

Practical Course in Time Management

Effective Time Management



"Money is expensive. Human life is more expensive. And time is the most expensive."

Alexander Suvorov.



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What Is This Course About?

First of all, the goal of this course is to make you sure that you can have time to do much more in this life! And you need to know and follow simple rules for that.

It will not take you more than an hour to read this book, while the principles described in it will help you for the rest of your life.

The book contains the exact and reliable instructions on how to manage your time and thus complete more in less time.

After you read the book, you will know:

- how to complete more and make more money in less time
- where to find time for your family, friends, sport
- how to do your job with pleasure, without tension and nerves.

First step: Plan! Prioritize! Act!

The entire time management comes down to three magical words: **Plan, Prioritize, Act**. That's what all books on time management are about. It's just that they deliver it from different angles, from different points of view, in different ways.

The main time management rule is not to do everything, but **to do the main things**. No person has ever managed to complete all tasks because there are always more tasks than time. It is important to do the **main things**, those that produce 80% of the result. As it was said above, the entire time management comes down to three words: Plan, Single out the main things, Act.

Plan – it means you have to make up the list of tasks that have to be done.

Prioritize – it means that you should select the main tasks from the entire list of tasks

Act – it means you should directly complete the main tasks first.

To do right now:

- 1. Create the list of all your activities you want to be engaged in in the near future*
- 2. Select the most important things from the list - those that will produce 80% of the result.*
- 3. Get down to the most important task!*

Second step: Prepare your time management tools

The second rule of time management says: keep your mind free. It means that your mind must be always free for new thoughts, ideas. You must not always keep in mind lists of tasks - what to do, phone numbers, addresses, etc. - all this information should be stored on an external device. That is why you need tools for effective time management. You should use the following tools:

- 1) LeaderTask organizer
- 2) PDA or phone
- 3) notebook

You are likely to have a PDA or a regular mobile phone already, the key point is that it has to support the dictating machine feature. It is convenient to dictate tasks when you cannot use a computer and a notebook.

A notebook will be useful because it is the simplest thing that will work literally everywhere.

The LeaderTask organizer is the main time management tool, you can enter all your information into it: task lists, appointments, contacts, aims, projects. LeaderTask will securely store all the necessary information. Besides, the program will work from a flash drive, which means it will be with you wherever you are! To start working with the program, you should download and install it on your computer.

To do right now:

1. *Install the LeaderTask organizer. Download: <http://www.leadertask.com/download/leader.exe>*
2. *Set the button on your PDA/phone that will be convenient for you to start the dictating machine*
3. *Prepare a comfortable notebook and a pencil.*

Third step: Use the LeaderTask organizer

Let's start from the most important thing – how to use the three magical words of time management in the LeaderTask organizer:

- Creating the list of your tasks (Plan!).
- Setting deadlines and priorities (Prioritize!).
- Viewing tasks for Today (Act!).

