

DO NOT WAIT, the time will never be right

Seven Step Method

1. Decide exactly what you want
2. Write it down – thinking on paper is critical
3. Set a deadline on your goal
4. List the steps necessary for achievement
5. Organise the list into a plan (priority and sequence, visual layout)
6. Take action on your plan immediately
7. Do something every day to move closer to that goal

Organisation

Always Work from a List

Four lists: master list (to capture all ideas), monthly, weekly, daily

- Make a list of every step needed to complete project, organise by priority and sequence
- Just go as far as you can see, and be confident you will be able to see farther at that future point
- Make the next daily/weekly/monthly list at the end of the previous day/week/month
- Transfer items from Master -> Monthly -> Weekly -> Daily
- When a new task comes up, add to list before doing it
- Tick off items as you complete them

Begin Immediately and Persist Until the Task is Complete

- Once you know the highest-value task, everything else is a relative waste of time
- Take action on the most important task first thing every morning
- Once you start, keep working to full completion (task switching costs are a major time sink)
- Notice if you are becoming distracted by conversation or low-value activity
- Most identifiable sign of high-performing people is action-orientation, they are in a hurry to complete key tasks
- Urgency will generate action instead of discussion: focusing on specific steps, concentrating on results

Tricks to Get Started

- It is easier to commit to doing a small piece of work, and momentum often keeps us working beyond the initial steps
- Divide large/complex projects into distinct smaller steps, and resolve to do one of them
- Resolve to work for a specific short time period, as little as 5-10 minutes (even shorter works too)

Review your goals and performance at the end of every day/week/month

Efficiency

Three Questions for Maximum Productivity

- What are my highest value activities? (Think to yourself, then ask others)
- What can I and only I do that if done well will make a real difference?
- What is the most valuable use of my time right now?

The more accurate your answers are to these questions, the easier it will be to set priorities and do the most valuable task (epistemic rationality!)

Apply 80/20 Rule to Everything

- Law of Forced Efficiency: There is never enough time to do everything, but there is time to do the most important things
- A handful of your tasks are likely much more valuable than the others
- You get your time and life under control only insofar as you discontinue low-value activities
- If you want to add something new, you must complete or discontinue something old
- Completing high-value tasks is more satisfying
- Continually review responsibilities to identify tasks which can be delegated/eliminated without loss

Reasons for procrastination (and their solutions)

- vagueness/confusion around objectives and how and why to accomplish them (write down goals, list specific steps)
- feeling of inadequacy, lack of confidence, inability in key area of task (identify and learn key skills)
- attempting to begin task while fatigued (protect energy level with diet, exercise, regular breaks/vacations)
- important tasks seem large and formidable upon first approach (resolve to do single step or limited time period)

ABCDE Method

Place letter next to each item

- A: task you must complete, very important, major positive/negative consequences (rank many A items with A-1, etc.)
- B: task you should complete, mild consequences
- C: task is optional, would like to do but no consequences
- D: task can be delegated, do so ASAP
- E: task can be eliminated without any real difference

Never do a B task when an A task is left incomplete

Create Deadlines

- Imagine you have to leave town tomorrow, what absolutely must be done before you go?
- Set deadlines (and sub-deadlines as appropriate) for every task and activity
- Determine how many minutes/hours each task will require, add a 20% buffer, then make it into a game to beat your own estimates

Create Blocks of Time

- Set aside 30/60/90 minute blocks for important tasks
- Getting up early and working for hours before going to work is a key productivity habit
- Time planner on day/hour/minute level enables you to see and consolidate blocks of time
- Plan your day in advance and schedule fixed time periods for particular activities (e.g. sales calls 10-11 AM)
- During these work times, turn off electronic communication, eliminate any distractions, work nonstop
- Use transition periods ("gifts of time") to complete small steps in larger tasks
- If you fly often, plane rides are a great unbroken block of time, plan your work for the entire duration

Workspace

- Clear everything off your desk until only the task at hand is in front of you
- Have everything you need to complete task before you begin
- Make your work area comfortable, attractive, and conducive to working long periods
- Once you complete preparations, begin working immediately
- Assume the body language of high-performance: sit up straight, sit forward away from back of chair

Electronic Communication

- DO NOT check voicemail/e-mail first thing in the morning
- Tech is your friend, there to increase speed/efficiency/accuracy of information transfer, but can be addictive
- Just because someone sends you an e-mail does not mean you have an obligation to respond (if important they will resend)
- Delete 80% of e-mails unread immediately. Only 20% of those remaining are urgent, put the rest in a file to respond later
- Create zones of silence in your life where no one or nothing can reach you
- Maintain inner calm by pausing on a regular basis to listen to the silence

The most powerful word is “no”

- Say no to anything not a clear high-value use of time
- Say it clearly so that there are no miscommunications
- Say it regularly as part of your time-management strategy
- Say it early and often!

