MINIMALIST WORKDAY

50 STRATEGIES FOR WORKING LESS

EVERETT BOGUE
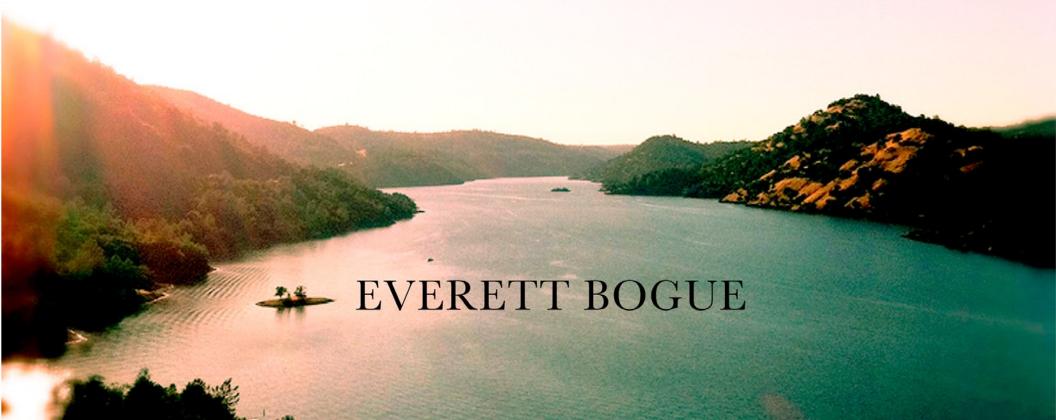
INTRODUCTION TO MINIMALIST WORKDAY

Over the last year I've accomplished a couple of things:

1. Quit my day job, became location independent.
2. Start living with less than 100 things.
3. Built a profitable business around a blog.
4. Written two best-selling e-books which completely support me.

Throughout this time, I managed to keep my work schedule down to less than 2 hours per day, on avarage. Yes, some weeks I worked 10 hour days, and others I simply didn't work at all. In the end though, I don't actually work that much anymore. My goal is to help you do the same.

This e-book took me 4 hours to write and edit, and 2 hours to produce.

Maybe I'm super human, but I don't think so. We waste a lot of time, and that's why we work so much.

Over the last year I've received hundreds of emails from readers asking how to reduce their work schedule. I've written a number of blog posts on the topic, and both of my e-books weigh into the issue. I've been interviewed about the minimalist workday by major newspapers and blogs.

All of this has made me conclude that we want to work less, so I've put this e-book together to help us do just that.

AVERAGE AMERICANS

The average American works 7.9 hours a day, that's just under 2,000 hours a year.
I'd like to argue that much of that time is wasted, sitting at a desk, doing stupid
work that doesn't matter.

Also, two weeks of vacation a year is a crime, and you know it.

I think this is one of the most important issues of our time. The world changed,
and how we use our time is much more important than how long we sit at a desk.

It's time for a revolution in the way we think of work. I hope you agree with me.

WHY THIS E-BOOK IS FREE

I have published two other e-books in the last year, both of them I charged money for. I honestly don't need much more money at this point, so making you pay to learn how to work less seems like extortion to me.

You're already being held hostage by a corporate system, being forced to work endless hours for low pay. To charge you money to learn how to opt-out would be like sticking a hot poker in an open wound. I won't do that.

So I'm giving this away for free. If it helps you, consider buying one of my other e-books. I'd also love if you sent this e-book to as many people as you think can benefit from it. Thank you.

My e-books are here, if you feel like checking them out after reading:

Minimalist Business
The Art of Being Minimalist

HUNTERS AND GATHERERS

We've been told since day one that we were supposed to sit at a desk for 8 hours a day, but there's always been another way.

There are ways to master the art of time, and the best way to do that is to become a hunter. A hunter spots opportunities and greets them... this, above all else is the winning strategy for working less.

We all used to be hunters, so believe it or not it will come naturally to you once you try. It's hard to tell from where you're sitting at your desk right now though. You have to stand up before you can start hunting.

