

# Effortless Peak Productivity



Gerald Pilcher

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# Introduction

## Why Should I Triple My Productivity?

Whether at home or at work, tripling your productivity offers a host of advantages. Who doesn't want to get more done in less time?

When you're more productive, every area of your life can benefit.

Do you regularly feel stressed out because you're so overwhelmed by everything that needs to be done? Do you often feel as if you don't know where to begin with all the tasks on your plate? Tripling your productivity can eliminate this anxiety and stress. As a result, not only will you achieve more, you'll also enjoy better mental health.

In the workplace, the more you get done, the more successful your work life becomes. If you're running your own business, this equates to higher profits. If you're working for a company, higher productivity gets you noticed for all the right reasons. You'll impress your managers and be first in line for promotion. Even at its most basic level, tripled productivity adds up to three times more harmony in your life.

This applies just as much in the home as it does in the workplace. A lack of productivity at home can lead to stress, arguments and discontent. With better productivity, the whole family can be happier, and relationships will improve. Not only that, you'll have more free time to enjoy yourself. Who doesn't want that?

Are you ready to experience these benefits in your own life? Then read on to discover how our expert tips are about to help you achieve your personal best.

# CHAPTER 1

## CREATING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT FOR PRODUCTIVITY



## Chapter 1 – Creating the Right Environment for Productivity

The »rst step towards becoming more productive is to create the right environment. You can't triple your productivity if you're surrounded by distractions and clutter. Here is some expert advice to help you achieve this goal. Whether you're working from home or in an of»ce, these tips will get you off to the right start.

### Top Tips for Setting up a Highly Productive Of»ce

Creating a workspace that is geared up for productivity is the key to getting more done in less time. Here are some sure-»re ways to give yours an overhaul:

Remove anything which isn't related to a project you're working on right now. Any project more than three months old needs to be removed from your immediate work area. This improves your focus and keeps you productive.

Make a daily “to-do” list to follow. This keeps your day on track. Break up the day into segments and assign tasks to each segment. One trick used by experts is to add a couple of tasks you’ve already done to your to-do list. This gives you a mental boost and pushes you to accomplish more goals.

Try color-coding your materials. Colors help to improve your mood and evoke perceptions. This improves your outlook, helping you to achieve more at work. On a practical level, it also helps you to see at a glance what relates to each project.

As a result, you’ll save time that would otherwise have been spent searching for things.

Use a timer. A timer helps you manage your time more effectively and enables you to track your progress. When you’re at work, it’s all too easy to lose a sense of time. This means you can end up spending too long on certain tasks.

Decide in advance how long you need to dedicate to a particular job. Then use the timer to track that length of time.

This gives you a better sense of how long each task requires to complete.

Keep your phone close at hand. This ensures you don’t need to leave your seat to answer a call, saving you time.

Stand up your file folders. Files take up a large amount of space when lying flat. Use a desktop standing box that has a minimal footprint but helps you stay organized. This will also keep important documents within arm’s reach.

Adjust your computer monitor. Craning your neck to see your monitor impacts on your productivity. Make sure you choose the right viewing angle for you. This reduces fatigue, improves your concentration and, thus, your productivity.

Think vertically. Your desk may be horizontal, but there’s plenty of vertical space below and above it. Utilize it to the max. Store writing utensils under your desk or use monitor risers to use the space under your monitor. Better desk organization means better productivity.

Put up family photos. This helps to create an encouraging and positive environment at work. If you’re feeling stressed, seeing the reasons that you go to work helps to boost your productivity.

Brighten your space. Light has a key role to play in boosting your mental health and helping you to stay positive. This, in turn, makes you more productive. Try to maximize natural light in your workspace.

Follow these top tips and you'll find that your work environment boosts your productivity.

## Working from Home? How to set Your Workspace up for Maximum Productivity

If you work from home, there are multiple distractions that can affect your productivity. Avoid those distractions by setting up the workspace for maximum productivity. Here are some top tips to follow:

Find the right workspace for you. Everybody works differently. You may find that you work better at your kitchen table or in your bedroom. You might prefer to work by a window or by a wall. Finding the best spot for you is key to getting more done. If you're setting up a home office, you can design a room that is a highly productive space.

Set yourself up close to a power outlet. You'll probably be working from your phone and laptop. This means you need constant access to power. Don't waste time by having to charge up your devices in a different room or away from your desk.

Choose a well-lit space. Working in the dark reduces your productivity. Whenever possible, choose a space with plenty of natural light. Make sure you also have a lamp nearby, so you don't strain your eyes.

Add touches to motivate you. When you work at home, you aren't restricted by office rules. That means you can add anything you like to your workspace. Green plants are nice touches in workspaces to improve positivity. Add photos of your loved ones or motivational quotes; anything to make you feel good and keen to get to work.

Remove the TV. If you're working in a public area of your home, make sure the TV isn't on. They reduce your productivity. Even if you can hear the television from your home office you can be distracted.

Make yourself comfortable. Find ways to make your workspace as comfortable as possible to boost your productivity. Choose a chair that supports you and reduces back pain. Make sure your laptop is at the right height for you. Open a window or adjust the air conditioning.



## Avoid Distracting People

There are many benefits to working from home. However, there are some negatives too. One of the biggest is that there are probably going to be other people around. This can be a major distraction. When you work in an office, everyone around you is focusing on the same type of tasks. This minimizes the distractions associated with other people.

At home, however, your children, pets, housemates or partner are all engaged in their own thing. It can be all too easy to get caught up in their activities rather than your own.

It's also very common for those around you to forget that you're supposed to be working. Children often come in asking you to play. Housemates may come and ask you about preparing dinner or household chores. Your partner might pop in to engage you in conversation. None of this is helpful for your productivity.

Even friends can be a problem. When you work from home, many people fail to recognize that you're working. They wouldn't dream of visiting you at work for a coffee and a chat. Yet, they think nothing of coming around during your working day. This isn't just distracting; it stops you getting work done. As a result, you become overwhelmed and non-productive.

