

## Unit II – Time Management

### Techniques

#### A detailed guide to time management skills and techniques

We tend to think of time management, productivity, and “being busy” as synonymous concepts. We believe that to excel in our business and personal lives, we must constantly be on the go, maybe even sleep-deprived, as we cram in working, studying, child care, writing a novel, training for an ascent up Mount Rainier, and preparing gourmet dinners. As productivity expert Julie Morgenstern says, “Everybody is overloaded. Everybody shows it.”

#### What is time management?

Definitions of time management usually revolve around the ability to use time productively and efficiently, especially for work, business, and school. However, productivity consultant David Allen says time management is a misnomer (a wrong or inaccurate name or designation). “You can’t manage time anyway. Time just is,” says the inventor of the “Getting Things Done method”. “But you can manage yourself during time, so what you manage is your attention, your focus.”

Julie Morgenstern is a productivity expert and the New York Times best-selling author of *Time Management from the Inside Out*. She says that we need to understand time management differently than we currently do. “I would start by changing your perception of time,” she says. “It’s sort of an ethereal (extremely delicate and light in a way that seems not to be of this world), ambiguous thing, and I teach people to think of time like a closet. It’s a limited amount of space that’s only going to fit so much. Once you get a visual metaphor of time as a closet, it becomes so much easier to manage it,” notes Morgenstern.

#### What are good time management skills?

For Morgenstern, once you view the days of your life as limited space, like a closet, you can begin to see that not everything will fit: “Even if you’re willing to work 12 hours a day, it’s still a limited amount of time, and if you are trying to do 15 hours worth of work in a 12 hour day, it’s not going to work. You’re going to feel frustrated at the end of the day. You’re going to feel that you didn’t get enough done.” Morgenstern offers the following time management tips:

- **Be a time estimator:** The solution is to become a good time estimator. “The gateway skill to good time management is when you ask not just what you need to do, but how long it will take,” notes Morgenstern. Ask that question for every request or interruption, and with that information, you can decide what will fit in your time closet. In addition, she suggests adding a how long column to your to-do list. “Once you start quantifying tasks and time, you’re in a position to tangibly manage your obligations and make much better decisions.”

- **Be a time mapper:** Morgenstern also recommends organizing your time closet by creating what she calls a time map. “A time map is a template for your week,” she says. “You take the 160 hours in the week and the 24 hours in the day and chart that out. You include what time you wake up and what time you go to sleep. Everything in between is the space you have to work with. That’s the closet of your day.”

Executives have recurring meetings. Parents have the early, daily drop-off at school. Still, Morgenstern thinks students can especially benefit from the templates. For their time map, students add their classes as known quantities. They might decide that Friday night is always their social time, but that Saturday is the day to do errands. “You create a structure,” adds Morgenstern. “That time budget is a template, so you fill in the blanks.” Your to-do list of errands is applied to the Saturday slot. Your assignments may change, but you know you’ll be studying every night between 6pm and 9pm. “The routine of always knowing when something happens really fuels efficiency,” she emphasizes.

Routine can also help you spot work/life imbalances. “It goes back to the closet image,” Morgenstern says. “If your jeans go here, your sweaters go here, your t-shirts go here, and your belts go here, it’s easy to see if you have too much or too little of something. You can see how in balance you are. But if everything is scattered, you can’t see if you have too many jeans or not. Similarly, regarding your day, if you group similar tasks, you’re more efficient and you can see how you’re doing in terms of your life. If one category is monopolizing your life at the expense of others, you need to find ways to shrink this down to make room for something else.”

- **4-Ds: Delete, Delay, Diminish, Delegate:** Morgenstern finds that when you really look at how long things take and when you become a good time estimator, things always take longer than you have time for. That’s when the 4-Ds can help. Use them to streamline a task or your entire to-do list, for work or at home.
  1. **Delete:** Ask yourself if the return on investment in a project is worthwhile. Maybe it duplicates work already done.
  2. **Delay:** Does it have to be done now? Can it be eked out over time or started at a later date?
  3. **Diminish:** Can you limit the scope? Instead of taking 12 hours to do a report, would a one-hour conference call suffice?
  4. **Delegate:** Can somebody else do it, and better? Is it perhaps somebody else’s job in the first place?

### **More tried and true time management skills**

You might know these skills already. As Morgenstern suggests, “Tackle one skill at a time, one tool at a time, and one strategy at a time. Don’t think that by reading one article and tackling one strategy your life is going to run perfectly.”

- **Set SMART goals.** To get somewhere, you need to know where you’re going. You also need to be able to measure your progress. SMART goals are specific, measurable, and realistic, so you have a greater chance of achieving them and knowing when you’re going to get there.
- **Make to-do lists.** Lists help you to remember things, which seems like an obvious advantage. But they also free your mind so you can focus on bigger, more important concepts or problems without carrying all that baggage around.

As organization and time management author David Allen says, “Your mind is for having ideas, not holding them.” Have you ever lain awake after midnight trying to remember everything you need to do during the next week? It’s amazing how quickly and comfortably you go sleep after you’ve gotten up and made a list. A list is a stress reducer, as you see the big picture when your responsibilities are written down. Lists also provide a record of your efforts, and when a task is done, you have the reward of checking items off as done. Here are some additional time management tactics to help you use your time effectively:

- **Prioritize:** You may need to complete goals in a certain order, and this is especially true for tasks. Some tasks need to be accomplished immediately, others not. Learning the difference between urgent and important items may help.
- **Chunk Activities:** Break a big job into smaller tasks. When Theodore Melfi directed the movie *Hidden Figures*, he didn’t just go to the set and film the whole thing in one go. He and his team blocked each scene and filmed shots one at a time. Chunking can help with the next skill.
- **Avoid Procrastination:** Procrastination often arises from fear of failure and being overwhelmed. Remember, your fear is probably worse than the thing you need to do. If it is that bad, a solution is out there. As Moore said, “There’s always one more thing you can do to influence any situation in your favor — and after that, there’s one more thing, and after that there’s one more thing, etc. The more you do, the more opportunities arise.”
- **Consider Why You Procrastinate:** If you do procrastinate, don’t shy away from the problem out of shame. Ask yourself why you’re doing it. Morgenstern suggests that for activities you’re avoiding or that seem to consume too much time, time yourself on three occasions while completing that same task, and then check the average time. Timing may help offer insights about problems concerning the activity.

