

**Redefining Public Service: A Focus on State Counsel and Management of
the Jigawa State Ministry Of Justice**

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Being a paper Presented at a One Day Workshop organised by the Jigawa State
Ministry of Justice

On

October 8, 2021

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Quotes

“Just like money, talent, and friends in high places, time is a resource you can use to meet your objectives. Although you can always earn.” — Robert M. Hochheiser

“Saying no to someone else is like saying yes to yourself.” — Helena Learner

“Time is the only capital any human being has, and the one thing he cannot afford to waste.” — Thomas Edison

“Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.” — Will Rogers (1879–1935),

1.0 Introduction:

Public service is a service funded by the government or its agencies. The services provided by Jigawa State Ministry of Justice are public legal services funded by Jigawa State Government. These services are provided by the management as well as the teeming state counsel.

The Ministry is an all-important ministry that the Constitution singled it out of the other ministries detailing the person who is competent to hold the office. The head of the Ministry is the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice. He is the Chief Law Officer of the state and Chief Legal adviser of the government and other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA). The status of the Ministry and by extension the status of all staff of the ministry is exceptional. The HAG and the staff of the Ministry are to serve as role models for others. There is therefore the need to redefine our understanding of public service and the onerous task of being law officers in the government of Jigawa State. This is possible through understanding the mission and vision of the Ministry and keying

into it individually and collectively. This is necessary for improve and better service delivery and the development of our capacity. This is possible through control and management of time as well as understanding the place and value of emotional intelligence. These are among the objects this paper seeks to achieve.

1.1 **Over view of the current schedules reality:**

We are in a period responsibility overload and under tremendous pressure to accomplish several tasks. Officially there are so many files waiting for our review and advice, others for preparation of court processes such as motions, charges, addresses, briefs etc. We have unfinished task, time hungry schedules and commitments. While we struggle to complete the important tasks, urgent tasks are unavoidable. We desperately struggle to meet deadlines, time frames based on detailed instructions.

We are faced with unprecedented and conflicting demands of our time from our superiors or heads of department, the courts, witnesses, victims' families, professional colleagues, family, neighbourhood, community and from even personal or unofficial quarters. Successful people notwithstanding the odds of time, focus and devote their energy to one thing at time and once that task is accomplished they immediately move to another without delay. This should be the routine.

2.0 **Redefinition of public service as a Public Attorney:**

Ministry of justice is a public service department of government. The counsel and other staff are its assets. The Ministry cannot succeed without having a clear mission and vision because they are the critical elements of every organisational strategy. That is not all, the ministry must not have mission and vision that its staff do not key into or do not understand. This is the starting point.

2.1 **Organisational Mission:**

Mission statements are short and concise encouraging and motivational statements directing organisational growth. It summarises organisational “goals and values.” That is, what the organisation stands for and what it seeks to achieve. It serves as a road map to organisational success and what an organisation and its employees seek to become in the future. A good mission statement must be “clear, encouraging, strategic, achievable and unique.” It must equally be compelling and adjustable.

Mission statement significantly impacts on the organisation, its business and employees. It encourages critical thinking towards a better future of an organisation. It demands employee commitment and instils positive organisational culture by helping organisations and its employees to align to the same goal, think in the same direction and to distinguish themselves among competitors and similar service or products providers.

Happily, the Jigawa State Ministry of Justice has as its mission improvement of justice delivery robustfully and professionally emphasising interagency cooperation which is key in the administration of justice. The mission reads “{t}o improve the delivery of Justice, through robustness and professionalism while maintaining synergy with all tiers of government.” Can we say that by our conduct and attitude to work have individually and collectively aligned to this mission?

2.2 **Organisational Vision:**

A vision statement explains the essence of the existence of an organisation and how it intends to continue in that regards. It restates organisational declarations and plans of the company towards the realisation of its future goals. It is through the vision statement that a

clear direction is set for all employees and how their contributions will translate in the realisation of the overall organisational goals.

Emphasis in vision statement should be more on how the organization plans to grow instead of the services or products it offers. The vision of Jigawa State Ministry of Justice is “Justice for all citizens consistent with the ideals of democracy and the rule of law.” Here the emphasis here is not on only justice for all but for upholding tenets of democracy and rule of law which are bedrocks for justice and equality.