Establishing boundaries for your home working life is therefore vital. Set rules for your loved ones. Make sure that they know they're not allowed to disturb you between certain hours. Make sure that you also adhere to those working hours. Don't allow yourself to be distracted.

If someone comes in to talk to you during this period, you must reinforce the rules. Don't give in and be persuaded to play or chat. Gently remind the disturber that you're working, and they need to wait until you're done. It isn't easy to establish these boundaries. However, when the message eventually gets through, you'll find working from home becomes substantially easier.

# CHAPTER 2

## DEVELOPING A PRODUCTIVE MINDSET



## Chapter 2 – Developing a Productive Mindset

Having a productive mindset is key to getting more done. Think smart instead of working harder. While most of us know that we should have the right mindset, we're not sure how to achieve it. What does a productive mindset look like? Here, we take a closer look.

### Think Smart, Work Smart - The Importance of Your Frame of Mind

When you have a productive mindset, you can make the best use of all your resources. You'll maximize your efforts, your energy and your time. It isn't about working harder. It isn't about trying to accomplish everything. It isn't even about trying to get things done as quickly as possible. A productive mindset is about making the most of the things you have. It's also about enjoying the process. With this frame of mind, you'll think smarter and work smarter, getting more done.



What elements does a productive mindset have? Which elements do you need to nurture in yourself to become more productive? Here are some of the best:

**Curiosity** – a willingness to question, explore and seek out new concepts and ideas. It's also the desire to learn and know more things. **Motivation** – without it, you cannot improve or make progress.

**Vision** – if you can visualize the things you want to achieve you can focus on them better. When you have a clear picture in your mind you can strive towards those goals.

**Critical thinking** – you need to assess situations objectively.

Look at all the advantages and disadvantages then make appropriate adjustments.

**Self-confidence** – believe that you're capable of achieving your goals. This allows you to achieve your potential.

**Persistence** – a willingness to overcome adversity and obstacles allows you to achieve your goals. Don't allow others' opinions, setbacks or circumstances to make you feel as if you can't succeed.

**A positive outlook** – your attitude makes or breaks you. With a positive attitude, you can meet any possibility head-on.

**Open-mindedness** – if you have an open mind, you can generate innovative new ideas. You also become more receptive to new experiences.

**Balance** – to function properly, you need to maintain balance in your life. It's important to work towards your goals.

However, it's equally important to recharge your batteries from time to time. Pushing yourself too hard only leads to frustration and burnout.

When you integrate all these elements into your thought processes, you'll develop a productive mindset. As a result, you'll achieve your goals more effectively.

## Plan Your Day

Planning is key to success. Plan every day the evening before. Using to-do lists can help you to stay productive. They improve your focus and organization.

You can make those lists as long or as short as you wish. You may find it most helpful to keep them to just three or four items. That way, you'll be more likely to achieve those goals. This will boost your mental well-being and increase your productivity exponentially. Too many items on a list just cause you to feel overwhelmed and disoriented.

Jot down your to-do list each evening before you go to bed. This gives you a good start to the next day. Instead of having to waste time focusing on which tasks need to be done, you'll be ready to go.

A to-do list allows you to capture every task that comes in.

There'll always be tasks coming at you. A to-do list helps you to prioritize the ones that need to be done first. As a result, you can concentrate on the tasks at hand. You'll avoid unnecessary distractions.

To-do lists also give you more clarity and help you to pace yourself properly. You won't forget anything important. Also, when you check off items on the list, you get a real sense of well-being and achievement. This alone makes it worthwhile drawing one up.

### The "Eat the Frog" Technique

This technique may have a strange name, but it's very useful. It's based on a saying by author Mark Twain. His idea was that if you eat a live frog every morning, nothing worse can happen to you all day. This is a funny idea, but it's true!

Of course, it doesn't mean eating a real frog! The frog here is the most unpleasant task on the to-do list that you've drawn up. It's human nature to try to avoid unpleasant tasks. We're all guilty of putting off something that we must do but don't want to do.

Whether it's a phone call to a difficult client or a long and boring report, eating the frog is essential.

When you avoid an unpleasant task, it's always on your mind. It stops you from getting on with other jobs that need to be done.

It prevents you from focusing. You know all the time that the unpleasant task must be done. Why put it off? Do it first and get it out of the way!

Although it's no fun to "eat the frog", it will make the rest of your day easier. With the hardest task done, you'll have the easier jobs to focus on for the remainder of your workday.

Make eating the frog a lifelong habit. Tackle that major task before you do anything else. It isn't easy to get into this habit, but it'll boost your productivity immensely.

What do you do if you have more than one unpleasant task to tackle? The answer is to eat the ugliest one »rst! Begin with the task that's least appealing. Find the discipline to start straight away and to persevere until you've completed the task. It isn't going to be easy. However, when you've got into this habit, you'll realize how it has improved your work life. Your productivity will increase hugely, and you'll feel as if you're achieving more.

### Ditch the Procrastination

We've already mentioned how, as humans, we're naturally inclined to procrastinate. While it's normal, that doesn't mean that it's desirable. Procrastination can be the death knell to your productivity. Rather than putting off jobs until later, tackle them head-on. This is where the "eat the frog" technique comes into play. However, it doesn't just apply to the least appealing jobs. It applies to absolutely everything in your life. Whether at work or at home, ditching the procrastination can make a huge difference.

You might not think that procrastination is a major issue. If you're putting off reports that need to be done for Friday until Thursday afternoon, is that really a problem? After all, you're getting them done on time. So, how can the delay be impacting your overall productivity? Let's take a closer look.

Imagine it's Monday and you've got a vital report to »nish for Friday morning. You know the report is essential. However, it requires lots of research. You don't enjoy researching and writing the report. You, therefore, decide to put it off. You spend the following three days working on other, less vital tasks. When Thursday comes around, you realize the report still needs to be done. You're trapped.

