



The Leader's Guide to

TEAM PRODUCTIVITY

HOW TO BUILD A CULTURE OF EFFECTIVE EXECUTION

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NOBODY GETS A DEGREE IN PRODUCTIVITY.



Imagine this.

You have a team of skilled, talented, and educated professionals. Each team member has relevant training and experience, a good attitude, and a solid work ethic. They even get along well with each other. And when all these pieces fall into place, they get results—they deliver high-quality projects on time and to spec.

The problem is the pieces don't always fall into place. One teammate promises to deliver and then doesn't. He or she forgets deadlines, misses meetings, misplaces important communications, loses track of to-dos, then apologizes profusely for the inevitable blunders. One person's fumbles send the whole team scrambling. The result is failed projects, frustrated teammates, and financial losses. Sound familiar?





People come to the workplace with various skillsets and backgrounds.

They know how to navigate applications, develop programs, design products, oversee communications, manage resources, devise strategies, or lead people, but few are versed in workflow management, and even fewer have been through formal training for it.

Nobody gets a degree in productivity.



Getting Things Done.

THE HIGH IMPACT OF POOR PERFORMANCE

We recently asked *1,160 professionals* to tell us how individual performance affects team productivity within their organizations.

This is what they said:

Out of 1,160 professionals:

94%

say at least one teammate **frequently misses deadlines.**

53%

say their manager does this.

91%

say at least one teammate **forgets tasks and appointments.**

48%

say their manager does this.

85%

say at least one teammate **appears busy but fails to complete tasks on time.**

40%

say their manager does this.

91%

say at least one teammate **spends too much time on unimportant tasks.**

42%

say their manager does this.



When even one teammate flounders, the team and organization suffer.

And 9 of 10 say when even one teammate commits any of these blunders, the team and organization suffer.

Morale, trust, productivity, quality, customer service, and profitability decline.





The Difference Between Expertise and Effectiveness

One major challenge organizations face is the tendency to conflate expertise with effectiveness.

No amount of knowledge or skill can compensate for the harmful effects of poor productivity habits.

Leaders often hire or select people for a team because of their experience or technical skills. But our research shows no amount of knowledge or skill can make up for how poor productivity practices affect morale and results. Managers need to shift their thinking about what constitutes a valuable team member. There's a key difference between *how* people work and *what* they do.

In terms of how work is executed, even small fumbles have huge impact. Most dismiss the idea that writing things down or establishing a protocol for how to end meetings, for example, can have a dramatic impact on team trust and execution, but to do so is naïve.

People can have good intentions and rich technical backgrounds yet still overestimate their ability to manage workload. In fact, we've found that as a person's roles and responsibilities increase, their productivity practices begin to fail them. In order for team members to thrive in a world of endless tasks and inputs, they must develop a few key productivity practices.

From Distracted and Disorganized to Smart and Strategic

4 PRODUCTIVITY SKILLS FOR TEAMS

Productivity practices are high-leverage behaviors, or keystone habits. They have sweeping effect on a person's work and homelife, either for good or ill. And as our research reveals, they have dramatic impact on whether a team flounders, stalls, and stagnates, or collaborates, innovates, and executes. Productivity skills, in other words, determine how well a person can apply his or her expertise and, by extension, how well a team functions.

This is good news. By adopting just a few vital skills, team members can learn to execute effectively on time and inoculate themselves from mishaps and bungles. Here are a few skills teams can begin practicing today for increased effectiveness.

01

End with Action: At the end of every meeting, identify a clear next action and a plan for follow-up. Never settle for a vague course of action, such as "Let me work with this for a bit." Instead, identify concrete next actions by specifying who will do what by when and who will follow up. This not only ensures projects move forward seamlessly, but also reduces the need for future meetings.

At the end of every meeting, specify who will do what by when.





02

Create a Capture Culture: One of the most important but widely overlooked productivity skills is that of capturing tasks, assignments, and ideas in a trusted tool, whether that be a notepad, calendar, or app. When team members consistently capture commitments, they not only are more apt to get work done on time, they also foster trust. When you capture an assignment following a discussion with your teammate, you communicate that you care. And when teammates see you capture tasks, their confidence in you increases.

*Capture
all tasks,
requests,
and ideas in
a trusted tool.*





*Dedicate blocks
of time for
doing work
and clarifying
work inputs.*

03

Do the Right Stuff: There are three modes of work, and every team member should dedicate time for each.

