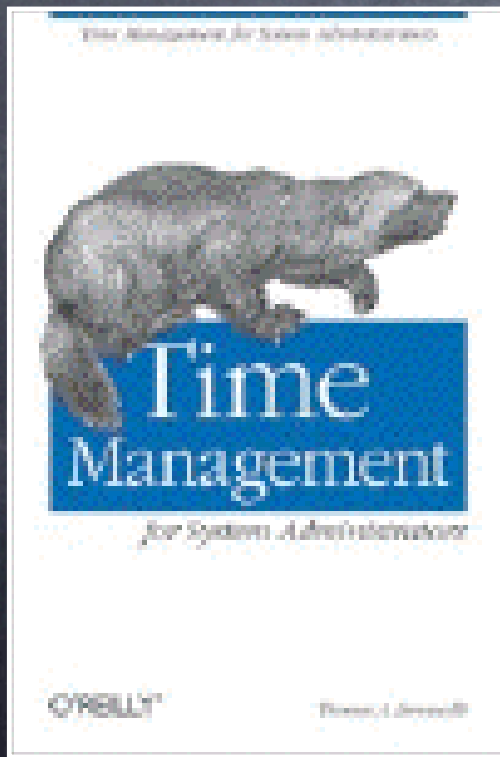


Time Management for SAs

by Thomas A. Limoncelli

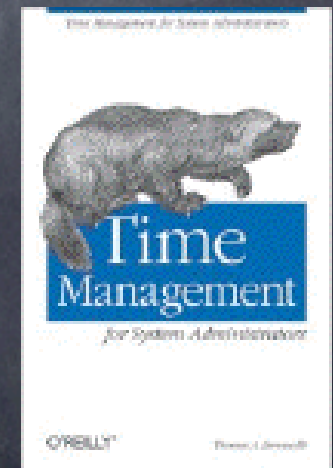
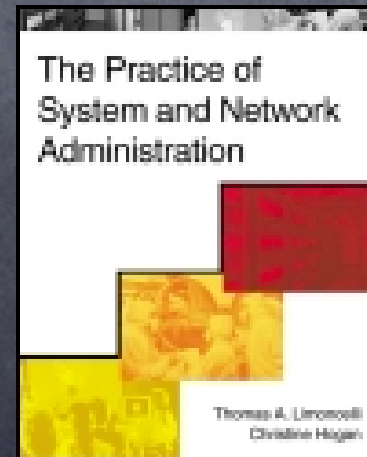


Presentation for
\$GROUPNAME
2005-11-09

www.EverythingSysadmin.com

Who is this guy?

- SA since 1988, UNIX since 1991
- Has worked at companies such as Cibernet Corp, Dean For America, Lumeta, Bell Labs
- Books:
 - "Time Management for System Administrators"
 - "The Practice of System and Network Administration"



Meeting with my boss

8 hours a week

=

2.5 months

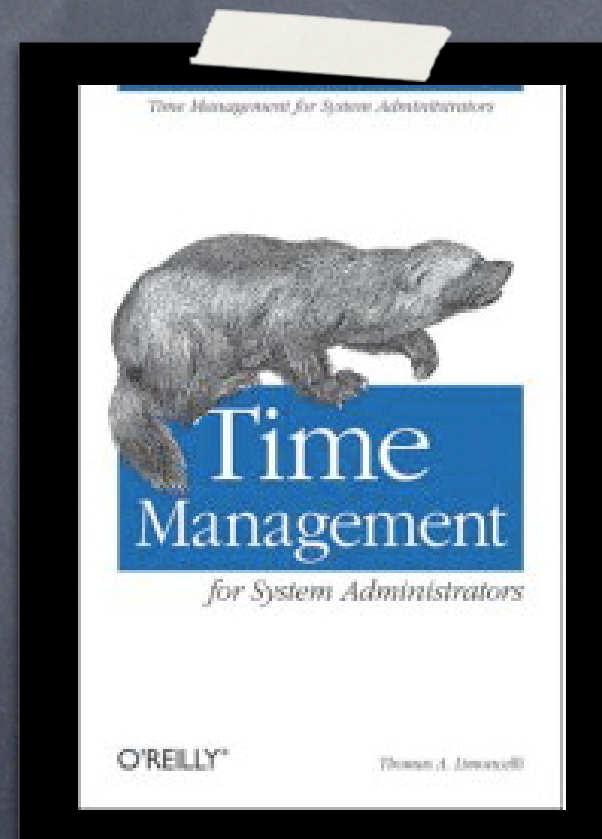
Poll:

Your biggest time
management issues

Why TM for Sysadmins?

- The problems are different
 - Higher degree of customer interruptions
 - ...and still expected to get projects done...
- The solutions are different
 - We're geeks, we can use tools
- Lack of mentoring
 - Other careers have more opportunities for mentoring on these issues.
 - Most SA mentoring is technical

- Preface
- Foreword
- 1. Principles
- 2. Focus vs. Interruptions
- 3. Routines
- 4. The Cycle System:
- 5. >>ToDo Lists and Schedules
- 6. >>Calendar Management
- 7. >>Life Goals
- 8. Prioritization
- 9. Stress Management
- 10. Email Management
- 11. Eliminating Time Wasters
- 12. Documentation
- 13. Automation
- Epilogue



Principles of Time Management

Principles

- ① **One System:** Keep all time-management information in once place
- ① **Conserve Brain Power:** Avoid distractions, focus on one thing at a time
- ① **Use Routines:** Mass-produce things that you do often. Think once, do many
- ① **Same tools everywhere:** Use the same tools for your personal-life

Maintaining Focus

Effective "project time"

"The SA life is divided between putting out fires, and building new buildings."

Focus is
concentrated
effort.

Focus problems we cause

- A messy desk
- Visually complex items in front of us
- Icons on our desktop, Instant messenger clients, music, stock tickers, news tickers, "you have new mail" notifiers, games, multitasking overload.
- **Clean up your workspace -- Free your mind!**

Mutual Interruption Shield

- Take turns "fielding interruptions" with a co-worker to permit uninterrupted project time
- You field interrupts in the AM, they do it for you in the PM.

Change Official Structure

- Split into a tier 1 / tier 2 structure
 - Tier 1 -- "Customer facing"
 - Handles 80%, bumps 20% up to tier 2
 - Tier 2 -- "Project & Engineering"
- Physical layout:
 - Make sure customers must trip over "customer facing" people to get to Tier 2.
 - Move Tier 1 offices to high-traffic areas
 - keep Tier 2 relatively obscured

Handling Interrupts
without being a JERK

For each request

Pick one:

- Record it
- Delegate it
- Do it

When to "record it"?

- I'm in the middle of another project
- Not urgent
- Not a "while you wait" request

When to "delegate"?

- Someone else can do it
- Too urgent to put off

When to "do it"?

- Emergency -- outage affecting multiple people.
- It's my job to react in this situation.
- Requests from my boss.

Theory where you least
expect it.

What do Sysadmins Do?

