

## 4 Conclusions

In actual fact, the positive effects of the Pomodoro Technique on individual or team productivity come from a number of different factors; below an attempt is made to summarize them.

### 4.1 Inverting the Dependency on Time

The Pomodoro represents an abstraction of time, a box that can hold and limit *becoming* and on which time depends, in the end. It's precisely by breaking and inverting our dependency on *becoming* that a different vision of time emerges. By measuring ourselves against a finite abstraction of time - the Pomodoro - we can succeed in breaking our direct dependency on the concept of *becoming*.

Specifically, the time-boxing concept together with the typical Pomodororian notion of time running backwards (from 25 minutes to 0) generate positive tension (*eustress*) which is capable of facilitating the decision-making process. In more general terms, this stimulates the vital contact you need to assert yourself and at the same time accomplish activities.

The passage of time is no longer perceived as negative, but positive. Every Pomodoro represents the opportunity to improve, or in crisis situations, to rapidly reorganize. The more time passes, the better chance you have to improve your process. The more time passes, the more easily activities can be estimated and scheduled. The more time passes, the more the feeling of anxiety is assuaged, and in its place come enhanced consciousness, sharper focus on the here and now, and a clearer mind in deciding your next move. The result is higher productivity.

Moreover, the same dependency inversion mechanism is applied in the Pomodoro Technique to reduce and eliminate interruptions. This increases concentration and continuity in work, and here too there is a considerable correlated rise in productivity.

### 4.2 Regulating Complexity

We can maximize our motivation by accomplishing several challenging activities every day that are neither too complex nor too easy, simply by applying the following rules:

- If It Lasts More Than 5-7 Pomodoros, Break It Down.
- If It Lasts Less Than One Pomodoro, Add It Up.

Less complex activities are usually easier to estimate, so quantitative estimates improve. Breaking down activities so they deliver incremental value also bolsters our determination to attain our objectives.

### 4.3 Detachment

Frequent breaks with the Pomodoro are essential to achieving more lucid, conscious and effective mental capacity with a resulting increase in productivity. It is important to note that in many environments there's a sort of aversion to breaks, as if they were a sign of weakness. Common wisdom in many companies seems to be: "Real managers start the meeting at 9 AM and end at 10 PM and never leave their office." This extreme behavior at work actually reveals a tenaciousness that often lays a solid foundation for frustration and working with a lack of concentration, and consequently a lack of effectiveness.

By applying the Pomodoro Technique, many people have begun to understand the value and effectiveness of detachment. A break every 25 minutes lets you see things from a different perspective and enables you to come up with different solutions; you often find mistakes to correct, and your creative processes are stimulated. Detachment enhances the value of continuity.

But the break really has to be a break. It isn't simply stopping an activity when the 25-minute buzzer rings, or when a set is finished, and continuing to think about that task during the

break. With the Pomodoro Technique, you get used to stopping and disengaging from continual work situations that don't improve individual or team effectiveness. Stopping, detaching, and observing yourself from the outside enhances awareness of your behavior. Stopping becomes synonymous with strength, not weakness.

## 4.4 Observation and Continual Feedback

The Pomodoro Technique represents a method of comparison every 25 minutes. The first and last five minutes of a Pomodoro, which serve to review and repeat what you've done, already enable you to realize if a certain course of action is effective. Pair work magnifies this positive phenomenon more than individual or group work. In the most critical cases, it's even possible to change direction from the very next Pomodoro, rescheduling the activities that need to be done.

Recording data at least once a day, with tracking every 30 minutes, lets us assess the effectiveness of our *modus operandi* on the basis of objective metrics. By observing what you've recorded, you can come to a decision to modify your process, improving the content of activities, defining clearer objectives or breaking down activities, identifying and eliminating duplicated or unnecessary activity or phases, testing alternative strategies for assembling activities while reducing error in qualitative estimates.

The chance to directly affect your work or study process by steering it toward improvement stimulates your personal interest in accomplishing activities by asserting yourself.

## 4.5 Sustainable Pace

Respecting the timetable for work and breaks contributes to achieving continuity. To guarantee consistently high productivity, in fact, it's not effective to make yourself work or study non-stop from morning till night. An industrial machine certainly produces more if it works a long time without stopping, but human beings simply don't function like industrial machines.

By respecting the schedule for breaks between single Pomodoros and sets of Pomodoros, you can work and study while maintaining your pace. You'll get tired, which is only natural, but you won't become exhausted. In other words, by consciously managing breaks and the complexity of content, in time anyone who uses the Pomodoro Technique can come to know his or her sustainable pace or physiological rhythm.

