



Summary of Eat That Frog!

Original book by Brian Tracy

There isn't enough time in the day to meet all of the work and personal responsibilities you're swamped with, let alone keep up with email, social media, and all the things you've been meaning to read. In *Eat That Frog*, business consultant Brian Tracy says the answer is to identify your most important task—the one with the greatest consequences—and do that first each day. It's like eating a frog: when you have a big challenge, or frog to eat, it's best to get it out of the way first; everything after that will be easier by comparison. Based on this insight, Tracy offers a list of practical tips for improved productivity and success.

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1-Page Summary

You'll never get caught up or get ahead on everything you have to do, author Brian Tracy contends in *Eat That Frog*. There isn't enough time in the day to meet all of the work and personal responsibilities you're swamped with, let alone keep up with email, social media, projects, and all the books and articles you've been meaning to read.

Relying on productivity tools isn't the answer because no matter how much time you save, there are more than enough incoming tasks to fill it. The only way to take charge of your time is to ignore most things—instead, **focus on your most important task first and do it quickly and well.**

If you're able to get the most important things done consistently and efficiently, you can outperform the smartest person who fails to follow through. Mark Twain had a metaphor for getting hard things done: if you have to eat a live frog, do it right away and everything after that will be easier by comparison.

Your most important and consequential task—the one you're most inclined to put off—is the frog.

Building on this insight, Tracy, a business consultant and trainer, offers practical tips gleaned from hundreds of books and articles for improving your productivity. Tracy tested the advice he read, and he compiled the most useful ideas. All are specific things you can do immediately to get results and be happier. Many of the ideas will also work in your personal life. The more quickly you apply these principles, the faster you'll advance in your career.

Make It a Habit

To succeed, you need to develop success habits. The key one is overcoming procrastination and tackling your most important task. With diligent practice, it eventually becomes automatic.

Making a habit of getting your most important things done has two payoffs: immediate satisfaction and long-term success.

Doing hard tasks successfully sets up a positive feedback loop. Completing a big job releases endorphins in your brain that make you feel good. A secret of success is that you can get addicted to these endorphin-induced feelings of self-confidence and capability. Subconsciously, you aim to complete more such tasks because you're addicted to success. It's one of the keys to long-term success and living a happy life. When you have a success habit, it becomes easier to do the important things than to dodge them.

How to Get Things Done

Here's a list of Tracy's favorite strategies for improving your productivity by focusing on the most important thing. (Shortform note: Although the book doesn't organize these strategies in any type of sequence or by theme, we have organized them thematically in the one-page summary to make them easier to follow. The full summary more closely follows the book's organization.)

Prepare

1) **Determine your goals:** Determine what you want to accomplish, then write down your goals. There are seven steps for setting and achieving goals:

- **Define your goal:** Determine your goals in conjunction with your boss, so you're clear about what you're aiming for/what's expected and in what order.
- **Write it down:** When you write down a goal, you make it real and concrete. A goal or objective that isn't put into writing is short-lived.
- **List the steps for achieving it:** It's easier to achieve your goal when it's broken into individual tasks.
- **Turn the list into a plan:** Prioritize your tasks, and list things in the order they need to be done. With a written goal and a plan, you'll be far more productive than if you had only a mental list.
- **Set a deadline for achieving it:** Set an overall deadline plus sub-deadlines for steps toward your goal. A goal needs definite deadlines with specific responsibilities to be completed—otherwise, you'll procrastinate and get little done.
- **Act on your plan:** Just do something. Your plan may not be perfect, but it's better to act on an average plan than to do nothing with a great plan.
- **Do something every day to advance your goal:** Put it on your schedule. For example, make a certain number of cold calls or exercise for 45 minutes. Don't miss a day. Keep pressing forward.

2) **Create work-life balance:** Determine the three things you do at work that account for the majority of the value you contribute. Also, set personal or life goals in three areas: financial/career, relationship/family, and health/fitness. Focus each day on completing the most important things at work, so you have time to do what brings you happiness and satisfaction in your personal life. Your goal should be to do your best at work while not losing sight of the reasons you're working: to have strong relationships and a satisfying life.

3) **Know what's expected of you:** Identify the key areas of your job where you're expected to deliver results, and make sure you focus on them. Your success and your company's depend on your delivering these results. Grade yourself on each area on a scale of 1-10 to indicate your strengths and weaknesses. Instead of ignoring or rationalizing your weaknesses, focus on the expectations you need to meet and develop a plan for excelling in all areas. The better you get, the more motivated you'll be to complete the important tasks.

4) **Identify your biggest limitation:** Identify the biggest thing that's holding you, your project, or the company back and eliminate it. A constraint may be external to your company, internal, or even personal (everyone has personal limitations). Removing it will significantly speed up your progress toward your goal. Removing a limiting factor may be your most important task—or frog to eat—at the moment.

5) **Build your skills:** Continually upgrade your skills to increase your value and productivity and advance your career. Determine what you need to learn in order to do your job better. Identify your most important tasks and capabilities, then draw up a plan to continually upgrade your skills in these areas.

6) **Plan each day:** On a sheet of paper, list everything you have to do. A minute spent planning can save 10 in implementation. Whenever something comes up, add it to your list. When you work from a list, you can increase your productivity by 25%—two hours a day. Effective planning requires lists for different timeframes—daily, weekly, monthly—plus a master list and separate project lists. You move items between lists as you constantly prioritize.

Prioritize

7) **Live by the 80/20 rule:** 20% of your efforts will produce 80% of your results. Focus on doing the few things that make the most difference, or better yet, narrow it to one thing. If you have 10 things to do, doing the two most important ones will have a greater impact than doing the other eight combined. Each of the 10 tasks may take the same amount of time, but a certain one will generate more value—perhaps as much as 10 times more—than all the others. The most valuable task is the one you should complete first, or the

frog you should eat first.

8) **Weigh the consequences:** The most important thing you can do is the one with the biggest consequences or greatest impact. Determine which thing that is by asking three productivity questions: "What are my most impactful activities," "What can I alone do that will have a significant impact," and "What's the best use of my time at the moment?" Do the activity with the greatest impact first, especially if the consequences are positive. The greater the potential positive impact of a task, the more motivated you'll be to stop procrastinating and get it done.

9) **Be a creative procrastinator:** Since you can't do everything, you have to put off or eliminate something. Purposefully procrastinate on small things—for instance, answering non-urgent emails—so you can get the important things done.

