

THE ONE MINUTE TO DO LIST BY MICHAEL LINENBERGER | BOOK SUMMARY AND PDF

Michael Linenberger's book *The One Minute To Do List* explains how a good to-do list can be extremely effective in managing your day and ultimately being more productive. Linenberger examines different ways to approach your own list and how to manage it on a day-to-day basis. The book examines different rules, approaches and how to apply your own list on different platforms whether it be physical, pen on paper, on your computer desktop or completely mobile on your smart phone.

A good to-do list can show you what your most important next work to do is. A good to-do list approach will control the size of that list so you do not feel overwhelmed by it. A good to-do list system should help you do the work smartly and efficiently; it can make sure the work you do next is the right work. And it can truly get your workday under control. The benefits of this one minute system are huge. Your sense of chaos at work goes away. You'll get the right things done on time, and you won't waste time on the wrong things. The One Minute To-Do List removes uncertainty about what you need to do, and helps you focus on the right things. You end up feeling—and being—in control.

SECONDS TO WORKDAY RELIEF

To get going, take one minute to do a brain dump of things that are nagging you right now, using the 1MTD approach. We're going to do this on paper. Find two blank sheets of paper and get a pen or pencil handy.

On your first sheet of paper, create two sections or “zones”. These are called urgency zones.

The first urgency zone is called Critical Now. Make a list of anything on your mind that you know is absolutely due today. Don't spend more than 20 seconds on this. If there is nothing due, leave it empty.

Next, about one-third of the way down the page, write the heading Opportunity Now. Now make a list in this section. List here those tasks that, though not urgently due now, you would work on now if you had the opportunity. Include things that may be due tomorrow, or later this week, or even as far out as ten days.

On the second sheet of paper, create the urgency zone called Over-the-Horizon Zone. Now, write down here anything on your mind that can wait ten days or more for you to get to. Items here are obviously your slow-burn items. Even though they are beyond your “concern horizon”, it is good to record them so you do not lose them.

The List

You have probably lowered your stress level greatly. If any of those things you wrote down were previously bouncing around in your mind and causing you anxiety, you’ve now confidently recorded them in one compact list that you can rely on.

This to-do list approach is particularly useful because it emphasizes urgency. It is urgency that causes your stress level to rise at work, and it is urgency that you should manage first. This system addresses that directly.

Now that you have this three-part to-do list, update it throughout the day as new things present themselves or as priorities change. Carry this list with you everywhere you go.

RULE YOUR TO-DOS WITH EASE

The number one cause of a failed to-do list, particularly those that are automated, is that the list gets too big and overwhelming.

Rule number one: Keep the Critical Now list to five items or fewer.

How do you prevent yourself from loading more than five items in the Critical Now section? That’s where the second rule comes in; it’s called the Going Home Test. Ask yourself the following question: “Would I be willing to not go home but instead work even till midnight or beyond, to get this item completed?” If the answer is “no,” don’t put it in the Critical Now list; put it in the Opportunity Now list.

Rule number two: Twenty or fewer opportunity now items

Since the items you place here are discretionary, this section will tend to get big, fast. Why? Because you will tend to add more items than you complete on any given day. To keep it under control, limit the number of items here to 20 or fewer. Because 20 items is about the maximum number you will scan through and digest in one quick glance.

Rule number three: Review Cycles: one hour, one day, one week

Critical Now items: review approximately once each hour. Opportunity Now items: review approximately once each day. Over-the-Horizon items: review approximately once each week.

Rule number four: Write deadlines in the subject line

This way, when you scan the Opportunity Now or Over-the-Horizon lists, you can see upcoming deadlines and keep your eye on them. When a due day arrives, move the task to the Critical Now section.

Rule number five: Write only the very next step

For example, instead of “Landscape garden” write “Call Jim and get name of his landscaper.” These items are specific steps that you can act on when you see them.

SIMPLE AUTOMATED SOLUTIONS

You can easily move tasks between the three urgency zones. If you use only paper, you’ll need to erase and rewrite tasks to move them. Being automated makes it easier to copy tasks that come to you in e-mail. You can see your task list on your smartphone or tablet when traveling. Computer, or smartphone? Having it on your computer is almost always needed; most of us do much of our work on our computers.

