Tensions in Time Management: Implications for Leaders
14:30 – 16:00 (90 minutes)

Organizers:
Prof. Dr. Laura M. Giurge (London School of Economics)
Dr. Jennifer L. Sparr (University of Zurich)
Time management can be challenging, especially for leaders.

We invite you to…

- … analyze your own time management habits: The Time Audit Exercise
- … explore the tensions in time management: The Polarity Map Exercise

Together, we will draw conclusions for self-leadership and people-leadership practices regarding time management and exchange best practices.
What is time?
Why is it so hard to manage our time?

Cultural barriers

Organizational barriers

Individual barriers
Think about 3 key goals that you want to achieve in the next 12 months at work.
### The Time Audit Exercise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work activity</th>
<th>% time in the last week</th>
<th>Serves which goal</th>
<th>Important/Un-important</th>
<th>Urgent/Non-urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Individual goal</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Non-urgent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Time Audit Exercise: Debrief

- Are you **satisfied** with how you spent your time last week?
- What % of **your time** did you spend on your **key goals**?
- What % of **your time** did you spend on **important / urgent activities**?
- How close is last week to how your **ideal week** would look like?
- What are the **barriers** that prevent you from optimally using your time?
Why is it so hard to manage our time?

- Long-term & Short-term goals
- Individual & Collective goals
- Performing & Learning
- Planning & Flexibility
- Availability & Boundaries
- Work & Life goals
- Productivity & Recovery
Paradoxical elements are characterized by:

- Interdependence
- Contradiction
- Persistence

Source: Smith & Lewis (2011)
Time is an important leadership tension

THE 11 PARADOXES OF LEADERSHIP THAT HANG ON THE WALL OF EVERY LEGO MANAGER

- To be able to build a close relationship with one’s staff, and to keep a suitable distance.
- To be able to lead, and to hold oneself in the background.
- To trust one’s staff, and to keep an eye on what is happening.
- To be tolerant, and to know how you want things to function.
- To keep the goals of one’s department in mind, and at the same time to be loyal to the whole firm.
- To do a good job of planning your own time, and to be flexible with your schedule.
- To freely express your view, and to be diplomatic.
- To be a visionary, and to keep one’s feet on the ground.
- To try to win consensus, and to be able to cut through.
- To be dynamic, and to be reflective.
- To be sure of yourself, and to be humble.

Source: Evans (2000)
A key leadership tension related to time is...

Plan your own
time well

Be flexible with your schedule
1. Change your question. 
   How can I do both?

2. Embrace the tension and start to feel comfortable with it. 
   Tensions are inherent in work and leadership.

3. Take your distance from the problem and start looking for new approaches. 
   The following exercise can help.

Source: https://knowledge.insead.edu/leadership-organisations/overwhelmed-adopt-a-paradox-mindset-14026
The Polarity Map Exercise: Analyze the Tension

Why would you want to leverage this tension (state the greater purpose)?

Step 1: Enter positive results
Step 2: Enter positive results
Step 3: Enter negative results
Step 4: Enter negative results
Step 5: Enter action steps
Step 6: Enter action steps
Step 7: Enter early warnings
Step 8: Enter early warnings

Planning your time
Being flexible

What is the danger of NOT leveraging this tension?

Adapted from Barry Johnson
The Polarity Map Exercise: Debrief

- Any **key insights** from applying the polarity map to the planning-flexibility tension?
- Anything **new / surprising / creative** you will implement?
- Which **conditions** make the planning-flexibility tension easier / harder to manage?
- How is the planning-flexibility tension related to **other tensions** you experience as a leader (e.g., closeness-distance, control-autonomy, goal conflicts)?
Want to learn more?

Research: Flexible Work Can Dampen Motivation
Harvard Business Review, April 2022

The Course of Off-Hours Email
Wall Street Journal, October 2021

Why Time is the Currency of Knowledge Work
Forbes, May 2021
Thank you!

Best of luck with managing your time!