10) **Prioritize your to-do list:** Prioritize your to-do list using the ABCDE labeling method to ensure you get the right things done. Label each task as follows:

- **A—must do:** These are tasks that are very important. They are tasks that you *must* do—not doing them will have serious negative consequences. For instance, an "A" task might be something your boss directed you to do,
- **B—should do:** These are tasks that you *should* do, such as returning a non-critical call or email. These tasks have much less dire consequences than "A" tasks—for instance, someone may be unhappy if you don't do it.
- **C—would be nice to do:** These are tasks that would be nice to do, but it doesn't matter whether you do them or not. Examples include having lunch with a coworker or phoning a friend. These tasks don't affect your work.
- **D—delegate:** These are tasks you can delegate. You should delegate everything possible so you can create time to do your extremely consequential "A" tasks.
- **E—eliminate:** These are tasks you can eliminate. They include things that were important at one time but are no longer relevant, or unnecessary things that have become habits. Any time spent on one of these tasks is time diverted from an "A" task.

Take Action

11) **Be fully prepared:** Before you sit down and begin an important task, make sure you have everything you'll need in front of you so you're not distracted by looking for things later. Countless projects never get done, or are done haphazardly, because people fail to prepare for the job in advance. Once you have everything laid out like the ingredients for a recipe, start the task immediately.

12) **Take it step by step:** Make a big job doable by breaking into smaller steps and focusing on one step at a time. Imagine your large task is a salami that you've cut into thin slices, and you only need to eat one small slice at a time.

13) **Motivate yourself:** Coach yourself: use your inner voice to encourage and urge you to excel. Repeat to yourself, "I have what it takes" to build confidence and overcome doubt. Push yourself to complete your most important tasks by giving yourself deadlines and sub-deadlines. Approach your work with a sense of urgency, or a compulsion to get on with the job and get it done. When you know what you need to do, just do it.

14) **Make technology work for you:** Take control of your devices by using the available features to organize your work, remind you of what's important, and keep unimportant things, such as social media and notifications, from wasting your time.

15) **Stay focused:** Focus on your most important task for two sustained 90-minute periods each morning. Use a planner to block out this time and stick to it. Eliminate interruptions and don't multitask. Research indicates that the habit of responding to emails, texts, and calls results in a shorter attention span and a lack of focus, which make it impossible to complete the kind of tasks vital to your success.

Conclusion

Developing the habit of doing your most important task, or eating your biggest frog, the first thing each workday primes you for success. Anyone can learn to do it. Following these rules can help you develop the habit and get on the road to success faster.

Preface

You'll never get caught up or get ahead on everything you have to do, author Brian Tracy contends in *Eat That Frog*. There isn't enough time in the day to meet all of the work and personal responsibilities you're swamped with, let alone keep up with email, social media, projects, and all the books and articles you've been meaning to read.

Relying on productivity tools isn't the answer because no matter how much time you save, there are more than enough incoming tasks to fill it. The only way to take charge of your time is to ignore most things—instead, **focus on your most important task first and do it quickly and well.**

Tracy, a business speaker, trainer, and consultant, read hundreds of books and articles on time management and efficiency and tried many of the ideas. *Eat That Frog* compiles the most useful ideas, in no particular order: You can implement any idea at any time. When implemented in their entirety, they can transform your career and life.

Success Can Be Learned

Tracy grew up with few advantages and wasn't good in school. With no specific plan, he spent his early adulthood traveling and earning money as a laborer; later, he began working in sales, with little success.

Finally, he did something that changed his life—he started asking successful people what they did to be more productive and earn more than most people. He did what they told him to do and his sales took off. Simply applying what he learned changed his life.

The same process can work for anyone: Figure out and do what successful people do until you get results too; learn from experts. **Successful people aren't intrinsically better than anyone else—they do better because they use their time more effectively.**

Within a year of applying the lessons he learned, Tracy became a top salesman in his company. A year after that, he became a manager and within three years, a vice president in charge of a sales force spanning six countries—when he was just 25 years old.

The Key Insight

Tracy discovered that **the key to success is to focus on your most important task and do it quickly and well.**

He offers practical tips building on that insight for personal effectiveness. The book doesn't delve into psychology, research, or theory—it focuses on specific things you can do immediately to get results and be happier. Each idea is aimed at boosting your performance and value. Many of the ideas also can work in your personal life.

The more quickly you put these principles into practice, the faster you'll advance in your career.

(Shortform note: To clarify the principles and reduce repetition, this summary consolidates overlapping chapters.)

Introduction: Eat That Frog

If you're able to do important things quickly, you can surpass someone with great plans who fails to follow through. Mark Twain had a metaphor for getting hard things done: if you have to eat a live frog, do it right away, so that everything after that is easier by comparison.

Your most important task—the one you're most inclined to put off—is the frog.

Here are the key things to know about frog-eating or accomplishing challenging tasks:

- Completing your most important task contributes the most to your success.
- If you have two important tasks, or two frogs to eat, eat the worst one first—that is, start with the hardest task.
- Discipline yourself to start on the most important thing immediately and persevere to the end. Treat it as a personal challenge.
- If you have to do something hard, or eat a live frog, it doesn't help to dwell on it; just do it. Studies have shown that the most successful people are action-oriented—they jump right into big jobs and persevere until they're done. In contrast, in many companies, there's way more talk than action, which is why these companies aren't as successful as they could be.

Make It a Habit

To succeed, you need to develop success habits. The key one is overcoming procrastination and tackling your most important task. With diligent practice, it eventually becomes automatic.

Making a habit of getting your most important things done has two payoffs: immediate satisfaction and long-term success. Doing hard tasks successfully sets up a positive feedback loop. Completing a big job releases endorphins in your brain that make you feel good. You experience a burst of energy and self-confidence. The more important the task, the happier getting it done makes you feel.

A secret of success is that you can get addicted to the endorphin-induced feelings of self-confidence and capability that come from completing a big job. Subconsciously, you aim to complete more such tasks because you're addicted to success.

It's one of the keys to long-term success and living a happy life. When you have a success habit, it becomes easier to do the important things than to dodge them.

There are three steps to developing the focus and perseverance to get things done: decide, discipline yourself, and practice:

1. **Decide** to make getting important things done a habit.
2. **Discipline yourself** to apply the principles in this book.
3. **Practice** the habit until it becomes automatic.

Visualize a New You

You can use the technique of visualization to speed up your progress toward increasing your productivity.

Your self-image drives your behavior—so to improve yourself, you need to change your mental picture.

Think constantly about the benefits of being focused and getting things done. Visualize yourself getting important jobs done quickly and well. For instance, if you have a major presentation to prepare for, visualize yourself sitting at your desk, entirely focused on your task, ignoring your phone and email, and persevering until you're fully prepared.

Your ability to learn and develop success habits is unlimited. When you train yourself to do the important things—to eat your frogs—you set yourself up for success.

