

title: **Time management & programming efficiently in a web dev job**

num_comments: 20

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upvote_ratio: 0.97

Post Text

I've been a lurker on here for a while and this is my first post. I started learning web development a little over a year ago. I now know HTML5, CSS3, a good amount of Javascript, and I've been learning React since January. I was diagnosed with ADHD a few years ago (mid twenties) and am unmedicated by choice. (I can usually function just fine as long as I get enough sleep). I am past tutorial hell thank goodness. Right now I am focusing on making projects to put on a portfolio. Once I have a few projects on my portfolio, I plan to start applying for jobs. The thing that terrifies me is I have always struggled with time management. I have "time-blindness" which I am sure many of you who have ADHD can relate to. I have always struggled with efficiency. At my last job (nothing to do with web dev or tech), I was let go, and the reasoning the boss gave me is because I am not efficient enough. Granted there were a whole bunch of issues with the workflow there but still. At my current job (a factory), I just had my annual review and it was very positive except my boss basically said I need to work faster. And it was pretty much the same issue from my last annual review which was my first one. I am terrified that even if I do manage to land a web dev job, I will continue to struggle with these things. And that could impact my ability to keep the job. So I guess my questions to you all who have worked or are working in the industry is, do any of you struggle with efficiency/time blindness/time management? If so, how do you cope? Are there strict deadlines that you have to meet? If you tend to struggle with these issues how do you ensure that you meet those deadlines and predict how long things will take you? Also, are there any tips or tricks where you could improve your time management skills specifically in this industry? One of my biggest issues is I get sucked in to my projects so much that I lose track of time. It's even worse when I am trying to debug something. I could easily get stuck on a problem for hours without realizing how much time has passed, but it has also taken me days to figure something out. Is this normal? I really have no one to compare myself to except for youtube mentors/tutorials and I know those are not realistic to compare to since they are edited. I keep telling myself it will get easier the more I do this. But what if it doesn't? What if I end up dedicating 1.5 to 2 years of almost all of my free time learning web dev only to find out I can't keep a job because I can't meet deadlines and work efficiently? At the same time, I can't even imagine giving up. This is so much apart of me now that I know I could do this as a hobby even if I couldn't keep a job. But still.. I really want to work in this field. ​ Anyways... any advice or ideas would be greatly appreciated. I am so anxious about this. The more I think about job hunting, the more I wonder if landingand keeping a web dev job is even a realistic goal for me.

Comments

Commenter_2

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 7

I honestly have the same issue and while I'm studying at home I'm pretty safe but I worry about what will happen in a full time job doing web development. But, what I would try is slicing the project down into smaller parts, giving them a time frame, and setting an alarm (for instance, the head of the html of the project shouldn't take more than a few minutes, the main html maybe an hour, etc). At my last job I used apps used for HIIT training to beep every few minutes to remind me of time passing, but I still had issues with efficiency.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

That's a great idea, i think i will try this. Setting reminders may not work for me as they tend to be more of a distraction but i will definitely try setting time limits for how long certain sections should take. One thing I've done the last two days when i only had an hour or less a day to work on a

project is set a small goal goal for each day. Like today i only had 30 mins and my goal was to make my navigation responsive and i did it no problem. So perhaps combining these 2 methods will help.

Thanks for the advice and good luck on your own journey!!

Unknown_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6

well i would say the key is experience, so thats why you start with a junior role and gain exp. and also u can ask olde devs on some problems they probably fixed before and also i would say the key is to know how to google correctly for those problems and find answers.
cheers

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6

Very true, sometimes i forget there will be more experienced devs and i won't be expected to know or have to figure out everything myself.

Commenter_4

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 5

If I were you I would apply like mad right now for Jr dev roles or start looking at freelancing websites since you have the skills listed above to make them. Web design that is.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

I will definitely start soon... I want to add more to my portfolio first. My issue was i was working on one big project for a long time but now i am starting to work on smaller projects so once I've completed perhaps 3-4 i will definitely start applying for jobs. Do you think that is wise? Since i have no experience i at least want to have a few things to show an employer.

Unknown_User

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

[deleted]

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

You have no idea how amazing that makes me feel.

I think 4 good projects is perfect. Thanks so much for the encouragement!

Commenter_5

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 5

> One of my biggest issues is I get sucked in to my projects so much that I lose track of time. It's even worse when I am trying to debug something. I could easily get stuck on a problem for hours without realizing how much time has passed, but it has also taken me days to figure something out. Is this normal?

This is hyperfocus a classic ADHD symptom. I solve it with the pomodoro technique.

