

Time Management Fundamentals

LinkedIn Learning Course Link:

www.linkedin.com/learning/time-management-fundamentals-14548057

3 principles of productivity:

- Space (organization)
- Mind (Focus)
- Time (good schedule)

1. Laying the groundwork for productivity

Time management begins with knowing what motivates you, allowing you to stay focused on your tasks.

“When I have an extra 10 hours a week, I’ll spend more time with my wife, and relaxing”

We have a scale that goes from focus to chaos, and it is good to understand where we are in this scale so we can take appropriate action.

The principles we follow are the most important thing. Not the technology or app. A schedule will become your best friend and it doesn’t matter what cell phone you have, but your commitment to apply everything you learn.

2. The great obstacle to productivity

Many people think that multi-tasking makes you more productive, but it is quite the opposite.

We can divide multi-tasking in two categories:

- Back tasking: The act of leave running/working something that DOES NOT require your attention (e.g. Bake a cake while you do the dishes)
- Switch tasking: The real enemy, trying to split your attention between two different tasks, what drains your time, and mental health.

Switch tasking increases the time required to complete a work (If you’re typing an email and you receive a SMS, you will likely stop the email to check the SMS, answer it and go back to the email. But by doing that you have to read everything you’ve wrote again to get back on track, making you waste time).

We have 3 main principles of productivity, they are:

- Space (Organization)
- Mind (Focus)
- Time (Schedule)

About the principles, you have to keep your **space** clean to avoid distractions and reduce the chaos, the **mind** comes into the game by keeping away distractive thoughts and interruptions, we should give our best try to keep ourselves focused and a good **schedule** will keep us on track of what are the ‘Most Valuable Activities’ (MVA), guiding us to our main goal by protecting our attention.

3. Productivity principle 1: Space

Gathering points are places where you leave unprocessed stuff.

By unprocessed stuff we mean something that is missing the “what, when or where” it belongs to. If you don’t know one of the W’s, it is a unprocessed item.

To reduce the amount of switch tasking, we should aim to have 6 or fewer gathering points.

A good way of taking care of your workspace is leaving an inbox, where you can put all unused stuff in there. At a scheduled time, every day, you’ll clean up that inbox and put everything away. Just leave it accessible and make sure to dispose anything unused in the inbox rather than letting stuff gather in unapproved areas.

Apart from your main inbox, also choose a portable inbox, where you can fit anything unprocessed that might come (like receipts, cards, flyers, etc.). As soon as you come back, make sure to dispose all everything in your main inbox so you can take care of it later.

Notepad, emails accounts and messaging apps are also strong gathering points and should be analysed. The less of them you have, and the more “action focus” you can make them become, the best.

4. Productivity principle 2: Mind

Your mind is NOT an approved gathering point.

A cluttered mind is constantly on a state of switch tasking. Having a clear mind, free of to-do tasks reduce distractions and strengthen your focus and productivity. So removing your unresolved tasks from your mind and putting them in a gathering point is an efficient way to make a clean-up of your brain.

An idea, a task or simply a to-do task popped into your mind? Write yourself an email, or put that in a notepad and this notepad in your inbox, move this thought to an approved gathering point but do not leave it in your mind. And yes, this is a micro task switch, but it is much better than leaving this thought recurrent and distracting you all the time.

We have the mental triggers exercise to practice, and I started using my approved notepad gathering point. I scheduled it to Saturday 19, 10:00 AM and I will conclude this exercise for the first time.

5. Productivity principle 3: Time

Avoid using different calendar apps for work and personal. Even though they sound like split lives, it is easier to keep track of your time when you have only one gathering point for time (one schedule app).

When we try to do too many things in too little time, we pay lots of switching costs. Things take longer, we make more mistakes and we increase our stress – Dave Crenshaw

Never make an appointment without keeping track of it in your calendar. Even if it is a lunch with a friend, if you don't write it down you put pressure on your mind to remind that event. So if it must be done, schedule it!

Leave some blank time in between your appointments. This time might be to unexpected interruptions or just to relax.

Your calendar is not a place for tentative, it is a place to check what you will do and when you will do. If you're unsure about doing it, don't schedule it.

A good point is broadening your view to the future. We are often used to think and plan for a maximum of two weeks ahead. But we can think about months long or even years. This gives us the perspective of having a lot of time and really easy our plannings and productivity.

Saying 'NO' is another efficient way to save time and not overwhelm yourself. Every time you say yes to something you are saying no to another. It is good to learn and understand when you should say no for people and situations or at least ask for a specific deadline. No is the most powerful word when it comes to focus!

Saying no to ourselves is also a valuable resource. Many time we lost focus because we end up having great ideas that we think it is best for that moment, but this leads us to moving our attention towards something different then our goal.

Exercise: **Create a 'Perhaps' list.** Every time you come up with a new idea, put that in an approved gathering point and later move it to a perhaps list. This list can be reviewed every so often and you can decide on take action, delete or just keep the idea there for the next review. When you reasonably delay some ideas to keep track of current projects, it is a kind of a good procrastination. It is making you stay in line with your main goal for that moment in time. The point here is to say "not now", but still leave yourself open to doing it in the future.

I think the last question of this module was very interesting and meaningful so I will append it here:

Question 4 of 4

What is a best practice to protect your schedule if someone makes a request for your time?

✓ Ask for the request through email.

Correct

Asking for an email allows you to see if this time will conflict with your schedule...and whether the person is truly committed to asking you.

What is the next step?

Imperfect action is better than no action at all, your best guess is very valuable and most of the times the right choice here.

When will it be done?

If it can be done in five minutes or less, do it now!

Where is its home?

Create places if needed to.