Use a text document like word to begin with. But, you can do even better than that if you do not mind learning new software. The main advantage is that task software adds features—features that come in handy when your list starts to get large.

USING OUTLOOK FOR THE ONE MINUTE TO-DO LIST

If Outlook is already your main e-mail system it’s already on your desktop and you are accustomed to having it open. And with recent versions of Outlook, you can have your task list sit right next to your e-mail. Windows Outlook has a very quick way of converting e-mails into tasks—you just drag and drop the e-mail.

USING TODDLEDO FOR THE ONE MINUTE TO-DO LIST

ToodleDo is amazing software. It works better than almost any other task software out there—including Outlook tasks, in many ways. ToodleDo is browser based so it runs in the same easy way for all users on any computer or tablet (Windows, Mac, Linux, iPad, Android, and so on). That means anyone can use it, no matter what hardware they use. And finally, even if you use Outlook or another system for e-mail, you can still use ToodleDo for your tasks— ToodleDo can be used together with any e-mail system.

CONTROLLING E-MAIL WITH THE ONE MINUTE TO-DO LIST

Out-of-control e-mails lead to dropped responsibilities—dropped to-dos. E-mail is a major receiving area for the many new to-dos we get each day. So, if we cannot manage our e-mail, we cannot manage our tasks. A good task management system like 1MTD can serve as a way to solve your overloaded in-box.

The solution is to convert action e-mails into tasks and manage them where tasks should be managed: in your to-do list system. In Outlook and ToodleDo it is actually easy to convert e-mails to tasks; doing so only takes a few seconds. So, rather than spending ten to 20 minutes working on one e-mail task just because it is right in front of you, use the 1MTD to convert it into a prioritized task in just a few seconds and move on to the next e-mail.

Single Folder Filing

Once you start converting e-mails to tasks, you will find it is very easy to file mail out of your in-box. That's because the tension has been removed from the inbox. There's no need to refer to the in-box when looking for actions—they are now in your to-do list.

Drag all e-mail to one folder, and emptying the in-box every day. In Outlook and in other folder-based e-mail applications, create a new folder called the Processed Mail folder. Once you extract and create tasks, there's nothing left hanging in the in-box that you feel you need to act on. So it is easy to file it—you just move it all into one folder.

GOING MOBILE: USING 1MTD ON YOUR SMARTPHONE OR TABLET

The reasons for putting your 1MTD on your mobile devices are obvious. You might be working away from the office and don't have your computer with you. Or you do have your computer but you don't want to take the time to open it just to take a quick glance at your tasks. Just make sure you do the following: Keep your tasks in synch across multiple platforms Put your tasks in the 'cloud'

TAKING 1MTD TO THE NEXT LEVEL

The next level is called Master Your Now or MYN for short. MYN helps you manage high volumes of tasks. One of the first places you're going to accumulate too many tasks is in your Opportunity Now list. When that gets too long, you'll need to prioritize within the list. To that end, MYN includes a concept called FRESH Prioritization—it provides a natural approach to managing a long list of tasks in your Opportunity Now section.

Fresh Prioritization

FRESH Prioritization is a simple and natural answer. You implement it by using start dates on all your tasks and sorting them a certain way. It is very simple to do, and it's an important new principle of automated task management. With this approach, the tasks you see first at the top of your Opportunity Now list are probably going to be ones with the most energy and most freshness. They tend to be your most important optional tasks.

Now, not all tasks lose importance over time. So, if you look lower in your Opportunity Now list and see some tasks that are still very important and they seem positioned too low, all you need to do is set the start date of those to a more recent date.

Don't use a due date, use a start date

The concept of using a start date brings up another important new principle of task management. That's to favour start dates on all tasks, rather than due dates, when scheduling tasks. If you set a date that's fake you'll know it's fake and you'll ignore it. In fact you may miss some important deadlines because you'll get in the habit of ignoring all due dates you write down. So, don't write a due date on a task unless there truly is a deadline for that task.