3.0 **The Value and Meaning of time Management:**

Time is the most all-important and precious asset or resource in life that must be taken seriously. Time according to Thomas Edison “is the only capital any human being has, and the one thing he cannot afford to waste.” Ulwais in his wisdom equally posited that “Everyone knows that time is limited but few are aware of that fact.” In fact, God does not discriminate in time sharing time. The wise saying is “time and tide wait for no one.”

Appreciating the value of time by attaching monetary value to our time will aid one focus on high value tasks avoiding low value tasks. It will push us strive to make hay when the sun shines. This is because tide and times wait for no one. There is no time to even say there is none. Twenty-four hours is available to the wise, to the fool and to the entrepreneur. Goal getters and target setters can only succeed with good time management attitude.

Apart from having a mission and vision, an organisation and its employees need to be good time managers and utilisers. Time management is a process and it is about being organised as an individual or organisation whether in public life or private. Time management has

been defined as “the process of organising and planning how to divide your time between specific activities.” It is “the judicious use of time for achieving success in life.”

According to R.I. Adams “powerful and effective time management” is something everyone should strive to get in life.” Good time management assist one to eliminate or minimize stress. It assists one to gauge between productivity and over working. Good time managers achieve more results in comparison to time wasters by exceptional utilisation of time-management skills and techniques.

The law of time management is that one must strive to avoid distractions, trivialities and time consuming habits. Time management is all about the discipline to value time. It is the ability to allocate the bulk of one’s time to right activities and according to importance. It is being prudent with one’s limited time and the ability to prioritise ones activities according to which one comes first and which come last. Which activity is urgent and important that must be done and which can be deferred much later. It is an obligation to take and use time seriously. As a fundamental asset it should not be squandered or wasted. It is the ability to use the scarce time to get more done in tight and demanding work environment or in life.

The realisation that time is never sufficient today and the fact that our day cannot be extended beyond 24 hours necessitates good time usage and management. In other words, Managing time assist one “to work smarter-not harder” to get more results within a short period of time despite tight or busy schedules and despite high pressure. This paper is about redefining our attitude to public service through understanding the basics for successful public service career and public service delivery.

3.1 Debate on whether time can be managed

The above notwithstanding there are scholars who believe that time management is a myth. These scholars contend that although one can manage himself, his schedules, his entire life by making the most of time available but that time cannot be managed. According Peter Levin “there is nothing you can do to manage time (even though) you can make the most of it. You can work out what you to do with it.

3.2 Time Wasters:

Undoubtedly, we are all time wasters. Not all time wasting is however useless as some assists one to relax and reduce work stress and tension. But in the first place when you control time you control stress. A time is said to be wasted when the activity it is devoted to is less important or less fun. The ability to identify these time wasting behaviours helps one to adjust to these time wasters.

Time wasters are “behaviours, obligations and other activities” that erode our valuable time. These wasters originate from the environment we work and from one self. In the former are “visitors, telephone calls, mail, waiting for someone and unproductive meetings.” In the latter includes disorganisation, procrastination, social interaction and social media, acceptance, perfectionism and avoidance. These time wasters are examined below.

3.2.1 Drop in Visitors:

No matter how organised or time conscious you are, drop in visitors and colleagues (who we may not be able to throw out) often break our concentration in carrying out our routines. These unexpected and creeping interruptions interfere with our work flow and take a chunk of

our valuable time. We must therefore try to diplomatically resist others imposing themselves on our schedules. Your inability to control visitors is a “goodbye to your ‘To Do’ list for that part of the day.”

3.2.3 Constant Checking of Emails: Checking of emails from laptop and desk computers or smartphones has been identified as worst time wasting activity. On the average, persons check their emails twenty times a day others check more than that. One is expected to a lot specific times in his schedules for checking of emails and once you on your mails try to address or respond to pressing issues immediately and reflect others in your to do list.

3.2.4 Unproductive meetings:

Meetings are very necessary but we must determine how necessary they are and what time to allot to them. Valuable as meetings may be, they have been adjudged as time wasting ventures if not properly handled. So we need to reflect on the frequencies of our meetings by assessing how productive our meetings are.

The rule of time management is that all meetings must begin and end of time. They must have agenda, duration and take-aways. Each item must be allotted time. Boundaries and terms must be set. Successful meetings require planning and communication to all attendees of the object of the meeting. Persons in meetings must at all times keep in mind the object of the meetings. A successful meeting must be led and managed by the chairperson. He should learn to talk less while other members talk more. It must end on a positive note and summary of the decisions and action to be taking. Overall let not our meetings be occasions “where minutes are kept and hours are lost.”