Exercise: Seizing a Frog

Author Brian Tracy argues that the key to success is developing the habit of getting your most important task done first. It's like eating a live frog—if you do it right away, everything after that is easy by comparison.

Think of a big, important task you have been procrastinating on doing. What is it? What effect has your procrastination had?

What would the effect be—on your career, attitude, and feelings—of getting this done quickly and doing it well?

How can you apply the three steps—decide, discipline yourself, and practice—to get it done tomorrow?

Chapter 1: Determine Your Goals

Before you can identify your most important task and jump into it, you need to know your goals and what actions will contribute the most to reaching them.

Understanding your goals and action steps makes it easier to beat procrastination and complete your top task. In contrast, people with vague goals lack motivation because they aren't sure what they're trying to achieve.

Furthermore, people with specific, written goals achieve far more than those who haven't articulated their goals, yet only a handful of people have specific goals.

There are seven steps for setting and achieving goals. While doing just one of them could jump-start your productivity, implementing all of the steps could generate extraordinary results.

Steps for Success

1) **Define your goal:** Determine your goals in conjunction with your boss, so you're clear about what you're aiming for/what's expected and in what order.

Many people spend their days doing trivial tasks because they haven't clarified their goals with their boss. If you're in this situation, you could be wasting your time trying to do a good job on something unnecessary. To paraphrase author Stephen Covey, your efficiency could be moving you in the wrong direction faster. (Shortform note: For more of Covey's productivity tips and strategies, [read our summary of Covey's The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People here](#) and [our summary of First Things First here](#).)

2) **Write it down:** When you write down a goal, you make it real and concrete. A goal or objective that isn't put into writing is short-lived.

3) **List the steps for reaching your goal:** It's easier to achieve your goal when it's broken into individual tasks. A list gives you a visual representation of the process for achieving your goal—it maps a path to follow, increasing the chances you'll achieve it on schedule.

4) **Turn the list into a plan:** Prioritize your tasks, and list things in the order they need to be done. You may want to depict your plan with boxes, circles, and arrows to help show the relationships between tasks. With a written goal and a plan, you'll be far more productive than if you had only a mental list.

5) **Set a deadline for reaching your goal:** Set an overall deadline plus sub-deadlines for the steps toward your goal. A goal needs definite deadlines with specific responsibilities to be completed—otherwise, you'll procrastinate and get little done.

6) **Act on your plan:** Just do something. Your plan may not be perfect, but it's better to act on an average plan than to do nothing with a great plan.

7) **Do something every day to advance your goal:** Put it on your schedule. For example, make a certain number of cold calls or exercise for 45 minutes. Don't miss a day. Keep pressing forward.

Review Your Goals Daily

Specific, written goals change your thinking. They motivate and energize you, and help you avoid procrastination. The more ambitious they are, the more they inspire you; the more you dwell on them, the more driven you are to achieve them.

Review your goals every day. Start your day by completing the most important task that will move you toward your goal.

Exercise: Put Your Goals in Writing

Before you can identify your most important task and jump into it, you need to know your goals and what actions will contribute the most to reaching them.

List five things you want to accomplish. To make them more real, write them in the present tense as though you've already achieved them (example: I weigh xxx pounds by this date).

From your list of five goals, pick the one whose achievement would make the biggest difference in your life. Set a deadline for achieving it.

Make a list of what you would have to do to achieve the goal. Prioritize and organize the list into a plan.

What step or action can you take each day this week to move toward this goal?

Chapter 2: Plan Each Day

At work, you should try to get the maximum return on your investment of energy and time. The way to do this is by planning. A minute spent on planning could save you up to 10 minutes in implementation. This means taking 10 minutes to plan your day can save as much as two hours in wasted time and unfocused effort during your day.

Planning is so important that business and self-help books often quote the “Six-P” adage: Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.

Although planning your day increases your productivity and effectiveness, surprisingly few people do it, perhaps because it seems difficult. But in reality, planning is simple: On a sheet of paper, list everything you have to do.

Gain Two Hours a Day

Always keep a list. Whenever something comes up, add it to the list. When you work from a list, you can increase your productivity by 25%—two hours a day.

Each night, make a list for the next day. Include leftovers—unfinished or undone tasks from the day before—and new tasks for the day. A benefit of making a list the night before is that your subconscious mind will mull over it while you sleep. You may wake up with ideas that help you with your tasks.

The more time you take to think and make lists, the more effective you'll be.

Create Multiple Lists

Effective planning requires lists for different timeframes—daily, weekly, monthly—plus a master list and separate project lists. You move items between lists as you constantly prioritize. Here are the basic lists:

- **Master list:** Your master list contains everything you want to do at some point. Every time you get an idea or a new task comes up, put it on this list.
- **Monthly list:** Compile this list near the end of the month, for the upcoming month. Move items to it from your master list, and add anything else you know of for the month.
- **Weekly list:** Use this list to plan the next week. Build it as things come up during the current week.
- **Daily list:** List specific tasks you're going to complete that day. Move items from your monthly and weekly lists to your daily list. Throughout the day, check off items as you do them to visually show your accomplishments, create a sense of momentum, and motivate you.

Working from lists will make you feel confident that you're on top of things and not forgetting anything.

Planning a Project

When you have a project or task to do, start by making a list of each step required for completing it. Organize the steps by priority and by when they need to be completed. Use project-planning software or a sheet of paper to display the tasks so you can see every step. Implement it step by step.

Planning a project in advance will greatly reduce the amount of time and effort required to accomplish it. The 10/90 rule of planning states: Spending 10% of your time on a task planning it will reduce the time required to complete it by 90%.

In addition, when you have a plan for your day, it's easier to get started and keep going.

Exercise: Make a List

Planning is as simple as making a list of the things you need to do. Create different lists and move items between them—you need a master list, plus monthly, weekly, and daily lists. Spending 10 minutes to plan your day in advance saves up to two hours in wasted time and effort during your day.

For your job or personal life, make a master to-do list of everything you can think of for the immediate future. Then, as appropriate, move items from your master list to a monthly list.

Plan your upcoming week by making a weekly list, pulling items from your calendar as well as from your master and monthly lists. How does having a list of tasks for the week make you feel?

Now, pulling items from your other lists, make a list for the next day of specific items you will complete that day. Organize the tasks by priority.

Try this process with a project. Think of a work or home project, then make a list of every step required to complete it. Organize the steps by priority and sequence.

Chapter 3: Prioritize—Live By the 80/20 Rule

You should complete the most important task—or eat the biggest frog—first. But the biggest task is the one most people put off. They focus on the least important items, which have little impact, in contrast to the most valuable one. Thus, many people are busy while accomplishing little.

