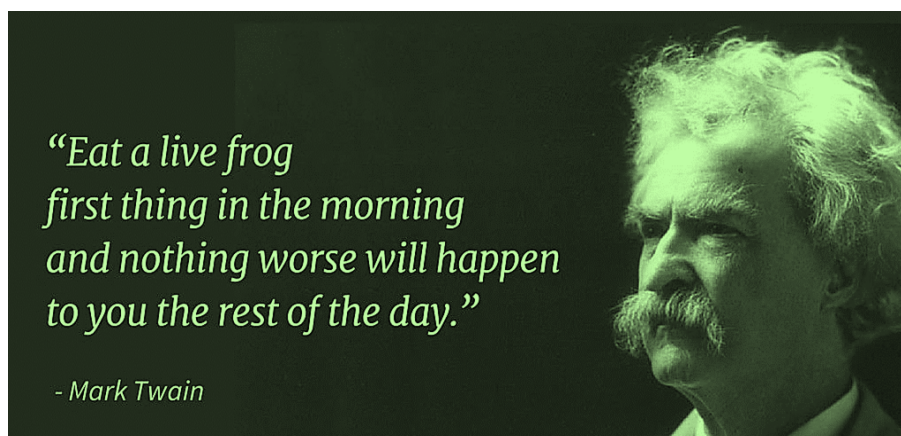


Eat a live frog for breakfast
A delectable look at time management



In a busy world with a barrage of tasks, e-mails and Zoom calls coming your way, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Each day brings a range of tasks to be completed, some are often unexpected, and you find that non-urgent but important work can go further down your list of priorities. Procrastination can manifest itself in your routines and before you know it, the day is done, and those less urgent tasks have been pushed further and further into your week.

A technique I like to follow is the concept referred to by some management consultants as 'Eat that frog', based on a quote from the author Mark Twain:



Now I am not advocating that you literally eat a live frog for your breakfast, however, we can draw parallels to our tasks. Think of the frog as that task you have been putting off and imagine it perched on your desk mocking you, emitting an odour, and being in the back of your mind while you try to work on other tasks. What if you just decide to 'eat' this 'frog', albeit rather unpalatable, and get this task over and done with. Voilà, you can now relax a bit with that weight off your shoulders.

I often employ this tactic at my family Christmas dinner where I eat the Brussel sprouts first (never been a fan...), getting this painful part over with and then I can relax and enjoy the fine meat and potatoes afterwards. I highly recommend this metaphor when managing your work week. Your biggest frog could be something like a meeting report to write, an important conversation to have or a large document you have been asked to review within a deadline.

Another tool I like to use is Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Principle. Former US President Dwight D. Eisenhower once said: 'I have two kinds of problems: the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent', which was the basis of how he organised his work. Tasks can be organised using the criteria important/unimportant and urgent/not urgent and then placed into the matrix below. What we really want is to have more time to spend working on the tasks in quadrant 2 (shown in green), which require planning and critical thinking.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	1. Necessity – Reduce Meet important commitments and deal with critical issues as they arise.	2. Quality – Increase Important goals. Focus and plan proactive actions to reduce quadrant 1.
Not Important	3. Interruptions – Manage Things that <i>appear</i> to be worth doing. Cut short, delegate or reject.	4. Distractions – Avoid Time wasting activities.

1

By mapping out your tasks for a week, you can identify your biggest frog, and find yourself with a lot more time on your hands to spend on those tasks and goals that really matter.

We wish to thank our colleague Dan Donachie for writing this article for the OIE In-house Times.

■ OIE In-house Times – November 2020

¹ <https://www.bytestart.co.uk/coveys-matrix-time-management.html>