

# Andrew's Ax

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## Urgent?

The average business meeting in Japan lasts over two hours and includes five participants. So every meeting uses a full 10-hour day (5 people x 2 hours per person = 10 people hours).

Multiply that 10 by your hourly employee expenses and you'll find each two-hour meeting is costing your firm +/- ¥50,000. What kind of return do these meetings deliver?

From my experience, far less than their cost. Whether or not the meetings are called on a moment's notice (as they often are), very few follow a written agenda and next to none are *ever* evaluated for their effectiveness.

Let's jump right to what is most likely challenging your company on an operational level: a failure to put "first things first." Or as Steven Covey would say, "Not enough Quadrant II activities."

"Quadrant II" refers to those actions that are "important" but not urgent." (See page 3 for the 4 Quadrants.) Things like planning, exercising, goal-setting, agenda-writing and yes, evaluating meetings. When was the last time you and your staff *evaluated* the effectiveness of your meetings? Do you even have a

form to do so? Surprisingly, even *after* reading Covey and/or taking a seminar that clearly identifies which activities are "QII," ignorance prevails.

Just last month I overheard a Japanese president of an American company operating in Japan say, "My ideal mix is "25% for each quadrant." You might remember that this includes quadrant IV, activities, those that are neither urgent nor important. So here's a president who's going to put 25% of his time and effort into time wasters? You can see why coaching is so necessary: Common sense is too often folded up and put in the closet with the futon.

This same executive (and I am sure you know someone like him) pays lip service to training for himself and his staff, to joining and participating in industry associations and a host of other QII activities that require initiative and investment.

### Putting first things first

How do you start your business day? By taking action, such as writing and reviewing your goals? Or are you like so many executives, who start their day reacting—checking and replying to e-mail. How you start will determine how you finish. And it will influence those around you. Does your staff start with action, reaction, or no action?

I know a president and founder of a

company who is nearly always late for his appointments, much to the dismay of those who he keeps waiting. He asked me recently, "How do you get out of the office for a 19:00 dinner meeting?" I felt I was stating the super-obvious when I said, "It starts by committing to the 19:00 meeting at 9:00 that morning. Who's in control of your calendar?"

### Doing it "IMA!"

"*Ima*" is Japanese for "now." It's also an acronym for a new AMT Group module—"Immediate Materials Action."

Morale and energy rise when people see their work areas cleaned up and people taking action "IMA!"

One client wrote me last month about how much IMA! has improved his work even though he had read several books and attended two time management seminars. He was already an expert, yet he learned something so valuable he claimed it's our best training module.

A key principle of "IMA!" is something most every workspace efficiency expert will tell you: touch a piece of paper only **once**. IMA! gives you four choices for that paper: 1) Deal with NOW (as long as it will take less than 15 minutes and your schedule is free); 2) file and schedule it to be done at specific future date and time; 3) delegate it (meaning send it to someone else's inbox); or 4) trash it. It never goes back to the inbox.

These and other skills IMA! teaches will create an additional 3 to 5 hours per week—multiplied by the number of employees you put through IMA! and you can see how the savings add up.

What are you going to do with the extra time? You'll reduce the "urgent" by scheduling more "important" activities. Like evaluating your meetings, and discovering ways to keep them high energy, on track and productive.

### Action

The key word in IMA! is **Action**. Theodore Roosevelt, a true man of action, once said, "In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing."

Let's take his words to heart. Clean up your workspace, liven up your meetings, and act...now, while it's not yet urgent.

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## Time Management Matrix

		Urgent	
		High	Low
Important	High	<p><b>High Important &amp; High Urgent</b></p> <p>Crises Deadlines Anxious calls</p> <p><b>QI</b></p>	<p><b>High Important &amp; Low Urgent</b></p> <p>Preparation Prevention Planning</p> <p><b>QII</b></p>
	Low	<p><b>Low Important &amp; High Urgent</b></p> <p>Interruptions Some meetings Some reports</p> <p><b>QIII</b></p>	<p><b>Low Important &amp; Low Urgent</b></p> <p>Time wasters</p> <p><b>QIV</b></p>

*Grow Box II to increase effectiveness*