The 80/20 rule developed by Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto is the key to prioritizing.

Pareto noticed in 1895 that 20% of his country's population accounted for 80% of its wealth. He interpreted this to mean that input doesn't correspond directly with output. For example, the 80/20 rule states that **as little as 20% of your tasks and effort will account for 80% of your results because some things are more important or contribute more to outcomes than others**. It's the difference between the "vital few" and the "trivial many." In economic terms:

- 80% of your sales will be generated by 20% of your customers
- 80% of your profits will come from 20% of your products
- 80% of your grocery bill comes from 20% of the items

According to the 80/20 rule, **if you have 10 things to do, doing the two most important ones will have a greater impact than doing the other eight combined**. Each of the 10 tasks may take the same amount of time, but a certain one will generate more value—perhaps as much as 10 times more—than all the others.

Focus on Value, not Quantity

Resist the temptation to get the easy or small things out of the way first to shrink your list. What you choose to do repeatedly becomes a habit that is difficult to break. If you always do unimportant things first, that becomes your habit. Of course, low-value tasks multiply like rabbits and you never get caught up so you can get to the important things.

Instead, **before you start a task, ask whether it's a top 20% task or bottom 80% task; only do it if it's high-value**. You should refuse to work on the low-value 80% of your tasks until you've completed the valuable or top-20% tasks on your list.

Take Control

The hardest part of tackling big things is getting started, but once you start, you'll be motivated to continue by the excitement of working on something that makes a difference. Keep building on this energy and stimulating your mind by doing the important things. The feeling of satisfaction you get from completing a big, important job will motivate you to do more.

When you develop the ability to prioritize your time this way, you're really managing yourself and your life. By taking control over what you do next—choosing the important over the unimportant—you're managing the sequence of events in your life and setting yourself up for success.

Exercise: Prioritizing

According to the 80/20 rule, 20% of your effort produces 80% of your results. Focusing on the few most

important things will have the greatest impact, yet most people focus on the “trivial many” (the 80%).

Take a look at your tasks and activities for today or tomorrow. Which tasks are you most inclined to do first and why?

What are the likely results of these tasks?

Which few tasks, if you focused on them, could bring the most (80% of) results? How would you feel at the end of the day if you got those things done?

How would focusing on those few things first change your day?

Chapter 4: Weigh the Consequences

You can determine how important a task is by considering the consequences of doing or not doing it. This can help you determine what frog to eat, or what to do next.

According to a Harvard researcher, taking a long-term view is the biggest predictor of success. It's more important than family, connections, or education.

How far ahead you think affects your decisions and actions. People who take a short-term view opt for immediate gratification; they tend to focus on relieving present tension and drudgery this way. Successful people delay short-term gratification, and focus on achieving longer-term goals for their career and life. Because they're future-oriented, they consider how their current options will contribute to the future they desire. As a result, they make better decisions—use their time better—than those who give the future little thought.

At work, knowing what's important to you in the long term helps you make better decisions about your priorities in the present. **The important things have significant long-term consequences; the unimportant things have few long-term consequences.** Activities with significant long-term impact might include taking courses to improve skills, reading about your field, and focusing on high-value tasks that will help you accomplish more and get ahead.

If a task has significant positive consequences or impact, make it a priority and start on it immediately. The greater the potential positive impact of a task, the more motivated you'll be to stop procrastinating and get it done. Keep focused and build momentum by starting and completing consequential tasks one by one.

If there are likely to be significant negative consequences if you *don't* do a particular task quickly, make that task a priority as well, so it doesn't derail your goals.

Time passes regardless of what you do with it—but how you use it, or what you do in the short term, determines where you end up down the road. Thinking about future consequences helps you determine your priorities.

Deadlines and 'The Law of Forced Efficiency'

The "Law of Forced Efficiency" states that while there isn't time to do everything, there's sufficient time to do the most important thing.

You experience this when you have an imminent deadline on an important project. When you know the consequences of missing a deadline on a key task and time is running out, you find a way to get the task done, often at the last minute. You do whatever it takes in order to avoid the consequences of missing the deadline. You're forced—or force yourself—to be efficient.

Sometimes, deadline pressure is the result of having multiple important things to do—many managers under this kind of pressure are working at 110% of capacity. The only recourse is to focus on each top thing in turn. But deadline pressure also can be self-imposed—a result of procrastination. This kind of deadline pressure works against you.

Many people say they work better under deadline pressure, but research indicates the opposite.

Under deadline pressure from procrastinating, people feel stressed, make mistakes, and have to redo work,

which ends up taking *more* time. Often the mistakes—such as product flaws and cost overruns—have long-term financial consequences.

It's better to plan your time, and create "wiggle room" for unforeseen issues; add 20% to the estimated time a project will take. When you're in control of your most important tasks, you'll be calmer, more confident, and do a better job.

Three Productivity Questions

Three questions can help you maximize your productivity:

- 1) What are your most impactful activities?** Which ones will make the biggest contribution to your organization or your life? Besides answering this question yourself, ask your boss, coworkers, and others what they think the highest-value things are for you to do. Have a definite answer before you start anything.
- 2) What can you alone do that will have a significant impact?** This is something only you can do—if you don't do it, no one will. Doing it will make a big difference in your work or life.
- 3) What's the best use of your time at the moment?** This is the key to effective time management; answering it enables you to overcome procrastination and be productive. At any given moment, one task will be the best use of your time and is the one you should be working on.

Exercise: Consider the Consequences

Considering the consequences can help you determine your most important task. Tasks with the greatest consequences are the most important; tasks with few consequences are unimportant.

Look at your to-do list for today or this week (or make a list). What are the long-term consequences of each task on your list? In other words, what impact will each have on the future?

Which one or two tasks have the greatest potential positive consequences? What are these consequences?

What steps can you take to start and complete these tasks immediately?

Chapter 5: Be a Creative Procrastinator

Most people procrastinate unconsciously or without thinking about it. As a result of not thinking, they put off important tasks that can have significant long-term consequences in their lives and careers.

However, **there's another kind of procrastination you *should* practice: creative procrastination**, during which you consciously decide *not to do certain things*. You put them on the back burner, so you can focus on more important things instead.

Since you have too much to do, you really have no choice but to procrastinate on the small, unimportant ones. Put off, delegate, or eliminate activities that don't add much value to your work or life.

Saying "no" is essential to time management. Investor Warren Buffet said a key to his success was saying no to everything that wasn't critical to him at the moment. You should say no to everything that isn't optimal use of your time because you don't have extra time. Doing something new can only mean eliminating or first completing something else you're doing.

