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https://www.100test.com/kao_ti2020/501/2021_2022__E9_AB_98_E7_BA_A7_E5_95_86_E5_c85_501331.htm Managing in the Present Present Tenses Focus: time management and current problems facing a service company 1. Management themes Read the following text and then discuss the questions below. Time management has become one of the key issues of the second half of the twentieth century. Managers, grappling with work pressures and deadlines, have come to recognise that time is a precious commodity to be ' saved ' , ' gained ' , and not ' wasted ' or ' lost ' . But if time is a commodity, how then can we best describe, measure and manage it? To describe and manage it, imagine a line that goes back to the beginnings of creation and continues into the mists of the future. And on that line are a number of significant marks-these separate the past from the present from the future. And within each time zone-past, present and future-we can differentiate periods of time from points of time. For example, the 1980s gave us a period of rapid economic growth. black Monday was a point of sudden financial catastrophe. How can this brief analysis help the international manager? Firstly, there is the link between past, present and future. In other words, historical performance should be a guide to the future, and the present ought to represent last year ' s forecast. So change-that which normally differentiates any two periods on our continuum-can be seen as a gradual evolution rather than a dramatic revolution. Secondly, the use of a time-planning system, on which

key points and periods are plotted, enables managers to organise their activities so that bottlenecks can be avoided and deadlines can be met. So stress, where the jobs to be done exceed the available time, can be reduced to an acceptable and productive level.

1.1 Discussion Does your organisation live in the present? Does it change with the times? Do you work in a stressful environment? Do you think that time management can reduce stress.

2. Listening You are going to hear an extract from a meeting between Anna, Brian and Pete, the three partners of Softsys, a small company supplying business software. The company was established two years ago and after a period of rapid growth is trying to consolidate its market position. As you listen, make notes of the tasks that are agreed and note the partner who is going to do the task.

Listening task (A=Anna. P=Pete. B=Brian)

P: I think we all feel that things are getting a little out of control. We ' re pushing ourselves almost to breaking point and I ' m worried that something ' s going to snap unless we take control of the situation.

B: Exactly. We have to start managing the business-rather than letting it manage us. So what can we do about it?

A: Well, the first thing we can do is to start planning. I mean up to now we have done everything by intuition, but I ' d like to know where we plan to be five years from now.

B: That ' s good-a long-term plan. OK, Pete, are you prepared to start working on it?

P: I can make some notes and circulate them. Then we can discuss them.

A: Good. P: Fine. A: Now what about roles? I mean I know that we each have got our own specialist functions within the organisation and that we also function pretty well as a team, but

perhaps we need a leader. P: You mean like a managing director? B: Yes, but I thought our philosophy was to keep a flat management structure. A: Yes, I accept that we don't want to create a hierarchy, but I still think that it can help us if we choose a managing partner who has overall control. P: Yes, I really don't think that will harm the relationship between us and I agree that it can help us to run the company more efficiently. B: Well, I am not totally convinced, but I'm willing to be persuaded. As you two are keen on the idea, why don't you prepare a paper about what the management structure would be and the functions of the managing partner? A: Well, I'd like to have a go at that. I'll prepare some notes and circulate them. Then we can discuss them at our next meeting. If that's OK with you, Brian? P: Yeah, fine by me. B: Well, we've talked about planning and managing. Now, what about improving the organisation? I think we need to look at how we can organise ourselves better. A: Well, having a managing partner should help. B: Of course, but we need to look at our own roles, too. P: To identify areas of responsibility? B: Yes, first the areas where each of us has the main responsibility and then the areas where we are involved, but not primarily responsible. Take purchasing, for example. We need to buy in goods everything from machines down to plugs. We buy in machines when a customer has placed an order and then we check cashflow and consult the others. But we buy the smaller items without any consultation. A: Oh, come on, we always discuss major purchases and the minor ones are made when we need to. We can't consult with each other for every bit of cable we buy. B: I know

we can't. But that's exactly why we need one person with responsibility for authorising purchases. Then we can consistently check where we can get the best value for money by putting one person in charge. And that person can reconcile the purchases made against the invoices that come in. It's simply a matter of streamlining the system-which must be in everyone's interest. A: So, what do you suggest? B: Well, I think we should each make a list of the major functions within the organisation. We've talked about purchasing. Then there's sales and after-sales service... P: ... and finance. B: Yes, and installation. Well, I'd like to see one person with primary responsibility for each area, just as we said for purchasing. And the others may have secondary responsibility for that area. So, I propose that I draw up a list of the primary areas or activities that we need to carry out, and then at the next meeting we decide who will have the primary responsibility for each. I'm sure it'll streamline our business. A: So, where does that leave us? P: With some homework to do and some key issues to discuss at our next meeting. By the way, when are we meeting? A: Well, let's say that...

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