Coincidently enough, hunter gatherer societies had 2-hour workdays. The Internet has allowed us to start hunting again. You can either do repetative tasks, or seek big paydays. It's your choice.

Once you start to spot opportunities outside of everyone else's assumed reality, you'll begin to notice them everywhere.

But as I mentioned before, you have to stand up to start seeing.

WHY WORK 2 HOURS A DAY?

It might seem obvious, but there are numerous benefits to be accrued by working less.

We're so used to spending most of our lives at our jobs that it might not even seem possible to work less. Believe me, it is.

Inevitably someone will send me an email about this e-book calling me lazy. Believe me, I'm far from it. Why waste an extra six hours when you can get your work done in two?

Working less isn't lazy, in fact I'd like to argue that working MORE is lazy. Why? Because if you work for eight hours just out of habit, you aren't making tough choices in order to maximize your business and get things done.

THE BENEFITS OF
2-HOUR WORKDAYS:

- Less stress.
- More time to relax and enjoy your life.
- More time for learning, research, reading which can maximize profits.
- You'll make your friends jealous, because you're at the park while they're sitting under fluorescent lights.
- When you work less you also spend less, because you don't need to waste money blowing off steam.

The biggest benefit is of course that you'll get paid more per hour. If you make $10 an hour in an average 8-hour day, when you reduce your schedule to 2 hour days, your rate will jump to $40 an hour. That number can grow exponentially as you make more money from your business.

THE STRATEGIES FOR WORK SCHEDULE RE-DUCTION

Over the last year, I've experimented with hundreds of different strategies in order to minimalize my workdays.

Some strategies, like avoiding the time-suck of endless email checking, have revolutionized my business. Others didn't work out so hot, these I won't write about here, because they won't help you.

Before I get into what not to do, let me go over three things that you must do in order to keep your business going strong while you're not working.

1. Provide value.

No business exists without providing a valuable resource for people to invest money in. You need to offer something that gives people value, quality, and usefulness. Obviously this is definition incredibly nonspecific, because every business is different. A valuable photographer produces quality photos of people and places. A valuable writer leads people with clear writing that conveys information. A valuable accountant makes sure the taxes get done and no one gets audited.

2. Productize.

Most businesses depend on services which are transacted in real time. This is NOT the kind of business I advocate building in *Minimalist Business*. Instead, create a product that will fill the needs of a number of people. A product must have a specific focus, and yet be generic enough that it can help a small number of people who really need it. Make the product digital, because physical media costs money and will undermine your ability to profit and thus have a free life.

3. Automate.

Finally, it can't be necessary for you to be physically available all the time if you're going to be working two hours a day. So, you need to automate your business. Use automatic distribution systems to bring your product to the people who need it. E-junkie is good for that, but there are of course other ways. Receive money automatically into your paypal account, this way you won't need to receive a phone call, or answer an email in order to bring your work to the world.

The alternative to this is physically sending out boxes with your product in it to anyone who orders. You don't want to be in that kind of situation, because it doesn't scale. Go digital and you'll automatically have a profitable business that only takes a moment to automate.

WHY YOU NEED THOSE THREE ELEMENTS

If you don't do these three things, your minimalist business will STOP the moment you take your hands off the reigns. It's important to keep those three absolutes in mind, and not to let them suffer while you're eliminating stuff that doesn't matter.

For example, if you stop providing value to customers, or have no way to automate the distribution of that value, you will fail the moment you stop checking email 45 times a day or putting boxes in the mail.

Now that I've gone over what not to stop doing, it's time to focus on what you can eliminate to eventually reduce your work schedule to less than 2 hours per day.

This process won't be easy, but it is rewarding.

When you have more free time you'll be able to dedicate it to health and reading/reading like I have in order to contribute massive value to the lives of others and thus your own business.

I realize some of these strategies will be redundant from blog posts that I've written. My aim here is to combine all of these resources into one extensive list.

For a more comprehensive view of how to actually start a minimalist business, check out the [Minimalist Business Bookstore](#).