Continually review your activities to identify tasks you can jettison or reduce without any real cost. Look especially hard at time-consuming activities. For instance, you may not realize how much time a nonproductive activity is eating up—for instance, golfing three times a week for three or four hours at a time.

There are some activities that you can stop altogether—for instance, watching television or spending time on social media. Instead, do something that enhances your life or career, such as spending time with your family, exercising, or furthering your education.

Exercise: Procrastinate on Purpose

Most people procrastinate unconsciously and end up putting off the most important things. Instead, you should intentionally procrastinate on things of little importance so you can get the big things done.

Think about your tasks and responsibilities for today or this week. What small tasks can you put off doing now? Which ones can you eliminate entirely or delegate?

How did these low-value activities get onto your agenda in the first place? How can you keep tasks like this off your list in the future?

By abandoning these tasks, what task with significant long-term consequences can you complete today/this

week instead?

Chapter 6: Prioritize Your To-Do List

You'll get more and more-important things done faster if you effectively plan and set priorities. The ABCDE method is a tool for prioritizing. Here's how it works. On paper, list everything you have to do for the next day. Next, rank each item by marking it with an A, B, C, D, or E, as follows:

A: Use an A to designate tasks that are very important. They are tasks that you *must* do—not doing them will have serious negative consequences. For instance, an “A” task might be something your boss directed you to do, or it could be visiting a top customer. If you have multiple tasks of this level, prioritize by marking them A-1, A-2, and so on.

B: Use this label for tasks that you *should* do, such as returning a non-critical call or email. These tasks have much less dire consequences than “A” tasks—for instance, someone may be unhappy if you don't do it. These are tadpoles compared to the “A” list items, which are frogs. Never do a “B” task when there's still an “A” task to do.

C: A “C” task is one that would be good to do, but it doesn't much matter whether you do it or not. Examples include having lunch with a coworker or phoning a friend. These tasks don't affect your work.

D: A “D” task is one you can delegate. You should delegate anything that someone else can do, so you can create time to do the tasks that only you can do, the consequential “A” tasks.

E: These are tasks you can eliminate. They include things that were important at one time but are no longer relevant, or unnecessary things that have become habits. Any time spent on one of these tasks is time diverted from an “A” task.

It's important to discipline yourself to start on your A-1 task immediately and persevere to completion. By prioritizing your work and getting the important things done, you'll accomplish more than several people's efforts combined.

Exercise: Try the ABCDE Method

The ABCDE method is a way of organizing your tasks. “A” is for must-do tasks; “B” is for should-do tasks; “C” is for things it would be nice to do; “D” is for those you can delegate; and “E” for things you can eliminate.

Go over your current activities and tasks and give each one a label from A to E.

How many of each designation do you have? What does that tell you?

What is your top task? How much time have you designated for it and when?

Chapter 7: Focus on Results

Everyone is hired to produce specific results in several key areas. You need to know your key areas and expectations because your success and the company's depend on delivering these results.

Most people get the concept of focusing on results, but they still have one of two problems:

- They're unsure of the results they're supposed to produce and are being measured by.
- They procrastinate on doing things in certain key areas important to the company and their career because they're not good at doing those things.

Your key areas are things you're responsible for accomplishing—if you don't do them, no one does. For example, key result areas for managers and salespeople are:

- Manager: planning, hiring, delegating, supervising, evaluating, and reporting
- Salesperson: prospecting, building customer relationships, making offers, handling objections, closing sales, and getting referrals

It's crucial to know what your key areas are and the expected results for your job. If you're unsure of the specific results you've been hired to deliver, you won't know how well you're performing or how to improve and advance in your career.

Clarify Expectations

Identify your key deliverables as you understand them, and discuss them with your boss to make sure you're in agreement on what they are.

Also, discuss them with colleagues whose work must be coordinated with yours, so you're moving in the same direction. For example, if you're a salesperson, when you close a sale, others become involved in delivering the product or service. Further, your individual performance impacts whether your department or company meets sales and revenue goals.

Once you've identified your key areas, grade yourself in each area on a scale of 1-10 to indicate your strengths and weaknesses. Even if you're excelling in five of six areas, poor performance in one area will hold you back. For example, a manager who can't delegate may fail because it's key to supervising and getting results from others.

Weak performance in a certain area can also lead you to procrastinate in that area or avoid it. Instead of ignoring or rationalizing your weaknesses, focus on the expectations you need to meet and develop a plan for excelling in all areas. The better you get, the more motivated you'll be to complete the important tasks.

A Clarifying Question

To help guide your career, here's a useful question to ask yourself: **What skill would have the greatest impact on furthering my career if I excelled at it?**

Look inside yourself for the answer—you may already know it. Also, ask your boss, colleagues, and coworkers. Then, make a plan and start working to improve your performance in this area. You should have

confidence in your ability to improve because most skills in business are learnable.

You'll be able to overcome procrastination and get more done faster when you perform well in every key result area, in the process also boosting your career.

Exercise: Your Results

Everyone is hired to produce specific results in a half-dozen or so key areas. You need to know your key areas and expectations because your success depends on delivering these results.

Identify the key deliverables of your job; grade yourself on each one on a 1-10 scale.

What is one area or skill that would make the biggest difference in your career if you improved and excelled at it?

What can you do to continue developing and increasing your abilities in these areas?

Chapter 8: Create Work-Life Balance

Determining your three most important tasks for your job and the three most important things in your personal life can help you achieve balance and be happier and more satisfied.

Out of everything you do at work, there are likely to be three tasks that, in total, account for the majority of the value you contribute. To perform your best and make your maximum contribution, you need to identify these key tasks and focus on them. Anything not directly related to these tasks should be put on the back burner, delegated, or eliminated.

Focusing on the few tasks that contribute the most to your company will increase your results and your value. When you're worth more to your company, your compensation will increase. You may even find that you're working fewer hours because you're not wasting time chasing a lot of unimportant things.

Your Life Goals

Focusing on the most important things at work will make you more productive, resulting in more time for your personal life. But there too, you need to identify what's most important.

To help identify your personal priorities, try this exercise. In 30 seconds, write down your three most important goals in the following areas: a financial/career goal, a relationship/family goal, and a health/fitness goal. Then grade yourself to assess where you're satisfied and where you want to improve.

Refine your goals by asking these additional questions (answer each in under 30 seconds):

- What are my top three goals in each of the three areas—for example, what are my top health goals?
- What are my top three personal and professional development goals?
- What are my three biggest concerns?

The answers will tell you what matters most to you.

Time Management Is a Tool

Time management skills enable you to complete the important things at work, so you have time to do what brings you happiness and satisfaction in your personal life.

Most happiness in life comes from having strong relationships with other people. You build strong relationships by spending time nurturing them. Being more efficient at work frees more time for you to spend with loved ones.

