

3 MINUTE READ | LESSONS LEARNED

Read This Google Email About Time Management Strategy

A Google employee teaches his colleagues how to block out interruptions and set aside "make time."



[Photo: Tristan Colangelo via [Unsplash](#)]





Editor's Note: *This article is one of the top 10 Leadership stories of 2015. [See the full list here.](#)*

I recently wrote an email to our team that posed a simple challenge in [time management](#). The response I got was unexpected, and I was urged to share it with more people—so here we are. Some of my fellow Googlers went so far as to make a video for those of us who appreciate a good visual aid. Otherwise, here's the original email (minus some inside jokes):

ADVERTISEMENT

To: ■■■■■■■■■■■■

Subject: If you don't have time to read this . . .
read it twice.

Stop. Breathe. Now, think about how you're managing your time.

Speaking for myself, I have some room for improvement.

It's been said there are two paradigms to scheduling—[the manager and the maker](#).

The manager's day is cut into 30-minute intervals, and they change what they're are doing every half hour. Sorta like Tetris—shifting blocks around and filling spaces.

The maker's day is different. They need to make, to create, to build. But, before that, they need to think. The most effective way for them to use time is in half-day or full-day blocks. Even a

single 30-minute meeting in the middle of "Make Time" can be disruptive.

We all need to be makers.

*Ok. Great idea. I'll do that ... you know ... later ...
I'm late for a meeting.*

ADVERTISEMENT

No. It doesn't work that way. The only way to make this successful is to be purposeful.

Establish an implementation intention. You need to define precisely when and where you'll reserve Make Time for your projects. Let me tell you a story about a study on this effect:

- The control group was asked to exercise once in the next week. 29% of them exercised.
- Experiment group 1 was given the same ask, along with detailed information about why exercise is important to health (i.e., "You'll die if you don't".) 39% of them exercised.
- Experiment group 2 was asked to commit to exercising at a specific place, on a specific day at a specific time of their choosing. 91% of them exercised.

Commit to protecting Make Time on your

calendar, including the time and place where you'll be making, and ideally detail on what you'll be making. That way, you know, it'll actually happen.

So, I can just do this like . . . last thing on Friday, right . . . after all of my meetings are over?

Actually, no. Many of our meetings could be shorter or include fewer people, and some don't need to happen at all. Take back those hours for your Make Time instead. But don't put it off till the end of the day on Friday—the time you choose really matters. Your energy levels run the course of a wave throughout the week, so try to plan accordingly:

Aim to do the following:

Monday: Energy ramps out of the weekend—schedule low-demand tasks like setting goals, organizing, and planning.

Tuesday, Wednesday: Peak of energy—tackle the most difficult problems, write, brainstorm, schedule your Make Time.

Thursday: Energy begins to ebb—schedule meetings, especially when consensus is needed.

Friday: Lowest energy level—do open-ended work, long-term planning, and relationship building.

Always bias your Make Time toward the morning, before you hit a cycle of afternoon decision fatigue. Hold the late afternoon for more mechanical tasks.

My new challenge to you: create and protect your Make Time, and before you "[steal someone's chair](#)," consider whether it'll be disruptive to their Make Time.

I have Make Time on my calendar. Please don't schedule over it, and I promise to do my best not to schedule over yours.

One Googler's take on managing your time



Jeremiah Dillon is head of product marketing at [Google Apps for Work](#). Follow him on Twitter [@jeremiahdillon](#).

NEWSLETTER

Get the latest Leadership stories delivered to your inbox daily.

[YOUR@EMAIL.COM](#)

SEND

☒ I'd also like to receive special Fast Company offers