You've got lots of other work to do. However, you can't work on any of them. You need to get that research done and the report completed. You must work all night to meet your deadline. You submit the report as required on Friday. Everything's »ne.

However, look at how it impacted on your productivity.

You didn't effectively spend the time between Monday and Wednesday. You should have allocated time to each task according to its importance. More important tasks need longer times spent on them. Spending longer on a less important task isn't increasing value.

The work is less important already. You've also given yourself several days of anxiety, whether you realize it or not. That report will have been on your mind the whole time. The longer the task is prolonged, the more anxious you become. You eliminate this worry by tackling the job head-on.

Not only that, although you »nished the report on time, it probably wasn't of the best quality. This means you're not achieving your personal best. You won't impress your managers and you won't put yourself in line for a promotion.

Clearly, procrastination is a problem, so how do you eliminate it?

Identify what you tend to procrastinate on. Is it always the same sort of task?

Ask why you're putting those tasks off. Probe your answers. Is it because of your ability? Your feelings? When you understand the reasons for putting the task off, you'll be better able to overcome them.

Come up with your action plan to resolve the problem. If you're worried that you're incapable of completing the task, take a course or read about the subject. If you're lacking confidence in speaking to a client on the phone, work on your self-esteem.

Take the plunge. Although it's hard to take that »rst step to do the task you're avoiding, it's essential. The more you do it, the easier it becomes. It may take time, but soon you'll overcome the habit of procrastinating.

# CHAPTER 3

## TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES



## Chapter 3 – Time Management Strategies - The Key to a Productive Day

With so much to do, it's easy to become overwhelmed. Whether at home or at work, poor time management causes a lack of productivity. Therefore, finding better ways to handle your tasks and your time is essential.

When you manage each day effectively, you can put each task into an appropriate timeslot. You'll experience less anxiety and stress. You'll also be able to complete each task to the best of your ability. As a result, you'll achieve your personal best.

Here are some of the best time management strategies that will lead to a productive day, every day.

The "2-Minute Rule"

The “2-minute rule” can make an enormous difference in your life. This is especially the case if you tend to procrastinate. The concept is that if you’ve got a task that could be completed in 2 minutes, do it immediately.

This applies to all kinds of chores. Whether you’ve got emails to answer, dishes to wash or the garbage to take out, the 2-minute rule applies. It’s a time management strategy that dramatically improves your productivity. You’ll eliminate procrastination and accomplish more every day.

How does the 2-minute rule work?

Think about the tasks that you’re procrastinating on now. Are they actually hard to do? Do you have the necessary skills to get them done? Are you just avoiding embarking on them for some reason? Are you just too lazy to complete them? The 2-minute rule says if you could do it in under two minutes, do it straight away.

Review your to-do list now. How many of those tasks could be completed in two minutes or less? Cleaning your desk? Making a phone call? Putting the laundry in the machine? Get them done now!

Of course, not every goal can be completed in under two minutes.

Yet all goals can be begun in under two minutes. Let’s look at the science of how this works. According to Isaac Newton objects at rest stay at rest.

Objects in motion stay in motion. That means once you begin a task it’s easier to carry on with it. The hardest part is simply getting started. So, if you need to write a report, write a single sentence. It’ll take two minutes, but it could start you off and you’ll write for an hour.

The key element of the 2-minute rule is that it isn’t necessarily about results. Instead, it’s about the process. It focuses on taking action and allowing the process to continue from there.

Essentially, the 2-minute rule is about taking action consistently rather than about performance. Try it for yourself and see if it revolutionizes the way you get things done.

### Forget Multi-Tasking

We often think that multi-tasking is the way forward. After all, surely doing more should mean that we get more done. However, it doesn’t always work that way.



The brain isn't actually wired for multi-tasking. Research shows that multi-tasking can actually reduce your productivity by up to 40 percent. That's a significant drop. If you must toggle between several tasks, your focus is limited. Your working memory is hampered. You also have more mental fatigue and increased stress. None of this is conducive to higher productivity levels.

You can boost your productivity by instead focusing on a single task at a time. If you have a report to write, get on with it. Don't try to read emails or take calls at the same time. A sole focus allows you to get more done more effectively. As a result, you can achieve your personal best with each task you tackle.

That doesn't mean there isn't a place for multi-tasking. If you have low-level tasks that need to be accomplished, you can do them together. For example, imagine you need to call your mother and iron some shirts. You could put her on speakerphone while you work - simple!

Remember, though, this only works with tasks that require minimal concentration. For any job which needs extra focus to get it right, single tasking is the way forward.

## Take a Break

It seems counterintuitive to take a break when there's work to be done. However, taking regular breaks helps to boost your memory, creativity and concentration.

If you work continuously for extended periods of time, you'll experience more stress. You'll also become more exhausted and won't be able to achieve your personal best. Taking frequent breaks helps to refuel and refresh your mind. This allows you to maximize your efficiency.

Taking a break means that you don't always have to be rushing around and busy. That's not the best way to be productive. You are allowed to say no to certain tasks. If you don't have time to take on another job, say so. You aren't always obliged to take on things that are unimportant or that you don't want to do. It's sometimes hard to say no. But if you always say yes, you can't progress with tasks that are important. Bear this in mind before you take on new jobs.

Sometimes, you also have to give up on a job. Again, this is counterintuitive, especially when you want to achieve your personal best. However, if the task you're undertaking is going nowhere, it's sometimes best to cut it off immediately.

There's little point in completing something just for the sake of it. While you should always persevere with tasks, if you've hit a brick wall, it could be time to give up. If you do have to give up on a job, don't waste time on guilt. Move on to the next task and don't dwell on it.

Also, if you're too physically or mentally tired, it's important to take time out. You can't do your best work if you're exhausted.

There's no point in pushing yourself past the breaking point.

Have a good rest instead. Go to bed early. Have some leisure time. Even take a vacation. This will prevent a productivity slump and will give you more momentum on your return.