3.3.5 Disorganisation: There a golden saying that there is “a place for everything and everything in its place” . Disorganization is a problem in our work places. It decreases our productivity. It holds one back from promotion, it blocks creativity, add stress, prevents us from being productive. Organization helps one in the long run because organisation helps us to saves time, achieve creativity.

3.3.6 Procrastination: According to Edward Young “Procrastination is the thief of time.” Indisputably not all the tasks we undertake are juicy and interesting. It is the law of nature of things. While some cases and files we handle are interesting or pleasing and favour our standpoint others do not. There is also a class of jobs that are difficult. On no accounts should we post any difficult or unpleasing task. Should we do this no amount of time management technique will help us. “The job doesn’t get any less pleasant while you wait... it wount get any easier either.”

The law of time management and organisation requires us to learn to set deadlines, reward yourself, and arrange with a colleague to routinely ask you for follow ups on specific and difficult task. Learning to adopt the strategy of starting work with undesirable and difficult task will assist in overcoming procrastination.

3.3.7 Multitasking: This is the attempt to do so many things at once. Although multitasking according to Dril Zeller “is not the most effective work style” we are prone to it daily. While addressing an important issue, you may receive a phone call on a different issue. Immediately one hangs up the phone, he may receive a message from a colleague and may need clarification from his superior at same time. At the same time you are dialling your phone number you may quickly remember the need to

update your to-do list as a follow-up to your last phone conversation. This is multitasking and most at times cost time instead of creating time.

3.3.8 Telephone and Social media Addiction: No one doubts our addiction and resultant interruptions in our psyche and our addiction to social media sites such as Tiktok, instgram, facebook, Twitter, snap chat, telegram, Whatsapp etc. we devote time scrolling and chatting. A new research found that “addictive substances, gambling, and receiving notifications on social media, all activate the same section of the brain—the orbitofrontal cortex.”

Addiction to social media platforms significantly affects our time management. Subconsciously we have drugged ourselves with social media pills and without realising we lose the bulk of our time and life.

For productive life we must learn to put some restraints and reduce our addiction to social media.

3.3.9 Not Learning to Say No: In the course of our routines telemarketers, intrusive calls, friends, colleagues and superiors do interrupt our day by demanding our time to do something such as attending or chairing a meeting, executing a task or act in a capacity etc. Although it is difficult to say no, we should learn not to allow them because they drain our time and stress our life by saying know. Learning to say know is a according to ‘a critical skill’ we must acquire. We must learn not to do everything demanded from us or according to what others wants us to do against our schedules.

We can say know by giving reasons, being diplomatic, suggesting a trade-off (by suggesting to do something else); and by not putting off our decision by saying for example “let me think over it.”

3.3.10 Perfectionism: No human job can be perfect though one is expected to put and do his very best. Attempt at perfectionism consumes time and add to the list of time wasting ventures.

4.0 Time Management Skills and Techniques:

4.1 To Do List: This time management technique assists one to be well organised in the workplace. It equally helps us to remember to prioritize all necessary works in reducing being stressed by a chunk of unimportant works. One should mark his activities in order of importance, important, more important, most important and redraft 1- any number or A-Z

Related to do list are action catalogues. They are industrial strength version of to-do list. An action catalogue helps us to convert activities into actionable activities and then manage them within a three-tier structure:

- 1) Next Action List – precise and immediate actions that one needs to perform to move your project or office forward
- (2) Delegated action List- Details of delegated actions. Delegation enables heads or superiors to create time for managerial responsibilities.
- 3) The project Catalog- Contains list of projects one wants to work on along with other actions that you have gathered that will contribute towards the completion of these projects. By so doing one is focused on what to be done daily and will be done in the long term

Action catalogues help one to manage and progress many projects simultaneously especially for increasingly complex and challenging jobs

4.2 **Activity Logs:** This is another useful technique that helps in analysing how he uses time. It is a time management skill that helps us to track changes in energy, alertness and effectiveness throughout the working hours. Activity log help us to eliminate time wasting activities thereby increasing productivity

5.0 **How to be organised:**

How many times did we question ourselves of the fact that “we have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.” This demands that we must at all times have scale of preferences in our schedules. That is scheduling the most important before the less important.