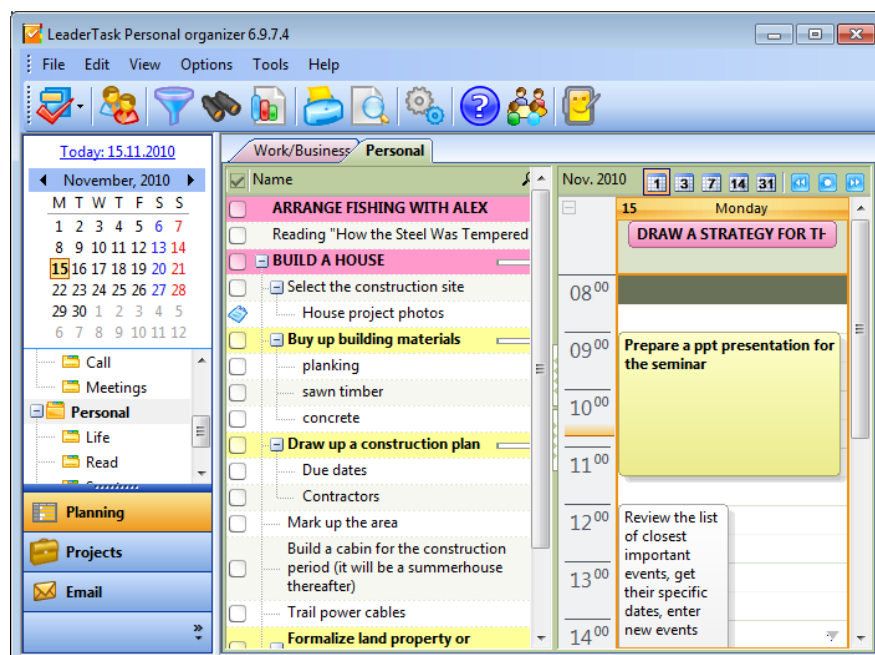
Creating the list of your tasks

To start planning your time effectively, you should create the list of all tasks that need to be done in the near future and later on. Launch LeaderTask and start using it.

There are three ways to add a new task:

- Press the Ins key
- Click the right mouse button and select “Add Task” on the menu
- Select the "Add Task" button on the toolbar

Use the way that is convenient for you to add all tasks to LeaderTask.



Setting dates and priorities

After the task list is ready, you should specify what and when to do. If the task is to be completed on a certain day, you need to set the date for it when it will be due.

There are several ways to set a date for a task:

- click the “Date” button in the task properties
- drag and drop the task from the tree to the necessary date in the calendar.

To highlight the main tasks (i.e. the most important ones), you should set the corresponding priority for them. There are several ways to set a priority:

- Press the Ctrl+PgUp keyboard shortcut
- Click the “Priority” button in the task properties and set the necessary priority for the task

To sort your tasks by priority, click the header of the “Name” column. This way you will sort them by their importance: the most important ones will be at the top, while the least important will be at the bottom.

Viewing tasks for Today

After you make up the list of your tasks, specify dates for them and set their priorities, you can get down to these tasks. To see what you have to do today, click the “Today” button located under the Calendar in the Navigator. After you select “Today”, the task tree will show tasks planned for today, tasks with no dates specified for them and overdue tasks. Thus the “Today” view shows all tasks that are to be dealt with today. And you do not have to view previous days in order not to forget anything. All necessary tasks will be in Today. If you move

some task from “Today” to some future date, this task will be shown on that date and will not interfere with current tasks.

Use the GTD (Getting Thing Done) system

Getting Things Done or GTD is an action management strategy and also a system of methods and techniques the purpose of which is to help a modern person complete more and get tired less. The GTD abbreviation stands for Getting Things Done, which is the name of a book by an American business trainer David Allen.

The main principles of GTD with examples of how it can be done in the LeaderTask organizer:

1) Organizing information. All incoming information must be stored in one place. This way it is easier to view it and find what you need. All information should be divided into actions, i.e. what you should do (they are called “Tasks” in the LeaderTask organizer), and reference information (it is called “Notes” in the LeaderTask organizer).

2) Grouping tasks by context. You should combine things with the same context (“kairos” in time management terms): place, person, calls, events... (it is called “Categories” in the LeaderTask organizer). It is much more effective to do things that share the same context, even if these things belong to different projects.

Examples:

“Calls” context: it is better to make all calls planned for a working day at one time, i.e. to allot some time and make all people you need.

“Bank” context: it is also better to add all tasks related to the bank to the “Bank” category, this way you can complete all tasks during one visit to the bank.

“John Smith” context: You should link tasks related to a certain person (it is called “Contact” in the LeaderTask organizer): ask, make an agreement, discuss - with this contact. When you call or see this contact, you can see all tasks you can complete with this contact at once.

You can get tasks with the necessary context from LeaderTask with one click by selecting the necessary category/contact.

In other words, grouping tasks by context = doing relevant things right here right now.

3) Criteria for selecting tasks to do

- 1. By context (what is to be done in this place? with this person? during this event?)
- 2. By time (what is to be done at this time? and do I have time to do it?)
- 3. By effort (do I have energy to complete this task?)
- 4. By priorities (what is the most important thing to do?)

All criteria except for # 3 (since the computer cannot decide how you feel) are present in LeaderTask:

Context and time are implemented in “Categories”, “Contacts”, “Time periods (dates)”, “Projects”.

Priorities are implemented in LeaderTask as priorities and users can define their own set of priorities and group tasks using this set.

4) Natural planning model.

