attending a gym class. Sincerely, I have noted increment in the number of customers because I have ample time to meet new customers outside the office in places such as gym classes and social works.

Creating a distraction-free environment for studying is of paramount importance in reducing time wastage during studies. Certainly, quality studying requires a serene environment where there are distractions. Before I created a distraction-free environment for studying, I used to study in a room next to where my daughter's bedroom. They could not sleep in their bedroom alone because of fear. Before I implemented this technique, I did not have a housemaid and my daughters could come to me claiming that they were nervous and they needed someone to accompany them as they sleep. Sometimes, I was forced to abandon the studies to check their condition, especially when one of them was sick. In short, I was wasting more time on distractions than concentrating on my studies, making me sleep very late. During that time, I performed badly in the studies because I hardly acquired quality content from the studies. The attempt to create a distraction-free involved dedicating a special room for studying where my daughters cannot interrupt my studies. The studying room consists of all the necessary resources for studying including a computer, internet connection, and writing materials among others, which reduces the time required to fetch the resources from different places when I want to

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study. The initiative of creating a distraction-free environment is not only rewarding to my studies but also to my health and well-being. Nowadays, I finish studying early and go to bed earlier than before. For that reason, I am able to wake up early in the following morning and prepare for work. In fact, I have started recording higher marks in exams than before. Recently, the professor for the Advance PC Applications course rewarded me with a present to express his excitement when I emerged the top student in the class.

In conclusion, the ability to balance the responsibilities is of paramount importance. Indeed, proper time-management skills reduce stress and result in exemplary work, while poor time-management skills impart stress in someone and result to shoddy work. Thus, the ability to balance the responsibilities of home, work and school emanates from one's ability to save time. In my case, I was completely overwhelmed with various responsibilities until I decided to practice three time-saving techniques that include the use of calendar and planners, employing a housemaid, and creating a distraction-free environment for studying. Fundamentally, the three time-saving techniques not only assist me in balancing the responsibilities but also help me to practice other essential activities and have some time to relax.