- **Persevere:** This skill is a particularly important one for young people to learn. Of course, in the context of a volatile economy and uncertain job security, it's important to remember at any age. There are good and bad days, and mistakes are opportunities to learn. To put a bright spin on the ancient concept of the wheel of fortune, your luck will come around.
- **Understand the Difference between Efficiency and Effectiveness:** As the management guru Peter Drucker said, "Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things." Let that be a lesson to people who always need to jump in. Before plowing ahead, think about something for five minutes to determine if it's worthwhile.
- **Use Organizational and Planning Tools:** Your phone can remind you about appointments, so you don't have to worry about keeping every little meeting. Digitizing your files can help clear your desk, as well as all the other surfaces of your home and office. Use technology - it can help.
- **Celebrate Small Achievements:** When you've reached a milestone or goal, reward yourself.

### **Why use time management?**

Time management skills can help you balance conflicting demands on your time. Learning to better manage your time can help you:

- Relieve stress.
- Maximize your accomplishments.
- Track the tasks that lead to your goals.
- Be more organized.

### **Think Globally: Time Management Tips for Remote Teams**

We live in a global world with remote work teams, and even remote friends and families. Office hours are essentially 24/7, so it's easy to get caught up in the frenzy and leave the phone on, even on weekends and vacations.

Julie Morgenstern recognizes this: "I think a person's impulse is to try to do as much as they can in an environment like that. Like a kid in a candy shop. 'There's so much happening, and I should try to keep up and do as much as I can.'" Morgenstern recommends you reframe your thinking.

"It's like going into a supermarket. It takes enormous discipline to come out with just the three things you went in for. Most people go in for three things and come out with a cart full of stuff. There's so much there, and it becomes tempting. So you need a mindfulness to take the time before you go in every day to plan tomorrow. Say what the most important things are to do, and focus — use the muscle of focus — and, yes, be open to distractions, but not too many, because you don't always want to leave everyday with a cart full. You just want the three things you went in for."

And what about those time differences? Say you're on a deadline for a project. Your translator in the UK needs to upload the French translations, so you, in San Francisco, can publish them when you come in at 8 a.m. Pacific Time. However, she's working her way through languages alphabetically and is still working on Chinese translations. For situations like this, Morgenstern says you need to establish a dialogue about time. "Without it, people are just not aware. They're not thinking about it. If you assume they're going to figure it out, that's misguided. They don't know. They probably don't even know how long their own stuff takes," she stresses.

### **Crucial Conversations about Time Management Techniques**

According to Morgenstern, conversations about time management need to happen in many situations, not just with remote teams. "I think talking about time is the other thing people don't do. They just suck it up, and there's no dialogue around time. People just say ok and try to figure out where they're going to find the time, or they stay up late and suffer in silence," she points out.

A key tool she recommends is asking not only what you should do, but also how long it will take. And just asking those questions can also reveal misunderstandings. "If someone says, 'I think that will take me five hours,' ask how they're approaching it. Ask them to talk you through it, and then you can say, 'Oh, wait a minute. I wasn't expecting you to do a 40-page summary. All I was expecting was a five-bullet email,'" she explains. "Just having those conversations saves so many people so much time."

### **What are the techniques of time management?**

Techniques are collections of skills. The power of employing techniques is that an expert has already perfected the steps for you. Therefore, all you have to do is apply them. The following are some of the current, major time management techniques.

- **Pomodoro:** Created by software developer Francesco Cirillo, pomodoro is a time management technique named for the Italian word for tomato. Cirillo's inspiration for the method came from the tomato timer he used to help him focus while studying at university. You set a timer (not necessarily a tomato-shaped one) for 25 minutes and work on a single task or project. When the timer goes off, you've accomplished one pomodoro. Take a brief break of about two minutes, during which you can look up that recipe or play with the dog. Set the timer again. Complete four pomodoros. Then take a longer break.
- **18 Minutes:** This technique comes from the book *18 Minutes: Find Your Focus, Master Distraction, and Get the Right Things Done*, written by Peter Bregman. In essence, it works like this:

- Each morning, spend five minutes deciding what you need to do that day and what will help you to feel that you've accomplished something.
- Each hour, spend one minute considering if you've used the hour productively.
- Each evening, spend five minutes to assess what you've learned and accomplished during that day.
- **Domino Reaction:** Promoted by author Amit Offir in his book 24/8 - The Secret for Being Mega-Effective by Achieving More in Less Time, this technique posits that, over time, some activities have a greater cumulative payback than others. The most commonly cited example of a domino reaction activity is writing a book, which presumably continues to generate revenue even after its completion. For instance, the book may garner you interviews or invitations to work on other projects.
- **Getting Things Done:** Getting Things Done (GTD) is a methodology for organization and time management developed by David Allen and discussed in his 2001 book of the same title. Allen himself describes it as "a set of best practices that allows you to get more space in your head, so you have more bandwidth, attention, and ability to focus on the most meaningful stuff."

**The GTD system has five basic steps:**

- **Collect:** Gather all the sticky notes and bills littering your space, and write down any appointments, ideas, or tasks.
- **Process:** 400 times a day, for several seconds, review these items. Work through each in the order in which they appear in your list or inbox to decide what's needed. Can you complete the task? Can you delegate it? Do you have to wait to finish it, or can you wait to finish it?
- **Organize:** Toss it, file it, or add it to a calendar or to-do list.
- **Review:** Review your inbox, your calendar, your to-do list, your office, or what's on your mind as often as you need to in order to keep your mind clear and stress-free.
- **Do:** Start or finish your tasks. Contrary to other tips, which advise doing the difficult or unpleasant tasks first, GTD suggests you try to do things in context, as they arise.

To Allen, the beauty of the system is that you can start wherever you are, even if you're sitting in a forest of paper piles. "All you need to do is pick up something out of the pile and say, what is this? and what's the next action I need to take on this? A lot of systems start by saying you should set goals, get organized, set priorities, have a purpose, etc., and most people say, Yeah, yeah, yeah, I should. But, our day-to-day and hour-to-hour life is out of our control, and if that's out of our control, trying to set goals or set a bigger vision is just going to blow more fuses for us."

“The big secret of Getting Things Done is not so much about getting things done. It’s about being appropriately engaged with all levels of commitments in your life, so you can be totally present in whatever you’re doing” - David Allen, time management guru

- **Time boxing:** With this technique, you set a specific start date and deadline, thus limiting the time to work on a task or project. Use this on your own or with teams in the workplace. Scrum, a framework for managing projects that stresses teamwork, accountability, and incremental progress toward a well-defined goal, employs various timeboxes, including the sprint, which is a timebox of one month or shorter duration.
- **POSEC:** This time management technique often appears in business guides and is a riff on Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs. POSEC helps you reach your goals (self-actualization in Maslow-speak) by recommending that you chunk. If you work through the POSEC steps correctly, you scale Maslow’s hierarchy to attain personal happiness. The POSEC steps are as follows:
  - **Prioritize** and define your goals and tasks, and order them in terms of the most important and achievable in the time allotted.
  - **Organize** and figure out the best way to accomplish your everyday tasks, such as feeding the cat or getting groceries.
  - **Streamline** and simplify the things you have to do but don’t like to do, so you’ll have more time and energy for other things.
  - **Economize** and reduce the things that are not urgent.
  - **Contribute.** Achieving your tasks and goals should give you the opportunity to give back to society. You can also consider this step the delayed payoff from certain activities.

