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### Key Finding

Relying on the clock compromises individuals' control and ability to savour positive experiences.

### Business Application

While organising business activities around the clock has been found to maximise efficiency gains, it can simultaneously compromise effectiveness, a critical goal of the new economy. As a result, clock-independent organisational processes need to be formalised.

People around the world adopt two styles to manage their activities over time: “clock time” and “event time”. With clock time, people slice time into standard and quantifiable units and let an external clock dictate when activities begin and end. A clock-time day might start with waking up at 7 am, arriving at work at 9 am, meeting co-workers from 9 am to 12 pm, having lunch until 1 pm and working on the business model until 7 pm. A second style is “event time”, where activities are planned relative to other activities; people begin an activity conditional on having completed a previous activity. An event-time day could start with waking up naturally, going to work when you feel ready, meeting co-workers until the goal of the meeting is achieved, having lunch when you feel ready for it, and working on the business model until you feel it's time to “call it a day”. In event time, individuals transition from one activity to the next when they sense that the previous activity is completed. Their schedule is not dictated by the clock.

Decades of economics research have advocated that relying on clock time is the one best way to organise business activities in modern societies. While managers' reliance on clock time has undeniably generated unprecedented efficiency gains on standardised tasks, my research suggests that it might be time to question the pervasiveness of clock time as managers actively shape the new economy. My colleagues and I have found deep psychological implications of relying on either scheduling style that go well beyond the mere organisation of activities. First, individuals relying on the clock perceive their activities as independent of one another significantly more than event-time individuals do. As a result, clock-time individuals feel less connected to their environment, think that they have less control over it and consider that their actions affect the environment less than event-time individuals do. Second, clock-time individuals savour positive experiences significantly less than event-time individuals do. This is an issue, since the ability to savour is a critical antecedent of several management goals, such as entrepreneurial success. Our current research is concentrating on distinguishing when managers should rely on one style versus the other, and what new organisational processes should be implemented to foster both efficiency and effectiveness.

**Read more:** Sellier, A.-L., Avnet, T. (2014), “So What if the Clock Strikes? Scheduling Style, Control, and Well-Being”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 107(5), 791–808.



**Anne-Laure Sellier** is an Associate Professor in Marketing at HEC Paris. She is a leading expert on the psychology of time and creativity. To know more, visit her [website](#).

**Research interests:** time perception, creativity, self-control, social influence, conformity; more generally, the intertwining of cognitions and emotions in judgement and decision-making.