# Transcript: IT Podcast - Ep 90 - Eisenhower Matrix Urgent v Important Principle for Time Management

*The following transcript is a verbatim account of the video or audio file accompanying this transcript.*

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

IT audio series, flexible, portable, profound.

Speaker #2 (Julian Cook):

Hello and welcome to the IT Audio Series. I'm Julian Cook and I've been a program mentor in the IT college since 2012.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

I'm Jessica Galterio and I've been a program mentor in the IT college since 2015. We talk about this a lot. Time management and prioritizing tasks is one of the most difficult parts of being a student. When we are adults, we tend to have a long to-do list as it is. But when you add being a full-time student into the mix, it becomes even more complicated. Today we're going to talk about a strategy that can help you to really determine which tasks get your attention most and which tasks can be put off, delegated or removed completely.

Speaker #2 (Julian Cook):

Humans aren't great at time management and making priorities. We take on large tasks that we get excited about without thinking about how we're going to be able to prioritize them in the future. We try to do things all by ourselves that we really can just break into smaller pieces and get some help on. We focus on small, almost irrelevant details because it's easier than tackling the more complicated things. Worst of all, we have no idea we're doing it. We believe that we are completely in control and we don't anticipate any outside forces having any impact on our abilities to complete our task.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

Man, this all sounds pretty bleak, how has humanity survive for this long?

Speaker #2 (Julian Cook):

That's a good question. Luckily, we have a tool here that can help you manage your to-do list and determine which things should be done first, which things can be done later, and what someone else can help with. Finally, what you don't even need to do at all.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

This is called the Eisenhower matrix. It's based on an idea from former President and General Eisenhower. He said, "Especially when our affairs seemed to be in crisis, we are almost compelled to give our first attention to the urgent present rather than to the important future." Meaning that we focus on what is right in front of us, no matter how important it ultimately is to our goals, and then have a tendency to put off or put aside the things that don't seem to have an impending deadline.

Speaker #2 (Julian Cook):

This leads us to some really negative feelings about how we approach things. I often hear people talk about how they feel like they're holding on by a thread trying to get everything accomplished in a day. People say they feel like they just don't have time to make progress on their long-term goals because every day there are new tasks they need to accomplish just to keep their heads above the water. If you feel this way, grab your to-do list. Let's take a look.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

Now. It's okay. You can pause for a second while you go grab it, get another piece of paper while you're at it to. Then draw a vertical line and a horizontal line through the center of the page. You should have four quadrants. At the top in what we call box 1, you write urgent and not urgent is box 2 to the right of it. Along the left side, write important and not important.

Speaker #2 (Julian Cook):

Let's start with the first box. This is where urgent and important come together. These are tasks that are in your face. Things like a scheduled exam, a medical emergency, a ringing phone with your boss on the other line, stopping a child from running into traffic. These are things you need to pay attention to right now or there will be consequences.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

The next box where not urgent and important come together. These are things that you need to do. Parts of your long-term goal, maybe scheduling an exam, creating your flashcard set, watching a video on your course material, building that model train with your son, going to the gym, writing scripts for a podcast. All of these tasks are important and all of them ultimately lead to furthering one of your long term big picture goals. Success in your education, your job, or your family.

Speaker #2 (Julian Cook):

These things are easy to put off because we're bombarded with the urgent. The best way to deal with these is to make them become urgent. Not by procrastinating them, but by scheduling them. Items that go in this box should be put on your calendar. Put them for a day and a time when you'll be able to focus on it. That way unless something truly both important and urgent comes up, if somebody is bleeding, deal with that. Something truly important and urgent comes up, then deal with that. Otherwise, that time is for this task, and this task only. Set up a reminder, set up a timer, get it done.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

Then there's third box where urgent and not important come along. People have a tendency to naturally spend a lot of time working on tasks that fall into this box. Because when something is urgent, it just feels more important than it is. This leads us to spend all of our time on things that are ultimately not furthering our goals.

Speaker #2 (Julian Cook):

Let's talk about an example a lot of us might relate to making dinner. Yes, you need to feed yourself and your family. You need to do it tonight, but does it have to be you? Maybe you can delegate this task in full, if you have a partner that can help or you can delegate it in part. Maybe they could just chop the veggies ahead of time for you. This is what works really well in my household. If delegating to another person in your household isn't an option. Is delegating in part, maybe outside of your household and option?

Something like maybe picking up vegetables that are maybe pre-chopped, or maybe using a meal service that can help you out. Other examples of tasks that can be delegated, maybe in whole or in part, might be picking up kids from school. Maybe your partner can help calling the vet to schedule your dogs checkup or grocery shopping. Those are things that can be delegated or that can be managed in such a way where they end up taking less of your time. I moved all my grocery shopping online and the past couple of years and it has saved me a ton of time that I can use on those more important tasks.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

Now, not everything in this box can be delegated, but do what you can to minimize the things that fall in this category. Turn off notifications while you're focusing on another task. Set clear boundaries on what you're able to do for others, be comfortable saying no. When you do have to do these other tasks, try to keep them from taking over completely. Now, we've been working from home here at WGU for a long time. But that was something that I really had to work on. My family just felt because they saw me that that could help them with anything urgently right now. While a lot of the times I did, I did have to draw a line with my family so that I could continue to work, stick to my call schedule, make sure I'm still doing my job ultimately rather than getting juice boxes.

Speaker #2 (Julian Cook):

Finally, the last box. Now this box is neither urgent or important, and these are things you really should not be spending any of your productive focus on. These are things like social media, video games, television, busy work. I'm not saying to cut leisure activities out of your life. These are important, and typically things like going to the gym, meditation, reading for pleasure, and catching up with your friends, fall in that category. But in order to lead a full life, you need to be sure to do these things. That said, moderation is important. There are studies out there that show how important leisure activities are. It's been shown that when people utilize their downtime for relaxations, that they're more productive in their professional lives. Part of the goal is to do these kinds of things, but not to let them take over the rest of our lives.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

For a lot of us our schoolwork falls squarely in the second box. It is important. It is something that we need to complete. But since WGU offer so much flexibility, it often doesn't feel as urgent as other tasks. Even if those other tasks are ultimately not as important as our goals. I've had many students over the years who spend their six month term with that box completely ignored while they put out urgent fires all around them until suddenly now they're in that urgent mess. They realize that their time is running out and their courses have moved boxes. This is a stressful place for school to live and it's not when or how students do their best work, and it will not lead to furthering your goals in the way that you anticipated when you started this program.

Speaker #2 (Julian Cook):

Sit down with your list, make your boxes, figure out where each of your tasks belongs. Your goals to spend as much time as you possibly can in that second box. Make those tasks that are important but not urgent, into urgent tasks for the time they are scheduled. Once you do that for a while and things start to fall into place, you'll realize that you don't feel the same anxiety about school that you might have felt before. He might feel hopeful, determined, and more confident that the goals that you've set out to accomplish are getting tackled. Once you reach that goal, you'll be able to celebrate your accomplishments.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

I agree completely. We hope that you enjoyed this episode of the IT Audio Series. If you are interested in learning more about time management or how to prioritize your tasks and goals. I highly recommend having a chat with your program mentor or checking out the Student Success Center. Thank you for listening.

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

Schedule time with your program mentor to explore more deeply. WGU, a new kind of U.