50 ESSENTIAL STRAT-EGIES FOR 2-HOUR WORKDAYS

1. Time-cap tasks to less.

If you give yourself 8 hours to complete one task, it will inevitably take you 8 hours to achieve it. Stop messing around, you know that you can do better. Give yourself 15 minutes to create something, and you will do it in 15 minutes. You can't have a 2-hour workday if you take all day to do what's important to your business.

2. Focus on the important.

If you only have two hours to work, you'll need to do important things during that two hours. In order to do important things, you have to know what is important. Through tests and analysis identify the key components of your business, and only focus on these things. For instance, the only important element of my business is creating valuable content. If I only have two hours to work, this is all that I do.

3. Stop checking email (I shouldn't need to ask you again.)

I've drilled this one into the ground, stop checking email. [Here's how to check your email once per day.](#)

4. Eliminate meetings.

In the past, the only way to get other people's opinions was to sit them all down in a room and ask. Now we have this marvelous thing called the Internet. Just make stuff, people will weigh in if it's good or bad. You don't need to sit in a room with a bunch of random people to decide if something is important.

5. Don't read blogs.

There are a lot of blogs out there, most of them aren't worth reading. I only have a couple of blogs that I really enjoy, I unsubscribe from the rest. Don't spend most of your workday reading other people, it's just information. Information doesn't do any good without action. Stop reading, start doing. If my blog bores you, I encourage you to unsubscribe as well. I'd rather you do work than read more information.

6. Don't read newspapers.

Newspapers will make you very aware of all of the things you can't have an effect on in the world. You can't change the fact that a bomb just blew up in Iraq. You can't change the fact that there's oil spewing out into the Gulf. So why are you reading the newspapers? Because they make you feel like you're involved, even when you're not. Add to the fact that newspaper writing is getting more and more horrendous as costs are cut and writers flee to the free distribution of the Internet -- there's basically no reason to waste your time.

7. Destroy your TV.

Ditto. My friend Tyler Tervooren likes to say that you'll [save 8.2 years of your life and $133,369](#) if you stop watching TV. Destroy it, and you'll have 35 hours a week more to dedicate to your business (even if you only need 10 of those hours.)

8. Obtain information from qualified sources.

When you find that you need additional information in order to get your work done, it's absolutely essential that you get it from qualified sources. Who are qualified sources? People who have actually done what you want to do. Don't ask people who haven't done something how to do it, they're liable to give you bad information. If you want to live anywhere in the world, ask someone who has (not your friends working in retail.)

9. Test your assumptions about reality.

We assume a lot of things in order to make our lives function. This is good, because we don't want to go about re-learning the English language every time we meet a new person. However, some assumptions can be proven to be false over time. Almost everyone over 30 thinks you need a publisher to bring your message to the world, while everyone under 20 doesn't even know what a publisher is -- they are the publisher. Test your assumptions, because chances are you might be wrong. A lot of the big payouts in the modern age come from challenging untested assumptions.

10. Create scarcity for your services.

If you charge $9.95 an hour for your services, chances are that you'll never have enough clients. You're an expert now, if you want to make a living you need to charge expert wages. How many clients do you need if you charged $500 an hour, for instance? Obviously that's not a rate that everyone can charge, but you can't get a rate like that if you don't ask. Create scarcity by only taking clients who can pay -- let the rest get free information from your website, or buy your products.

11. Fire bad/needy clients.

If you don't like working with someone, or if they're more demanding than their rate allows. Fire them. This also includes UNPAYING clients, such as blog commenters or people who email you asking dumb questions. This will free up more time for you to find new clients that don't cause you tons of trouble. Not all clients are created equal, sometimes in order to work less than 2 hours a day you need to find the ones who are willing to do their own legwork, and not cause you tons of trouble.

12. Say who you are and what you actually do.

Here's a good way to save yourself a lot of trouble: be specific about who you are on the Internet and what you actually do. So many people are wishy-washy. 'I'm a social media consultant, designer, photographer, copy-editor, nose-picking, pot smoking, shoe shiner.' You can't be all of those roles at once, pick one and everyone will have a much clearer picture of why they should care about the work that you're doing. BONUS: put a picture of yourself on everything you do on the net, it really helps.