More broadly, I describe my model of why this happens here:

https://www.reddit.com/r/slatestarcodex/comments/gveyoi/is_adhd_the_missing_square_here_prediction_of/

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

Thanks! This is so interesting. I really appreciate you sharing this.

I keep hearing about the pomodoro technique and i have a feeling it may not work for me as alarms tend to distract me and i lose my train of thought or i just ignore them. But i may have to test that theory just in case.

Commenter_5

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

> tend to distract me

Talk to James Bach about de-focus.

The key insight he gave me was that success was _not_ about avoiding distraction. Success is about managing the *dichotomy* between focus and exploration. The extremes of this are hyperfocus and distraction.

The problem you describe is that you're being hyperfocused at a time when you *want* to notice "oh. right. I'm in a rabbit hole." and explore for the next thing to focus on. So yea, the pomodoro technique will distract you. Thats the point.

> lose my train of thought

Thats why you write automated tests and why you write the goal for each pomodoro.

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3

I'm working on my second web dev internship right now and I feel a lot of the struggles you predict for yourself. When I run into difficulties I tend to lose focus which makes me take forever to debug. My advice for that issue is if you find yourself spending too long on a task (set a time limit!), just go ask someone else to take a look at it. Everyone makes stupid mistakes, coding is a complex task so its easy to overlook little stuff. Don't worry about it too much. And the more you ask the more you learn!

The upsides are that if a company uses agile usually everyone is able to choose how much work they want to do (measured in points) for each sprint (usually a two week period), so you can set whatever size goals you want and you have a measurement so you can adjust next time if it was too much or too little (of course points are just an estimation so it won't always be perfect but it's better than nothing). Also every tech company I've worked at or heard about has a really open culture about asking questions. Programmers are usually smart people who get that asking questions is how people learn.

Best of luck!

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 3

Thanks for the insight! I had no idea some companies operated like that. Then again i didnt really understand what agile was either.

I know something i need to work on is knowing when to ask for help. I've spent all weekend trying to solve problems before finally posting on stackoverflow. Now i usually give myself 3-4 hours before asking. But i wonder if that would be frowned upon in a real job. What's considered normal? Any idea?

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Asking for help is so hard, but in my experience people are always happy to help. I also have only been an intern, so basically my only real purpose was to learn, so I might have a slightly biased point of view on this, but at my first internship my manager was in charge of all frontend in the company so people asked him questions all the time. He sometimes had me shadow him when he went to help people, and a lot of times it was a really easy fix for him since he was so experienced but he was always super happy to help everyone out even though he was super busy.

I would say it depends on the problem for how long you should spend. Also keep in mind that you're not a student, you're part of a team. While it's important and valuable to struggle through stuff and try to solve things yourself and always keep learning and whatnot, you also should count your coworkers among the resources at your disposal when solving problems. If the most efficient thing for the team is to ask a question, then ask. Think from their perspective. If you were a senior developer, how long would you want someone to struggle with a problem before using a smaller amount of your time so they can move on. If that makes sense.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

That does make sense. I suppose also from a business stand point they just want the thing done. They don't want someone to spend hours on a problem if they don't have to.

Thanks so much for the insight!! This really helped.

Commenter_6

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

Yes exactly! It's all about the business and efficiency. I'm glad I could help!! :)

Commenter_7

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 2

Stop blaming yourself

I'm also having a lot of trouble with efficiency, but I'm improving step by step. You have to realize and accept that because of ADHD, there are some downsides that will effect your live. You can make steps to minimize the impact, but it will take years find your way and a lot off effort. But that is something that make lifes so interesting, working to a goal, seeing your progress and looking back how it was years ago. The same thing is for learning a job, you are new so there are thing that you will have to learn and have to master before everything goes easily.

Base

If you want to improve your efficiency you have to make sure you have a good base to work from. Make sure you take care of yourself, so sleep enough, take care of what you eat, keep hydrated and keep an rhythm. To be efficient and stay efficient you have to make sure your body is working correctly, so your brain can also keep on working correctly. But also remember that there is more in life then only work. So don't spend all your energy on your job and keep some left for your friends or girlfriend. Know you only got so much energy you can spend on a day.

Know yourself

Know what tasks are difficult for you, and try to figure out which part off it is the reason you find it difficult. You say you have trouble fixing bugs, what part make it difficult. Is it difficult to find your way in the codebase ? Then first try to find the logic in the codebase yourself, if you can't find it, ask a co-worker how he does it. It's more efficient to ask a co-worker how he does it, then to spend hours finding the best way. And if that doesn't work, try to find ways to make it easier for you. I had an project where each time I needed to fix an small bug in the page that I was viewing, it would take me an hour to find the

page. I asked my co-workers and they said it requires experience in the codebase. Because it was a problem everybody faced I made some changes, so on every page is a comment that tells us which page you're looking at. Which tackled this problem for me and for all my co-workers, and will help making everybody more efficient.

