



**ATLANTA CHALLENGE**

Building extraordinary teams and leaders

# OPTIMIZE YOUR WORK

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To lower your stress and improve your effectiveness.





## OPTIMIZE WORK EXERCISE

*This powerful exercise can help you identify the activities on your plate that are draining your energy and diminishing your performance. By clearly seeing this pattern, you can make strategic decisions that will optimize your energy and your effectiveness.*

### **STEP ONE**

List the primary functions you carry out in a typical day (or week, if appropriate) on the “Activities Chart.”

### **STEP TWO**

Also on the “Activities Chart,” estimate the amount of time you currently spend engaged in those activities, and the amount of time you would prefer to spend in those activities.

### **STEP THREE**

Map out those activities on the “Current Matrix.” Remember that sometimes only a portion of an activity belongs in one quadrant, so feel free to map out each activity accordingly (see sample).

### **STEP FOUR**

Map out your preferred time allotments on the “Desired Matrix.”

### **STEP FIVE**

Review the list of “Strategies For Optimization” and select which approach you will use for each task that you want to change your time allocation.

### **STEP SIX**

When you are done evaluating your work day, consider going through this exercise again and taking a look at how you can optimize your personal time.



## ABOUT THE QUADRANTS

### IMPACT

This measures the degree to which an activity “moves the ball forward” in your work. Does a given activity strongly contribute to your success (performance, goals, etc.), only mildly support your progress, or does it actually get in the way of progress because it eats up too much time? Think about how important the outcome of the activity truly is, and how important it is for YOU to be the one doing it.

### BATTERY

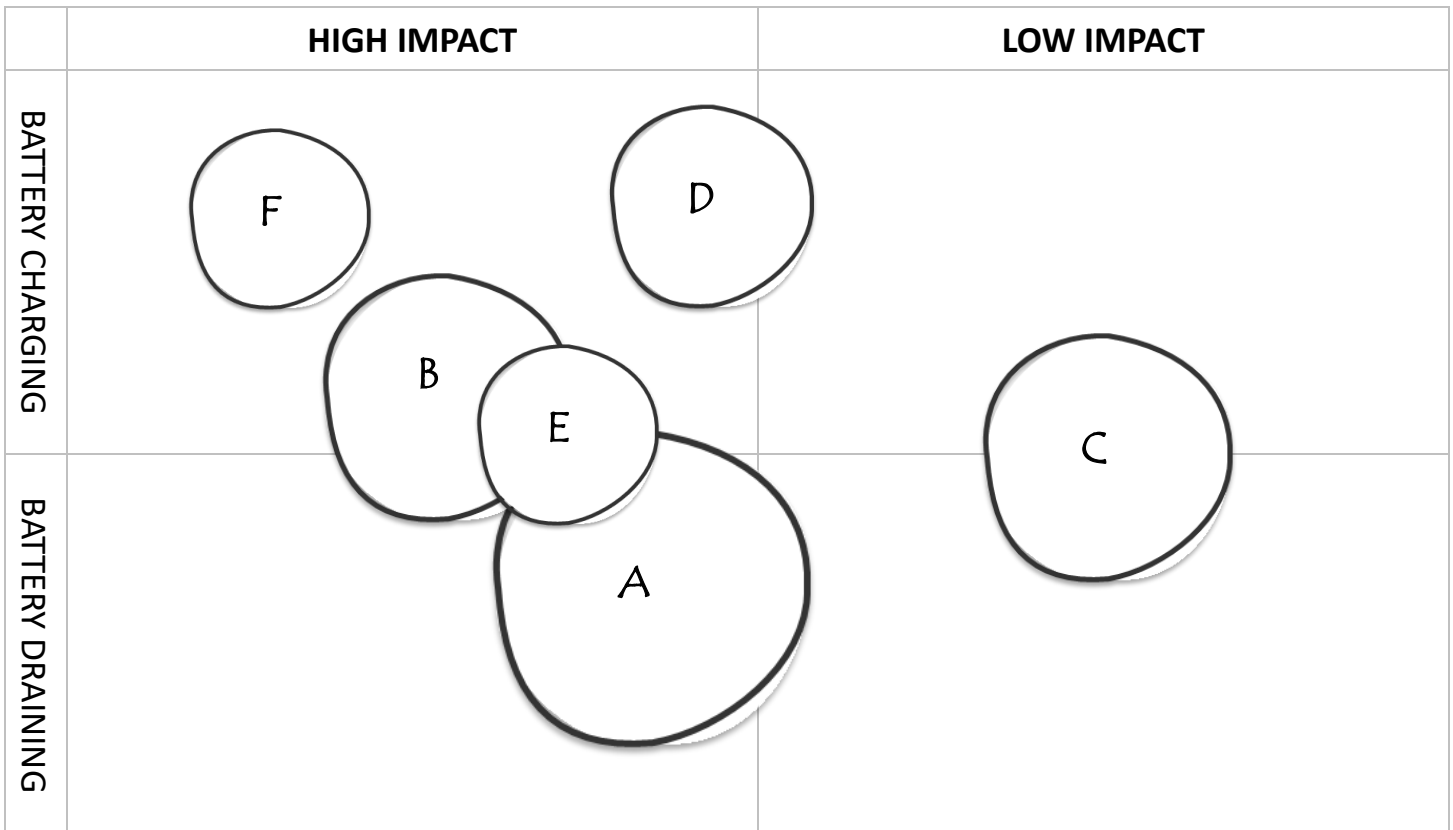
While you are engaged in the activity, do you feel energized, excited, fulfilled, recharged? Or does this activity leave you feeling more burned out than it seems like it should? There are always some activities that we have to do regardless of how we feel about them, but if we can improve the ratio of battery charging activities, our performance grows exponentially.

