

Systems Activity 4 – Boosters and Sappers aka ‘Energy Makes Time’

Former company boss and leadership coach Mandy Brown makes a good point about time management on her blog, Everything Changes. So many of us, she says, have the feeling that we have too much to do and not enough time to do it. Brown argues that when our levels of energy are low, we often take much longer doing tasks we might have once completed quickly. We’re feeling sluggish so...

- The maths homework that should’ve taken half an hour ends up filling fifty minutes of your evening, or
- The textbook read-through takes twice as long because you find you’re not concentrating or,
- You want to write up some notes, can’t find them... and suddenly, you just can’t be bothered anymore.

The solution, she suggests, is to sequence tasks better. The phrase she uses is, “*energy makes time.*” In other words – when we’re feeling inspired or boosted, our focus lasts longer, we get more done, and seem to have more time. (<https://everythingchanges.us/blog/energy-makes-time/>)



So could we organise work in a way that boosts us, instead of sapping us?

Take the tasks you do in a typical day’s work, and choose whether they boost your energy or sap your energy. It’s often easy to do this – there’s just a feeling we have. But if you find it hard, consider these ideas:

The booster: If you’ve just organised and completed an energy-boosting task, you’ve often got just as much or even more energy after you finish an hour’s work. These tasks often leave you feeling positive, pleased, excited to do more. (They’re not necessarily easier subjects or tasks, by the way!)

The sapper: Working on an energy-sapping task feels the opposite. These tasks might not be hard – but they might leave you feeling flat and drained, as if your energy gauge is low.

OK, have a go at this now. Make a list of tasks you’ve got coming up, then try and assess how they’re going to change your levels of energy...

Task:	Level of energy it gives you:
	
	

What themes emerge? What tasks do you thrive doing, and which require a bit more grit to complete?

Now organise and sequence a day's work that **considers your boosters and sappers**. Some of the following advice might help:

- Start your day with a booster. Whatever happens afterwards, you'll have given yourself the energy to push forwards feeling positive.
- Follow a sapper with a booster. If you've got a sapping task, it's often good to have something to look forward to.
- Do two sappers with strict time limits, then give yourself a break. Churning through a couple of tough tasks, and being strict about how much time you're going to spend doing them, deserves a reward. Take a little time off, go for a walk, watch a little TV, play a game. Then begin again with a booster.
- Finish your day with a booster, not a sapper. You don't want that final task of the day extending out as you get more and more exhausted. Aim to finish your day with some that's even a little bit positive.