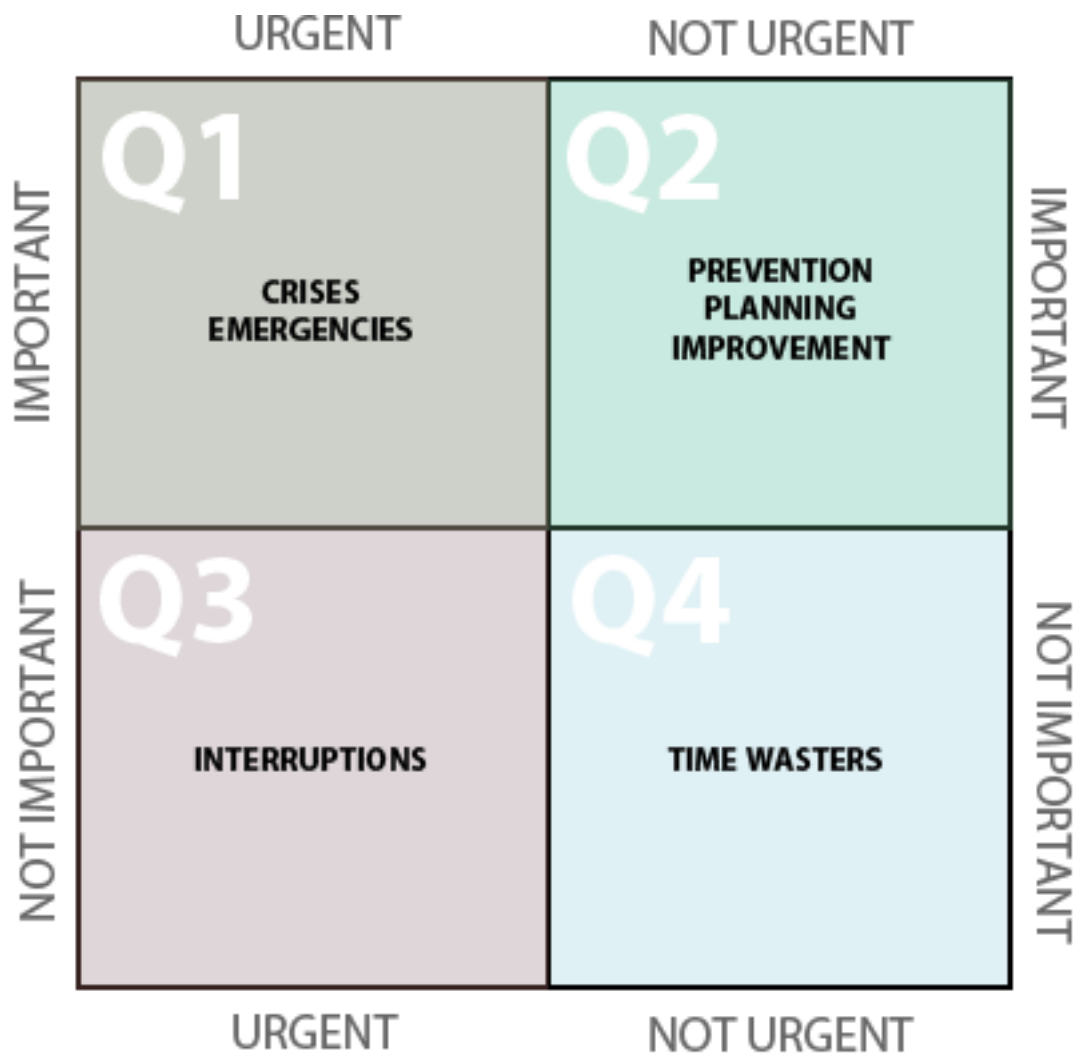


The Four Quadrants of Time is a time management matrix popularized by [Stephen Covey](#) in his book [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#).



Everything you do in life can be classified as:

- Urgent / Not Urgent
- Important / Not Important.

Most people spend their lives focused on the Urgent things regardless of their importance. In business as in life it is extremely important to always ask yourself: “Am I doing this because it is truly important or am I doing this just because it is urgent?”

Only focus on the important things — ignore everything else regardless of the urgency.



