7 Tips to Increase your Productivity

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Hello

Are you busy? If you are like many people then you are likely to reply that you are rushed off your feet. "How do I find the time to do everything I need to do?" is a plea I often get. "How can I get more done during the day is another?" "Social life, what social life?" people say to me. You get the picture. Maybe you also fall into this category. Below are some guidelines to help you get more done during the day.

1. Prioritisation: You have to prioritise. And taking the time to prioritise the important work will pay off tenfold. It is not a waste of time to prioritise and you are never too busy to prioritise what must be done during the day. If you don't focus on deliberately working on what is important you will get to the end of the year and find you may have done lots of things, but they were not really the things you wanted to work on. Take a piece of paper and draw a two by two matrix so you end up with four quadrants. Label the top importance and the vertical urgent. In the top left hand quadrant put in all tasks that are urgent but not important. In the top right hand quadrant write in tasks that are important and urgent. In the bottom left quadrant write in tasks that are not important and not urgent. And in the bottom right quadrant write in tasks that are important but not urgent. Now compile a to-do list. What you want featured on the list are the important tasks.

If you don't have a to-do list consider having one. That is one list, not a whole lot of lists. Keep a manageable number of items on your list. If your tasks add up to more than twenty you have a problem. You may need to delegate or schedule other projects for later. Cross off each task as it is completed. A lot of people find the best thing is to start with the most difficult task first thing in the morning.

2. Stop Multitasking. It is not possible to do more than one task at the same time; your brain cannot do it. So multitasking is a myth. What you are actually doing is spending short amounts of time on one task then switching to the next, and then back to the first, and so forth. And actually this wastes time and reduces the quality of the work done. Studies show that multitasking decreases productivity 20-40%. So just focus on one task, finish it, and then work on the other. If you have a to-do list then you won't need to waste time worrying that you will forget what you need to do next.

3. Work with your energy levels not against them. Work out which time of the day you have the most energy, morning, evening, or some other time, and schedule important and difficult tasks for this time. Take breaks. You do not do more if you don't take breaks. Every 60-90 minutes take a 5 minute break where you physically and mentally leave your work station and work and do something totally different like take a walk. Eat properly and drink water throughout the day. Remove the things from your life that drain your energy whenever you can. Complete incompletes and don't procrastinate. These both take up energy and time worrying. Clutter drains your energy so sort it out or call in someone who can help you sort it out.

4. Manage interruptions: People can lose up to 2 work hours a day through interruptions. That is 10 hours per week - more than a whole extra day. There is a lot you can get through in that time. So learn to manage interruptions. Only allow interruptions if it is absolutely critical and there is no one else who can deal with the issue. If your job allows it (and really think before you say your job does not allow it) have closed door time during the day. Schedule and communicate the times when you will be available. People learn to schedule their work around the availability of others. You teach people whether or not they can bother you every minute. If you are on deadline then tell others and specify you do not want to be disturbed unless something absolutely cannot wait or cannot be dealt with by someone else. If you respond to calls and emails during the evening or on weekends, then you are letting others know you are contactable at those times. Keep meetings focused and keep chit chat for lunch and coffee breaks.

5. Batch Tasks. Batch together similar tasks and do them at the same time. Tasks that can be batched include reading and responding to emails, making phone calls, handling correspondence, and filing. If you cannot do without your social networks and you need to spend time researching on the internet then batch everything you want to do while connected to the web.

6. Manage Emails. Everyone moans about the number of emails they get. Get yourself organised. Endless emails in your inbox will drain you of energy just looking at them. Keep your inbox empty. As each email comes in read it once and deal with it. If it will take a lot of work to respond to, or it is part of a project then write it down on your to-do list. Use folders and subfolders to sort and store emails. Check email only at certain points during the day unless your job requires otherwise. Reroute non-essential emails like non work-related emails to another folder for this purpose. Write short and effective emails and tell others to do the same. Use templates for repetitive emails or memos.

7. Beat Procrastination. Huge piles of work are demotivating so don't let the work pile up. If you need to take a Saturday to clean up then do so. Just get rid of the big piles as soon as you can. If you are in the habit of putting off work then change your habit. Decide the night before what you want to do the next day and when you walk into your office just sit down and start working. If procrastination is a problem then make the task smaller. Break it down into smaller and smaller tasks. People do seem to find that helps. If you have a task to do that you hate, just tell yourself that you will work on it for 10 minutes. Once you have started you often feel better and just carry on. Watch your self-talk. If you say things like "I hate doing this", "this is going to be so difficult to do", you just make it harder to do the task so stop saying things that just make it more difficult to get going. If you still cannot get going, think of the consequences of not doing the task. Hopefully that should generate enough pain to get you to start working. If you can get into the habit of doing things ahead of schedule, such as doing something the minute you get it, then great. It is a worthwhile habit to get into. Once you have finished a long or difficult task, reward yourself.

Have a wonderful February

Best wishes

Penny