|                  | HIGH IMPACT  | LOW IMPACT   |
|------------------|--|--|
| BATTERY CHARGING | <b>OPTIMAL WORK</b><br>Ideally 75% of your time is spent in this quadrant.                             | <b>TEMPTATIONS/BREAKS</b><br>OK as an occasional way of charging yourself up, so long as it is in moderation.<br><br>Be honest with yourself about low impact. |
| BATTERY DRAINING | <b>OBLIGATIONS</b><br>Most jobs include some elements of this. But too much of it can lead to burnout. | <b>WASTE OF TIME</b><br>Must be eliminated.  |



## SAMPLE

|    | ACTIVITY / FUNCTION<br><i>(typical day or typical week)</i> | % Time  |           | STRATEGY FOR SHIFTING<br><i>(Shift / Trade / Rebalance)</i> |
|----|---|---------|-----------|---|
|    |   | Current | Preferred |   |
| A. | <i>Engineering Management</i>                               | 25      | 10        | <i>Delegate</i>   |
| B. | <i>Process Improvement</i>                                  | 20      | 20        | <i>Shift</i>  |
| C. | <i>DevOps</i>   | 20      | 10        | <i>Rebalance</i>  |
| D. | <i>Coding</i>   | 15      | 20        | <i>Shift, Rebalance</i>                                     |
| E. | <i>Platform Architecture</i>                                | 10      | 15        | <i>Shift, Rebalance</i>                                     |
| F. | <i>Customer Troubleshooting</i>                             | 10      | 25        | <i>Rebalance</i>  |





# ACTIVITIES CHART

List your primary activities in a typical day, or a typical week.

|    | ACTIVITY / FUNCTION<br><i>(typical day or typical week)</i> | % Time  |           | STRATEGY FOR SHIFTING<br><i>(Shift / Trade / Rebalance)</i> |
|----|---|---------|-----------|---|
|    |   | Current | Preferred |   |
| A. |   |         |           |   |
| B. |   |         |           |   |
| C. |   |         |           |   |
| D. |   |         |           |   |
| E. |   |         |           |   |
| F. |   |         |           |   |
| G. |   |         |           |   |
| H. |   |         |           |   |
| I. |   |         |           |   |
| J. |   |         |           |   |
| M. |   |         |           |   |
| N. |   |         |           |   |



## CURRENT MATRIX

|                  | HIGH IMPACT | LOW IMPACT |
|------------------|-------------|------------|
| BATTERY CHARGING |             |            |
| BATTERY DRAINING |             |            |

## DESIRED MATRIX

|                  | HIGH IMPACT | LOW IMPACT |
|------------------|-------------|------------|
| BATTERY CHARGING |             |            |
| BATTERY DRAINING |             |            |



## STRATEGIES FOR OPTIMIZATION

### Shift from Saboteur to Sage

By identifying our Saboteur patterns and how they effect our mindset, we can often find that the task itself isn't the problem, it's how we think about the task. Carefully and honestly look at the tasks in your "Battery Draining" category and consider if it is the activity that drains you, or the way that you perceive the activity.

If you are judging yourself, the constant self criticism , stress, and even fear, can be exhausting. Are your Saboteurs creating stress in you to keep you on task, or punish others for giving you the task? Focus on what is good about the task. Few things are 100%, so try to find 75% good in it and see what happens to your approach.

If you are judging others for not doing it right so you have to do it yourself, or judging others for unfairly putting the work on you, stress will build up and your performance will go down. Try having empathy for others, and seeing things from their perspective. Perhaps there is an opportunity to work with others to make things better.

Your energy will also be sapped by judging the task itself (or other circumstances) as bad. Look for what is a gift in the situation. How does this activity give you more knowledge, more strength, or more inspiration (to outgrow it!)?

### Delegate/Trade

Some activities utilize capabilities that are not in our strong suit. We can work through some of these, but too many of them drain us and prevent peak performance. Look at ways you can delegate those tasks to someone better suited to them so you can focus on your sweet spot. And when it comes time to let it go, check to see how your Saboteurs may react.

### Rebalance Time Allocation

Review your activities and look for ways that you can set a limit on the time you spend on that activity. Sometimes, when we dislike something, we end up dragging it out. Sometimes, we can find a more efficient way to handle the process, but when we are in Saboteur mode it is hard to see other options.

### Re-Think Your Approach

Look at the tasks that you can't move and see which Thinking Style you typically employ to get them done. See if you can find ways to change your approach that are more in line with your style.