- Simple things, done once
- Hard things, done once

- Simple things, done often
- Hard things, done often

Rarely



Easy



Hard



Often



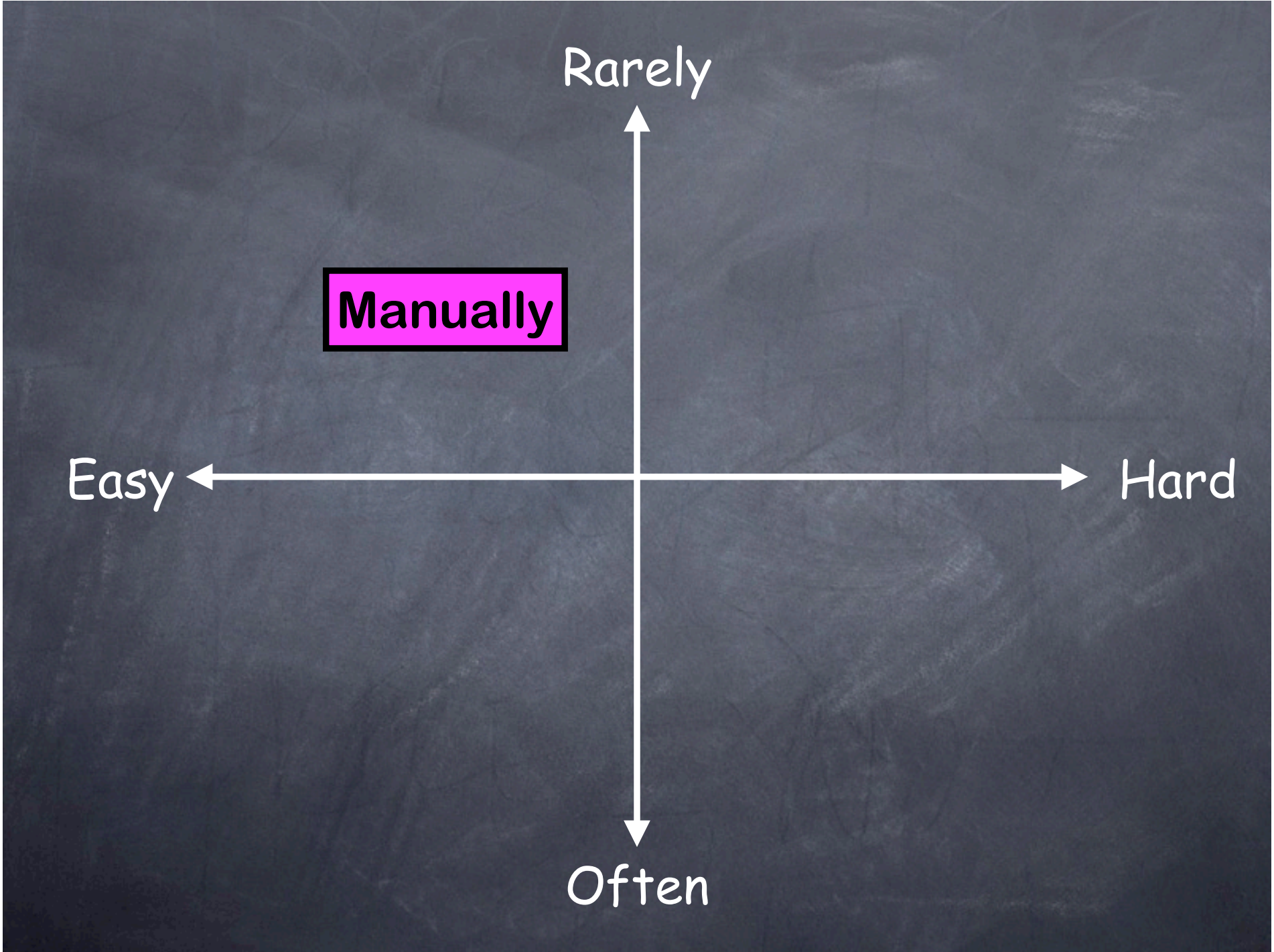
Rarely

Manually

Easy

Hard

Often



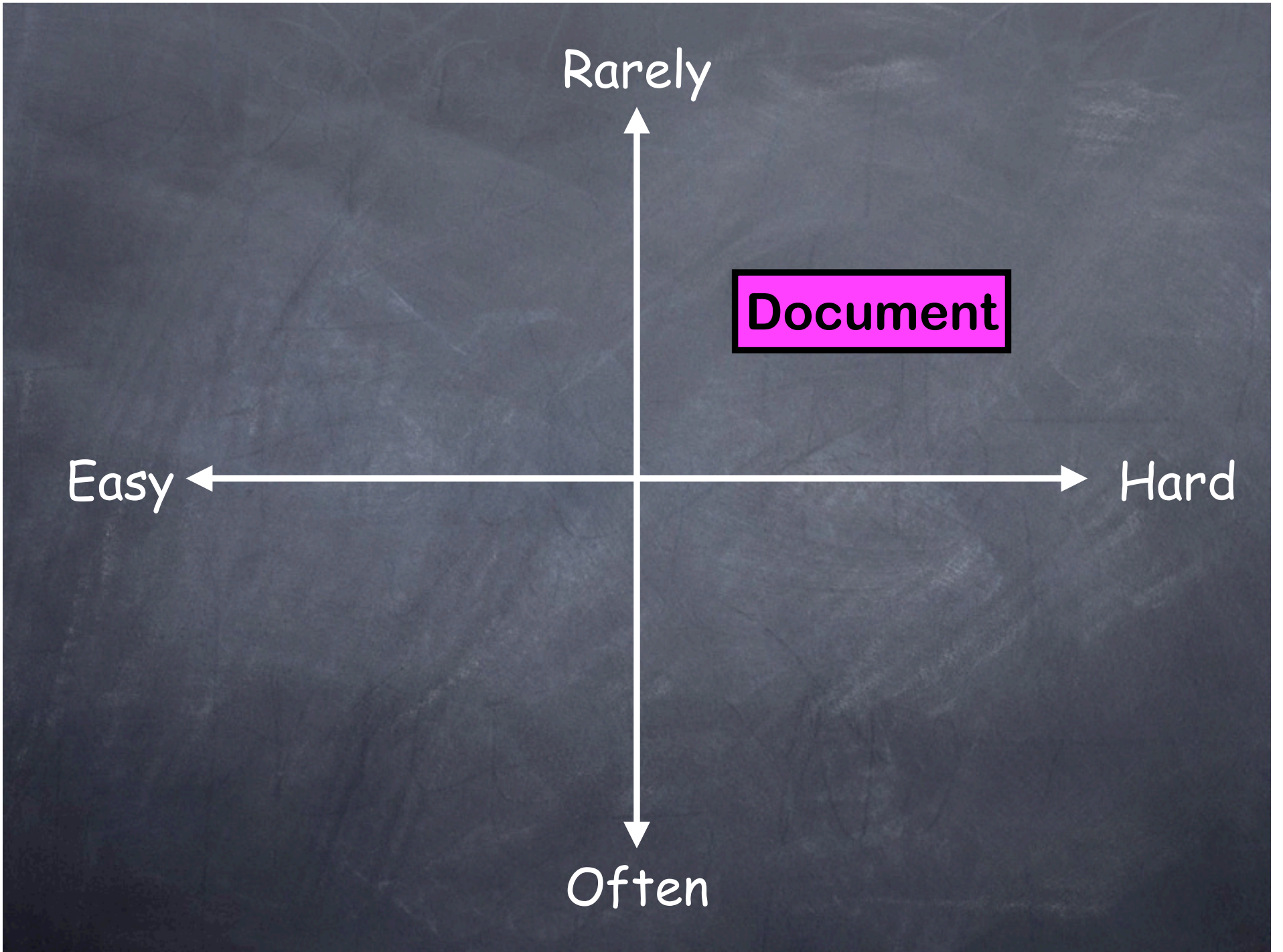
