

BOOST YOUR PRODUCTIVITY

5 PRACTICAL STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO ACHIEVE INSTANT AND NOTICEABLE RESULTS

What do we all want?

We all want to be more productive with our day.

But sometimes it feels that productivity is an elusive quality. It is spoken about so much that it is starting to lose all meaning.

When it comes to productivity the internet has a lot to say. For instance, if you type in "How do I increase my productivity?" into Google, you'll get around 148,000,000 results.

What we all need is a compact guide full of useful information that people can actually use!

So, in this guide I am going to go give you 5 simple steps you can follow, so you can stop hearing about productivity and actually start achieving it!

The guide will contain useful practical tips you can start using today, and begin seeing real change in your life. I'm confident of this, because everything I'm about to share with you, I do in my everyday life. And it really works!

STEP 1 GIVE YOUR BODY WHAT IT NEEDS

A sure-fire way of increasing your productivity is to boost your daily energy and creativity. Makes sense right? But how do you go about doing this? Unfortunately, there's no magic potion, but we have the next best thing. Try out all these tips and you'll feel the difference for yourself.

1. Sleep for 50 minutes more – Unless you usually sleep 8 hours per night, bump your regular sleep routine up by 50 minutes. This means, go to bed 50 minutes earlier. That extra sleep will improve your cognitive scores by 22% within 7 days. Nice! Plus, you'll have more energy to get stuff done, and you'll be kinder to others - yep, the science proves it.

2. Walk to improve creativity – In a recent study it has been found that creative output increases by an average of 60% when walking. Indeed, Steve Jobs, the late co-founder of Apple, was known for his

walking meetings. So, if you want to get the creative juices flowing, you now know a simple way to do it.

3. Have a flexible work schedule – This may seem radical, but yourself, and workers, should be encouraged to have naps in the afternoon and should be able to clock in whenever they want. This helps create a more creative and productive workforce. A nap of between 30-90 minutes is recommended. It's only since the industrial revolution we have been obsessed with squeezing all our sleep into the night rather than having one or two sleeps through the day.

4. Have a positive attitude – Your attitude determines your productivity. More than almost any other factor, your perspective on the current situation affects your ability to get work done. Do what it takes to get yourself in the right frame of mind before you start work.

STEP 2 GET YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT RIGHT

Now you know how to get your body and mind ready to be as productive as possible, the same needs to happen to your working environment.

Have the basics set up correctly so that there is nothing holding you back from being as productive as possible.

In this step there are a few simple quick fixes you can make, that will have a real impact on your overall productivity. So, there's no excuse for not trying them out. See which ones work best for you.

1. Work in 50-minute blocks – During these blocks, nothing is allowed to happen except you focus and work. You don't take calls, look at your inbox, browse, or start other activities. You do one thing. It's all about focus. Then after this take a short break, re-energize yourself, and remember to stand up. The average person sits for 8.9 hours a day, so make sure take regular breaks from this to keep your health and productivity in tip top shape.

2. Get plants for your workspace – Research has shown that plants in the office significantly increased workplace satisfaction, self-reported levels of concentration, and perceived air quality. This all results in an increase in productivity of approximately 15%.

3. Use multiple screens – According to a study conducted by Jon Peddie Research, productivity increases an average of 42% when using multiple displays. Now that is well worth the price of an additional monitor.

4. Improve speed of typing – Just think how many words you type on your keyboard every day. If you could type them fractionally quicker this would result in a lot of time being saved and hence increase your productivity. A useful tool to help you cheat at this is Text Expander. This allows you to create shortcuts for common lengthy terms you are always typing.

STEP 3 GO MOBILE RIGHT

We truly are in the digital age, and it offers great opportunities to drastically increase your productivity by simply adopting new technologies. It may require effort, but it is well worth it.

Need some convincing? Well consider this. Millennials are officially the largest generation in the global workforce.

Today's average millennial spends over 3 hours a day on their smartphone, which means your average employee and their smartphone are pretty much inseparable.

Furthermore 93% of businesses have seen an increase in the productivity of their workforce when using mobile devices out of the office. And despite this 71% still believe they could still increase their productivity by more effectively using mobile devices and applications to enhance communication and collaboration. Need a helping hand in going mobile? Consider the following:

1. Use mobile apps – The age of apps is truly upon us. Whether at home or at work, you can find an app to help you out with just about anything. Unsurprisingly business leaders still believe email is the most important app for mobile productivity. It's all about finding the right apps for you that will make noticeable change in your life.