**COPE Technique:** American productivity expert Peggy Duncan has developed the cope technique, which includes the following steps:

- **Clear:** Get clear on your goals.
- **Organized:** Organize everything you must do.
- **Productive:** Prioritize your tasks and goals.
- **Efficient:** Work on finishing the priority items.

**Triage Technique:** Invented during the Napoleonic wars to assign degrees of urgency to soldiers’ illnesses, you can apply the basic concept to any organization and time management question. Determine which of these three categories your tasks fall under:

- Things that are important but not urgent. Planning for your toddler’s post-secondary education is important, but it’s not yet urgent.

- Things that are a waste of time. For example, learning to tile and buying all the supplies for one 20-square-foot bathroom floor may not be worth the effort, if you don't plan to tile another floor again in your life.
- Things that need immediate action. If you're a student taking your CAT exam in a week, you need to study now. If you're a store manager, and a customer and a clerk are having a heated skirmish, you need to defuse the situation immediately.

**Eisenhower Method or Covey's Time Management Grid:** We can trace this method back to Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in World War II and 34<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. It was inspired by his comment that, "What is important is seldom urgent, and what is urgent is seldom important." Organizational guru Stephen Covey adapted the method in his book "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People". Covey coined his version of the technique the time management grid. The grid is a box containing four quadrants:

1. **Urgent and Important:** Do these tasks first. Service your car when the break is not working.
2. **Important but Not Urgent:** Put these on a calendar to do later. These include things like reading a book for professional development or moving the planters to scrub the deck.
3. **Urgent but Not Important:** These items include interruptions, such as reading unsolicited email instead of turning off your phone or computer.
4. **Not Urgent and Not Important:** These items yield the least direct value and distract you from your priorities.

People often find that their activities fall into quadrants 1 and 3. Try to focus on quadrant 2 activities. Although these activities are often easy to achieve, they can offer significant benefits to all parts of your life. To use the time management grid or matrix, add your to-do list items to each box as you deem appropriate. You can also use the matrix as an analysis tool by making six copies and using one for each day to track how you spend time. In the sixth copy, add up the week's activities for each quadrant, and estimate what percentage of time you spent on each.

**A-B-C Method:** Managers originally used the ABC method for supply chain management to determine which stock returned the most value for effort. For the purpose of time management, you apply the technique by grouping your tasks into categories A, B, and C. Similar to the Eisenhower method, each category represents a different priority level:

- A = important and urgent
- B = important but not urgent
- C = not important and not urgent



Take your to-do list and assign each of your tasks to the appropriate category. Now, within each group, prioritize each task. For example, Task A1 should be done first and so on.

- **Pareto Analysis (of Time versus Result):** People sometimes refer to this as the 80-20 principle. Often pejoratively applied to human activities, such as working and volunteering, the Pareto analysis describes the perceived phenomenon in which 20 percent of the people are said to produce 80 percent of the results, while the other 80 percent of the people sit and talk about results and judge others' actions. You can apply this method thoughtfully and without judgment in your personal life or with your work team. Consider what activities or processes produce the most results. That should form the basis of your efforts.
- **How the ABC and Pareto Methods Work Together:** Look at your A group and determine which tasks you'll complete the fastest. Then do those. You can do them in 20 percent of your time.

### **Tips for Time Management**

No matter what you do with your life, most tips for organizing your time are relevant. Whether you're a student, an executive, or a worker, a caregiver, these tips can help:

- Do a time log for a week to determine where you spend your time. Be honest. Look at the time you waste.
- Have higher-level and intermediate goals. How can you figure out what you need to do, if you don't know what you want to accomplish?
- Keep a to-do list. List the tasks needed to accomplish those goals.
- Curate your to-do list daily. Every morning, create a new list of what needs to be done that day. At the end of the day, think about what you need to do tomorrow, and then make that list.
- Use one of the time management techniques to organize all of your lists and establish your priorities. You might try adding the things you don't want to do first. Also, add one likable activity to that set of unlikable activities.
- Learn to say no. If you have to focus, focus. If you can't take on another project without the quality suffering, then don't. If you don't feel like you should go to a dinner party, a fundraiser, or out for a drink with friends, just don't.
- Eliminate distractions. If you need to finish something, lock yourself in your office, and ignore your email. Also consider any frequent daily interruptions and how you might avoid them.
- Delegate. This applies to small business owners, managers, and maybe even cohabitants.
- Consider your health. Take breaks, get rest, and don't work on your holidays or every weekend. Have some periods of complete downtime. And sleep!

- Work in blocks of similar activities.
- Don't multitask. Extensive studies show that the vast majority of people aren't good at it. If it's an absolute must though, and you're one of the few who can do it effectively, then do it.
- Use waiting time during your commute or in a doctor's office to get things done. Review class notes, make your grocery list, etc.
- Use tools to help you schedule and organize.
- Don't procrastinate, but if you do, ask yourself why.

### **Time Management Tips for your Job Search**

While you can apply general time management tips to any part of your life, searching for a job can be particularly taxing and demoralizing, which is why managing your time effectively is critical. Here are some important time management tips to assist you in your job search:

- Schedule time for researching companies and reviewing interview questions. If you truly want another job, blocking off this time is vital, whether you already have a job, or you're currently unemployed. Don't let the hours and days get away from you just because no one is structuring your time.
- Use tools to help you stay organized and on track. Don't forget appointment times or lose important contact information by using scraps of paper. Keep all your job search information in one place, like a notebook or an online task management program.
- Chunk goals into smaller tasks. A job search can feel overwhelming. Just remember, one task at a time, and don't get discouraged by news about the weak job market — you only need one.
- Learn to say no. If you need to prepare for an interview, don't agree to go out for shopping with friends and families.
- Delegate. Maybe it's time for the kids to learn to pack their own (nutritious) lunches or for your neighbor to chauffeur the soccer team.
- Ask how long interviews are expected to last. You need to mentally prepare for marathon, four-hour sessions, and you also have to schedule the rest of your life. Moreover, asking this type of question makes you look like a good time manager.

Laura Rotter is a talent acquisition and benefits manager. She says that as a job candidate, you can demonstrate your time management skills before you even appear for your first interview.

“The real way to see if someone has good time management skills is if they are highly responsive in communication. Some people will respond to a request for an interview days and weeks later,” says Rotter. The optimum response time is no later than one day. The same is true for the thank you note after the interview. Your email should arrive by the morning of the next business day.