Question to Ask: “If I were not doing this already, knowing what I know now, would I start doing it again today?”

Improve Rate-Limiting Steps

- There is always a rate-limiting step in every task
- Identify that choke point, and make a single-minded effort to weaken that constraint
- 80% of the limiting factors exist internally within you or your organisation
- Take an honest look at self and company, accept responsibility for your life and look to yourself for both the cause and cure of the problem
- Accurate identification of the limiting factor can bring about huge progress quickly, otherwise you solve the wrong problem
- The key constraint may be small and not entirely obvious, make a list of every step in a process
- Behind every rate-limiting step is another one, so target the next one and alleviate that as quickly as possible

Identifying Your Strengths

What Are Your Unique Talents?

Do what you love to do, and do it well!

- What gets you the most compliments/praise?
- What affects the performance of other people the most?

Ask yourself these questions:

- What am I really good at?
- What do I enjoy the most about my work?
- What has been the most responsible for my success?
- If I could do any job at all, what would it be?
- If I won the lottery, what work would I choose to do?

Rule of Three

Three core tasks provide most of your value, focus on optimising those. In thirty seconds, write down your three most important goals in life right now

- Giving people longer rarely results in different answers
- In most cases people have a financial/career goal, a personal relationship goal, and a health/fitness goal.

Big Seven in Management: planning, organisation, staffing, delegating, supervising, measuring, reporting

Big Seven in sales: prospecting, building rapport and trust, identifying needs, presenting persuasively, answering objections, closing the sale, getting resales and referrals

Question to Ask: “What one skill would have the greatest positive impact on my life?” (ask others as well)

Optimise Self

Skill Acquisition

- Identify the most important things you do, and make a plan to continually upgrade those skills
- You can learn any skills necessary to be more productive/effective

Three Steps to Mastery:

- Read in your field at least one hour/day
- Take every course/seminar available on key skills
- Listen to audio during downtime

3 D's of New Habit Formation

1. Decision to learn new habit
2. Discipline to practice
3. Determination to persist until habit is encoded

Optimising Mood

- To perform at your best, you need to be in a good mood!
- Level of self-esteem is critically important for motivation and persistence
- The way you interpret things determines how you feel
- Resolve to become an optimist

Four Behaviours of Optimists:

- Look for the good in every situation
- Seek the valuable lesson in setback/difficulty
- Look for the solution to every problem (vs. blame/complain)
- Think and talk continually about your goals

The biggest enemies are fear of failure/rejection and accompanying doubts

- The way to overcome fear is to do precisely that thing
- Act as if you already had the courage and behave accordingly

State maxims to yourself on a regular schedule, to internalise positive beliefs

Questions:

- What is holding you back?
- What sets the speed at which you achieve your goals?
- What determines how fast you move from here to there?
- What holds you back from doing the most important tasks?
- Why haven't you already achieved your goal?

Expand to three most important goals in:

- Business/career
- Family/relationship
- Financial
- Health
- Personal/professional development
- Social/community
- Biggest problems or concerns in life

Key Result Areas

Your work can usually be broken down into 5-7 key result areas (KRA), where you are completely responsible

- Make a list of important output responsibilities, tasks which feed into others
- Determine key result areas and grade yourself on 1-10 scale
- Your performance is only as strong as your weakest KRA
- We tend to avoid jobs where we performed poorly in the past
- Refuse to rationalise/justify/defend weakness, instead identify clearly, and make a plan to improve

Visualise

- Imagine being your future awesome self, self-image has a powerful effect on behaviour
- Visualise how the world would look with your goals completed

Generate Intrinsic Motivation

- See yourself as role model for others
- Set higher standards for yourself than others set for you
- Make it into a game!

Energy Level is CRITICALLY IMPORTANT for Motivation

- Utilise the specific time of the day when you are at your best for top-priority tasks
- Sometimes your best use of time is indeed to quit early and get a lot of sleep
- Take one full day off every week: no work or electronic communication or anything taxing. Instead do activities which replenish you
- Take regular vacations every year, both weekends and 1-2 week breaks

Big three for energy level:

Sleep Diet Exercise

Questions:

- What am I doing physically that I should do more of?
- What am I doing that I should do less of?
- What am I not doing that I should start doing to maximise performance?
- What am I doing that affects my health should I stop doing entirely?

Work/life balance is not optional

- Time management is a means to an end: freeing up time to do the things you enjoy and love
- The more time you spend with loved ones, the happier you will be
- What matters is quality of time at work and quantity of time in rest of life
When you work, *work* – wasted work time comes out of personal life

You are shaping yourself into a new, superior human being.

Be an ascending spiral of personal effectiveness.