2. Use mobile broadband – Using a mobile dongle can cost from less than £1 per day and means that you can connect, from your laptop, anywhere. This effectively means, your office can be anywhere you want it to be.

3. Use a tablet – You're more likely to take this type of device everywhere and is the next step in technological mobility. With the availability of Wi-Fi and mobile data contracts, being connected won't be an issue. Tablets are a much more convenient way to stay connected, and when used in conjunction with mobile broadband for laptops, you are free to work when you want, where you want.

STEP 4 PLAN EFFICIENTLY RIGHT

A large part of being productive is about getting as much done with the amount of time you have.

You have to be efficient with time. And the best way to do this is to plan efficiently. This may seem like a daunting proposition but it's vital.

Now I'm not suggesting you plan every second of every day. What I am suggesting is, that before you start work strategize your day for 30 minutes.

This means you do not check email or respond to others in the first 30 minutes of the day. This alone will change your life.

The inbox is nothing but a convenient organizing system of other peoples' agendas; so if you begin the day in your inbox you are framing the day in reaction not thought.

Instead, get in tune with your body, then sit down and decide on the major projects and priorities for the day. When doing this consider the following:

1. Focus on your goals – Without worthy goals, both personal and professional, you will never be motivated to get things done.

2. Create common goals – Without a team which is working towards common goals there is no real support; simply individuals performing isolated tasks, each defending their days and inboxes. Sharing common goals increases innovation and collaboration.

3. Set deadlines for tasks – Parkinson's Law dictates that a task will swell in perceived importance and complexity in relation to the time allotted for its completion. Be realistic with deadlines, don't put yourself under unnecessary pressure.

4. Schedule regular meetings. It's well advised to bring your team together to review last week's progress and their goals for the week ahead. These can be in person or online.

5. Reward yourself after a big task. This is important for two reasons. One it gives you closure on a large amount of work, so you can start your next task fresh. And second it keeps you motivated so you continue to work at your full potential.

STEP 5 STREAMLINE YOUR DAILY TASKS

Daily tasks are a pain aren't they – always so repetitive and it feels like you're just wasting time doing them.

The reason they are daily tasks is because they are pretty essential, but you have more control over how long they take than you think.

Streamlining your daily tasks has two great benefits. One, you're going to have a lot more free time to focus on your actual work that is going to improve your business. And second, it will reduce your stress levels, as a lot less focused effort will be needed to complete them.

Great, so how do I get started? You're going to start with the daily tasks that take up the most time.

1. Get your email under control – If you are spending too much time on email, you're not alone. Many people do. And it can be of the biggest time wasters of your day. The average employee spends almost a third of their workday processing email. That is 2-3 hours of email per day. Up to 15 hours a week. Or even 97 complete workdays a year! And limiting the use of email can significantly reduce stress, according to recent research by the University of British Columbia. So how to tackle it? Dr Monica Seeley, a UK based email consultant, suggests that your inbox should be your work in progress, and contain no more than 50 emails. Her tips include:

- Sort your emails by date, then by subject and person, and delete all those old chains
- Move all emails over a week old in to a separate folder
- Flag any which still need action (or create a task from them) and move them to a separate Pending folder
- Reduce the amount of times you check your inbox a day. Ideally you would check it twice. Once at the start of the day, and once an hour before the end

2. Strip out unnecessary admin – In a recent survey by ServiceNow, 90% of managers said that they spent time on administrative tasks outside their core job function. With the four common processes or services being; setting up a new employee, opening a purchase order, requesting tech support and ordering marketing collateral. The solution to this is automation. 90% of the managers surveyed said that automating these inefficient processes would make them more productive.

3. Use modern solutions for a variety of everyday tasks – Perhaps one of the biggest innovations in streamlining mundane everyday tasks is the rise of cloud accounting. Traditionally, accounting tasks, such as bookkeeping, can suck up far too much of your business' time and effort. This doesn't add value, and takes the fun out of being in business. Cloud accounting can save your company time and money. It will give you a better overview of your finances, and improve collaboration with your team. I'm really excited about the possibilities and I hope you are too. If you want to discuss further how cloud accounting can work for you then please contact us.

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