What about your resume? How can you demonstrate that you budget your time well? Rotter says that HR professionals tend to be wary of self-descriptions. (So much for the ubiquitous keen self-starter.) “A clean, tight resume effectively conveys the message that you’re a person with a good system for staying on top of things” advises Rotter.

### **Learn to say No**

At times, requests from others may be important to them, but conflict with our most important goals. Even if it is something we would like to do, but simply don’t have the time for, it can be very difficult to say no. While it’s great to be a team player, it’s also important to know when and how to be assertive, and let the person know you can’t handle their request at the moment. Negotiate a deadline that helps them achieve their goals without sacrificing your own.

### **Overcome procrastination. Use the “4D” system:**

- **Delete it.** What are the consequences of not doing the task at all? Consider the 80/20 rule; maybe it doesn’t need to be done in the first place.
- **Delegate.** If the task is important, ask yourself if it’s really something that you are responsible for doing in the first place. Can the task be given to someone else? See “10 Things a Manager Should Never Delegate.”
- **Do it now.** Postponing an important task that needs to be done only creates feelings of anxiety and stress. Do it as early in the day as you can.
- **Defer:** If the task is one that can’t be completed quickly and is not a high priority item, simply defer it.

### **Eat the Frog - From Brian Tracey’s book:**

"If the first thing you do each morning is to eat a live frog, you can go through the day with the satisfaction of knowing that that is probably the worst thing that is going to happen to you all day long." Your frog is the task that will have the greatest impact on achieving your goals, and the task that you are most likely to procrastinate starting.

### **Meetings**

Poorly run meetings are time wasters, multiplied by the number of people in the meeting. See “How to Lead a Team Meeting.” **The Glass Jar: Rocks, Pebbles, Sand, and Water.** Tackle the “rocks” first. If you keep tackling the small things (the sand, pebbles, and water), and not the important strategic items (the rocks), then your jar will quickly fill up with no room for rocks.

### **Eliminate electronic time wasters**

What takes your time away at your work? Facebook? Twitter? Email checking? Continuous messaging with friends and family? Stop checking them so often. Set times and limits, and wean yourself off of these distractions.

### **Get organized**

In order to effectively manage your time and be productive each day, you have to create the right environment. Start by eliminating clutter, setting up an effective filing system, and utilizing workflow management tools to help you create a productive environment.

### **Take care of your health**

A good night's sleep, healthy eating, and exercise will give you the energy, focus, and stamina required to make the most out of your day. Time is precious, particularly when it comes to running a small business. Yet there are never more than 24 hours in a day. Some entrepreneurs respond to this fact of life with focus and purpose. Others freak out. Are you in the latter group? You don't have to be. With the right approach, you can work efficiently, productively, and relatively stress-free.

### **Here are eight tips for effectively managing your time:**

#### **1. Know your goals.**

Make sure you're engaging in activities that support your business goals, both short- and long-term. Everything else is a potential time-waster. Your daily plan should revolve around working on tasks and activities that directly relate to generating income and growing your business.

#### **2. Prioritize wisely.**

Stephen Covey, co-author of *First Things First*, offers an organizational tool for your to-do list based on how important and urgent tasks are.

Looking at what goes into making up your day, where do your activities fit into these categories?

- **Important and urgent** — Tasks that must be done. Do them right away.
- **Important but not urgent** — Tasks that appear important, but upon closer examination aren't. Decide when to do them.
- **Urgent but not important** — Tasks that make the most "noise," but when accomplished, have little or no lasting value. Delegate these if possible.
- **Not urgent and not important** — Low-priority stuff that offer the illusion of "being busy." Do them later.

Write down your three or four "important and urgent" tasks that must be addressed today. As you complete each one, check it off your list. This will provide you with a sense of accomplishment and can motivate you to tackle less essential items.

### **3. Just say no.**

You're the boss. If you have to decline a request in order to attend to what's truly important and urgent, do not hesitate to do so. The same goes for any projects or activities that you've determined are headed nowhere: Be prepared to move on to more productive tasks. Learn from the experience to avoid wasting time later on.

### **4. Plan ahead.**

One of the worst things you can do is jump into the workday with no clear idea about what needs to get done. The time you spend thinking ahead and planning your activities is trivial compared with the time you'll lose jumping from one thing to the next (and rarely completing anything). Depending on your personality, try one of these options:

- **The night before** — At the end of the day, take 15 minutes to clear your desk and put together a list of the next day's most pressing tasks. It's a great decompression technique, and you'll feel better sitting down at a clean desk in the morning.
- **First thing in the morning** — Arrive a few minutes early and assemble your prioritized to-do list (see #2). This may prove to be the most productive part of your day.

### **5. Eliminate distractions.**

Start paying attention to the number of times someone interrupts you when you're in the midst of an important task. Track self-induced interruptions, too, particularly those of the social media variety. Your smart phone is extremely useful, but it's also addictive and among the most insidious time-wasters known to mankind.

It may take a massive exercise in will power, but shut the door and turn off your phone to maximize your time. Instead of being "always on," plan a break in the day to catch up on email, call people back, talk with staff, etc.

### **6. Delegate more often.**

If you've done a good job of hiring talented, dedicated employees, there's always more work they can take off your desk. Running a successful small business depends upon the owner's ability to think about what lies ahead and not get mired in day-to-day operations. Look for opportunities to pass responsibility for specific tasks to others on your team.

### **7. Watch what you spend**

How many productive minutes are you packing in each week? Use this simple timesheet tracker to quickly and easily clock in and out of various tasks or projects throughout the day. Switch jobs or tasks with just one click using the TSheets mobile app, or track time directly from

your desktop. Then generate robust, real-time reports to see exactly where you're spending your most valuable asset — and where it's being wasted.

## **8. Take care of yourself.**

Be sure to get plenty of sleep and exercise. An alert mind is a high-functioning mind and one that's less tolerant of time-wasting activities.

### **The importance of daily planning (and how it helps managing your time)**

#### **Why is daily planning so important?**

Introducing daily planning into your routine is an easy – but essential – step to create balance in your life: it allows you to clearly separate the time you spend working and the time you have for everything else (this is essentially important if you work from home, these lines tend to get a little blurry).

Here are a few reasons why you should consider introducing some planning into your life sooner rather than later:

- It can make your life a lot less stressful: Knowing what to expect from the day ahead of you (and having an action plan to go through it all) considerably reduces the amount of stress for the next day;
- It allows you to evaluate yourself: Having plans allow you to analyse whether you're sticking to them, evaluating your own ability to stay – or not – on schedule;
- It helps you be prepared: You can't predict the obstacles that may occur, but part of your planning routine can be having a contingency plan for emergency or unexpected situations – it'll help avoid panicking.