The model of planning a project proposed by David Allen:

1. Define the purpose (“what for”) and principles of work.
2. Envision the desired outcome
3. Brainstorm the way how to achieve this outcome
4. Organize your work
5. Define nearest actions

Projects are represented as a separate section in LeaderTask. Project properties include its goals, the responsible person, its time frame, the “Completed” checkbox. All projects actions (tasks) are kept within its context, i.e. displayed when it is active.

5) Weekly review.

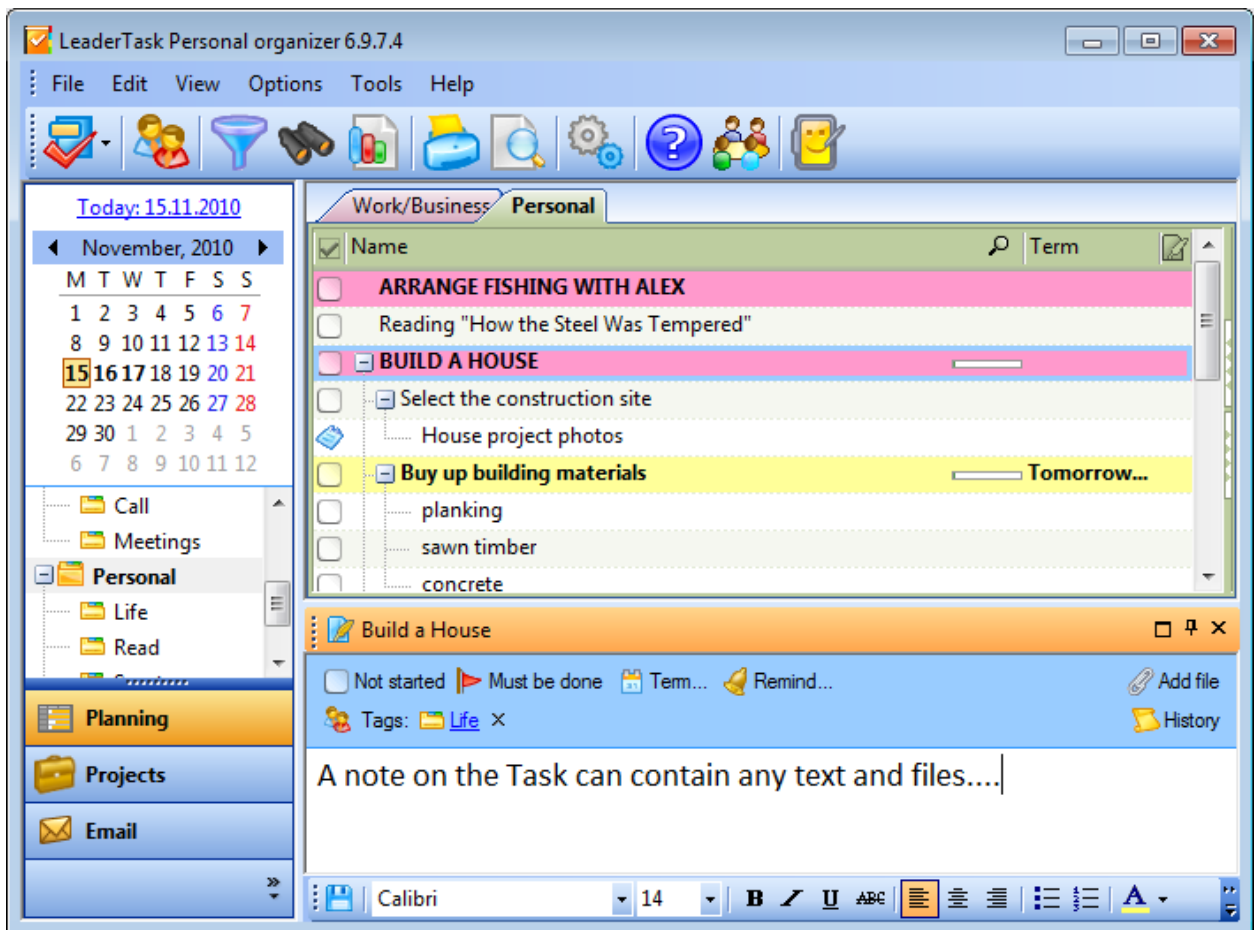
The number of tasks is constantly increasing, ideas, thoughts, solutions keep coming to us all the time. There are useful and not very useful ones among them. For you not to get lost in heaps of your own plans, David Allen recommends that you do a review at least once a week - "Weekly review". This review will help you get rid of irrelevant tasks, make your goals clearer, evaluate how close you are to your goals, etc.