DEFINE WORK

Process inboxes, in-trays, or other requests and clarify inputs into next actions.

DO PREDEFINED WORK

Complete clarified tasks from calendars or to-do lists.

DO UNDEFINED WORK

Work on unplanned, irregular, or emergency tasks as necessary.

Without boundaries, people tend to spend their time on whatever is latest and loudest rather than on key priorities. Conversely, when team members dedicate blocks of time for each kind of work, and the team has a culture of respecting those boundaries, they complete critical projects and tasks. While all work modes are necessary, team members become more effective to the degree they demarcate time for each work mode.



04

Make It Okay to Say “No.” A “yes” mentality will backfire the minute your yes men have too much on their plate. Avoid dropped balls and missed deadlines by making it okay to renegotiate tasks or decline requests. But here’s the key: frame negotiations not as a complainer craving less but as a contributor craving focus. Instead of “no, I don’t have time for that,” communicate your desire to focus on the right priorities. Foster a culture where teammates seek real solutions rather than agree to every request out of a sense of obligation. Managers can praise this behavior to spur focus and engagement.

Renegotiate requests you cannot meet, and frame those renegotiations as a contributor craving focus.



THE PROOF IS IN THE PERCENTAGES

In a separate study, we found that people who practice these and related productivity skills are significantly less likely to fail to meet deadlines, let others down, not finish projects, and experience stress.

For example, compared to those who do not practice these skills, people with effective productivity habits are:

55x

LESS LIKELY

to say they start but don't finish projects.

10x

LESS LIKELY

to say they chronically reschedule appointments.

18x

LESS LIKELY

to say they feel overwhelmed.

88x

LESS LIKELY

to say they feel inadequate because they let themselves and others down.

39x

LESS LIKELY

to say they miss deadlines and assignments.

You can see a complete report of the study [here](#).



Together Everyone Achieves More

Workplace productivity is a team effort. It's not enough to have one superstar. And one person making silent fumbles can destroy the productivity of an entire team.

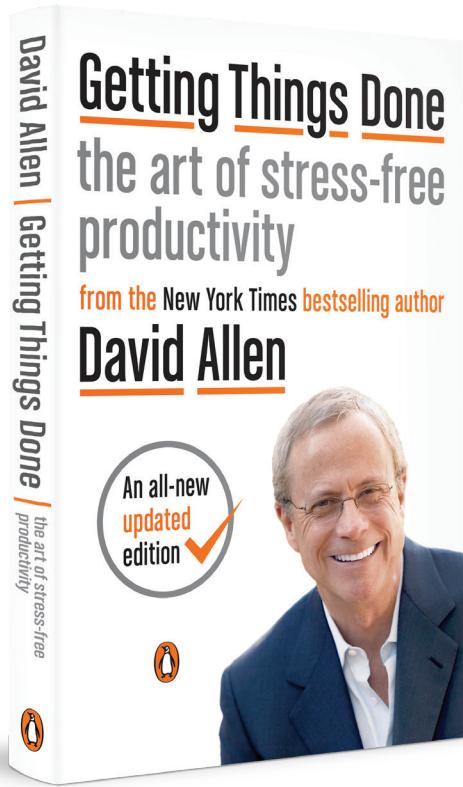
Not only is productivity a team effort, it's largely a function of team culture. While each employee brings to the workplace personal habits, they also adapt to workplace norms. Without providing clear standards and equipping employees with the skills to meet those standards, organizations are

betting that their workers will show up as experts in productivity. That's a bad bet.

To influence how team members do their work, organizations must intentionally create norms for how work is done. They can do this by equipping teams with proven productivity skills. **When team members have a shared understanding of how to effectively manage workflow, they foster focus, trust, and accountability.** Efficient productivity follows.



Personal productivity habits in the workplace are largely a function of organizational and team culture.



Getting Things Done[®]

The skills outlined above hail from **Getting Things Done[®]** (GTD[®]) by Crucial Learning. GTD teaches skills to manage the near constant flow of requests, tasks, and interruptions people face at all levels of the organization. By learning how to capture, clarify, and organize incoming requests and commitments, people can make better decisions about where to invest their time and energy, focus better on the right priorities, prevent critical tasks and projects from slipping, and reduce stress and burnout.

Get Started

To bring the Getting Things Done skills to your organization for increased productivity and engagement, contact us to learn more.

Call **1-800-449-5989** or visit us at **CrucialLearning.com**.



Getting Things Done.



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