Preface

In the 1950s, as home and work chores became increasingly mechanized and as the electronics revolution hinted at an even more startling efficiency to come, futurists made a bold prediction: by the year 2000, the average person would work only 20 or 30 hours a week. There would be so much leisure time that most of us wouldn't know what to do with it.

We now know that these '50s oracles were wrong—very wrong. Electronics and automation have sped up life so greatly that, to keep up with the swift flood of tasks and info-bits, most of us work *more* than 40 hours, not fewer, and have seen our leisure time shrink away. The computer chip didn't free us. It forced us to produce at *its* speed.

So, we're on a responsibility overload. Faxes, Federal Express, and e-mail demand instant action. Computers and laser printers pour out 50 personalized letters in minutes—something that once took a secretary all day to do. Consequently, our mailboxes and in-bins overflow with all sorts of materials that clamor for our attention.

All this communication and the ease of travel mean that the network of people you deal with has grown exponentially. Indeed, you meet more people in one year than your grandparents did in a lifetime. No wonder so many of us have trouble remembering names.

To make matters worse, you may have turned to a book on time management for help before, one that argued (as most do) that you must erect great, logic-based ramparts to hold off the disorganized barbarians or super-efficient competitors out there. The author may have suggested that within those barriers you

can reside in a cool, patterned, and neat little environment, practicing the one true religion of time management.

If only it were so easy or true. But you know better.

More often, you feel overwhelmed, exhausted, defeated. You probably even feel guilty taking the time to read one more book on time management—this one. *But there is hope.* That's what this book is all about.

The Right Way and the Wrong Way—Maybe

Tiffany loves computers. She took to them like a duck to water. So when she needs to shuffle among five documents, she finds that the easiest, most effective way to do so is to open five windows on her computer and click among them, going from one document to another, then back again. She can edit them, copy and paste sections from one to another, or combine them into a single document, all with the simple click of a mouse.

Jim, on the other hand, is a pen-and-paper kind of guy. He prefers to lay out hardcopies of the five documents on a worktable and label sections of the various documents for change. He makes notes and additions and repaginates by hand. Sometimes, he even cuts and pastes them with tape into a new sequence. Finally, he types his final draft—or, if he has the luxury, he sends it out to be retyped or edited by someone who really gets computer formatting.

Neither way is necessarily the "right" or "wrong" approach to accomplish the task. Tiffany and Jim have each developed a way of working that accomplishes what they need to do with the least possible stress, in a manner that makes them feel confident and in control.

A good case could be made that using a computerized system is inherently more time saving than a manual approach. But if we require Jim to do his editing on the computer, we may, at the same time, force him into thinking more about the way the computer works than about the job. While Tiffany's instinctive and immediate grasp of the intricacies of word processing enables her to do the job most efficiently, Jim's lack of empathy

with the way computer programs operate makes software an "efficiency enemy" for him. Instead of struggling to work out how to format a table, he finds it easier and more satisfying to sketch the table by hand and leave the details of formatting to later—or to someone better equipped for that job.

Of course, we might suggest to Jim that he take classes on the use of the computer. In today's work environment, there's almost no way to be efficient without computer skills. But, by nature, Jim may never become a "natural" like Tiffany. He should certainly try to sharpen his computer skills, but he may never be completely comfortable with them.

And Jim's major talent perhaps lies in a different area. He's most useful to his company not as a word processor but as a business development manager. While he shuffles among those five documents, the company really wants him focusing on their content—not on cutting and pasting electronically while retaining the correct format from one document to another.

It's important to remember, then, while reading *Time Management*, that not every single suggestion, strategy, or technique will work for you. There will be moments of insight when you think, "Yes! Why didn't I think of that?" There will be other moments, however, when you conclude, "I couldn't possibly do that! In fact, I *hate* doing that!"

Be reassured. We are individuals. We learn differently, we work differently, and we succeed using different combinations of methods. Rarely is there a "right" or "wrong" way to organize one's life. *Results* are what matter.

There are, however, many ways to improve upon the systems you already have in place or to consider entirely fresh ones that can make your life—and your job—easier, more productive, and more stress-free. This book, we hope, will provide some useful suggestions to accomplish that. It's up to you to select which strategies are best suited to your particular style of working and which, when incorporated into your routines, will make you more confident in your ability to get the job done—on time, accurately, and with the fewest possible hassles.

But be ready for moments—many moments, probably—when you'll say to yourself, "I've always known that. My *parents* told me to do that!" Sure, but are you *still applying* it? After all, as you'll discover, much of your journey toward better time management is about recommitting to what you already know.

The Benefits of Time Management

Time is finite. We have only so many hours available in a day to live our lives, accomplish the tasks that we need to accomplish, and enjoy our lives.

Every minute we waste in frustration over a task that seems overwhelming is a minute subtracted from the time we've allotted to enjoy life. Even our jobs should provide us with pleasures—a sense of accomplishment, the gratification of recognition for a job well done, and financial rewards, too—that enable us to enjoy our personal lives even more. It can be done. Less stress, more confidence, reduced frustration, greater fulfillment—these are all benefits that flow from leading a time-managed life. Our hope is that *Time Management* will help you achieve all these things and more.

The primary benefit to you, as you read and absorb the lessons here, will be an increase in your on-the-job productivity. But, like other books in the Briefcase Books series, *Time Management* is designed to provide you with far more than that. It's intended to assist you, as well, in helping your frontline staff refine their own time-management skills, in making their jobs easier, and in making them more productive. Even more, it will help you to apply the skills you learn to your life outside the workplace—to your home, your relationships with family and friends—in short, to your life in general.

This sub-theme—that these skills go beyond your own job—will be evident throughout the book. It's interwoven into the content through examples from ordinary life and from the kinds of jobs done by your staff. These examples will serve, we hope, to pique your imagination—to get you to think about other ways

to strategically apply the lessons they illustrate. And you'll real-
ize that they can apply in many areas of your own life and the
lives of others around you, as well.

This book, as you'll discover, also covers a myriad of other
topics that intersect with time management, like organization,
efficiency, and goal setting for your personal life. Indeed, time
management doesn't exist in a vacuum. It meshes into the very
fabric of our daily lives. It goes to the very core of how happy
and fulfilling our days ought to be.

So what can you expect as you read this book? In our first
two chapters you'll learn about the theories that underpin time
management and that can transform, in a fundamental way,
how you lead your life. For the rest of the book, be prepared to
discover hundreds of practical strategies that will serve you well
as you manage your everyday responsibilities.

Special Features

The idea behind the books in the Briefcase Series is to give you
practical information written in a friendly person-to-person style.
The chapters are compact, deal with tactical issues, and include
lots of examples. They also feature numerous boxes designed
to expand upon the text's core content. Here's a description of
the boxes you'll find in this book.

These boxes do just what they say: give you tips and
tactics for being smart in the use of time at work and
in your personal life.

These boxes provide warnings for where things could
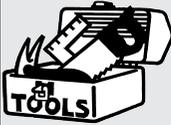go wrong when you're figuring out how to manage
your time.

These books give you specific how-to hints for better
managing time.

Every subject has some special jargon and terms. These boxes provide definitions of these concepts.

It's always useful to have examples of what others have done, either well or not so well. Find these stories in these boxes.

This identifies boxes where you'll find specific procedures you can follow to take advantage of the book's advice.

How can you make sure you won't make a mistake when managing? You can't, but these boxes will give you practical advice on how to minimize the possibility.