13. Start a blog.

One of the best decision you can make is to start blogging. Look at blogging this way: whenever you answer a question that someone has about your business you can do 1 of 2 things. 1. You could answer it on a private forum such as email and help one person, OR: 2. You could answer it on a public forum and help a whole lot of people. When you think about blogging like that, it will make it possible to work less than two hours per day.

14. Focus on less communication channels.

Communication is useful, but not a good way to work. You could spend all day talking to people and never get anything done, so don't. Focus less on the communications channels like email, Twitter, the phone. Focus more on getting work done. I recently deleted my LinkedIn account because it wasn't a communication channel that I found benefited my business to be engaging in. If you check less communications channels, you have more time for creating work.

15. Batch small repetitive tasks.

When you find yourself doing a lot of small little tweaks, just put them on a list to batch at some point in the future. If you stop doing important work to do a little tweak, it will take a long time to get back on track. It's absolutely essential to batch-task small repetitive tasks. Or...

16. Eliminate unnecessary tasks.

Just stop doing unnecessary things. They aren't necessary, so you don't need to do them. Try an experiment, just don't do something that you think might not need to be done. Either the world will fall apart (probably not.) or it won't (more likely.) If the world doesn't fall apart, you probably don't need to do the unnecessary task.

17. Stop doing stuff you hate doing.

Also, if you hate doing it, don't do it! Why make yourself do something you hate just because you think you should do it? Life is short, don't waste it on doing stuff that you hate.

18. Cap time on social media.

Social media is an endless vortex. Give yourself 15 minutes a day to check Facebook and do some Tweeting. Get off other social networks if you aren't finding any results there. Good, now you have a lot more time to put your energy into things that matter.

19. Don't accept phone calls.

Here's another big time-sucker of yesteryear. Business doesn't need to be done over the phone anymore. Reserve actual audio for a select few influential people, and instead give people simple and precise methods to get in touch with you, such as Twitter. This way you don't end up on the phone for extended periods of time with no real objective.

20. Establish an all-star inner circle.

One of the most important methods to elevate yourself above the crowd is to establish an all-star inner circle. I've made a point of aligning myself with a crowd of extraordinary individuals in order to amplify how my message gets to the world. You can do this too, and it can take an good deal of time out of your work schedule. For a full list of my inner circle, [see who I follow on Twitter](). Don't know who is influential? Twitter follow count ratios (bigger the follow:followed ratio the better) are a good measure.

21. Reduce communications with unimportant people.

Let's face it, you know that some people aren't as important as other people. There are bystanders, malcontents, lazy people, and just plain uninfluentials. Avoid these people, they will bring you down into the monotony of endless communication, arguing about the status quo, and inevitable mediocrity. If you're an influential, find a way to change that because it's hard to succeed if no one cares.

22. Don't go to networking events.

Networking events are useful, but only if they are small and you're surrounded by people who you know and want to meet in person. Otherwise, avoid them. They're filled with people looking for work, and people looking for work don't have money to spend on your products (or hire you forgodsake!) If there is an open bar, you can ignore my advice, and just go enjoy yourself.

23. Burn the stack of business cards if you do.

I have gone to a couple of networking events lately, and I always ended up with a stack of business cards from people who just really want me to check out their half-baked website. For the first few people, I was nice enough to send them an email with my e-book attached. However, most of these people didn't even email back. How useful is that? Twitter is so much better for networking than networking events will ever be -- because you can target who you meet, and not just talk to random strangers who still think the publishing industry exists.

24. Go paperless.

Paper isn't searchable, it costs money to print things on it. You'll streamline your business, eliminate clutter, and also move into the future if you stop using paper for your business.

25. Automate, automate, automate.

Everything except creation needs to happen automatically. I mentioned some ways to automate above, but I can't say enough how powerful it is to not have to be present for a transaction. You'll start making money in your sleep, and if your work is good enough, chances are you'll be able to take extended periods away from your business and simply just continue to make money. That's a win!

