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How to Boost Your Productivity to Uncharted Levels These 10 Ways

What if you could magically have an extra half hour or more to yourself or with family each day?

And what if you could increase your productivity by as much as 50% at the same time?

Does that sound like something you'd like? I know it sounds unrealistic, but it's entirely possible. Let me show you how.

Before we go any further, let me make something very clear. Not one of these 10 tips is a magical productivity bullet. There is no such thing.

Let me also be clear that this list comes from my own personal experience struggling to stay focused and meet deadlines. Each of these works for me, but some of them might not be ideal for you. If you implement a good number of them, though, you really can find yourself spending less time at work and getting more done.

10 ways to boost your productivity...today

1. Realize this first

Before you apply any hacks or new routines, first realize and acknowledge to yourself that you will never, I repeat never, accomplish everything in one day that you need to.

Get comfortable with leaving your desk with work to do. Don't let it stress you. Don't let it lead to procrastination on the important stuff. Just allow it to be.

2. Set a start and stop time for working each day

When you are an employee, your boss often does this for you. But what if you are the business owner?

You may own the business and don't have "work hours." No offense, but yes you do. You simply cannot work 24 hours a day, so you have work hours. Pick a time to start each day.

Pick a time to end each day. Stick to them. You will accomplish much more when you are on deadlines. If you aren't familiar with Parkinson's Law (work expands to the time you allot for it), read this [killer post from Jim Wang](#).

Note to the reader: I suck at this. One of my biggest mistakes is not setting definitive times for work each day. I'm making a commitment to working on this myself.

3. Go toast-free

The little thing that pops up to alert you of new email is called "Toast." It steals your time and focus. Turn it off!

Or better yet, go scorched earth and apply the advice I gave to Brian in this post (mattmcwilliams.com/moredonelesstime). As you will see in the developing theme below, it's best to schedule your email-checking time on your calendar. Do it on your terms, not someone else's.

4. Schedule personal time

Put family time, personal time, and social time on your calendar. Schedule it.

What's more important to you: work or family and friends? If you said work, you are weird. Really, you are statistically in the 0.2% of Americans who say that. That 0.2% is also the same group that ends up with heart problems and no friends. They die a lonely death at an early age (not confirmed, just assumed).

So schedule the time with your friends and family...on your calendar...and stick to it.

5. Schedule personal time (part two)

You also need to schedule time for yourself in your business or career.

I separate it from personal fun/family/social time because it's business-focused. This applies whether you work for someone or own the business.

Spend time thinking big things, reading about business, dreaming, setting goals, and brainstorming. We all have big ideas, inventions, and world-changing products inside of us. The problem is most of us never make the time to think through them. Schedule that time and don't let anyone steal it.

6. Schedule breaks and distractions

You're not a robot. Being more productive isn't about working for 9 consecutive hours, with no bathroom breaks or distractions. It's about managing them well.

I schedule my breaks and distractions. That means I know ahead of time when I am going to check social media or take five minutes to read the news. I can look forward to those things, knowing they'll be waiting for me.

It's amazing how fast you can catch up on the world of Twitter when you only give yourself ten minutes (hint: it takes ten minutes).

This doesn't mean you don't allow for any spontaneity at all. That would be boring. But, if you don't schedule some downtime during the day, distractions will pop up when you don't want them to...and they'll stick around for hours.

7. The old-fashioned to-do list

Yes, you already know about writing or typing out a to-do list. But, are you doing it every day?

Studies have shown that 15 minutes making a to-do list can save up to *two hours* the following day.

Here's the secret I learned the hard way: Don't make this an ongoing, never-ending list though. In fact, only put stuff on there you plan to do *that day*. You can keep another list for long-term projects. That means you write it out new every day.

I suggest having no more than five things on your list for each day. If you get through them all, great. Move on to your long-term list...or take the rest of the day off.

8. Task Snowball Day

Schedule a once a month "Task Snowball Day." What is that exactly?

I developed this idea after hearing Dave Ramsey's "Debt Snowball" many years ago. In his program, you pay off debts smallest to largest and it snowballs. It's all about momentum.

A "Task Snowball Day" should be scheduled once a month on a day when you have no pressing matters, such as meetings or deadlines. Simply take your long-term project list and order it by the time it takes to complete a task, least amount of time to the most. Forget about importance.

Start with the shortest task and move on to the next one. Continue until the day is done.

Usually on a day like this, I will get through 12-25 projects! At any point in time I may have 40-50 long-term projects/ideas on the table. And in ONE DAY I can eliminate 25-50% of them! That is encouraging and takes a load of my shoulders. Now my list is down to one sheet again!

9. Take care of yourself...duh

Get more sleep.

Exercise. Schedule it (are you sensing a theme here?). If all you do is get in five minutes on some days...trust me, it helps! Follow this simple five-minute workout (mattmcwilliams.com/5minuteworkout) and you'll get your blood flowing at least.

Use your breaks to get up and move around. If you are on the phone, make sure you have a headset and walk around. If you are on your cell phone, go for a walk. Do a set of pushups or bodyweight squats or walk up and down the stairs for 2 minutes.

Eat Better. Post-donut sugar crash = unproductive. Stick to real foods. No grease, sugar, starches, or high-fat meats during the day. If you must eat those things (and it's OK to sometimes), eat them when you don't need to focus for a few hours.

10. Clean your desk

One big change I made was removing everything on my desk that is in front of me except for one area next to my keyboard with a notepad and my to-do list. Now there is a vast empty space exists where clutter used to reign king. It's refreshing.

Make it a habit to clean off your desk each night before you leave. At least you'll start each day anew.

A warning

Do not try to do all of these things at once. Pick one or two at a time and then add more every week or two. It's easier to get a new habit to stick if it's the only new habit you are focused on.

Start with whatever is easiest to you. Set a calendar reminder to clean your desk each night, for example. Or start exercising today. Either one of those will give you a boost. Get some wins under your belt developing new habits.

Last tip

Do some research on your own to look for ways to improve your productivity. Read a book or two on the subject. I recommend Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and *Getting Things Done* by David Allen.

Question: What's your favorite tip to help boost productivity? Go share it at mattmcwilliams.com/boostproductivity