### Use the Commute

If you commute to work, that's time you could be spending on other things. Commuting can be a terrible waste of time.

Whether you drive or take the bus or train, there are things you could do at the same time.

The daily commute, all too often, is spent browsing social media or listening to music. If you're serious about boosting your productivity, there are many other tasks you should focus on instead. If you're driving, you could use a hands-free kit to make important phone calls.

Alternatively, you could listen to improving podcasts. If you're taking a bus or train, you could read an educational book or complete paperwork. You could even answer emails or plan the next day's tasks. Don't waste this precious time.

You could even try to reduce your commuting time so you can stay productive at home or at work. Take a shorter route. Take a cab rather than walking. Work from home if possible. Use a carpool instead of taking a long bus ride. The less time you spend on the move, the more time you can spend on important tasks.

Whether those tasks are at home or in the workplace, you can work more effectively with extra time to spare.

**CHAPTER**

**4**

**DECLUTTER  
YOUR LIFE**



## Chapter 4 – Declutter Your Life

We all have a clutter of clutter in our lives. Sometimes, that clutter is physical -»les on the work desk or piles of junk in the home. Other times, it's emotional or mental clutter. Do you always seem to have too much to think about? Are you anxious and stressed about the things you haven't accomplished? Do you struggle to focus on one thing? Clutter is the culprit.

Clutter, whether mental or physical, can seriously damage your productivity. When you're surrounded by clutter, you can't dedicate yourself to the task at hand. Files all over your desk make it difficult to work on the one you need to focus on. Junk all over your home makes it hard to keep on top of your household chores. Decluttering your life is, therefore, key to staying productive and achieving your personal best.

Clutter - The Enemy of Productivity

A cluttered environment is a chaotic environment. Chaos impacts negatively on your focus. It also stops your brain from properly processing information. Clutter distracts you and stops you from completing tasks efficiently and effectively. Conversely, a serene, organized and uncluttered environment is conducive to helping you focus.

Why is clutter so detrimental to your ability to focus?

When you overload the brain, it has to divide its power. This makes it harder to process information and switch between tasks. It also impacts on your working memory.

When you're in the workplace, clutter can be extremely detrimental. It can literally prevent you from carrying out your job. Studies have shown that the average worker spends around 4.3 hours each week just looking for paperwork. Not only does this add frustration and stress to the work environment, but it also reduces creative thinking and concentration.

When your workspace is decluttered, you can be more organized.

You can, therefore, sustain higher productivity, remaining fully focused on your priorities. How can you declutter at work? Follow these top tips:

Adopt an effective filing system. If you allow paperwork to pile up, you'll just waste time searching for papers. A systematic system of filing means you'll know where everything is when you need it. It will also keep items off your desk and in a designated location.

Keep your work surfaces as clear as possible. Keep essentials like pens or notebooks within arm's length. Keep everything else in drawers or cabinets out of sight.

A study has shown that Americans waste up to one week each year searching for missing items. Don't become a statistic!

Have a place for everything and keep everything in its place.

That way, you'll never be wondering where items are.

At the end of each workday, give your desk an overhaul. Check to see if any items can be thrown away or put away. This will help you to stay on top of the clutter that piles up over time.

What about in the home? Clutter in your house leads to clutter in your mind. It's therefore important to keep mess to a minimum in your living space too.

How can you reduce the clutter at home? Here are some top tips:

Be ruthless. Don't keep items because you're sentimental about them. If there's something that has sentimental value but isn't useful, take a photo of it. You can then get rid of the item itself and just display the photo.

Set yourself regular times throughout the year to donate items to charity. Once a month is a good target. Keep a box for this purpose and put items in it throughout the month. Then, on your chosen date, take it to a local donation center.

Consider selling any items you no longer use or need. Not only will this declutter your home, but it'll also make some useful extra cash.

Don't shop for fun. If you genuinely need something, you should only take enough money to pay for that item. Don't shop because you feel depressed or for a way to pass the time.

Remove shopping apps from your smartphone. This will help you to save money and will stop clutter from building up.

Check what you've got and use it. Instead of buying new furniture, give old pieces a makeover with a coat of paint.

Rather than buying a new out» t, consider how you can repurpose existing clothing. Turn worn-out jeans into shorts or cut the sleeves off an old jacket to make a gilet.

Consider adopting the trial period mentality. If you're hesitant to get rid of a certain item, store it away for a set period. You'll probably » nd that you can easily manage without it. Then you can get rid of it.

Adopt the one thing in, one thing out mentality. If you buy one new thing, get rid of an old thing. This stops clutter from building up. Instead of a closet full of shoes, you'll only have the ones you need and wear, for example.

It's never easy to declutter your life. We all tend to hoard items.

However, we rarely need the things that mount up in our homes and workspaces. By being ruthless, we can minimize the physical clutter. This, in turn, helps us to get more done and feel better mentally too.

Eliminate Digital Distractions

Distractions aren't all physical. These days, there are plenty of digital distractions too. These can be even more detrimental to productivity than physical ones. Have you ever found yourself scrolling through Facebook instead of working on that important report? It's an all-too-common problem.

It seems that distractions are everywhere. From TV to social media, it's important to remove them when you have other things to focus on. Whether you're working on a task at home or in the office, digital clutter halts your productivity.

How can you get rid of your digital clutter? Here are some top tips:

**Deal with your old emails.** First, go through your old messages. Delete any which are no longer needed. For the rest, create folders in your inbox where you can store them away.

**Create one folder specifically for items that you need to deal with.** This will keep them in one convenient location until you've dealt with them.

**Handle your inbox.** Put some rules in place for incoming mail.

**Whenever you receive spam, unsubscribe then delete.** This will stop further spam from building up. If an email arrives demanding a response, tackle it immediately if you can answer it in less than two minutes. Remember that 2-minute rule? If it'll take longer, put it into your folder and tackle it when you can.