# Bibliography

- (1) Charles Baudelaire, *I fiori del male*, Feltrinelli, 1991; ISBN 88-07-82028-5.
- (2) Kent Beck, "*Software-In-Process: A New/Old Project Metric*",  
<http://citeseer.ist.psu.edu/context/2433183/0>.
- (3) Henri Bergson, *L'evoluzione creatrice*, Cortina Raffaello, 2002; ISBN 88-70-78780-X.
- (4) Jerome Bruner, *La mente a più dimensioni*, Laterza 2003; ISBN 88-420-6860-8
- (5) Jane B. Burka e Lenora M. Yuen, *Procrastination*, Perseus Books, 1983;  
ISBN 0-201-10190-4.
- (6) Tony Buzan, 1982, *The Brain User's Guide*, E.P. Dutton
- (7) \_\_\_\_\_, *Make the Most of Your Mind*, Fireside Edition, 1988; ISBN 0-671-49519-4
- (8) \_\_\_\_\_, *Use Both Sides of Your Brain*, Penguin Book, 1991; ISBN 0-452-26603-3.
- (9) Hans-Georg Gadamer, *L'enigma del tempo*, Zanichelli, 1996, ISBN 88-08-09056-6.
- (10) \_\_\_\_\_, *Verità e metodo*, Studi Bompiani, 2001, ISBN 88-452-5039-3.
- (11) Tom Gilb, *Principles of Software Engineering Management*, Addison Wesley, 1996,  
ISBN 0-201-19246-2.
- (12) Carlo Maria Martini, *Figli di Crono*, Cortina Raffaello, 2001; ISBN 88-70-78714-1.
- (13) Abraham H. Maslow, *Verso una psicologia dell'essere*, Astrolabio, 1971;  
ISBN 88-34-00184-2.
- (14) Steve McConnell, *Rapid Development*, Microsoft Press, 1996; ISBN 15-56-15900-5.
- (15) Yona McGregor e Tony Buzan, *A Guide to Animal Farm*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1998;  
ISBN 0-340-66401-0.
- (16) Eugène Minkowski, *Il tempo vissuto*, Einaudi Editore, Torino, 1971;  
ISBN 88-06-30767-3.
- (17) Anita Molino, *L'arte dell'apprendere*, Tecniche Nuove, 1997; ISBN 88-481-0396-0.



# Appendix 1: Rules and Glossary

## Rules

- A Pomodoro Consists of 25 minutes Plus a Five-Minute Break (§2.1).
- After Every Four Pomodoros Comes a 15-30 Minute Break (§2.1.2).
- The Pomodoro Is Indivisible. There are no half or quarter Pomodoros (§2.1).
- If a Pomodoro Begins, It Has to Ring:
  - If a Pomodoro is interrupted definitively – i.e. the interruption isn't handled (§2.2.2) – it's considered void, never begun, and it can't be recorded with an X (§2.1.1).
  - If an activity is completed once a Pomodoro has already begun, continue reviewing the same activity until the Pomodoro rings (§2.1.3).
- Protect the Pomodoro (§2.2.3). Inform effectively, negotiate quickly to reschedule the interruption, call back the person who interrupted you as agreed.
- If It Lasts More Than 5-7 Pomodoros, Break It Down (§2.3, §3.11, §4.2). Complex activities should be divided into several activities.
- If It Lasts Less Than One Pomodoro, Add It Up (§2.3, §4.2). Simple tasks can be combined.
- Results Are Achieved Pomodoro after Pomodoro (§3.8).
- The Next Pomodoro Will Go Better (§3.9).

## Glossary

- **Pomodoro.** Kitchen timer used to measure 25-minute intervals. The name of the Technique comes from the first timer used which was shaped like a tomato (pomodoro in Italian).
- **Time-boxing.** With this technique, once a series of activities has been assigned to a given time interval, the delivery date for these activities should never change. If necessary, the unfinished activities can be reassigned to the following time interval.
- **Qualitative estimation error.** This error occurs when all the activities needed to reach a certain goal haven't been identified.
- **Quantitative estimation error.** This error occurs when the estimation of a single activity (or set of activities) is higher (overestimation) or lower (underestimation) than the actual effort.



## Appendix 2: To Do Today Sheet

[illegible]





## Appendix 3: Activity Inventory Sheet

[illegible]