Rarely

Document

Easy

Hard

Often



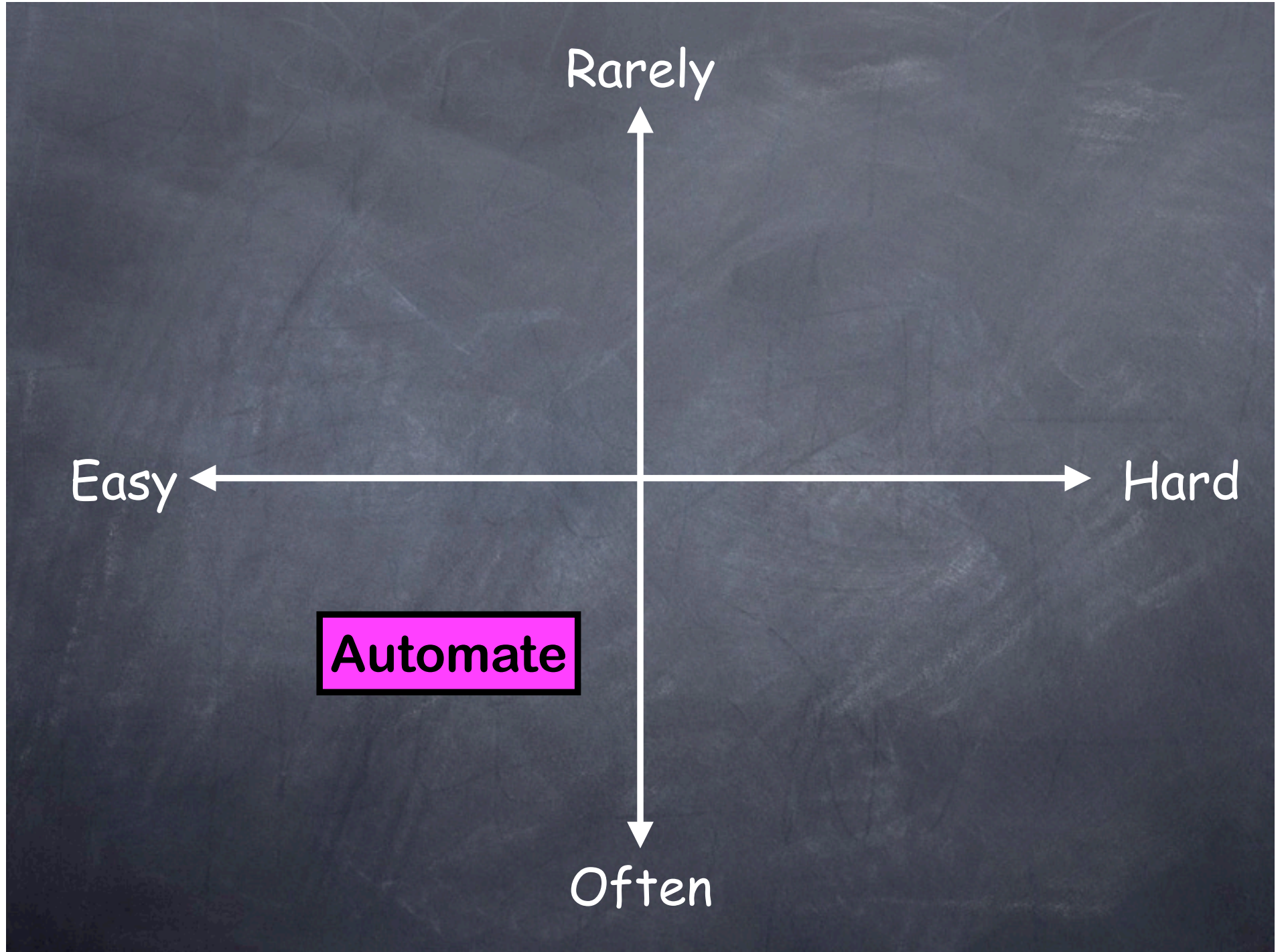
Rarely

Easy

Hard

Automate

Often



Rarely



Easy



Hard



Purchase

Often



Rarely

Manually

Document

Easy

Hard

Automate

Purchase

Often

Routines

Get into that old, boring
routine!

"I wish I never woke up this morning
Life was easy when it was boring."

Darkness, The Police

Turn chaos into routines

- Schedule key meetings the same time(s) each week
- "Gasoline on Sunday"
- "Empty water from A/C reservoir as you enter the building."