**Tackle your downloads.** Set a time once each month or each week to go through your downloads folder. You'll usually find you can delete most of your downloads. The rest should be moved into an appropriate folder.

**Organize your folders.** Having folders that are easy to use and access is key to productivity. Organize by priority, category or date as you see fit. Sort your folders on your phone too. Group your apps into specific subfolders so they're easy to find.

**Back up your important documents and information.** Whether you use cloud storage or a physical hard drive, keeping those items in a safe location is paramount.

**Manage your social media.** Periodically, you should go through your social media networks and remove anything unnecessary or pointless. Unfriend, unfollow and create space for more important influences.



Delete your bookmarks. Bookmarks are useful when you're dealing with webpages. However, make sure you set a time to check the list regularly. This allows you to delete any bookmarks that aren't relevant anymore.

Delete your browsing history and cookies regularly. This will speed up your computer's start-up time and help prevent crashes. This saves you time and helps you stay productive.

Use a master password app or program. This helps to save you the stressful task of remembering all your logins and passwords. It'll also ensure they stay safe from hackers and cybercriminals.

Cull old programs and apps. Set a regular time each month to go through your computer and phone. Delete any programs or apps you don't use or need. This frees space and speeds things up.

Deal with your photos. We all take countless photos on our phones these days. However, many are useless. You probably have six copies of the same selfie as you tried to get the ideal angle! Delete the ones you don't like. Delete any images you'll never look at again. Most of us have taken a photo in a store to send a friend to ask their opinion. You don't need those shots anymore, so get rid!

When you get rid of digital clutter as well as physical clutter, you'll be more productive.

## Clear Your Mind

Not only do you need to deal with physical and digital clutter, but you should also remove mental clutter. These days, we're always rushing about. This means your mind can become cluttered. In turn, this reduces your productivity since you can't focus.

Meditation is a useful tool to eradicate this mental clutter. It also helps you to achieve greater clarity. You can take a mental break from the stresses of everyday life. You'll also be better able to tune into yourself.

If you haven't meditated before, you may need to practice for a while before you get the idea. Begin slowly to ease yourself into the practice gently. Find a comfortable, quiet place where you're able to relax. Start with only a short, 10-minute session.

Meditation is a tool you use to become more mindful. You focus on both your body and your breath. If you find your mind wandering, simply acknowledge it and bring it back to your breathing.

Meditation doesn't just help clear your mind; it also reduces your stress level. This helps to boost your focus. As a result, you can become more productive and achieve your personal best.

Are you ready to begin meditating?

Find a comfortable place which is calm and quiet.

Set a limit on your meditation time - around 10 minutes is a good place to start.

Put your focus onto your body. You can kneel, sit on a chair or on the floor. Make sure you're comfortable and stable.

Focus on your breathing. Feel yourself breathe in and out.

Don't judge yourself harshly if your mind wanders. Just return it to your breathing. It's normal for your mind to wander at first.

Once the designated time is finished, slowly open your eyes.

Spend a few moments becoming more aware of where you are and how you feel. Notice your feelings and emotions.

Practice daily, slowly increasing the length of time you spend meditating. Soon, you'll find it easier to declutter your mind of intrusive thoughts that prevent you from being productive.

# CHAPTER 5

## HEALTHY ROUTINES FOR GREATER PRODUCTIVITY



## Chapter 5 – Healthy Routines for Greater Productivity

Being more productive starts with establishing routines in your life. While some of those routines are centered around things like being organized at work, others are more personal.

Implementing healthy routines in your life are key to success and achieving your personal best.

### Sleeping and Eating - Helping You to Stay Productive

Getting at least seven hours of sleep every night is essential for both your mental and physical health. Unfortunately, more than 30 percent of people are failing to achieve this goal. Yet, sleep deprivation will reduce your efficiency and productivity. You'll make more mistakes and won't achieve your best.

Getting enough sleep, on the other hand, improves your mood.

It also reduces stress, improves memory, boosts creativity, and sharpens focus. You'll be better able to make good decisions and you'll get more done.

The quality of your sleep is also important. If you're getting nine hours of poor-quality sleep, that won't be as beneficial as six hours of excellent sleep. To improve your sleep quality, you should try to clear your mind and prepare yourself for rest. Avoid using any device with a screen in the two hours before bed.

Banish television and phones from the bedroom. Avoid drinking alcohol or eating a heavy meal before bed. Meditating could be a useful tool before bed to clear your mind and help you to sleep better.

However, getting more sleep isn't the only thing you can do to establish a healthy routine. Eating well is also important for productivity.

Most people think the only benefit of healthy eating is to avoid disease and to maintain a healthy bodyweight. Yet, eating well also has a major positive impact on productivity. Why is this the case?

Eating well will increase your alertness and energy levels.

It improves your immune system, so you'll take less time off sick.

You'll sleep better so you'll have better concentration.

You'll enjoy better mental health and a more positive attitude.

How can you eat more healthily to boost your productivity?

Base each meal on starchy foods.

Make sure you eat your 5-a-day.

Consume more »sh, especially oily »sh.

Eat less sugar and saturated fat.

Consume less salt.

Drink at least 2 liters of water each day.

Eat regularly and don't miss out on breakfast.

As well as the above tips, there are some golden rules that you should follow.

Avoid eating junk food. This will reduce your alertness. Foods high in saturated and trans fats make you sluggish. Meanwhile, foods with a high sugar content may give you a rapid energy boost, but you'll experience a crash afterwards. Sugary, fatty snacks may be convenient, but they could seriously damage your productivity.

Take care of how much caffeine you consume. We're often tempted to drink a cup of coffee if we're feeling under-productive. However, excessive amounts of caffeine reduce your productivity. Like sugary snacks, excess caffeine gives you an energy spike before a productivity-limiting crash. The best way to remain productive throughout the day is to consume caffeine in moderation. Green tea is a better choice than coffee and will offer you additional health benefits.