Quadrant 1: Important and Urgent

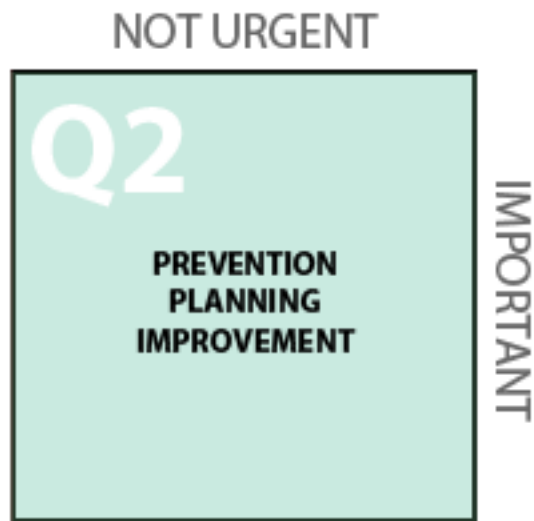
Firefighting mode: Crises, real hard deadlines for important project, health & family emergencies, etc...

These are things you cannot and should not ignore. However spending too much time in this Quadrant will lead to stress and burn out — you will be caught in a never-ending cycle of crisis management and fire fighting.

The only way to reduce the time you spend in this quadrant is to be proactive and to spend more time on the important things BEFORE they become emergencies.

Quadrant 1 Example:

Dealing with a heart attack is an Urgent and Important problem (Q1) that cannot be ignored — but maybe if you would have spent more time eating healthy and exercising (Q2) you could have avoided it altogether.



Quadrant 2: Important but not Urgent

This is where you should spend most of your time.

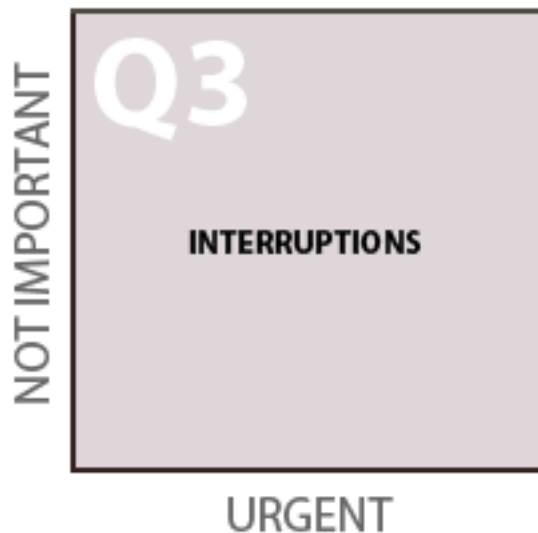
Activities in this quadrant include planning, prevention, capability improvement, relationship building, recognizing new opportunities, etc...

Spending your time in this quadrant will lead to:

- Clear vision
- Balanced life
- Discipline
- Control
- Very few crisis situations.

Quadrant 2 Examples:

- Frequently buying flowers for your wife/girlfriend “just because”
- Eating healthy and exercising to avoid future health issues
- Preventative maintenance on your home or car
- Reading, Learning, and Education
- Forming bonds and strengthening relationships with your friends and family
- Self renewal and spending time on things that inspire and uplift you



Quadrant 3: Not Important but Urgent

People spend a large portion of their time in this Quadrant confusing Urgent things for Important things.

This Quadrant is full of pressing matters: Interruptions, Ringing phones, Most emails, etc... Spending too much time in this quadrant leads to a very short-term focus with continual crisis management. You will begin to see plans and goals as useless since you are unlikely to have time to devote to them. Your relationships and reputation will suffer and you will feel victimized with no control over your life.

Quadrant 3 Example:

You have scheduled an important meeting with a co-worker 2 weeks ahead of time. This person has very limited time and so you carve out a 30 minute window to deal with a very important matter.

As you sit down and start the meeting, your phone starts to ring. The phone is screaming: "Pick me up! Pick me up! Pick me up!"

Most people will pickup the phone and sacrifice the Important but not urgent meeting for the Not Important but Urgent ringing phone.



Quadrant 4: Not Urgent and Not Important

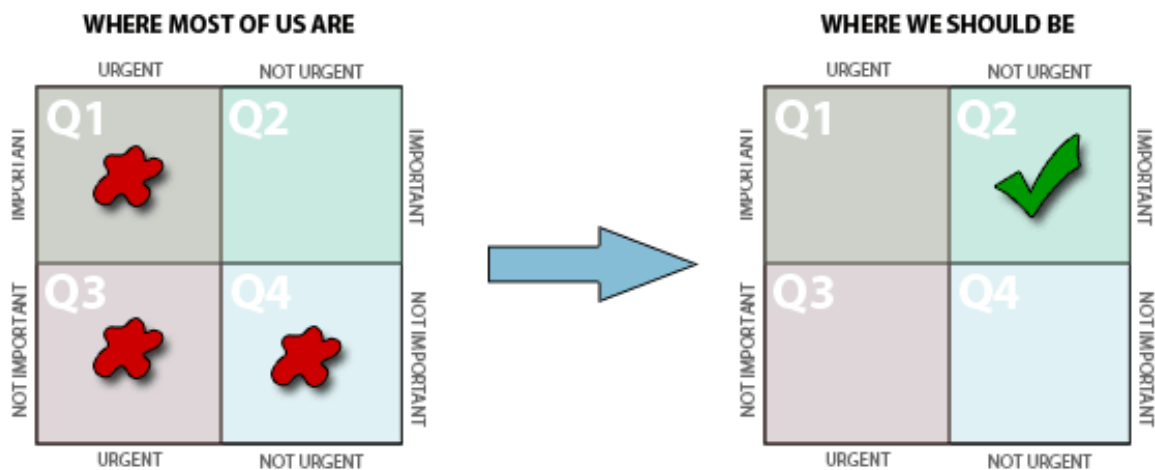
Quadrant 4 are the time wasters in your life:

Spending too much time in this quadrant can lead to dependence on others for your basics, loss of jobs, irresponsibility, etc...

Quadrant 4 Examples:

- Trivial busy work
- Mindless web surfing
- Watching too much TV
- Lots of pleasant activities.

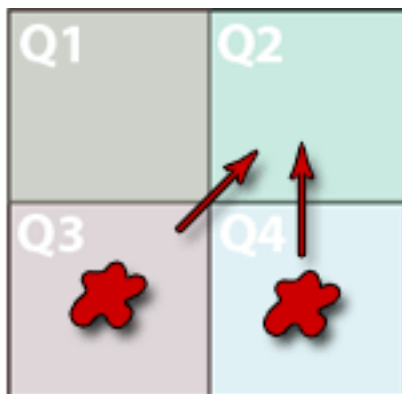
What now? How do I use this to make my life better?





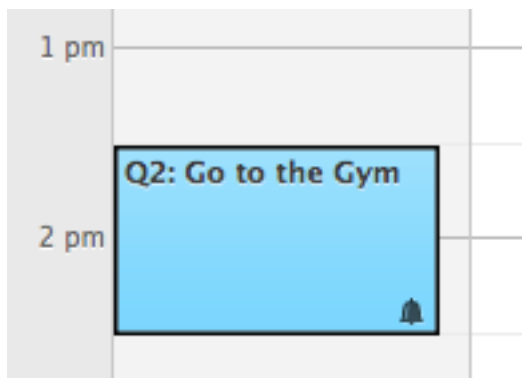
1. Identify Quadrant 2 activities.

- Write down all the Quadrant 1 and 3 activities you routinely do (all the Urgent stuff)
- Write down how you can prevent these things from reoccurring or from becoming emergencies in the first place: **These are your new Quadrant 2 activities.**



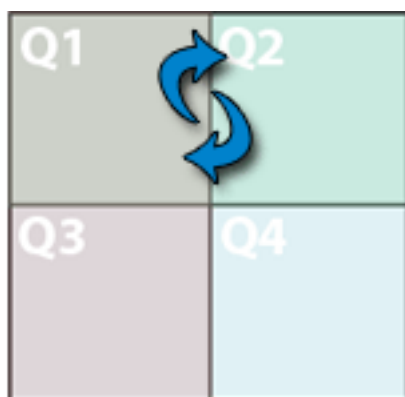
2. Free up time for Quadrant 2 activities

- Look at all the things in Quadrant 4 and **STOP DOING THEM!**
- Look at all the things in Quadrant 3 and stop doing them too. This is more difficult as it involves saying NO to people.
- You should now have time to spend on Quadrant 2



3. Schedule time for Quadrant 2

- Schedule time to do Quadrant 2 activities. (Put them in your calendar just like a meeting).
- DO THE THINGS YOU SCHEDULED!



4. Reduce Quadrant 1

- The beauty with spending more time in Quadrant 2 is that it should slowly chip away at all your Quadrant 1 activities.
- As you reduce your Quadrant 1 activities you have more time for Quadrant 2, creating a fly-wheel effect.

Simple, right?

Not quite. The Question “What is important to me?” usually does not have a simple answer.

Example 1: Going to a Sporting event (Rugby, Baseball, Football game, etc...)

Which quadrant does this fall into? The answer is it depends on YOUR priorities and what is important to YOU. On the surface it looks clearly like a Q4 item – a time waster. Not urgent and certainly not important.

But, it could be a Q2 event (important) if you consider the event to be an opportunity to spend quality time building relationships with your parents, children, clients or friends.

Example 2: Watching TV

Clearly another Q4 item: A time waster. Or is it? If watching TV is a stress reliever for you and serves as a way to wind down and chill out after a hectic day, it could very well be a Q2 activity. Just as long as you frame it correctly and consume it in the right way.

To be successful with this method you must have a very clear understanding of what is important to you, what your long term goals are, etc...

Good luck and hope this was a Q2 boost for you.