#### **How should you go about your daily planning?**

That depends! Each person works differently so, your daily planning will be as unique as yourself. Some experts advise you should plan your whole day the previous afternoon – that doesn't work for me, I create my cards on my “daily planning” pipe first thing in the morning, because that's the first thing I like crossing of my list.

Talking about crossing things of your list, that's another thing that comes with daily planning (especially if you, like me, do it using Pipefy): the sense of accomplishment of moving card after card into the “done” phase – I have to tell you, I'm all for small victories and each card I get done is a small victory in itself.

The one thing that doesn't change is: you have to start your planning by clearly defining your goals – from then; you'll go on to the necessary tasks to accomplish the

goals you'll define. If you're only planning the day ahead, those will be smaller tasks but, if you're planning your entire week, you can broaden your horizons.

It's very important that each task has a priority level, an estimated time to be completed and, if possible, a due date – that'll allow you to better organize them all throughout your days.

If you decide to trace a weekly planning, it's important to take a few minutes every day to evaluate your progress and analyze the tasks you have to do for the day – if your planning is on track, if you'll need to re-prioritize tasks, change due dates, etc.

Plan your day with Pipefy! Planning can be fun, especially if you have **the right tools to help you** in this endeavour! **Pipefy's** Task Management Template offers you the optimal structure to **manage yours and your team's tasks** better, clearly showing you what everyone has to do, what are the priorities, what's on time and what's late.

### **How to Improve Your Concentration and Memory**

The following are the ten simple strategies that anyone can use to improve the amount of information that they take in and remember and can use to improve concentration and memory.

**1. Pay attention.** You cannot take in information unless you are paying attention, and you cannot memorize information unless you are taking it in. Get enough food and sleep, and avoid distractions such as a background radio or television.

**2. Involve as many senses as possible.** For example, if you are sitting in a lecture, you will remember more of what is being said if you listen and scribble down a few notes. Or if you are reading a letter or an article, you will remember more of what is written if you read it aloud to yourself.

**3. Relate new information** to what you already know. New information is much easier to remember if it can be contextualised. For example, if you are prescribed a new anti-depressant drug, you can relate its side-effects to the side-effects of your old anti-depressant drug. Or you might notice that both anti-depressant drugs are from the same class of drugs, and thus that they have similar side-effects.

**4. Structure information.** For example, if you need to remember what ingredients you need to cook a meal, think of them under the sub-headings of starter, main course, and desert, and visualize how many ingredients there are under each sub-heading. Or if you need to remember a telephone number, think of it in terms of the five first digits, the middle three digits, and the last three digits.

**5. Use mnemonics.** That is, tie information to visual images, sentences, acronyms, or rhymes. For example, you might remember that your hairdresser is called Sharon by picturing a Rose of Sharon or a sharon fruit. You might remember the order of the colours of the rainbow with the sentence, ‘Richard of York got beaten in Versailles’. Or you might remember, as medical students do, the symptoms of varicose veins with the acronym ‘AEIOU’: aching, eczema, itching, oedema, and ulceration.

**6. Understand information.** Try to understand more complex material before you try to remember it. If possible, summarize the material in your own words and write or type out your summary. Reorganize the material or your summary of the material so that it is easier to remember. By manipulating the information in this way, you are forcing yourself to think about it actively.

**7. Rehearse information.** Review the information later on the same day or sleep over it and review it the following day. Thereafter, review it at regular, spaced intervals until you feel comfortable that you know it well enough.

**8. Exercise your mind.** Mental challenge can help to create new wire connections in the brain, which makes it more effective and more resistant to memory disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease. So develop a new hobby, read a novel, learn a foreign language, or practice yourself at crosswords or sudoku.

**9. Develop a healthy lifestyle.** Eat a healthy, balanced diet, take regular exercise, and avoid smoking. A healthy lifestyle increases the amount of blood and oxygen that is delivered to the brain, and reduces the risk of medical conditions that can lead to memory loss such as Alzheimer’s disease, stroke, and diabetes. Exercise also increases your ‘feel-good’ endorphins, which improves your mood and prevents depression. Depression results in impaired attention and concentration, and is also a risk factor for Alzheimer’s disease.

**10. Get sufficient sleep.** Sleep is necessary for memory consolidation, and feeling alert and refreshed improves your attention and concentration.

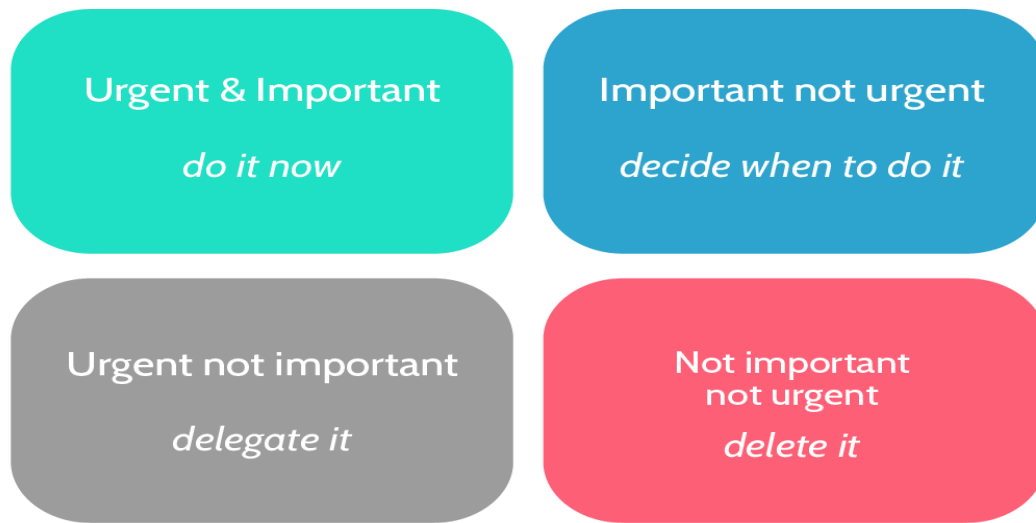
**11. See a doctor.** Certain prescribed and over-the-counter drugs can impair your attention and concentration, and hence your memory. If you suspect that this is the case for you, see your family doctor. You should also see your family doctor if you begin having memory problems that affect your ability to get by on a day-to-day basis.

### **Prioritizing – beginning at the start**

In 1954, the former U.S President Dwight D. Eisenhower said about task prioritization “I have two kinds of problems: the urgent and the important. The urgent are



not important, and the important are never urgent”. It was this quote that created the **Eisenhower Matrix**; a 4-box system for organizing your tasks by urgency and importance, then getting them done.