Never miss out on breakfast. Even if you don't feel hungry when you get out of bed, having breakfast helps you to wake up. A protein shake, cup of juice or piece of fruit »rst thing boosts your productivity. You should choose low GI foods for breakfast whenever possible. Avoid the sugary breakfast cereal or pastries and choose complex carbohydrates like wholegrains. This will ensure you have a steady energy source that will help you stay productive until lunchtime.

Eat small meals frequently throughout the day. This keeps your blood glucose level constant. As a result, you'll have more energy.

If you don't eat frequently, your blood sugar level will dip too low between meals. It will also cause you to overeat at mealtimes, causing a blood sugar level spike.

This makes your energy level unpredictable and will harm your productivity. Frequent, small meals space out the fuel supply for your body more evenly. You'll feel more energized, get more done and achieve your personal best in everything you do.

Eat smaller portions at mealtimes, especially at lunch. A huge meal will make you feel sleepy and will reduce your productivity.

On the same note, avoid eating any food containing tryptophan on an empty stomach. Foods like poultry, cheese, milk, and certain »sh have high tryptophan levels. These make you feel sleepy if you ingest them on an empty stomach.

The best thing to eat on an empty stomach is fruit. Packed with complex sugars and fiber, they break down more slowly in the body. Fruit can also be digested easily. This means you won't feel the fatigue that occurs with large portions and difficult to digest snacks.

Although some people worry about eating carbohydrates, they aren't necessarily the enemy. Yes, avoiding simple carbs like cakes or white pasta is advisable. However, wholegrain complex carbs take longer to be digested. This means the energy gained from them gets spread out. This keeps you productive in the long-term.

While you're thinking about what you should eat, avoid eating meat at lunch and breakfast. Generally, meat is high in fat and it's high in protein. This makes it harder to digest and will make you feel more tired, impacting on your productivity.

Try to include foods like oily fish and nuts in your diet. These are rich in omega-3 fatty acids which help the brain cells healthy.

They also help the body to store carbs as energy, not fat. As a result, you'll be more alert during the day. Eating more fiber is also a good idea since it helps the body to digest food steadily and slowly. This keeps energy levels on an even keel for better alertness and productivity.

Don't forget to think about what you drink too. Make sure you drink plenty of water, not just for good health but for better alertness. Staying well-hydrated helps nutrients that provide energy move through the body. It also helps to keep your blood flowing smoothly so your heart pumps more easily.

If you're tempted to drink alcohol before bed to get a better night's sleep, note that it's a bad idea. Alcohol may help you to fall asleep more quickly. However, it makes sleep much less restful. This is because alcohol impacts on how you metabolize food. It also depresses energy levels. Once the alcohol has worn off during the night, you'll be more likely to wake up. Since staying productive is linked to getting quality sleep, it's clear that avoiding alcohol before bed is a good idea.

### Establishing Routines to Keep Your Day on Track

Establishing healthy routines keep your day on track and help you to stay productive. Creating a morning routine to wake you up and an evening routine that helps you to unwind is important.

With a clear pattern to the day, you'll know what's coming next.



This saves you the time involved in thinking about what to do. It also helps you to feel that you're accomplishing more in your available time.

Productive people are aware of what they must do before the time comes to do it. Remember that failure to plan is planning to fail. Make planning for the day ahead part of your evening routine. This will ensure you have a clear purpose and mission when you get up in the morning.

Set your alarm early. Most people perform at their best in the first couple of hours after getting up (assuming they've had good-quality sleep). If you usually crawl out of bed half an hour before work begins, change this habit. Get up at least two hours before you go to work. You can use this super-productive time to get more done.

Develop a clear evening routine too that promotes restful sleep.

Switch off the laptop and phone a couple of hours before bed.

Take a warm bath and drink a soothing milky drink. Try reading a book to relax you before you usually drift off. As we've already pointed out, getting sufficient good-quality sleep is imperative for productivity.

Plan at least ten minutes in your day when you do absolutely nothing. Whether you choose to meditate as we mentioned earlier or simply relax, it'll help clear your mind. With just a short space of time in which to wind down and do nothing, you'll improve your overall focus.

Add working out into your daily routine. When your body is healthy, your mind is healthy. Do you think you lack sufficient time in your day to exercise? Then remember you'll perform ten times better when your body and mind benefit from the boost in its energy levels.

Planning a nap into your day can also work wonders. Napping for between 20 and 60 minutes daily allows your body and brain to rest. During this time, you'll be able to organize information in your brain. You'll also feel energized and ready to work harder when you wake up.

Each day, plan time in your evening schedule to reflect on your day. Rewind the happenings in your mind and think about everything that went well as well as everything that went wrong.

You'll gain helpful insights and you'll be better able to devise plans for a better tomorrow.

Add all these elements into your daily plan and you'll be much more productive.

## Identify Your Productive Times

Everyone has specific times of the day when they're most productive. Perhaps for you, it'll be early in the morning, or late in the evening. The key is to identify those times. When you've done so, you can schedule your toughest tasks for those hours.

There are, naturally, moments in every day when you're more focused, energetic and productive. When you need to focus on a specific task, it makes sense to schedule it for one of those moments. This will ensure you apply your best efforts to the task at hand.

Most people have their productive times in the morning. The first two hours after waking are often the best. However, this isn't true for everyone. You need to be in tune with your body rhythms to identify your peak hours.

To do this, you need to pay attention not to the clock but to your own body. If you force yourself to do your hardest work when you lack energy and focus, you'll just burn out. Therefore, you need to focus on the way you feel. Be aware of when your energy level is dipping. Evidence shows that the human mind craves a break after 90 minutes of working intensely. Be aware of the signals that your body is sending you. Do you feel sleepy, irritable?

Hungry? Those could be signs you need a short break.

When you're in tune with your productivity curve, you can plan your hardest tasks into your most productive window. Then, what do you do with the remainder of your day?

Getting the toughest task done every day makes you feel accomplished. However, during the remainder of your time, you should be working on progressing urgent tasks. You can also catch up on updates, meetings and communications. Just because you aren't at your most productive doesn't mean you should get nothing done.

