Quadrant II, the Sweet Spot of Six Sigma
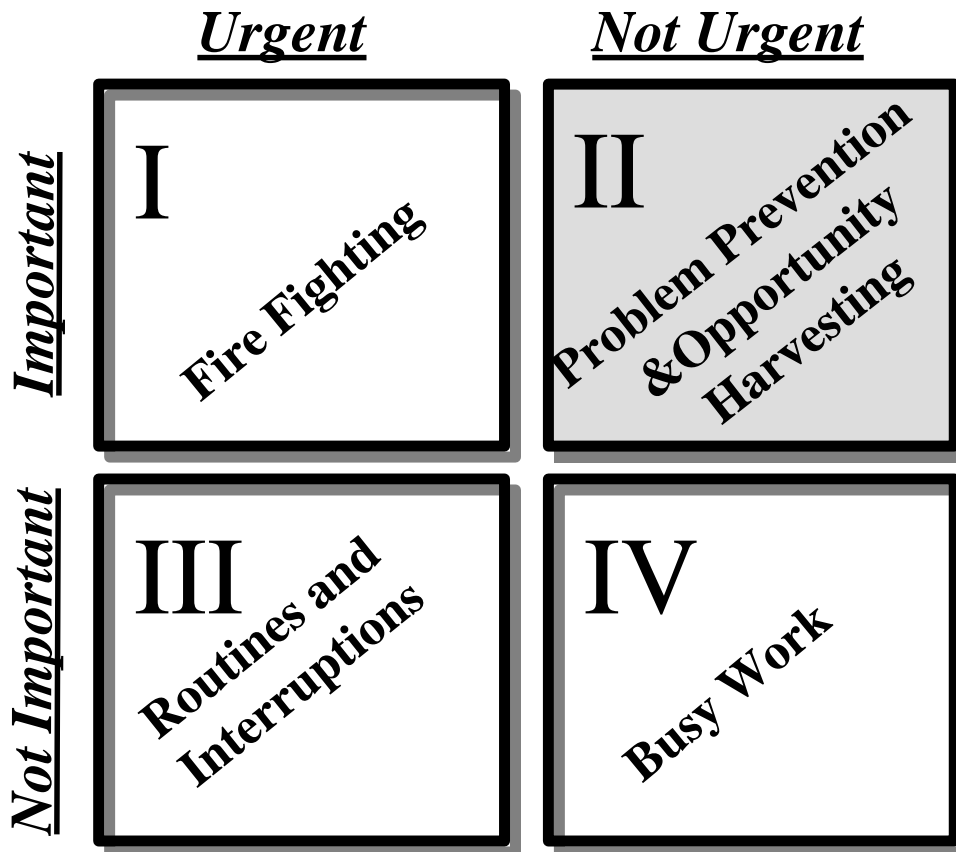## Dr Samuel Keene, FIEEE

Often times we wonder where our time went. It flies, both in our personal lives and at work. Our time seems consumed by rote activities interspersed with fire fighting. Sometimes we see the same problem over and over again. We wonder why we have to be subjected to this routine. Stephen Covey, author of "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" breaks down how we spend our time. He says, "Quadrant II activities (shown below) are the heart of effective personal management". We need to budget time here. This quadrant is normally subordinated to activities lying in the other quadrants. To paraphrase Peter Drucker, "Effective people are not problem minded; they are opportunity minded". Six Sigma implementation promotes companies to focus and spend more effort on the quadrant II opportunities, which in turn builds our ability to handle the challenges of the future.

Where Should we Work?

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	I — Fire Fighting	II — Problem Prevention & Opportunity Harvesting
Not Important	III — Routines and Interruptions	IV — Busy Work

Based on a model by Stephen Covey, 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

One example is taking the initiative to look anew at legacy corporate standards, which may be out of date for the current products.

The Corporate Packaging Team in one company questioned, "the validity of continuing to ship disk drives under archaic shipping standards". The legacy shipping standard, they were operating under, for non-operating shock was 75 g's at 11ms duration. This standard was carried forward from decades ago when the standard was floor-standing drives in a glass room. The 75 g's 11ms standard reportedly came from dropping such a drive 4 inches to the floor on its rubber casters. Corporate Packaging wanted to reexamine the appropriateness of this standard with its high-incurred costs for shipping their drives around the world. The legacy test standard was updated with a more effective, economical modern test that properly

evaluated the product's shipping capability. The revised test was less expensive and shipping failures were reduced under the new test standard. A double win!