The Eisenhower Matrix puts tasks into two categories, and then prioritizes them for you. It's a fast way to get everything in order at the start of the day. **Action:** Get into the habit of quickly categorizing tasks by using this checklist on your to-do list:

**The Important checklist:**

- It will affect many people or projects if incomplete
- Other tasks depend on its completion
- It contributes a lot of value
- It's low effort-high results (80/20 principle)

**The 'Urgent' Checklist:**

- It is overdue
- It is due soon
- It demands immediate attention
- The consequences of not doing it are immediate

To apply the matrix to your to-do list, use tags to denote which quadrant of the matrix it falls into. From top right to left, you've got:

1. Urgent AND important
2. Important NOT urgent
3. Urgent NOT important
4. NOT urgent OR important

When you have two frogs to eat, eat the ugliest one first – Brian Tracy. In slight contrast to the Eisenhower Matrix, Brian Tracy’s method of consuming amphibians focuses on your feelings towards the tasks on your list. **In the words of Mark Twain, if you eat a live frog each day for breakfast, nothing worse can happen for the rest of the day.** And so, the idea is to eat the worst frog as early as possible then breeze through the day. Replacing frogs with tasks, how does this method work?

**You categorize tasks into four boxes, such as**

1. Things you don’t want to do, and actually don’t need to do.
2. Things you don’t want to do, but actually need to do.
3. Things you want to do and actually need to do.
4. Things you want to do, but actually don’t need to do.

The logic is that if you don’t want to do a task, it’s probably because it’s hard. You know it’s important but you’re procrastinating. “Get the biggest, ugliest task out of the way as soon as you can, and the rest will come easily.”

**Use the ABCDE method for precise prioritization**

Another prioritization method from Brian Tracy, this time a little more mathematical. I love how it takes into account that **different tasks can take the same priority level**. Instead of randomly doing equal-priority tasks as they come along, the ABCDE method has two levels of priority. Here are the steps to take to prioritize your tasks with this method:

1. Going through your list, give every task a letter from A to E, A being the highest priority
2. For every task that has an A, give it a number which dictates the order you’ll do it in
3. Repeat until all tasks have letters and numbers
4. To make sure there’s point in categorizing them so strictly, you’re going to have to be hard on yourself.
5. You’re not allowed to start on a new letter until the previous letter is fully complete.
6. If you reference this against the other two methods that has been outlined, your A tasks would be your ... urgent and important frogs.

**The simplest method:** pick your 1-3 most important tasks

True to form, the simplest way to prioritize your tasks comes from Zen Habits. In the book *Zen to Done*, Leo Babauta says: “At the beginning of each day, review your list, and write down 1-3 **MITs [Most Important Tasks]** that you’d like to accomplish for the day. That’s your whole planning system. You don’t need any more than that.” — *Zen to Done*

Using the other methods in this article, you should be well equipped to pick your 1-3 MITs quickly, and get on the path to hitting to-do list zero. The beauty of this method, however, is that it relies on your intuition. After you've been on a few projects, or swamped by an overpowering to-do list enough times, you instinctively know which tasks are your most important.

In the end, there's not a complete mathematical formula for working it out, but there are some ways to make prioritizing your tasks a habit, and a skill you can hone to get work done faster.

**Reference:** <https://www.process.st/how-to-prioritize-tasks/>

### **Techniques for conquering procrastination**

#### **Two Methods for Conquering Your Chronic Procrastination - Fleet Maull**

Procrastination is a problem that many people struggle within at the workplace. There are projects that we know need to get done, but they keep getting pushed to the side, and eventually, they grow into a giant obstacle that blocks personal and professional progress.

Nearly everyone procrastinates at one point or another, whether it's checking email or social media before starting a task, getting up too regularly to refill your coffee mug, or taking time away from what you're not doing to pay attention to something else. Short breaks can be helpful, as they allow you to mull over the next steps of a task or the perfect wording of a letter. But when they become chronic and paralyzing, they fuel self-doubt, stress, feelings of incompetence, and other negative emotions that further impede progress.

Research shows that procrastination is a failure of self-regulation. Those who procrastinate tend to prefer pleasure over progress. This means that you might find completing small tasks, like answering emails, more gratifying than working towards a larger, more time-consuming goal. On the other hand, people may delay getting tasks done because they simply don't want to do it.

Although procrastination is normal, the self-defeating pressure and dormancy that come with it can be avoided. **Procrastination is a behavior that was learned, and it can be changed.** With effort, procrastinators can learn to stop weighing themselves down with negativity and prioritize projects in an efficient way.

The first step involves understanding what drives your procrastination. Many people avoid tasks out of fear that the job will be difficult or unpleasant. Others put off projects because they feel they're ill-prepared and will fail. These excuses tend to snowball and lock in feelings of

uncertainty and unworthiness. As a result, that project becomes a looming obstacle blocking you from moving forward.

## **How to Get Unstuck**

There are two key skills to get over procrastination: cognitive reframing and prioritizing work.

### **1. Cognitive reframing.**

It is also called cognitive restructuring, this is a behavioral technique that helps people change their thinking and approach situations differently. Think of the classic "glass half-full or half-empty" scenario. With cognitive reframing, people learn to see things in a more positive light. By focusing on the positive aspects of a situation, it's much easier to let go of the self-defeating voice in their head.

Cognitive reframing uses various techniques, but identifying the built-up negative feelings is critical. Take some time to write down all the feelings you have about a project, whether it's fear, anxiety or depression. When we focus our attention on what we're ignoring, we are able to change how we feel about a certain task.

### **2. Ongoing prioritization and re-prioritization.**

This enables you to actually work through the task(s) you're facing. Assess your priorities with Stephen Covey's time-management matrix. It's a diagram of four squares, with each task labeled as "urgent, not urgent, important and not important." So for instance, a task can be "important and urgent" or "important but not urgent."

By placing your tasks in quadrants, you can determine whether something demands attention now, is a distraction, is simply a waste of time, or is important but can be temporarily overlooked. The latter (things that are not urgent) are tasks that people typically procrastinate working on until the deadline looms or until they become crises that demand everyone's attention.

Another approach, called "chunking," involves breaking a big project down into smaller tasks. It makes the effort seem less intimidating and allows for little victories when tasks are completed along the way. Think of this like Newton's first law of motion: you need to get going to build momentum. So, while writing a major report is daunting, tackling one small project can be satisfying and help get you started on the others.

The critical strategies to overcome procrastination are recognizing the tasks you tend to avoid and changing the negative thinking that derails your productivity. From here, you can train yourself to overcome the inertia and conquer chronic procrastination. All you just need is to get started.