Plan tasks to suit your energy levels at each stage of the day.

At times of low energy levels, plan phone calls, emails and meetings.

At times of higher energy, plan urgent work and daily tasks.

At your peak productivity hours, plan to do the most challenging jobs.

At your lowest energy level, take a break.

Remember that spending more time working doesn't mean you'll necessarily get more work done. Quality time is more important than the length of time. So, plan your focus to suit your energy levels and you'll be more productive overall.



## Chapter 6 – Recognize What's Important

Around 40 percent of people in the USA feel burned out and overworked. However, many of us are »lling our days with tasks that aren't essential. "Busywork" is an all too common problem.

If you »nd you are avoiding deadlines by completing unnecessary jobs, you need to give your work approach an overhaul.

## Identify the Tasks You Can Ditch

The »rst step to overhauling your work approach is to identify the tasks you can ditch. Remember, eliminating isn't about being lazy. It's about staying ef»cient. It's about completing tasks that are essential rather than doing work purely for the sake of it.

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking you're being productive if you're incredibly busy. Yet, this isn't necessarily true. You're only being productive if you're effective and ef»cient. It's possible to achieve a lot more by doing a lot less.

What kind of tasks can you ditch, then?

Answering every phone call. If you're in the middle of an important task you don't need to answer the phone. Let your voicemail pick up instead. If it's important, they'll leave a message then you can call back later in your less productive hours.

Get rid of junk mail. Eliminate any subscriptions that you don't read and block spam. This means you won't need to read as many emails.

Eliminate as many repetitive tasks as possible by »nding better solutions.

How do you go about identifying which tasks you can ditch? Here are a few questions to ask yourself each time.

Is this an important task for my responsibilities or my customers/clients?

Any task which is key to customers or clients or your role needs to remain in your schedule. It may not be exciting or fun.

However, the deadline needs to be met.

Is this task worth the time I spend on it?

Are you expending too much time and energy on jobs that simply aren't worth it? For example, do you spend hours formatting documents to make them look more attractive when a simpler layout would suf»ce? Laboring over unnecessary tasks is a waste of time and reduces your overall productivity.

Will anybody notice if I don't do this task?

Are you completing this task simply because it feels important?

There are some tasks which wouldn't be missed if you ditched them. For example, if you draw up a detailed report after every meeting that nobody reads, should you bother doing it?

Is it a maintenance task or is it strategically important?

Spending excessive amounts of time on repetitive maintenance tasks prevents you from working on strategically important tasks. If you're in a rut, you'll end up staying in it unless you take action. Find other solutions for those maintenance tasks and free yourself up for the important ones.

Is this a distraction task?

We already discussed procrastination. It's important to think about whether each task you do is simply a distraction or whether it's vital. If you're avoiding essential jobs that you don't want to do by doing "busywork", it's time to ditch that busywork.

Use A "Do Later" List

We already talked about the importance of planning your day and writing to-do lists. However, there's another type of list that can be beneficial: the "Do Later" list.

The "Do Later" list helps to keep your mind clear. You have a to-do list with all the immediate tasks you need to do. But, what do you do with the non-urgent tasks? Rather than keeping them in your head, note them down. This allows you to remain fully focused on the key tasks at hand. Yet, you won't forget about all those non-essential jobs that can be delayed until later.

While this type of list is a useful solution, it isn't foolproof.

There's a danger that if a task ends up on the "Do Later" list, it just won't get done. Therefore, you should add a review date to each item. Note that review date in your diary.

That way, nothing will get overlooked. You should also keep your list in a visible location. This means you won't forget all about it.

In your less productive times of the day, you should aim to tackle some of the items on this list. That way, the task gets done without impacting your productivity levels.

The 80/20 Rule

When it comes to time management, the 80/20 rule can be revolutionary. Sometimes known as the Pareto Principle, this rule helps to boost your productivity. Applying this rule allows you to prioritize your time and your tasks. It's vital at work and key to success at home too. So, how does the principle work?

Out of any ten items, two are more valuable than the others put together. However, those two items are most likely to be the ones we delay and procrastinate on. The 80/20 rule ensures this doesn't happen.

How can you apply the rule in your own life? Write down 10 goals that you need to accomplish. Next, ask which of those goals is most important. Which one has the most positive impact? Which one is most essential? Which one is most time-pressured? Next, choose the next most vital goal. This identifies the "20" element of the equation. You now know which goals you need to work on first.

The 80/20 rule ties into the "Eat the Frog" technique mentioned earlier. All too often, the "20" element of the equation is the frog.

Often, the day's most valuable tasks are the most complex and difficult. Yet, the rewards and payoff when you complete them are also exponentially bigger.

Before you begin any task, you should therefore always ask whether it's a "20" task. Resisting the temptation to get small jobs done first is a hard habit to break. Yet, when you do break it, you'll boost your productivity and become more successful.

# CHAPTER 7

## DELEGATE, OUTSOURCE AND UTILIZE TOOLS



## Chapter 7 – Delegate, Outsource and Utilize Tools

If you look at all your tasks, there are probably many that you could delegate or outsource. Just because you can do everything yourself doesn't mean you should. Delegating and outsourcing can make you considerably more productive.

While it sounds obvious that we should all be delegating and outsourcing more, few of us do it. Why?

We tend to think that delegating is trying to escape and pass off work to other people. Some people, especially at work, think that delegating is a sign of weakness. You may even think you're the only one that can do the job properly.

Letting go is difficult. However, to be productive you must accept you can't accomplish everything on your own. The key is to know which tasks can be delegated. After all, if you delegate the wrong tasks, you could be giving yourself more work, not less.

How do you know which tasks are suitable for delegation? Here is a quick guide:

**Tiny tasks.** These are jobs which are quick to do individually but which mount up over time. Tasks like scheduling meetings, deleting spam or booking flights can all be delegated.