Developing your routines

- Repeated events that aren't scheduled
- When procrastinating takes longer than the task itself
- Things you forget often
- Low-priority tasks that can be skipped now and then but shouldn't be
- Maintenance tasks: IT is like gardening
- Relationship development: Borders require upkeep

Good habits save time

- Hesitate before pressing ENTER
- "ping" before and after disconnecting any cable
- Always backup a file before it is edited.
- Check for keys before leaving car, house, office, secured area, etc.

Automatic "Yes" Answers

- Would this be a good time to save my work?
- Should I bring my PDA/PAA with me?
- Should I record this task/event/date in my PDA/PAA?
- Should I call now that I'm going to be late?

The Cycle System

The Cycle combines

- A Datebook/Calendar
 - Track appointments, commitments, events
- Maintaining a Todo list
 - Perfect follow-through / Never forget a task
- Long-term and Life Goals
 - Get where you want to go

The "Todo List"

How do you remember user requests?

Zillions of Scattered
Notes

vs.

The Never-Ending List
of Dooooooooom

How to make "todo lists" work?

- One to-do list per day
- Kept in a single place
- With you all the time
- Easy to access

Tom's Item Marking System

X Done

— Moved to future day

NO Decided not to do it, record why & who told

- Delegated, record "to whom"

<May 14> More info on May 14's page

First sheet should look like:

	AB	Prioritized Daily Task List
X		Create account for new user "Bob"
—		Test new GCC
X		Report bug: netscan off-by-1 error
—		Call JP: demo of new VPN product
		Add web page: new support hours
		Cricket: monitor new router

End of day: 2 items left!

	AB	Prioritized Daily Task List
X		Create account for new user "Bob"
—		Test new GCC
X		Report bug: netscan off-by-1 error
—		Call JP: demo of new VPN product
		Add web page: new support hours
		Cricket: monitor new router

Move last 2 items

	AB	Prioritized Daily Task List
X		Create account for new user "Bob"
—		Test new GCC
X		Report bug: netscan off-by-1 error
—		Call JP: demo of new VPN product
—		Add web page: new support hours
—		Cricket: monitor new router

Leave work with a smile

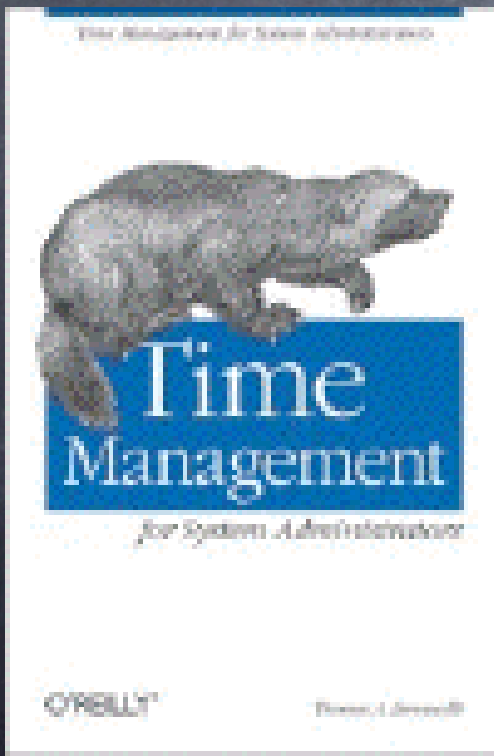
- Clear your "todo" list at the end of the day by moving & marking.
- Leave knowing you've "managed" all items.
- Benefit of paper planner: Physical effort to move items an incentive to get them done.

Advanced Techniques

- Start the day by...
 - More tasks than can fit in a day?
 - Start the day by rescheduling overflow
 - Prioritize the tasks
 - FIFO, "high impact", "expectation"
- Big projects?
 - Scatter tasks on different pages
- Techniques for dealing with huge overload

What are you going
to do with all your
new free time?

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On Sale Nov 20! Pre-order now!



Q&A

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