## **Sensible delegation**

### **Five steps to delegating right and reducing your stress**

Effective delegation is an essential supervisory skill. Any supervisor or manager must learn to delegate effectively in order to accomplish their goals. By definition, to supervise the work of others means that one has to take time away from the technical aspects of their job and tend to the people side of things. It is because time resources are finite; one must remove some of the work they were previously able to accomplish on their own from their task-list in order to make time for performance management and leadership tasks. If they want their work to be completed; they have to delegate it to their staff.

### **What is delegation?**

Delegation involves assigning responsibility to another person for a task for which you are still ultimately accountable. At the core of delegation are the opposite concepts of autonomy and control. How much autonomy the delegate has to decide, how to complete the task is negatively correlated with how much direct influence you choose to exercise over how the delegate will do the work.

There is a broad spectrum of possible combinations and the right one is dependent on contextual issues such as the task, the time available, and the experience level and/or fitness of the delegate to perform the task. The difference between delegating, micromanaging, and dumping lies in the results of that decision matrix.

### **Barriers to delegating**

Inevitably, leaders and managers have the myriad barriers they see when they think about delegating. Here are some of their challenges:

- I don't have time to train someone else to do it; it's faster to just do it myself...
- I'm not sure I can trust someone new with this task...
- I don't feel right asking others to do 'my' work...
- I worry people on my team don't have the right skills to do this task...
- What if the person I delegate to feels this is too [boring, easy, hard] for them...
- What if they do it wrong and I have to re-do it anyway?

Well, here's the reality:

First, unless you give people a chance to learn a task and earn your trust, you'll be overloaded and overwhelmed forever – nothing will change. How's your current workload working for you? Also, while it requires an up-front investment of time, developing your staff will pay back dividends. You have to have a long-view mentality on delegation.

You do want to ensure you don't just 'dump' boring or mundane tasks on folks who can handle more challenging and satisfying work – try to delegate a process or project whenever you can to give them the satisfaction of seeing something full-circle.

### **Benefits of delegating**

There are lots of benefits that delegating well can yield. Some of them include:

- Develops new competencies and skills in your staff, which helps them feel more satisfied in their job and feel more engaged (translation: they'll be less likely to bail)
- Develops more self-sufficiency and autonomy in your staff over-time, which helps them feel good and relieves you of having to spend as much time providing support and input
- Builds trust between you and your staff (it goes both ways)
- Allows your staff to have a wider variety of experiences and makes them more well-rounded and satisfied
- Improves service to clients – more qualified employees and faster/more efficient processes are possible when you share the work and remove the backlog
- You become less overwhelmed and can feel less overworked (imagine that!)

### **Some tasks should not be delegated**

Before you get all delegation-happy, beware: it's not always appropriate to delegate. There are actually some things that you should keep on your to-do list.

For example, you shouldn't delegate performance conversations or giving feedback. It's your job to manage performance and you're the only one who should do it. Also, you should never delegate firing an employee (although Human Resources professionals will tell you plenty of managers try to...). Managing a change process is also something that you should not delegate. You can delegate some aspects of the change management process, but the overall leadership of the change must stay with you.

### **The process of delegation**

The five step process that can help you delegate effectively.

**1. Analyze your time and tasks.** Take a close look at your time and the tasks on your to-do list. Break them down into the smallest chunks, but also keep them connected to the bigger project of which they're a part. Choose the tasks that you can and should delegate and those that you should keep. Consider grouping them to give that deeper meaning and satisfaction of seeing a process rather than just a tiny, boring, meaningless task.

**2. Choose a delegate.** What factors affect how you select a delegate? Think about their current

skill level as well as their desired skill development, their current workload, and the distribution of delegated tasks among your staff. Take a big picture view before zeroing in on who will be the best person for the job. Be extra aware of any tendency you may have to go to the ‘rock stars’ again and again: you’re not only burning them out, you’re inadvertently missing the opportunity to develop others and possibly causing them to get disappointed and disengaged.

**3. Brief the delegate** about the task and your expectations. Tell them both the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of the delegated task. Here are some of the important points to cover:

- Define the objectives clearly and concisely (create a checklist)
- Specify resources available (human, financial, equipment, facilities)
- Set a schedule with deadlines, milestones, review/check-in points
- Describe the ‘how’: the methodology and procedures – allowing as much input as appropriate. **Note:** the more experienced they are with the work, the less you should specify the ‘how’ and the more autonomy you should allow them.
- Specifically define levels of authority, decision-making range, and level of monitoring/autonomy (where on the Responsibility Ladder should they be?)
- Ask the person to summarize the task in their own words (this is where you can catch any gaps between your vision and their understanding of it)
- Get agreement and commitment
- Offer support without removing responsibility

**4. Monitor and encourage.** Be sure to do this in accordance with the appropriate level of autonomy and control that were discussed between you. This should prevent any surprises and also help you ensure that you’re helpful but not crossing the line into being overbearing or the ‘dead-beat boss’, nowhere to be found.

**5. Evaluate,** extract lessons-learned, and celebrate successes. This is a step that you should do for yourself as well as with the delegate. Get and give feedback, and keep developing the person up the Responsibility Ladder to take on more autonomy and to free you up from having to exert as much control.

<https://www.talentgrow.com/blog/5-steps-to-delegating-right-and-reducing-your-stress>

### **Taking the right breaks**

Next time you’re plowing through a days-long pile of work, barely looking up from your computer, consider this: Breaks are scientifically-proven to boost focus and productivity.

The University of Illinois - 2008 study found that the brain's attention resources drop after a long period of focusing on a single task, decreasing our focus and hindering performance. But even brief diversions, the study found, could significantly increase one's ability to focus on that task for prolonged periods of time.

"Like time, energy is finite; but unlike time, it is renewable," Energy Project CEO Tony Schwartz wrote in the New York Times. "Taking more time off is counterintuitive for most of us. The idea is also at odds with the prevailing work ethic in most companies, where downtime is typically viewed as time wasted."

Although Schwartz was advocating for more vacations, the same could apply to breaks taken throughout the day. Though breaks might seem counterproductive, they're more important than ever in the 24/7 workplace of constant connectivity and non-stop streams of email. We're constantly checking and updating our email, Twitter and Facebook in addition to the other work we're doing, and frequently we forgo real breaks in favor of cyber-loafing or Facebook-updating.

There's no way to perform at your highest level without allowing time for rest. Over long periods of working, the brain uses up oxygen and glucose, its primary forms of energy.

The brain uses enormous amounts of energy for an organ of its size, according to Scientific American, "regardless of whether we are tackling integral calculus or clicking through the week's top 10 LOL cats."

So why do we feel particularly taxed after working for a stretch of time? "Maintaining unbroken focus or navigating demanding intellectual territory for several hours really does burn enough energy to leave one feeling drained," writes Scientific American's Ferris Jabr, describing one theory. So, if your productivity is lagging, it might actually mean that you need to take more breaks, or more likely, better breaks that are truly restorative.