There are various ways we can be organised. Note keeping in jotters, clips in conspicuous notice boards can help us keep a note for all our thoughts, ideas, conversations and reminders in one place. Fifteen (15) minutes will be sufficient to organise our self to begin every day. This can be much easier with a to-do list and the use of technology to reminder us of schedules, tidy our desks, reward our self if you are challenged to be organised. We can equally use one calendar for all appointments and meetings and can choose the tools you like most to use

5.1 **Information Management: The Allen’s Input processing Technique (AIPROTEC)**

Having identified the fact each and every one of us has a deluge of information, processes, etc. to handle. One can in addition to the highlighted techniques and skills employ the AIPROTEC to manage the deluge of tasks in the court processes, committees, dozens of emails, telephone calls, voicemails, meeting requests, invoices, and other daily documents on our tables. AIPROTEC derived its meaning from David

Allen – a productivity expert writing entitled ‘Getting things done, 2003’. The technique helps one to be productive through effectively process these loads of incoming information.

- 5.3 **The Art of Filing:** This is all about managing documents. The Flurry of data pouring daily requiring processing, storage and retrieval is enormous. Art of filing aids quick retrieval of documents even under the pressure. In other words effective filing eases job and minimizes wasting the time of others. It therefore follows that a well-organised filing system is necessary because it eases document location and quick response to queries.

Effective filing can be achieved through the storage, categorisation and sequencing of folders. Other tips for effective filing includes avoiding keeping unnecessary documents, consistent naming of files and folders, storing related documents together, separation of on-going works from completed works and avoiding overfilling. Clouding of scanned digital copies of paper documents is equally advised. Another aspect of art of filing is the Organisation of documents according to dates

- 5.4 **Managing Emails:** At times we appear overwhelmed by the number of emails they receive. These flurries of emails require efficient management to boost a persons’ productivity. Tips abound for managing emails. The rule is to adopt the stand that a person will only check and process emails at a designated time. Additionally, one should try and keep his inbox as clear as possible. Organise your email in the format of “action”, “waiting” and “Archives.”
- 5.5 **Manage your health:** “Time management is about the quality of your time as well as quantity.” To be able to spend quality time on our job we must manage our health. We must not overdraw our energies to fall ill and

away from our job. We must learn to exercise, sleep well and to eat well. Take holidays to relax and reflect.

6.0 **Emotional Intelligence.** This is a coinage of Jack Mayer and Peter Salovey in 1990. The concept was popularized by Daniel Goleman in his book “Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ.”

IQ is the ability to acknowledge and handle emotions in yourself and in others, understand oneself and others and how to build positive working relationship. EI is also the ability to discover one’s strength and weaknesses with a view to improve for the better. It takes time. In fact it is a life journey.

According to Lee G., Jorge C. and Anita R. EI is about “good, hard and honest “ assessment of oneself to enable one to understand his motivations, feelings, reactions and behavior at a deeper level”

According to Daniel EI is the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and in ourselves and in our relationships.” EI according to Salovey and Meyer involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; ability to assess and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thoughts; ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge; ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Understanding EI has the following advantages:

- (i) It leads to greater performance
- (ii) Ability to recognize and respond to the feelings of oneself and to be more effective in discharging his role
- (iii) Encourages an emotional state
- (iv) Creating a positive emotional climate

- (v) Recognizing and working with your feelings, core staff and end users etc.

6.1 Social and emotional competence, and Emotional Literacy

Self-awareness – Being alert to your feelings

Self-regulation- Managing your feelings

Motivation: Using feelings to help achieve your goals

Empathy: Ability to understand how others perceive situations

Social Skills: Handling feelings well in interactions with others and ability to build genuine relationship

Personal Influence: Ability to inspire others through examples, words and deeds

- 6.2 **Emotional Literacy:** “the ability to understand your emotions, the ability to listen to others and empathise with their emotions, and the ability to express emotions productively.”

7.0 Conclusion:

To deliver as a public service department and as public servants we need to redefine our approach and attitude to the Ministry. We need to key into the mission and vision of the organisation we work. To succeed at work and in life we need to rework our relationship with time and must ensure we spend our quality time for valuable tasks. In other words, we must save and make the best use of available time. We must not allow our “time to be controlled by everyone and everything imaginable.” We must “govern the clock, not be governed by it.” To succeed one must have

clear goals and must allocate time to each of his goals. Since cannot be managed successful people take control of their time instead of time taking control over them. I will conclude adopting the words of John and Mellanie that the “good news is that you will never meet the perfect time manager. We all fall short. You are probably already very good at managing your time; in some respects, however, you realise that you now could be better.”

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