At work, the *quality* of your time counts; at home, it's the *quantity* of time that counts most.

So when you're at work, work the whole time. Don't waste time—focus on what you need to accomplish to do well at your job and do it. When you're efficient at work, you don't have to stay late or take work home with you, cutting into your personal time.

That's how you achieve the work-life balance that many people strive for. **Your goal should be to do your best at work while not losing sight of the reasons you're working: to have strong relationships and a satisfying life.**

Exercise: Identify Your Goals

Identifying and focusing on the three most important tasks for your job and the three most important things in your personal life can help you achieve work-life balance and be happier.

Identify your top three work tasks. If you could do only one thing at work, what would contribute the greatest value to your company and career? What's the second most important thing and the third.

In 30 seconds, write down your most important personal goal in each of three areas: career/finances, family/relationships, and health/exercise.

What plans can you make to focus on your work and personal goals each day?

Chapters 9-10: Be Fully Prepared and Take One Step at a Time

To make it easier to get focused and keep going on an important task, **make sure you have everything you'll need in front of you before you begin, so you're not distracted by looking for things later.** There are probably countless projects that never get done because people fail to prepare for the job in advance.

It's like preparing to cook something—you assemble the ingredients and utensils on your counter before you start so you don't have to look for something in the middle of following the recipe. Once you start your work task, you need to be able to keep going with interruption.

Clear your desk by setting aside unrelated work so you have only one task in front of you. Assemble all the documents and materials you'll need and keep them within easy reach. Ensure that your work area is comfortable and as distraction-free as possible. The cleaner and more organized it is, the easier it will be to get started and work efficiently.

Once everything is ready, start immediately. **Develop the confidence to begin by behaving confidently.** Sit up straight and lean forward away from the back of the chair with your feet flat on the floor. **Tell yourself, "Let's get to work," and jump in.**

Take one step and the rest will follow. Also, don't strive for perfection at each step—get it 80% right, move on, and make changes later. Once you start, press on until the job is done.

One Step at a Time

The best way to overcome procrastination and **make a big job doable is by breaking it into smaller steps and focusing on one step at a time.** Lao-tzu wrote: "A journey of a thousand leagues begins with a single step."

Most important things in life are done step by step. For instance, you don't achieve financial independence all at once—you save a small amount of money every month for years. You reach health and fitness goals the same way, a little at a time.

Author Brian Tracy crossed the featureless Sahara Desert in Algeria this way—by focusing one at a time on oil barrels that were placed at five-kilometer intervals to mark the route. He kept an eye on each barrel until he reached it, at which point he could see the next one.

Similarly, in completing your task, go as far as you can and, as you reach each milestone, you'll be able to identify and move toward the next one. Focus on the current step and have confidence that, when you complete it, you'll know the next step.

Alternatively, imagine your large task is a salami that you've cut into thin slices, and you only need to eat one small slice at a time.

One factor in your favor is that humans have a psychological need for closure or completion. **You have a subconscious need to get tasks done and not leave things hanging.** When you're pushing toward completion and when you finish a task, you feel happy because the completion triggers the release of endorphins. Finishing each step of a bigger task can make you feel good and motivate you to press on to final completion. Completing the task in its entirety makes you feel even better.

Exercise: Step by Step

The best way to overcome procrastination and make a big job doable is to focus on completing it one step at a time.

Think of a task or goal you've been procrastinating on. Make a list of every step or action you'll need to take to complete this task.

Organize the steps in the order they need to be done. What's your first step? Can you break that step into even smaller steps? Think of slicing a salami into very thin slices.

What will be the benefits of completing this task? How will you feel upon completion?

Chapter 11: Build Your Skills

Continually upgrading your skills is one of the most important ways to increase your productivity and advance your career. Determine what you need to learn in order to do your job better and then learn it.

Developing your skills has multiple benefits:

- It gives you confidence and motivation to plunge into challenging tasks without hesitation and get them done.
- It enables you to avoid procrastination. A major reason for procrastinating is feeling inadequate in a key area. Weakness in one area can be enough to keep you from starting a task.
- **Upgrading your skills is a time saver. The better you are at something, the faster you are at getting it done.** One additional skill or piece of information can make a big difference in how well you can do something
- It will advance your career. To keep your job and to advance, you need to continually upgrade your skills in your key result areas. You can always expand your knowledge, and no matter how much you know today, your skills and knowledge are in the process of becoming obsolete.

Identify your most important tasks and capabilities, then draw up a plan to continually upgrade your skills in these areas. You can learn anything—from typing and computer proficiency to specialized knowledge in your field. Learning should be a priority. Basketball coach Pat Riley said, “Anytime you stop striving to get better, you’re bound to get worse.”

You can take courses and workshops, or earn certifications and advanced degrees in your field. But there are also several ways to make learning part of your routine:

- 1) **Read about your field or industry daily.** Also, read books and articles about personal development and productivity.
- 2) **Take courses and seminars** addressing skills you need. Attend conferences and business meetings of your profession or occupation.
- 3) **Listen to audio programs in your car.** The average driver spends 500 to 1,000 hours a year on the road. Use this time to learn.

You build mental muscle or brain power by using your brain—so the more you learn, the more you expand your capacity to learn. The only limits to how far you can go are the limits of your imagination.

Chapter 12: Identify Your Biggest Limitation

In every effort, there's always a major constraint or limitation that hinders your progress on completing your task or achieving your goal.

It can be internal or external. It can even be personal—everyone has limiting factors.

There are always multiple factors creating friction, but one is greater than the others.

It's critical to identify the constraint that's holding you, your project, or the company back. Removing it will make a bigger difference in how quickly you achieve your goal than almost anything else you do.

Potential bottlenecks can be:

1) External: Outside factors affecting your ability to accomplish your goal include competitors, the market, customers, and the government. For instance, customers may have a false perception of your product that's hindering sales. An external factor will turn out to be your biggest constraint only about 20% of the time.

2) Internal: 80% of the time, your biggest constraint will be internal. It may be a person whose help you need or who has to sign off on an aspect of the process. It could be a key resource that's lacking or an organizational weakness, such as an inadequate marketing or sales effort. Other potential internal limitations are cash flow and operational problems.

3) Personal: Everyone has limitations affecting the pursuit of their tasks and goals, but one factor will predominate. To succeed, you need to **honestly examine yourself by asking what personal quality or knowledge or performance gap is holding you back**; what keeps you from accomplishing important tasks?

Your primary constraint may not be obvious at first glance. Make a list of every step in the process and every activity, then analyze them to determine what's holding you back.

