



Take Back Your Time
*Don't Let Outside Forces Decide
How Your Time is Spent*

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The Coach's Zone

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Take Back Your Time – Don't Let Outside Forces Decide How Your Time is Spent

Key Learning Points

Highly successful people line up their priorities every day. They do the first right thing and then they do the next right thing. Achievers always work from a sense of clear priorities which results in a healthy sense of urgency.

There is never enough time in a day to do everything you think or want to do. More days than not, many leave work frustrated over their lack of progress about what they got done and what still remains to be done. Have you ever asked yourself “where did the day go; I still have more to do? Then, you take that frustrated burden home with you. Sound familiar?

All of us are challenged each and every day to find new or additional ways or tools to improve our personal productivity. More times than not, you actually let other people control your time and in turn your results.

Instead of allowing yourself – and your success - to be victimized by others, make the decision to take charge of your destiny (and time) and start focusing on mastering the basics first.

With a solid foundation on the basics, you can build your personal “toolbox” of productivity tools to take your performance to the next level.

On an overall basis, those who are successful in “owning” their time, follow four key steps. They perfect their ability to:

1. Define – those people and things (activities) that create distractions on how you either want to or need to use your time in the most efficient way possible
2. Describe - with clarity the right task at hand that you need to accomplish; how you will accomplish it and by when and 10 key steps to improve your personal productivity
3. Identify – specific action steps you need to take to control your destiny in terms of specific outcomes/goals you want to achieve so you can put a stop to being victimized by the needs/agendas of others; specific action steps you can take to minimize the destructive impact of distractions – i.e. other people or tasks
4. Recognize – the most effective mental conditioning program (mindset) you will need to launch to help you become more productive while at the same time enhancing your levels of self-confidence and self-esteem

Time Management

I have a very clear feeling about “time management”. I believe that time management does not exist. It's just not possible to manage time! Rather, it's all about how you manage what you do

with the time you have available each day. And, how you work with that time sets the foundation for your personal productivity objectives.



Here's how you practice "effective you management":

- **Focus on the important things first** – that's right, the important things; the things that will have the most impact on your goals and your business.
- **Challenge what you think you must work on** – before you start a task make sure that you are the right person to do it in the first place. Keep clear on what is important to you and what you are best suited to handle.
- **Get in the mood** – start your day with the most positive attitude you can muster. You start positive you're going to be more productive. You start stressed or in a bad mood, get how productive you will be that day
- **Own the first 10 to 15 minutes of each** – get yourself organized when you get top your desk; get you head in the game and put your game face on – don't jump right into the chaos when you arrive. Your e-mails will wait for 10 or 15 minutes.
- **Say no.** Say know to distractions and to those people who want your time to do their work. Or, to work on something that's important to them but makes no difference to you.
- **Delegate.** Delegate the non-essential work. Use delegation (properly) to help train and develop your team members
- **Eliminate distractions.** Schedule a certain time (or times) each day to read and respond to your email or to return phone calls. Close your door or don't answer the phone when you're working on high priority work. Consider working "off hours" when there are fewer people — and distractions — at the office. Lock yourself away if you have to.
- **Avoid multi-tasking.** You'll make fewer errors and spend less time on rework. There's nothing inefficient about "working slow" on key projects or messing up more than one thing at the same time.
- **Bury the clutter.** Spend a few minutes each week organizing your files, email addresses and correspondence. Look for ways to reduce redundancies or trim steps from work processes. Get that unnecessary stuff off of your desk!
- **Plan the next day before you go home** – Try to stop working each day at around the same time. Take 15 minutes to assess the day and what was done and then establish your goals for the next day in that calm setting. Leave the plan at work. In this way, you will be

to start the next day with a clear vision of what needs to be done. Plus, you get to come home with less stress which in turn will allow you to enjoy your evening.

Getting the Right Things Done

Over the course of a typical day, week or month we always have things to get done. We also have an equal amount of things that can best be described as distractions. You know the stuff that gets in the way and pulls us in every which way other than the right way. Some of us can fight them off, sometimes.

