

We all know our time is very valuable and you cannot get it back. There are a massive number of productivity tips, courses, classes etc. that claim you will be able to do your job in half the time, or only work 4 hours per day and be just as productive as you were working 12 hours previously. Which of these tips and tricks are useful in your work and home life, and which are just too good to be true? Keep your true output high and your focus tight while reducing your stress level with these excellent ideas.

Multitasking Kills Your Focus

Multitasking was the buzzword of the early 2000s, where email was becoming increasingly valuable in the business world and technology was ramping up to become the highly disruptive factor it is in our lives today. It seems like doing two things at once would be a good way to fit more work into the same day, but in fact it could be killing our productivity as the two tasks that you're doing (poorly) at the same time actually take *longer* and are less successful than if you have focused on one task at a time. Your brain also feels more fatigued and stressed as it attempts to work on two projects at once.

Daily Planning Is Not Outdated

Sure, we may not use the same paper planners that we used ten years ago (or maybe we do!), but creating a prioritized list of projects and tasks that you need to accomplish not only gives you a feeling of satisfaction when you check things off the list, but also helps your mind shut down with the constant chatter of things you might be forgetting. Adding them to the list has a therapeutic effect on your mind, keeping you motivated to move in the right direction and stay focused. There are plenty of high-tech versions of to-do lists, but the easiest one is still a standard pen and a big piece of paper where you can do a version of a "brain dump" and write down every single item that you need to do or think about either personally or professionally.

Give It a Rest

Oddly enough, taking breaks from the project that you've been tied to your desk with for the last week may be the best thing you can do to drive additional productivity and focus around the topic. When you take a quick 2-10 minute break from what you're doing, your mind resets and can stop the chatter and refocus efforts on what you're trying to accomplish. Take a quick walk, which will drop your muscle tension, eyestrain and even fatigue down several notches. Grab some coffee and really drive away the fugue state that we can find ourselves in when we're fatigued or just not "there."

Do a "Clean Sweep"

While some individuals can thrive in chaos, the majority of people find it bothersome or even alarming and can feel out of control when their personal space at work or home is in disarray. Take a few moments at the end of each day to clear out the chaff and prepare to be productive the next day.

Know When to Say 'No'

There will always be certain meetings that you will be invited to that you are not sure what type of value you could possibly add to the conversation. In that circumstance, it is not remiss to politely request an agenda from the meeting organizer in order to determine if you're truly needed. If you don't feel you're adding value, you should feel

empowered to politely decline the meeting.

Stop Perfectionism in Its Tracks

Good leaders often feel compelled to make things absolutely perfect before they leave their desk, or before the item is shipped or the website is launched. Unfortunately, this attitude of perfection is actually an act of hubris on the part of the leader. Instead of holding back something that is just about there, but not quite perfect—go ahead and let it out into the world and see what happens. When you find yourself getting into the rut of over-thinking, overanalyzing and generally being a perfectionist, try to consider whether or not your customer or stakeholder will ever truly notice the tweaks that are being made. You will often be able to see that your project is “good enough” for you to release it to the world.

While freeing your mind for productivity is great, having the best tools available can be even better. There are any number of high-quality free or very inexpensive mobile apps available that can help you make the most of the limited time that you have available.