**Tedious tasks.** Mindless jobs which require minimal skill such as filing or photocopying can be delegated.

**Time-consuming tasks.** Break these long jobs into chunks then delegate each section to other people.

**Teachable tasks.** If you could show someone else how to do the job just as well as you, do it! It'll take time in the short-term but save you hours in the long run.

**Tasks you can't do.** Nobody is an expert at everything. If you're poor at report-writing, design or have no IT skills, delegate those tasks. It makes sense to give the job to somebody with the necessary skills.

**Time-sensitive tasks.** If you simply lack sufficient time to complete a time-sensitive job, delegate elements of it to others.

Now you know which tasks you can delegate. How do you go about doing it?

First, you need to select the best person for each task. You need to choose someone with the necessary skills to complete the job well. You also need to explain the reasons for delegating the task.

The person you've chosen needs to know why they've been selected.

It goes without saying that when you delegate tasks, you need to supply the right instructions to go with them. Nobody can effectively complete a task without knowing how to do it or what's expected of them.

Make it clear precisely what you need, or you'll end up wasting time redoing the task in hand. You may also need to provide training and resources to those you've delegated the job to. This ensures the task is completed to the same standards as when you were doing it yourself.

On the same note, outsourcing can also be highly beneficial for productivity. It helps you to save time and to be more focused on essential tasks. This applies both in the home and at work.

What kind of tasks can you outsource?



Why not consider hiring a VA (or virtual assistant). If you're running a business, a low-cost VA can help with repetitive and low-skilled tasks. Jobs like booking travel, scheduling meetings and replying to emails can all be outsourced to a VA. When you eliminate these tasks from your life, you'll get more essential work done.

Hire some help at home. Staying productive at home is easier if you outsource the most menial, boring and repetitive tasks to others. Hire a cleaner to save you time.

Pay somebody to install your dishwasher rather than struggling to do the job yourself. Get a gardener to keep your lawn looking its best rather than spending an hour mowing each weekend.

Freeing up this extra time allows you to focus on more important home-related tasks.

You should also be utilizing productivity tools to their best advantage. Hardware and software exist to boost your productivity, so leverage them. Invest in a tablet that allows you to work on your commute.

Use an online calendar that gives you automated reminders about your to-do list. Harness the potential of the latest apps to make managing all elements of your life smoother and easier.

By making these simple changes, you'll be much more productive daily.

**CHAPTER**

**8**

**INCREASING  
PRODUCTIVITY  
AT HOME**



## Chapter 8 – Increasing Productivity at Home

Many people tend to associate productivity with the workplace.

It's fair to say that staying productive at work is often a top priority. Yet, being productive at home is also important for your family life and your mental well-being. An unproductive home life leads to extra stress, dissatisfaction and stagnation.

Everyone has a host of tasks and responsibilities that need to be tackled in the home. It can seem virtually impossible to juggle them while still having enough quality time for yourself and your family. Yet, by simply utilizing a few productivity techniques, you'll revolutionize your home life.

Many of the ideas that we've already covered in this book can be applied at home as well as work. Delegation isn't something reserved only for colleagues. You can delegate tasks to family members too. Anyone can put laundry in the washing machine.

Anyone can clear the table after a meal or take out the garbage.

Planning your day is just as valid when you're at home. You can even apply the "Eat the Frog" and "80/20" rules in the home environment. However, there are a couple of additional productivity techniques you can add at home to make yourself more productive.

### Create an Enjoyable Environment

When you're at home, you're in your own space. That means you have the freedom to create an environment conducive to productivity. At work, you probably have limited control over your surroundings. There are rules and regulations that must be followed. At home, those rules are your own. That means you can think about how you can create the best space for you to stay productive.

One way to make a productive environment at home is listening to the right kind of music while you work. We've already said that distractions ought to be avoided. However, at home, background music can often improve focus. The key is to choose the optimal music for you.

It's always wise to avoid any music with vocals. Even if you don't mean to, you usually end up listening to the words. This is distracting and draws focus away from the task you're on. Instead, choose instrumental tracks that are upbeat.

Remember though, listen but don't participate. If you're drumming, dancing or tapping your feet while you listen, it's the wrong music for you. The goal is to listen to something soothing, not stimulating.

### Celebrate and Reward Your Achievements

In the workplace, it's becoming more common to celebrate and reward achievements. Unfortunately, we usually fail to do the same at home. It's vital to take the time to congratulate yourself whenever you have a productive day. When you accomplish a task, you need to acknowledge your success. Only through celebration and reward will you retain motivation to carry on trying and striving towards your goals.

Reflect on every day to determine what worked for you and what failed. Don't feel bad about the things that didn't work out.

Instead, identify why they went wrong. How could you change things next time? Reflection will boost your future productivity in the long run.

If you dwell for too long on the things that failed, you end up overlooking what went well. Make sure you give yourself full credit for those successes. Humans naturally seek out rewards.

Each time you celebrate a success, you're rewarding yourself.

This gives you increased motivation in the future.

You'll also begin to develop habits and rituals that will make you more productive in the future. You'll be programming your mind to become more successful. You'll also forge a more positive relationship with yourself. This gives you greater confidence which, in turn, makes you more likely to be more productive.

How can you celebrate your achievements?

Keep your own victory log that you can look back over.

Do something that you love but hardly ever have time to do.

Buy a treat for yourself.

Take some me-time.

When you reward your own achievements, even at home, you'll increase your productivity in the future. You'll also be more motivated to achieve your personal best.

## Conclusion

These chapters should have given you all the information you need to triple your productivity. Whether in the home or in the workplace, these simple measures will help you get more done in less time.

Thinking smarter means working smarter. Working smarter means being more effective. Being more effective means you'll have more leisure time. More leisure time means less stress and greater positivity in your life. Therefore, tripling your productivity won't just make you more successful, it'll make you happier too.

Follow the advice in this book, and you'll find it easier than you imagined to achieve your personal best.

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