Unfortunately, more times than not we get pulled into solving someone else's problems or worse yet we get seduced (and that is a great word) by the shiny object syndrome. Something that looks better than it really is. There will always be distractions and shiny objects. Our challenge however is how we not only fight them off but how we condition ourselves not to be tempted in the first place.

Getting The Right Things Done Solving The Productivity Puzzle



Here are five simple steps you can take to condition yourself to stay focused and get the right things done.

1. Start each day with this question, what is the one thing that I can or should do today that will get me closer to my goal or desired result? Work on that thing first and complete it if possible during the course of the day.
2. Create a one-time list of all high value activity or projects. Now high value projects are those that help you achieve your goals and keep your organization on track to realize the vision you have for it. High value tasks could be those that increase revenue and profitability but you have to define high value as it relates to you and your organization. Remember to stick to your definition of high value whenever you are confused or tempted to do something else.

3. Create a daily list of things to do. Work on the high value tasks first even if it is only a part of a major project. Work on it and then continue to monitor your daily list. It will feel good when you get to draw a line through something or check it off as done.
4. Take small, less than 10 minute breaks, during the day; maybe two or three of them and use them to first change the scenery and clear your mind and then to give yourself the opportunity to validate what you are working on are the right things. The things that are high value and the best use of your time and skills.
5. Learn to say no to those trivial things, and trust me they are trivial, that drain you of time and focus. You know what they are. It is the silly stuff that looks good or sounds good but in reality does no good. Accept the fact that there will always be distractions and obstacles to overcome and you should accept the fact that you can master them rather than being victimized by them.

Distractions

To achieve success you have to know how to deal with distractions - and we all know that there can be a lot of them. Sometimes we allow them get us off course. Distractions like moving from crisis to crisis; pulled in multiple directions with no progress being made or having to "baby sit" employees – takes a serious toll on us mentally, physically and financially. What can you do to fight these distractions off, minimize their impact or better yet prevent them?

Here are a several things that you can take action on to effectively manage distractions:

1. You need to have a vision (1 to 3 years out) for your business or career. Without a specific vision, there is no way that you can set realistic goals to move forward. Without specific goals, there is no way you can measure progress
2. Clarity of roles and expectations is critical for you to have any chance of succeeding. Have a daily plan, outlining what the top 1 to 3 things are that you need to accomplish that day. In developing this daily plan, also try to identify what barriers might stop you from completing these key tasks. Try to have a contingency plan ready if you get stalled.
3. In many cases, you're letting the day, week or month control you as opposed to you taking charge. You may be finding that nothing gets done, unless you do it. Are you delegating? Look at the skills of your team and "fix" why others can't do the work that you are doing. Is it a training need? Whatever it is, fix it. If left unchecked, it will stifle all growth in your business.
4. Make sure your team understands their roles; what they do; how to do it; why they do what they do and how it fits into what the overall goals are. This applies to everyone - from the mailroom to the board room. No exceptions. Once they understand their roles make sure they are proficient in all of their tasks. Set performance expectations for them and make certain all understand what constitutes satisfactory or better performance.

Look, there will always be distractions but how they impact you and your business is totally within your control – stop being a victim to them – it’s your choice

Multi-Tasking

Multitasking is just the opportunity to “screw” up more than one thing at the same time.

You can “do” 2 or more things at once but you can’t focus properly or effectively on two or more things – your productivity on one or both will suffer as will the outcome and you might find that you have to re-do your work several times to get it “right” – lost time = lost opportunities

Every time we try to do two or more things at once, we’re dividing up our focus and dumbing down all of the outcomes in the process.

Here’s the short list of how multitasking hampers us:

- There is just so much brain space available at any given time. Jamming more tasks than can effectively fit into that space only result in overload and then a mental shutdown.
- The more time you spend jumping back and forth from task to task, the more likely you are to lose sight of your original task/goal.
- When you jump from between one activity and another, you waste time as you focus and re-focus on each new task.
- Professional multitaskers possess and in fact live with a distorted sense of how much time is needed to get things done. They add more time than is needed which goes against having a healthy sense of urgency to get things done. Speed is a competitive advantage.
- Those who multi-task make more mistakes. This leads to poor decisions and even poorer results. This in turn causes higher levels of frustration and stress.