It is the way how convenient you can view tasks that is the main feature of LeaderTask. You can view your tasks using the "Navigator" (displaying tasks filtered by "In", Today, Projects, Categories) and also "Filters", i.e. predefined sets of criteria tasks will be filtered by.

Sample filters:

"My today tasks", "Bank tasks", "IMPORTANT", "URGENT", "Monthly sales", "Project XYZ in September", "Delegated tasks", "Topics for meeting on project N", "Overdue tasks", "Yearly goals", "Calls", "Yearly goals review" ...

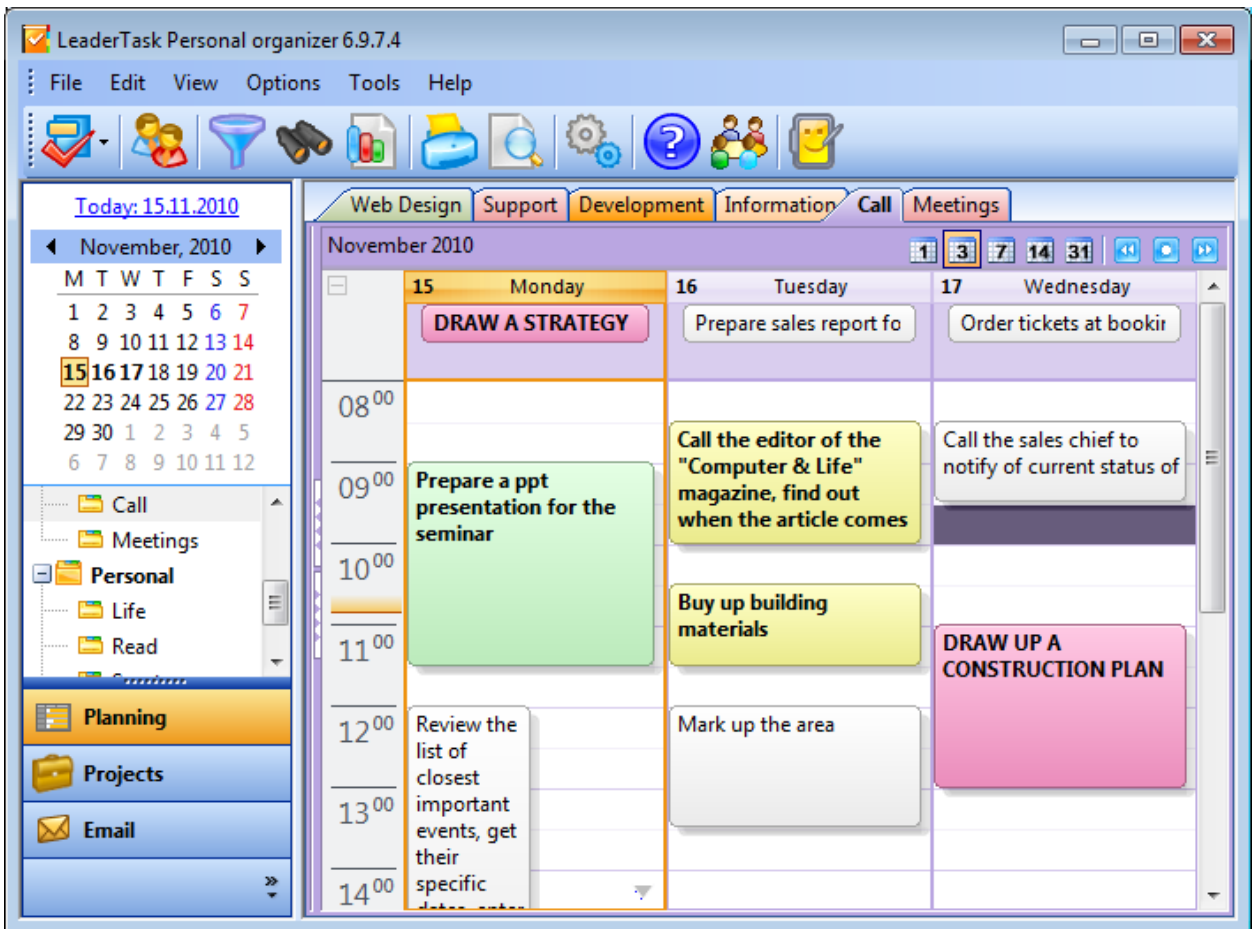
LeaderTask completely satisfies the needs of using David Allen's system - Getting Things Done, and offers powerful tools for time management.