Another aspect of knowing yourself, is to know how much energy and concentration you have at that moment. Know that if you didn't have enough sleep, you will not be able to concentrate on fixing bugs. And learn to switch to another task that comes easy to you and doesn't need you to force yourself. Learn to adapt yourself to your situation, instead of fighting your body. Another thing that helped me is knowing when your concentration is at its highest. For me it's in the morning and in the evening and the hour after lunch. So I plan all the difficult stuff in those moments. I also know that around the end of the day my sense of time is missing, so during that time I need to pick the right work and need some tricks to keep me on track. I trick that I recently use, is to set an alarm to a specific time and connect an action to it. For me I always check my email on 3 o'clock and check my progress of the day. So I will still have time to fix/complete what is necessary before I go home. And it helps keeping yourself focused on the things you need to be doing.

Planning

Another point to be efficient is to plan. If you have a project or idea you are eager to start, but have a deadline for that day. First finish the deadline and then start on the low important stuff. If you say that you have too much work to do, prioritize them and plan it. This gives you a lot of peace mentally. I cannot say how much peace and calm it gives you, when you are questioning yourself. You don't have to stress on the last minute because it has to be finished. You can go home when it's time, and don't need to make overtime to finish the last bits. And all that stress was because you wanted to do the fun work first.

And build a routine to do tasks. Make checklists for the things you need to do the task and what you need to do. It is hard to keep on coming up on the things you mustn't forget. And you have the benefit that with the checklist, you can do the task on moments you don't have any concentration.

The vibe you give

If people are hard working or not is also based on people's gut feeling and not always based on what you do. You can spend all day fixing bugs and working your ass off, but if your boss only looks which new shiny features are added to the program, you are still called lazy. So own the work you did and be proud of it, let it known to your boss. If he doesn't know what you do for him, he will not see that you are a hard worker. So let him know. And if he still finds you not efficient, check if he is realistic and check with co-workers. Maybe you're efficient but he is unrealistic.

Another point for the gut is also based on how you show yourself and how the boss looks at you. If I think about someone who is efficient, that person isn't coming late to work and leaving late to home, that person doesn't have a beard of 3 days and isn't just in time for deadlines. But for you this can be the way you are efficient, so tell him this and make it something structural. People don't mind so much for you being late to work, as long as you are predictable and communicate about it when you are later than normal. And look how you dress, that will also help. Better to over-suit than to under-suit.

Cheats:

Be confident about your work, even if it's a bit lower than the rest. Be friends with the manager or the boss. Talk with him when it is possible and make jokes. Somethings like that are not productive, but will make you look productive. See who is the favorite of the boss and look what tasks are the one the boss is keen to. And try to focus on the same tasks, so your boss will notice you. If you have difficult problems that takes a lot of time, even though the boss will think otherwise, ask your question to the favorite and let the boss know he helped (only do if the favorite is a nice person). The fact that the most efficient person also needed that much time, will make him think you are not that bad. And if the most efficient person was able to finish it in no time, will learn you how you are able to do it yourself. So it's a win

win.

Tools:

I use manictime to monitor my computertime. In the beginning it was a real surprise how much time I spend on random sites instead off my work.

Pomodoro timer: I found Pomotroid simple and usefull.

Cheap Chinese noise canceling headphones: to block all external distractions.

Paper: Every morning I update my tasks on 1 page and write an list of tasks I want/need to do that day on another.

I hope you will find some help in this text. Most tips are thing you need to repeat and mold so it will work for you. Don't expect it to make you the most efficient person in 1 day or 1 year. Is't a process and you will see benefits step after step. And be happy about your progress, it's something you did, so be proud.

OP

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

Thank you for the advice! I've never thought of some of these things such as how to give your boss a good impression/ gut feeling about yourself and the way you work.

I appreciate your response and will certainly be taking steps to implement these tips.

Commenter_8

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 1

RemindMe! 2 days

Commenter_9

ID: REDACTED! ~ (0.0) ~ <3, Upvotes: 1

I will be messaging you in 1 day on [2020-06-05 21:40:21

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Commenter 10

ID: REDACTED! ~ (0.0) ~ <3, Upvotes: 1

I can follow up with you regularly to keep you in track if that would be helpful.