26. Reduce your life overhead.

When your life overhead is less, you need to make less money. This makes it possible for you to worry less about making tons of money, and so working a lot isn't such an issue. Does your life stop if you aren't making $60,000 a year? Well, then you have to worry more than I do. If you only need to make $14,000 this year to break even, then you're going to worry less, work less, and ultimately probably make more money anyway.

27. Reduce your business overhead.

I don't care about revenue, I care about profits. If you're making $200 a day, and spending $100 of that on something else, you're cheating yourself out of a lot of money you could be channeling towards your life. If you're making $4 a day, and spending $100 a day on your business, well that's not a business, it's the Hindenburg. If your business overhead is zero, you have to work less. There is an entire section about how to achieve this in my book *Minimalist Business*.

28. Identify your most important work.

Figure out what you need to do to really bring in the big bucks. Hint: it probably isn't Twitter or email. What you need to do is make work that matters. If you have only two hours per day to work, use it to make work and not just be busy.

29. Drink more (but not too much) coffee.

Coffee makes your brain sharper, your reflexes faster, etc. I typically can't work unless I'm simultaneously sipping on a large coffee. Yes, that's an addiction, but it works. Other people work better with a gin and tonic. Others work better with a skim latte. Find your poison and let it help you work less.

30. Don't get caught up in communication.

One thing I see a lot of people doing is keeping all of their communication channels open at all times. Their Skype is on, their Twitter is a tweeting, their G-chat is open with their email. All of this serves as a distraction that will make your work day spiral out of control. Close all of your communications channels, turn off your phone, get work done.

31. Empower others to make decisions without you.

If you work with people, it's so important to let them do their work. How? Give them permission to make decisions without you. This will allow less back and forth to happen, and ultimately will create a better business. For instance, I don't micromanage my affiliates, I simply tell them to say what they think. Everything works best that way.

32. Over-deliver on core value.

Your business offers a key service or information that people need, and you need to over-deliver on the value that you provide. You want to leave people thinking 'wow, this changed my life!' Yes, that's hard to do, but it will go a long way towards reducing your work schedule if you can manage it. Example: I could have just written a 500 word blog post saying you should work less. Would that be over-delivering? No. So I wrote a 5000+ word free e-book that basically guarantees that you work less.

33. Offer a Forever Guarantee.

In the digital world, it's essential to offer people their money back if for whatever reason they don't like or find value from your product. We all know that we're not scammers, for some people on the Internet it's incredibly hard to tell. Also, not every product is for everyone. If someone purchased *Minimalist Business*, but were happy in their day job, I'd love to give them back their money. Learn more about a Forever Guarantee here.

34. Pay your fans to support you.

Imagine how much business you'd have if you had a team of a thousand+ marketing professionals doing their best to sell your work? Well, it's possible. You just have to [pay your fans to support you](#).

35. Don't do things you don't know how to do.

If you don't know how to do something, don't do it! Don't focus on your weaknesses and you'll be able to make better work. If you have no idea how to do design, find someone who does. If you don't know how to take a photograph, find someone who does. It makes no sense to waste time making ugly stuff if you know how to do other stuff better.

36. Focus on your strengths.

To counter that which you do not know what to do, focus on what you do! Take a moment and take stock of what your abilities are, make sure these are the focus of your business. I'm a good writer, so my business revolves around writing. Maybe you look good on camera, that means you should be doing a video blog. It all depends on what your strengths are, you should focus on them in order to work less.

37. Admit that nothing you do will be an absolute original.

So many people I know are sitting around scratching their heads for that one big original idea that will skyrocket them into fame. I have news for you: nothing is original. We're all just idea-DJs remixing old ideas in our own way. This means that the best ideas are actually combinations of other ideas rearranged in a way that inspires people to change the world. So don't wait around for the one big original idea, it ain't coming.