LeaderTask interface

Add appointments to the Calendar

There are two types of tasks in life: strict and flexible. For example, “write an article” and “make a report” are flexible tasks, which means it does not actually matter when this task is to be dealt with. But such a task as “go to the movies with wife at 7 pm” is a strict task because it is to be done exactly at that time. Strict tasks are commonly called “Appointments”. You can conveniently view appointments in the calendar in LeaderTask. The calendar can also show tasks that are due on a certain day without time and also tasks that last longer than one day (for example, some event or business trip).



Calendar in the LeaderTask interface

For the calendar not to lose its clear view, you should add only appointments in the calendar. Thus, you will see your tasks for today in the tree and your appointments in the calendar.

To sum it up, an appointment is a task strictly tied to a particular time.

Measure the results

One old adage goes like this: if you want to change something, measure it. It means that if you want to start spending your time effectively, you need to take the current measurements, i.e. see what you spend your time on. To do it, use a special LeaderTask tool called “Statistics” that shows what you spend your time on when you work with the computer.

The statistics plug-in will show you what programs and sites the time was spent on and build visual reports. You can call these reports your computer time reports.

To see tasks completed for a certain period, you can use another special LeaderTask tool called “Reports”. Reports show tasks completed for a certain period of time.

So, LeaderTask stores data about how you have been spending your time and what results you have achieved for this time. It is very convenient for further analysis: you can see what you spend most of your time on and whether it produces good results.

Using the Time Drive system

The Time Drive system is a set of various methods and techniques aimed at increasing the efficiency, better organization and self-motivation of a person. It is called Time Drive after the name of the book *Time Drive: How To Have Enough Time For Both Work And Life* that was written by well-known Russian expert in the field of time management Gleb Arkhangelsky.

You can successfully use these methods in the LeaderTask organizer. LeaderTask is a business organizer designed for planning tasks, appointments, managing projects and employees. Author of the Time Drive system Gleb Arkhangelsky recommends LeaderTask for time management.

LeaderTask has all features necessary for a businessperson. Here are the main features of the program:

- LeaderTask is very flexible, i.e. you can tailor it to any needs. It has all the necessary features: a contact address book, a task scheduler, a calendar, a mail client, a business organizer, a personal information manager (PIM)...
- The organizer can store any data: projects, tasks, notes, links, contacts, documents, tables, files and also all kinds of confidential information (passwords, usernames, PINs...). And it securely protects all this data!
- LeaderTask is mobile, i.e. you can easily move it from one computer to another using a flash drive. All your data will always be with you.
- And to crown it all, the program is perfectly compatible MS Outlook.

Recreation: how not to get completely exhausted

Organize your recreation as good as you can, try to completely switch to other activities.

You can create a special category called "Recreation" and add things that relax you, switch your attention, keep it away from work to this category.

The most important things are highlighted in various colors, they produce the best effect because they switch your attention as well as possible and thus let you rest from your regular activities. It is convenient to divide such relaxing activities into subcategories:

"Hourly" - short five-minute relaxation breaks, for example, "Call a friend", "Look up something interesting on the Internet", "Have a cup of tea"

“Lunch break” - longer activities, for example, “Exercises”, “A walk in the park”, “Visit guys in the department next door”

“Spare time” - things you can do at weekends or after work, for example, “Workout”, “Massage”, “Fishing”, “Billiards”

Summary:

- Make your recreation rhythmic during the day;
- Switch as much as you can;

Motivation: how to handle unpleasant tasks

Swiss cheese method. To complete an unpleasant/complicated task, split it into several smaller subtasks first and then complete them in a random order (as if you “bit” little pieces from the large task). It is convenient to do it in the task tree in LeaderTask.