Productivity

All of us are challenged each and every day to find new or additional ways or tools to improve our personal productivity. Instead of looking for that next great idea start focusing on mastering the basics first. The basics start with “mental conditioning” to allow you to train your mind to focus on a clear and specific picture of the what; the how; the why and the when of the task at hand. It’s just that simple. Yet some make it harder than it needs to be.

Here are some “basic” actions you can take to maximize your personal productivity:

1. **Plan your day** - Set aside 10 to 15 planning minutes at the start of each day to create your plan for your upcoming activities.

2. **Know your priorities.** Write down what's important and the order in which things should be done.
3. **Don't Delay.** The first step is always the most important so get started! Don't wait or put it off until "the time is perfect".
4. **Say no and mean it.** Learn to say no to activities that "look" important but really are just distractions or "shiny objects". Work hard to avoid going from "fire to fire" that you think are important but just waste time and leave you with nothing to show for your effort.
5. **You Decide.** Non-critical "stuff" does need to be done eventually – so set aside specific times to handle it – on your terms; not "squeezed" in between other activities. You would be amazed at what you can get done in 30 minutes when you actually schedule it!
6. **End of day review.** Review your day to see what you accomplished and what you could have done differently. With that knowledge plan your tomorrow. Make this the last thing you do each day before you leave your place of work. Believe it or not, you will come home in a better mood and enjoy the people and things that are really important.

Focus

Without strong focus skills, you are walking around a dark room searching for any glimmer of light. Usually, however, you're bumping into objects or walls that only slow you down and cause you to think more about how to avoid obstacles as opposed to concentrating on moving forward. Here are five key concepts to consider to help you build your focus skill-set.

1. Always accomplish the first task of every day. Little things do matter and when handled consistently will lead to big results.
2. Don't try to be perfect; just do what you have to do to keep moving forward towards success. Perfection is "overrated" while success is real.
3. All that really matters is the strength of your will to succeed. Stay focused on nurturing your will to succeed so that it will guide you in pushing past obstacles and barriers you will encounter
4. Sometimes you have to push through and slug it out in the "mud" to achieve success. If you're right don't be afraid to get dirty. The dirt will wash off but the feeling of success and achievement will help you shine inside.
5. To succeed you have to take a risk now and then; don't back down when faced with threats; stay calm; look for a way forward (it's always there) and do your very best with what you have.

Focus on these 5 points and master them. If you do, you'll be racking up more wins on a consistent basis which will make your journey to success less challenging. What have you got to lose?

The 20% Rule – Productivity on Steroids

It's an accepted fact that you cannot create more time. But, you can decide how you use the time you have available to you and re-direct it to more useful activities that will allow you to focus on those things that you do best and are the best use of your skills and abilities. How can you do this? Easy, follow these five points of my 20% rule:

1. 20% of your clients should be fired because they're draining you of resources.
2. 20% of all correspondence isn't necessary and 20% of the content that you create can be eliminated without any sacrifice to your message. Be clear by stating your intention and sticking with the facts.
3. 20% of a project's steps can be eliminated without it faltering. The more steps you have, the more likely you'll increase the number of mistakes made and the length of your project time.
4. 20% of what you do is irrelevant. Schedule a 60-minute meeting every week with yourself to outline what you need to do to get closer to your goals
5. 20% of the people working on a project can be eliminated. The more people there are on a project, the more touches there will be, which leads to more miscommunications and mistakes.

Some Final Thoughts

- Don't try to be perfect. Perfection is not a quest for the best, but a pursuit of the worst in us. Aiming for perfection is a moving target that no one ever hits.
- Self-discipline is when you do what you're supposed to do, when you're supposed to do it, even if you don't want to do it.
- Don't accept or make excuses. Take responsibility for your actions so you can own it, learn from it, and move on.
- Habits define us. It's important to assess your habits and determine which ones you need to drop, strengthen, or learn.
- Put yourself first because no one else will. You're no good to anyone if you're not good to yourself.

- Stop giving away your valuable time. You can't create more time, so make the most of it while you have it.
- A lack of planning on another person's part doesn't constitute an emergency on your part.

