



THE ACTION PRIORITY MATRIX

APM is a tool that enables us to make the most of our time by helping us choose the right tasks and opportunities to pursue. An Action Priority Matrix makes it easier to make decisions and sets out clearly which activities must be finished on time and which activities can be omitted or performed at a later time.

How does the Action Priority Matrix Work?

The Action Priority Matrix uses a simple 4 square grid to categorize your tasks or activities according to:

- The amount of EFFORT involved in completing it
- The positive IMPACT once completed

IMPACT	High	QUICK WINS HIGH impact, LOW effort	BIG PROJECTS HIGH impact, High effort
	Low	FILLER TASKS LOW impact, Low effort	HARD SLOGS Low impact, High effort
		Low	High
		EFFORT	

QUICK WINS quadrant

"Quick wins" are just that - BIG impact for not much effort, they are the most attractive projects, because they give you a good return for relatively little effort.

BIG PROJECTS quadrant

Major projects give good returns, but they are time-consuming. Some ideas to consider for yourself or your clients:

- Block out time to do "Big Projects"
- Plan, prepare and clarify required outputs
- Agree goals, dates and break down big tasks into smaller chunks - creating smaller, lower effort tasks
- Identify tasks on your list that are interdependent, for example tasks that need to be finished before you start the next one. Mark these tasks as a priority.



FILLER TASK quadrant

The Filler task quadrant, are jobs which are low in both impact and required effort. As the name would suggest, these are good tasks to perform when you are in between jobs on other projects. Keep these tasks off to the side and have them available when you have a hole in your day to fill. These are often necessary tasks that need doing, but may not have a bottom-line benefit.

An important question to ask is:

-Is this low impact task *really* necessary?

THANKLESS quadrant

Dropping down to the bottom right of the matrix, we find the jobs that no one wants to do – the Thankless Tasks. These duties do not provide much in the way of an impact on the company, but they do require a lot of time and effort.

In this quadrant try *first* asking, "How can this task be avoided altogether?"

There are many ways to avoid a task including:

- Simply not doing it (let whoever needs to know first!)
- Lowering your standards in order to let go of this task

If this task must get done ask, you could:

- Delegate it. Ask, "Who else might enjoy this task, could do it faster or could you delegate to who would benefit from the experience?"
- Pay someone to do it
- Do a swap with someone (you do something for them, they do this for you)
- Get creative! What OTHER ways are there to approach this task?
- Offer yourself an enticing reward for when it's done...

How to use the Action Priority Matrix

Step 1:

Make a list of all your activities.

Step 2:

Score the activities based on their impact and the effort you have to put into them to complete them. You can use a school grading scale from A (= high) to F (= low) or a 1-10 scale, or any other scale to score the activities according to their impact and effort needed to complete them.

Step 3:

Plot the activities on your Action Priority Matrix based on their scores.

Step 4:

Prioritize your activities.



Action priority matrix worksheet

Activity	Impact (0 – 10) 0 = No impact 10 = Maximum impact	Effort (0 – 10) 0 = No effort 10 = Maximum effort