**Here are six ways to optimize your breaks and in doing so, revolutionize your productivity.**

How often do you take breaks that involve mindlessly eating chips while scrolling through facebook / whatsapp / twitter? While it still helps to take your mind off of work briefly, this type of respite is not very effective in rebooting the brain. There are low efficiency and high efficiency ways to recover, and taking a break for social media or texting is generally a low-efficiency diversion.

"[Social media breaks] are better than not 'changing the channel,'" Andrew Deutscher, Vice President of Business Development at The Energy Project and an expert on office productivity, explained to the Huffington Post. "If somebody was on a 90-minute project meeting and it's really intense and they're focused, and they take a break for 10 minutes to go



through their Twitter feed, it's better than trying to push through in that meeting. But it's not really re-energizing... they're not going to be nearly as refreshed and recovered as if they took a real break to walk outside."

Then what is the better break? Get up and move around to get the blood flowing and clear the mind (Bonus points if you take a walk outside!).

In addition to providing mild physical exercise, walking has been shown to relieve stress, reduce fatigue and boost mood. Walking through green spaces could even put the brain in a state of meditation, according to a study recently published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

### **Make it a social break.**

Research has found that strong social ties in the workplace can boost productivity, and could make employees more passionate about their work and less likely to quit their jobs. For this reason, strategically designed coffee areas and leisure spaces where employees can enjoy breaks together are important to office productivity, Sociometric Solutions CEO Ben Waber told the New York Times. Waber also said "in general when we look at what makes people happy and effective at work, it's being able to spend time with a close group of people". "You need to structure work in such a way that people have these opportunities."

### **Work in a 90-minute burst, and then take a break.**

Those who work in 90-minute spurts could be more effective and productive, according to a theory of rest that borrows from observations made during sleep research.

Physiologist and sleep researcher Nathaniel Kleitman first described the "ultradian rhythm" as a 90-minute cycle during which we progress through all five cycles of sleep. But he also found these cycles to play an important role in waking life, signifying the movement between higher and lower states of alertness in a basic rest-activity cycle.

Working in this way involves using the principles of periodization (work-to-rest ratio) employed by many athletes and their trainers, often to increase endurance.

### **Take regular vacations.**

How much vacation you need will depend on how hard you've been working and how depleted you feel, but all of us need at least some time off in order to work at our highest level. And yet, U.S. workers left an estimated average of 9.2 vacation days unused in 2012, while more than six in 10 Americans said they worked through their vacation this year.

But the disconnection afforded from a vacation can help us relieve stress, improve mood, and see the bigger picture. The anticipation of an upcoming vacation can boost well-being for up

to eight weeks prior to the trip, according to a 2010 study in the journal Applied Research in Quality of Life.

### **Maximize your nap.**

Napping has been shown to improve learning and memory, boost mental alertness, and increase creativity and productivity, among other physical and mental health benefits. Take a 25-30 minute nap for a short, effective energy-booster, says sleep expert Dr. Michael Breus.

“The [30-minute] nap is particularly important for people who are tired during the day and didn’t sleep enough that night, and want to supplement their sleep a little bit,” Breus told The Huffington Post.

If you have a little more freedom in your schedule, taking a longer nap one that lasts 60 to 90 minutes has even more benefits for your mind and cognition. An hour to hour and a half nap improves memory test results as much as an eight-hour night of sleep, according to UC Riverside research.

### **Make it a mindful break.**

The most effective breaks are those that involve calming the mind through practices like deep breathing, meditation or yoga (mindful movement), which allow for maximum renewal in minimum time. Meditation and deep breathing can be particularly effective in relieving stress.

You may not notice a difference immediately, but research has shown that over time, cultivating mindfulness is correlated with lower **cortisol** levels. Plus, practicing meditation could boost your creativity and compassion.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/19/youve-been-taking-breaks-\\_n\\_4453448.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/19/youve-been-taking-breaks-_n_4453448.html)

### **Learning to say “No”**

The difference between successful people and really successful people is that really successful people say no to almost everything - **Warren Buffett**

If you feel guilty and uncomfortable saying no at work, you’re not alone. You may think people will dislike you, think you are entitled or question whether you are a team player. It seems paradoxical, but saying no strategically and respectfully can help your career. I spoke to successful women to find out when to say no at work (and why it’s crucial).

### **It Hinders Your Ability To Accomplish Your Responsibilities:**

“Say no at work when you are assigned a task that does not fall under your job description and could be easily accomplished by the person who is asking it. It's important to say no at work because it earns you respect. If you aren't getting paid to do something and the task

will take away time from accomplishing what you are paid to do, saying no demonstrates your commitment to your role and the value of your time.” — Eileen Carey, CEO of Glassbreakers

**It Doesn't Align With Your Long-term And Short-term Priorities:**

“Prioritization is critical in today's 24/7 work environment. I keep a list of long-term and short-term priorities and if a task or project doesn't fit in one of those buckets, 99% of the time I decline it. My best tip for saying no is to be straightforward and not dance around the subject. Explain that the task, project or activity doesn't align with your current priorities and, if the situation changes, you will revisit the topic. Also, sometimes you can suggest an alternative solution. Remember, everyone has to say no at some point, so the person will respect your candor.” — Johanna Lanus, CEO and founder of Work with Balance

**You Disagree With The Decision:**

“If you fundamentally disagree with someone, or if you are questioning why you are working on a project, you should absolutely say something. You don't necessarily have to say no, but you should always feel comfortable questioning and pushing back on processes that you disagree with. You don't always have to agree with every decision being made, but you should always feel empowered to question choices and, at the very least, to stir conversation. Asking why is a good substitute for saying no because it forces the opposite side to explain and justify her point of view. Asking why allows you to present your side too. While you might not agree with the justification, you will better understand where your boss is coming from.” — Liz Wessel, CEO and cofounder of WayUp

**It doesn't accomplish a key goal:**

“We say no to any meeting or project that does not directly or materially work toward the accomplishment of our key goals. Part of doing any role well is hearing out any and all opportunities that come your way, such as proposed partnerships, co-marketing or cross-functional projects. At the end of the day, however, you have a limited amount of time and resources, and it's your job to make sure you're spending these resources on the highest-impact endeavors. When you receive a proposal that may be a distraction, the best thing to do is hear it out fully and then directly and politely explain why it's not a fit for the company at this time. Being honest about your limited ability to take it on will resonate with anyone because the proposal is likely coming from someone with similar constraints who will respect your honesty and commitment to your goals.” — Alexandra Friedman and Jordana Kier, cofounders of LOLA  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/elanagross/2016/09/19/when-to-say-no-at-work/#4bc67f4d1322>