It's important to accurately identify the major issue, so that you choose the right strategy to eliminate it and restore progress toward your goal. Focusing on a lesser factor instead of the one that's hindering you the most will be a waste of time and a diversion.

For instance, one company attributed lagging sales to its sales staff and management, and the company restructured the whole department in response. But this tactic failed to improve sales because the major constraint holding back sales was incorrect pricing, not the sales staff. Once they focused on the right thing, sales took off again.

Once you fix the biggest constraint, you may find another that's now the biggest. Identify and remove each as you find it. Removing the most consequential bottlenecks will motivate and energize you to push your task to completion.

Removing a limiting factor may be your most important task—or frog to eat—at the moment.

Exercise: Overcoming Limitations

In every effort, there's always a major constraint or limiting factor somewhere that hinders your progress on completing your task or achieving your goal. Finding and removing it is crucial to your success.

Think of a task at work or a goal you're trying to achieve. List the main factors affecting how quickly you accomplish this task. They could be internal (inside your company), external, or personal.

What's the biggest factor—the one whose removal would speed your progress the most? What can you do about it?

Consider your key life goal or career goal and answer the same questions to identify the biggest factor holding you back.

Chapters 13-14, 19: Motivate Yourself

You create your emotions by how you talk to yourself. What you tell yourself about people and situations determines whether they motivate or discourage you.

One way to motivate yourself is to choose to be an optimist. Respond positively to whatever happens and don't let typical daily frustrations get you down. **Be your own cheerleader and coach: use your inner voice to encourage and urge you to excel.**

Constantly talk to yourself positively to boost your self-esteem, which is what motivates you.

Repeat to yourself, "I have what it takes" to build confidence and overcome doubt. When people ask how you are, respond, "I feel great" regardless of how you feel or how things are going. You have the ability to choose your attitude in any circumstance: choose to be positive.

Don't complain or talk about your problems because it puts you in a negative mindset, and it won't get you any sympathy. As a humorist once said, 80% of people don't care about your problems and the other 20% are secretly happy you have them.

See the Positive Side

Based on a 22-year study at the University of Pennsylvania, Martin Seligman wrote in *Learned Optimism* that optimism is the most important contributor to success and happiness. Optimistic people do better in most areas of life. Optimists have four behaviors in common:

- **They look for the silver lining:** when things go wrong, they always manage to find a benefit or something good in the situation.
- **They seek to learn from setbacks.** They believe there's a lesson they can learn from each setback or hurdle and they resolve to find it.
- **They focus on solutions rather than problems.** Instead of complaining when things go wrong, they ask, "What's the solution?" or "What's the next step?"
- **They focus on the future.** Optimists continually think about their goals and how to achieve them rather than dwelling on the past.

When you continually talk positively to yourself, you feel more focused, confident, and eager to tackle challenging jobs.

Push Yourself

Another way to stay motivated is to challenge yourself. **To reach your potential, push yourself to identify and tackle your most important tasks, or your biggest frogs.** Set a higher bar for your performance than anyone else would set for you: start work earlier, stay later, and do more than anyone expects of you.

One way to push yourself to beat procrastination and get more done is by giving yourself deadlines and sub-deadlines. For instance, work as if you had only one day to get your most critical job done. Imagine you have to leave town for a month tomorrow. What task would you most want to get done before leaving? Work on that first. (This is different from the harmful pressure you put on yourself when you plan poorly or have to rush due to prior procrastination.)

Setting a deadline or high standard and pushing yourself to meet it increases your confidence and self-esteem. It also builds the habit of productivity. Continually pressure yourself to become a high-achiever.

Act With Urgency

Acting with urgency is the final key to motivating yourself. Successful people are action-oriented; they're always pressing to get things done. They plan and prioritize, then jump into the most important tasks and work to the end. When they're engaged and working with momentum, they're in a high-performance state known as "flow."

You can get into a state of flow more easily if you approach your work with a sense of urgency, or a compulsion to get on with the job and get it done. A sense of urgency is accompanied by an action orientation, in which you focus on what you can do now rather than continuing to talk about what you might do, and you get started as quickly as possible.

To get yourself started and to keep moving, it sometimes helps to repeat mantras to yourself like "Let's go," "Do it now," or "Focus!"

While the first step is the most difficult, subsequent steps are easier because completing each one builds momentum toward the next. As you build momentum toward completion, you also build self-confidence and a feeling of competence. Having a sense of urgency that drives and enables you to get things done fast-tracks your career.

Exercise: Be an Optimist

What you tell yourself about setbacks determines whether they motivate or discourage you. Choose to be an optimist. Respond positively to whatever happens. Optimists are more successful in most areas of life.

What was the worst or most frustrating thing that happened at work this week? How did it turn out?

How did you react to it? What did you tell yourself about the situation, and how did this make you feel about it?

What's a different message or attitude you could have chosen instead? What lesson can you derive from the situation?

Chapters 15-16: Master Technology

Technology has enormous benefits, but if you don't take control of it, it may end up controlling you.

Many people feel compelled to be in constant touch, which keeps them reacting to a never-ending stream of messages rather than choosing whether and when to respond and controlling their own schedule. Immediately upon waking up, they check their phone messages and notifications. This continues throughout the day until bedtime. One study showed that people check their devices 85 times a day. They check twice as often as they think they do, according to another study.

It adds up to wasted time, a feeling of not being in control, and more stress about what's not getting done. And no matter how often you check for messages, they keep coming in. But **the fact that someone sends you an email doesn't mean you owe them your time.**

Apply the 80/20 rule to your messages and email. As many as 80% are unimportant and you can ignore, delete, unsubscribe, or block them. Most of the remaining 20% can probably be put off, which leaves only around 5% requiring an immediate response. Ignore anything not relevant to your priority tasks and relationships.

There are numerous benefits to unplugging or taking a break from communication devices. In one study, CEOs and entrepreneurs who turned off their devices temporarily experienced improved memory, sleep, decision-making, and relationships.

Tech entrepreneur Bill Gates unplugs and meditates each day. Similarly, you should **try turning off your devices for an hour in the morning and in the afternoon.** Or go further and unplug for an entire day each week. You won't miss anything important and you'll focus and perform better when you take tech breaks.

Make Technology Work for You

Instead of being controlled by technology, you can **use it to help manage your time—both to remind you of what's important and keep unimportant things from distracting you.**

When you're working on a high-value task, close all computer windows, websites, and programs you aren't using for the task. Turn off phone alerts and notifications.

Some people keep alerts and notifications turned on all the time because they want to be reachable in a potential family emergency. But rather than making yourself available to everyone 24/7, you can adjust your phone settings to limit your calls and texts to emergencies or certain people only. Take control by responding to messages by choice rather than reactively. Similarly, use your email program's features to sort and prioritize emails.

