

## Planning for Success

By Shirley Lee

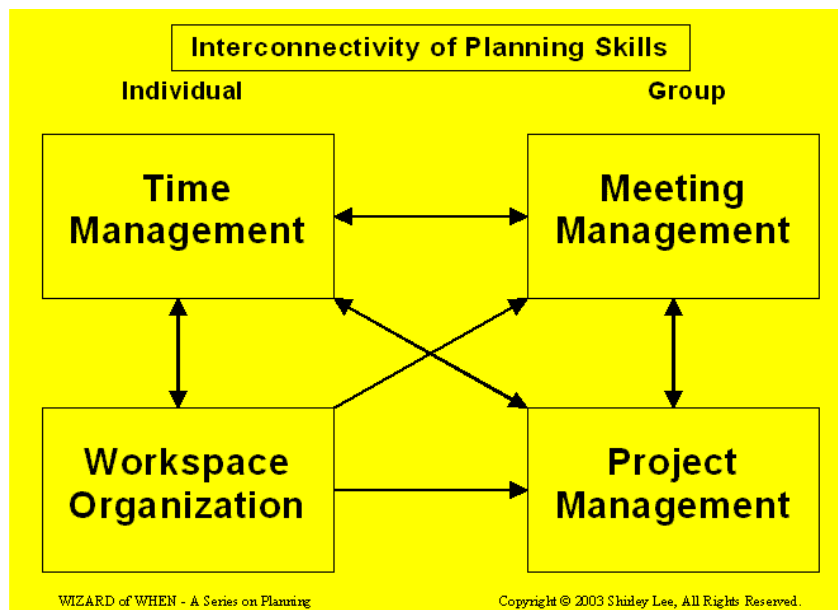
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Looking for keys that will help with career and opportunity enhancement? Consider the importance of time, meeting, and project management skills and how gaining better control in these areas can lead you where you want to go in the business world. It may be easy to see these skills will help in current job, but how can you be sure they will apply to future opportunities. Try looking at local human resources job descriptions on the various job-search sites and you will discover that most of them will require one or more of these management skills (also referred to as planning or organization skills). Think about how use of these skills may be seen by others to help you grow in your career. Being able to organize yourself will be noticed by a few people within the organization. However, being able to organize others by leading meetings and projects is visibility on a larger scale.

These different skill areas of time, meetings, and projects are related in principle and similar in technique. Adopting one of these skills and applying the principles can progressively lead into learning the others. At the bottom of this article is a diagram showing how these three management skills, plus the additional time saving aspect of workspace organization, interconnect. An example principle that the chart reflects might be, if you believe in the value of your individual time, it follows that you understand the value of other people's time in groups as well. Therefore, meetings which will always involve the time of others, require proper planning and management to ensure no one feels the time was wasted. A well-planned and executed meeting can actually make most attendees feel it was well worth their time and their input was valued. Since meetings are an integral part of project team member and customer participation, it also follows that running them well will lead to more efficient project management and effective use of the time and skills of those involved.

Need more proof that these skills are related? A method that personal time management typically involves is having a written set of tasks to do and then prioritizing each task according to goals. Those tasks of highest priority or get you closer to your goal are given attention first and have the most time dedicated to them. In a well-planned meeting, the goal is the stated meeting purpose and the prioritized task list becomes the group's meeting agenda followed by individual task assignments in the form of actions. Every project has a direct goal for what it is to accomplish in order for resources to be given to it. On a well-planned project, major tasks for reaching the goal are listed on a project plan and assigned to appropriately skilled people to meet their priority. Project priority is the critical path the task order must take, as well as the start and finish dates assigned to each task.

Although some people may argue having structured meetings and written tasks is a limitation on creativity and flexibility. Those who really know understand how having this structure actually increases flexibility and adaptability. How so? By providing direction on what is strategic, required, maintenance, nice to do, and unnecessary regarding work. By allotting time appropriately a person or a group can actually increase their creativity by freeing time usually spent on unnecessary and nice to do tasks towards the accomplishment of more strategic or creative things. Matching creativity and business savvy are also typical keys to career success.



In the diagram above the arrows represent how one planning skill can help to build or improve another. A two-way arrow indicates having a skill can help with the improvement of another skill and vice versa. A one-way arrow indicates that the skill the arrow goes from helps in improvement of the skill at the arrows point.

The above article has been adapted from the *Wizard of When - a Series on Planning* which contains training on units shown in the diagram. Copyright © 2003 by Shirley Lee, All Rights Reserved.

### **About the Author**

Shirley Lee is a consultant who helps organizations increase employee and system capacity to produce results. She has been an advocate of time effectiveness principles to help others learn to better utilize their time and began teaching the subject in 1989. Later Shirley began facilitating and coaching in meeting and project management, realizing the connection between these skills, workspace organization, and time management. More information on her is available on her website: [www.shirleyfinelee.com](http://www.shirleyfinelee.com).