38. So, remix the successful people.

That being said, it's important not to remix bad ideas. A good judge of whether an idea is good is whether you like the idea. If an idea that someone else makes you jump out of your shoes and run scream-ing barefoot in the street, then that's a good sign that you should be strategically copying it in order to fuel your own work. If you love Andy Warhol, by all means, copy his work! Eventually you'll find a way to make it your own. Just don't copy and paste, because that's copyright infringement. Meld ideas good ideas through the lens that is you.

39. Lead your people.

Show people the way, and they will follow. Become a leader by choosing to live your life in the way you want, and give people an example to follow. I lead by living with less and working from anywhere in the world, and this proves to a lot of people that it is possible. In the words of Seth Godin: we need you to lead us.

40. Don't be afraid to lose clients.

If you work less, you're going to make some needy people unhappy. They want you on call in the middle of the night, otherwise you're not good enough for them. Well, with clients like that, you'll never reduce your work schedule. Lose clients that cost you more time than they're worth, and you'll work less.

41. Make a certain group of people angry at you.

One of the most powerful ways to work less is to live your life in a way that pisses some people off. True story. For example, I'm constantly telling people that owning a car is evil, because I want more people to drive less. I don't own a car, so I can say that. Yes, it makes a lot of car driving people incredibly angry at me, I'm okay with that. If you make everyone happy, you don't create change.

42. Don't sell crap.

When you produce junk, you have to work harder to make it sell. If you
turn that around, and make valuable work that helps people succeed, it will
market itself. This way you won't need to spend all day trying to convince
people to buy something that isn't worth the money.

43. Did I mention not to check your email? Well, don't do that and also
send shorter replies.

Another time-sucking problem with email is replying to all of the messages
you get. If you receive a novel-length email, you're tempted to respond with
6,000 words. Don't! Limit your response to a few sentences and it'll go
a long way towards making the endless cycle of email slow down or stop.
Also, no one said you had to reply to every email.

44. Take more time off.

Funny enough, working less can be easier when you work less. Take time
off in order to rejuvenate yourself for when you want to work again. The
best way to work hard for two hours a day is to spend the rest of the day not
working. Sounds like a paradox right? Try it, it really isn't.

45. Don't aim for perfect.

When you try to make everything perfect, you end up spending a lot of time getting there. Perfect is overcoming the final 1%, and most people can't do that. I could have spent forty hours going over this copy to make sure all of the commas were exactly in the right place, that all of my ideas perfectly clear, unmuddled, and spelled completely right. Well, I know I'm not perfect, so I'm just going to publish as is. It's easier that way, and you spend less time getting done.

46. Stop after 2 hours.

Just stop. Set a timer. Whatever. Then you won't work too much.

47. Work well.

When you're working for 2 hours, you have to really bang it out. Make the stuff that matters, sweat on your work until you can't see clearly anymore. Burn yourself with your ideas. Just work so freakin' hard that you can't find your hands anymore. Then stop after 2 hours an go get a beer. That is how you work 2 hours a day.

48. Don't be busy.

Busyness and working aren't the same. Stop being busy, start working.

49. Enjoy the silence.

Just sit in the silence and enjoy it while it lasts. Powerful ideas develop in silence. If you're surrounded by the empty noise of a thousand voices you will have a harder time working less. Tune it out, sit in quiet, make work that matters.

50. Practice.

And as with all things, practice makes perfect. Initially it will be very hard to get your work done in 2 hours, but once you start practicing it will become easier and easier. The point is to try, and eventually you'll get there. Trust me.

WHAT NOW?

Help someone else:

- Email this to a friend.
- Retweet my blog post (the original post is here.)
- Share this on Facebook.
- Print it out and leave it at a coffee shop.

The possibilities are endless.

ABOUT EVERETT BOGUE

Everett lives a location independent lifestyle, currently based out of Oakland, California. He used to work at New York Magazine, but quit in order to live anywhere. Since that time he's been interviewed by dozens of bloggers, lived in four different American cities, doubled his income (and obviously stopped workin' so much) and plans to go vagabonding in South America this fall.

He's the author of *The Art of Being Minimalist* and *Minimalist Business*.

He blogs about living with less in order to achieve freedom at Far Beyond The Stars.