Frogs and Elephants is a very interesting method that comes down to the following. There are tasks (they are called “frogs” in terms of time management) that you do not want to do but you have to do. It may be quite a challenge to do them. So you can describe the solution to this problem as “Eat a frog every morning”. It means you will decrease the number of unpleasant tasks very day. Morning is the best time for that – once it is done, you can deal with more pleasant tasks all day. You can easily use priorities to highlight “frogs” in LeaderTask. For example, you can create the “Frog” priority and set its background color to green and its task color to yellow (like a real frog). This way you can arrange all frogs one after another and take them out one at a time.

Elephants stand for very large tasks in terms of time management. Like with the “Swiss cheese”, such tasks should be split into smaller ones, you should slice the elephant into small pieces (steaks) and “eat” one steak a day.

Everyday task table

It is convenient to display “frogs” and “elephants” in one table. In LeaderTask, you can do it either with the help of recurrent tasks (specify recurrence for a task) or using calendar views.

Summary:

- Use the Swiss cheese method for a slow start

- Eat at least one frog a day
- Slice elephants into steaks that get you closer to eating them
- Make up an everyday task table with the list of rewards

Goals: how to make dreams closer to reality.

It is very convenient to make notes and also keep a diary in LeaderTask. A diary is used to write down the most important events of the day, week, month. Notes offer the most convenient way to keep a diary.

It is convenient to make notes day after day thus arranging them in a chronological order (which is quite similar to a regular blog). You can also use notes to write down your personal mission, describe your goals.

Key areas of life.

To be able to plan your time effectively, you should single out the main priorities in your activities, i.e. the key areas of your life. It is convenient to arrange these key areas in the Categories section of the navigator.

Life management and life goals

In order to know where and why to go and also what results to achieve, it may be quite useful to clearly state your goals and you will be able to find out exactly what you have managed to achieve after a certain period of time. For example, write down what you are going to do within the next year, what results you are going to achieve, everything you dream of. Without any buts and other doubts. You can put it down in the form of a scenario: "First, I get my driver's license, then I buy a car, after that we go to the country for a month..." As we know, everything around us is the material projection of our thoughts so it is very important to create a clear positive image of our future so that it will be exactly what we want it to be.

It is convenient to have a separate category called "Goals" where you would describe only your goals and long-term plans from different key areas of your life. Put down what exactly you are going to do, by what date and in what order. Just imagine that LeaderTask is your magic wish list and everything you write down will come true. Remember that exactly what you think (plan, imagine) about the future is most likely to happen.

Summary:

- Determine your priority goals with your diary
- Define your personal mission
- Look for your vocation
- Single out 5-7 key areas of your life
- Write the scenario of your life for the next year
- Put down your goals for the next 5, 10, 15 years

Time Management Rules

1. Complete only the main tasks. (The main tasks produce 80% of the result)
2. Keep your mind free. (Write all information to an external device)
3. Look through your list of today tasks every day.
4. Postpone tasks that are not urgent today for later days.
5. Put down all your tasks, thoughts, ideas even if you need them in a month or year. Set dates for them, the dates when they will be relevant. You should always set the date even if the task has a contact, a project, a category or all of these. When the time is due, the task will appear in your list for today and you will decide what to do with it. Anyway, you will not forget about it.

Three magic words of time management:

Plan, Prioritize, Act

Correct Time Management Algorithm

1. Write down all tasks, projects, trips, appointments, etc. - everything you need to do in one single list of tasks in LeaderTask.
2. Single out the most important tasks from the list and move them to the beginning of the list using priorities.
3. Set the date when you will get down to the task. To do it, just drag and drop the tasks onto the calendar (the one in the planning section)
4. Before you start your working day, look through the list of tasks for today and do the tasks at the top of the list - they are the most important ones.

Summary

I hope you enjoyed reading this text and acquired some useful knowledge that you will use in your life! In any case, do not stop after reading this book, keep improving your time management skills. Communication with people who think like you is the best way to do it! Join the friendly Internet community of LeaderTask users at <http://www.TODOForum.com>. This is the place where participants can discuss some urgent topics, solve their problems and not only in the field of time management, but also in any aspects of their lives!

See you on the forum!

Best wishes!

Ivan Abramovsky, Head of LeaderTask development team

Yaroslavl, January 2011

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Please send your questions, comments and suggestions about the book to [my e-mail address - ivan.abramovsky@almeza.com](mailto:ivan.abramovsky@almeza.com)

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LeaderTask Company Management: <http://www.leadercommand.com>

Internet user community: <http://www.TODOForum.com>