Use Digital Tools

Use your online or paper calendar to block out time for your important tasks the same way you would block appointments and meetings. You can also use digital productivity tools or software to help you manage tasks and delegate them.

Some people hesitate to use digital tools because they require learning new software and systems. However, everything can be learned. Take advantage of any available training—the time you spend learning new tools will pay off in greater efficiency. Accept that everyone gets frustrated with technology occasionally. Remember, it's there to work for you, and you can master it.

Social media can be a big distraction or time waster, but some people use it to generate encouragement and positive feedback. They share their goals and updates on their progress with friends or like-minded people, who help them stay motivated and less likely to procrastinate. This can be a more beneficial way to use social media than posting about trivial things or complaining.

Chapters 17-20: Stay Focused

While technology is critical to time management—it can either help you manage your time or encourage you to waste it—it has another impact on your productivity that must be managed: It can undermine your ability to stay focused.

You have to stay focused in order to get anything important done well. But there are two big threats to your concentration: interruptions—especially emails, texts, and notifications—and attempts to multitask.

Research indicates that **the habit of responding to emails, texts, and calls results in a shorter attention span and lack of focus which make it difficult or impossible to complete the kinds of tasks vital to your success.**

When you get email alerts, message alerts, and social media notifications, they can give you a “buzz” or shot of dopamine, which spurs you to respond. It’s like reacting to the sound of a slot machine alerting you to a win. When you start your day by responding to notifications and alerts, it triggers a dopamine burst and sets the tone for the rest of your day—you continue to have difficulty focusing.

The Myth of Multitasking

Many people believe they can multitask or simultaneously handle incoming messages, interruptions, and important tasks.

In reality, you can only focus on one thing at a time. What seems like multitasking is “task shifting,” or switching your attention back and forth between different things. After being interrupted at a task, it takes 17 minutes to totally refocus on the task and continue working.

The more interruptions you experience and the more often you switch your attention, the more mistakes you make and the less you get done. The tendency to start and stop a task repeatedly can increase the time needed to complete it by 500 percent.

In contrast, **when you work without interruption, you can cut the time required to complete a task by as much as half.**

The more self-discipline you develop to stay focused, the more you increase your efficiency, or ability to do high-level work in less time. Self-discipline and persistence are qualities of character that help you get things done and also build your self-respect.

Use a Planner

Using a planner can help you create uninterrupted time each day to complete your most important tasks. Block out time—preferably in 60- to 90- minute stretches—for these tasks, treat it like an appointment, and keep it.

Your blocked-off time doesn’t have to happen at the office. Some people find it’s productive to get up early and work for several hours at home, where there are fewer interruptions, before going to the office. If you travel for business purposes, you can use time at the airport and in the air to work with few interruptions.

Mapping out your time in a planner helps you build your work time around getting your most important

tasks done without interruption.

What You Can Do

To minimize distractions and interruptions:

- Don't check your email the moment you wake up—this starts your day with a dopamine rush that you'll keep trying to repeat.
- If you have to check your email, make it quick and return to your work right away.
- Turn off the sound on your computer and your devices to avoid dopamine triggers and distractions, like the sound of receiving a text message.
- Limit your email checking to twice a day, closing out of it when you're done each time.
- In meetings, keep devices turned off.

To be more productive:

- Plan your day ahead of time.
- First, choose the most important task and start it immediately.
- Work for 90 minutes without stopping or being interrupted, then take a 15-minute break.
- Return to work for another 90 minutes. Then check email for a dopamine reward.

When you discipline yourself to focus without interruption for three hours each morning on your most important task, you'll be more productive and in control, and you'll kick the habit of constantly checking your messages.

Exercise: Sharpen Your Focus

To get anything important done well, you need to focus your attention on it. But often, people's attention is scattered and interrupted, especially with constant messages and social media.

Describe your typical morning at work. What do you do first? How many tasks do you start and compete? How often are you interrupted?

In a typical morning, how often do you check and respond to emails? What if you reduced your checks to only one time—how would that affect the rest of your work?

Besides minimizing email checks, what else can you do create two 90-minute periods of sustained focus?

Conclusion

Developing the habit of doing your most important task, or eating your biggest frog, the first thing each work day primes you for success. Anyone can learn to do it. Following the rules laid out in this book can you develop the habit and get on the road to success faster. Here's a quick-reference guide:

Summary: How to Get Things Done

- 1) **Determine your goals:** Determine what you want to accomplish, then write down your goals.
- 2) **Plan each day:** On a sheet of paper, list everything you have to do. A minute spent planning can save 10 in implementation.
- 3) **Live by the 80/20 rule:** 20% of your efforts will produce 80% of your results. Focus on doing the few things that make the most difference.
- 4) **Weigh the consequences:** The most important thing you can do is the one with the biggest consequences or greatest impact. Determine which thing that is and do it first.
- 5) **Be a creative procrastinator:** Since you can't do everything, you have to put off or eliminate something. Procrastinate on small things so you can get the important things done.
- 6) **Prioritize your to-do list:** Prioritize your to-do list using the ABCDE method to ensure you get the right things done. (A=must do, B=should do, C=nice to do, D=delegate, E=eliminate.)
- 7) **Focus on results:** Identify the key areas of your job where you're expected to deliver results, and make sure you focus on them. Your success and your company's depend on your delivering these results.
- 8) **Create work-life balance:** Determine the three things you do at work that account for the majority of the value you contribute. Also, set three personal or life goals. Focus on completing the most important things at work, so you'll have time for your personal priorities.
- 9) **Be fully prepared:** Before you begin an important task, make sure you have everything you'll need in front of you so you're not distracted by looking for things later.
- 10) **Take it step by step:** Make a big job doable is by breaking into smaller steps and focusing on one step at a time.
- 11) **Build your skills:** Continually upgrade your skills to increase your value and productivity and advance your career.
- 12) **Identify your biggest limitation:** Identify the biggest thing that's holding you, your project, or the company back and eliminate it. Removing it will significantly speed up your progress toward your goal.
- 13) **Motivate yourself:** To reach your potential, continually push yourself to complete your most important tasks. Set your own deadlines and race to beat them. Coach yourself: use your inner voice to encourage and urge you to excel. Approach your work with a sense of urgency, or a compulsion to get on with the job and get it done.
- 14) **Make technology work for you:** Take control of your devices by using the available features to organize your work, remind you of what's important, and keep unimportant things from distracting you.

15) **Stay focused:** Focus on your most important task for two sustained 90-minute periods each morning. Use a planner to block out this time and stick to it. Eliminate interruptions and don't multitask.