

BUSY - VERSUS - PRODUCTIVE

Do you ever get to the end of the day and wonder, what just happened, where did today go?

You start each day with good intentions, and resolve to accomplish everything. You are always so busy, yet at the end of the day not everything you wanted to accomplish is done.

You accept the saying ‘time flies when you're having fun’ realizing time flies even when you're not having fun. Do you ever wish you had a few more hours in a day?

The true value of time lies in how we choose to use it, average performers worry about completing a lot of tasks. Top professionals and leaders are generally the best at controlling their time. They do not have any more time than anyone else, yet they spend their time focused on (and actually accomplishing) the most important tasks.

Here are two powerful and proven steps to catapult your day from busy to productive:

1. Sit down today and decide what the most important things are that need to be accomplished tomorrow or for any given day. What is your highest value activity?
If you are in sales, you're paid to bring in business so a significant percentage of your time should be spent selling or generating sales opportunities. If you are in accounting for a small business a top priority may be cash flow so focus efforts on doing what brings in the most amount of money rather than what comes up first.

If you have any doubt what your most important activities are, ask your boss or other successful people in your same position. It is better to clarify priorities and values before you waste time focused on the wrong priority tasks.

Next, figure out how you are spending your time:

2. An excellent way to discover exactly how you use your time is to do a time study and document each thing you do (minor or important) throughout an entire week. This will show you which tasks get your attention and time. Most people are shocked by the amount of effort you exert on low priority items.

Begin your time study from the time you wake up and, for at least two days, document what you do every 30 minutes or at the change of any task. Most times you will be able to find an extra hour a day that could be better spent or saved to perform more important tasks.

It is important to invest your time to go through this basic exercise because memory is a poor substitute for reality. Often we recall what we think we should have been doing rather than what we actually did or simply cannot recall exactly where all of our time was spent.

If done properly, this will assist in viewing exactly where time is wasted or could be better spent. An example would be when I began tracking my time years ago I realized a significant portion of time was spent on technical or administrative work assigning tasks to the website teams. To obtain the hours of time each week from those areas we hired full time Project Managers for websites projects and a full time in-house technical director. Both of these positions are better served by someone dedicated to the tasks required while it provided hours of time I use for online research and search engine optimization.

I also realized I missed working out several times a week using that time to ‘catch up’ on important items I was unable to accomplish during the day.

I asked our Technical Director (who often claimed there were more tasks than time) to document his time so we could judge the amount of time that could be reallocated to other staff. He was quite upset and felt it was a ‘waste of his time’ to perform this task yet when he was done a clear opportunity was evident.

After completing his time study, he realized the main task of building websites was being delayed by computer support and updates at the office. The main company focus of building websites for customers was being delayed by tech work. We hired a part time tech support professional who now handles PC updates, software installations and other such work and the Technical Director gained three hours every week.

Other examples of where this may help gain valuable time are in data entry or customer communications. Project Managers have a tremendous amount of text, photos and content to input for each website. To accomplish this most efficiently Project Assistants were brought in for data entry only tasks at nearly ½ of the cost to the company and hours of time savings for Project Managers who could focus on customer projects. As the primary product and development, search engine expert and general business leader for the company I found it was more productive to have customer service staff schedule meetings and events.

What will your time study show? If you will dedicate the time you will find extra time to be a more productive and maybe even a happier person.

Every second that passes is gone forever so make sure each second counts

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