



Productivity & Time Management

“TIME = LIFE, THEREFORE, WASTE YOUR TIME AND
WASTE OF YOUR LIFE, OR MASTER YOUR TIME
AND MASTER YOUR LIFE”

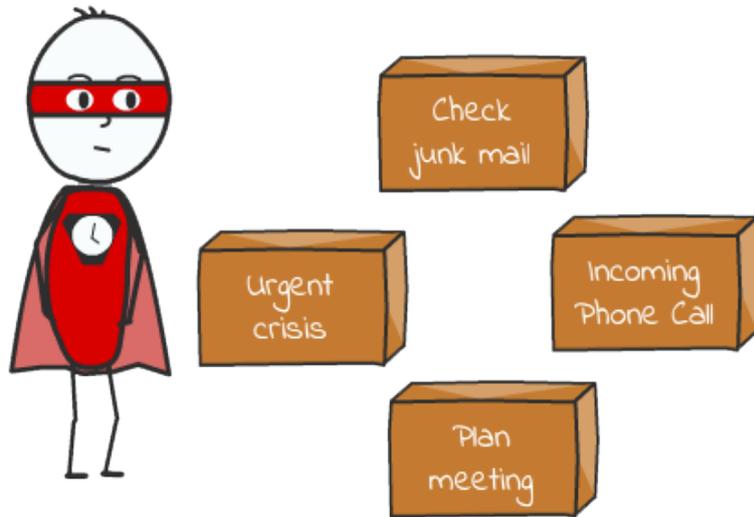
It seems that there is never enough time in the day. But, since we all get the same 24 hours, why is it that some people achieve so much more with their time than others? The answer lies in good time management. It's the ability to organise, plan and prioritise tasks to make the most of the limited time we have.

NAME



TIME MANAGEMENT

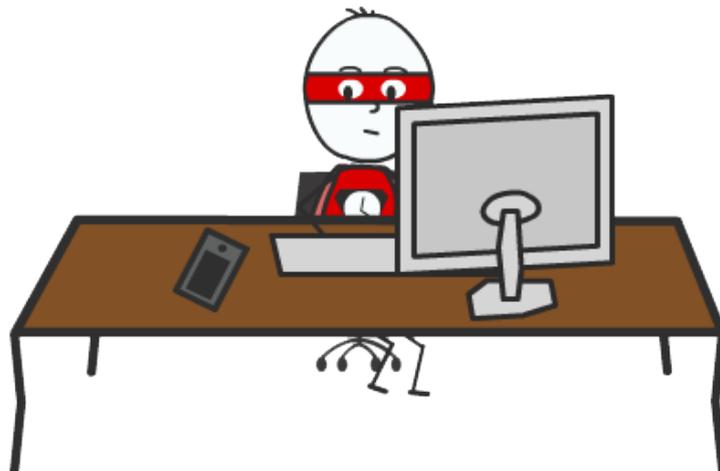
A Simple Skill To Prioritise Your Time



THE THEORY

One simple way of deciding how to prioritise your tasks is to write them down and draw three columns next to them.

Above the first column write urgent, above the second write score.



THE CHALLENGE

You are now going to think of four tasks you have to complete and characterise them in terms of importance and urgency:

Task	Urgent	Important	Score
(Write down your tasks in this column)	(An urgent task is one which requires your immediate attention)	(An important task simply means one which completion would contribute to key aims)	(Multiply the urgent figure with the importance figure)

Next to each task give a score on a scale of 1 to 3. With 3 being very urgent or important and 1 being the not very urgent or important. Now, multiply the urgent figure with the importance figure to give each task a score. Now place each task in order of their score from highest to lowest and some time management advisors would argue that you now have your priority list.

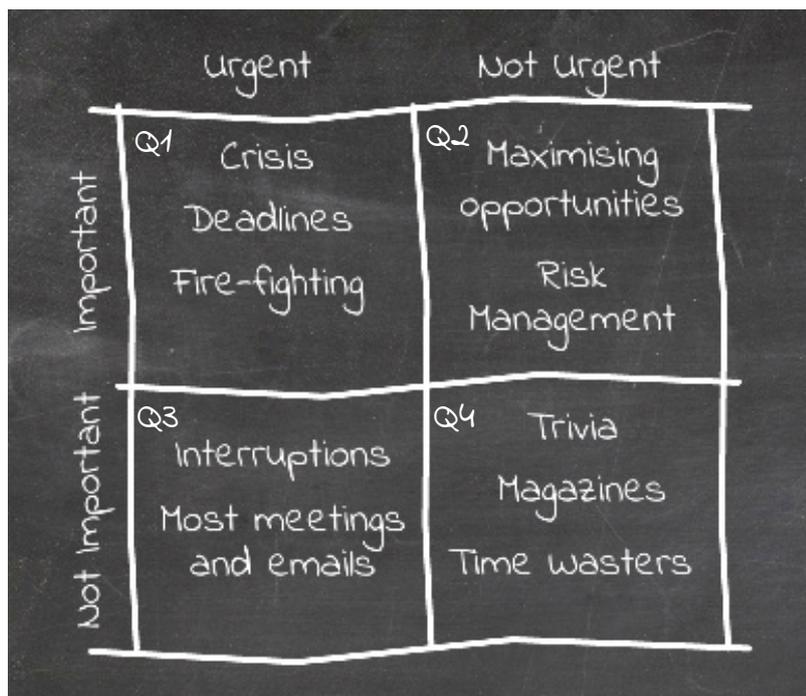
BEING EFFICIENT VS BEING EFFECTIVE

In his book, 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People', Bestselling author Stephen Covey asks us to look at time management in a different way to conventional time management guides.

Instead of focusing on being efficient, he suggests we should focus on being effective.

Covey thinks that we often give too much attention to things which appear to be urgent. For example, when somebody interrupts you at your desk with a question, the phone rings or a little window pops up on your computer announcing the arrival of yet another email. All of these place an immediate demand on your time, but they may not actually require your attention straight away. They are urgent... but are they important?

Instead of a simple scoring method, Covey presents us with a two-by-two matrix showing all the combinations of urgent and important:



The key to personal effectiveness is cutting back on the time we devote to tasks in Quadrant 3 and spending that time on Quadrant 2 activities. So, rather than saying 'yes' to everything that comes along, challenge yourself to focus on the importance of what's being asked.

TAKEAWAYS

THE KEY TO PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS IS CUTTING BACK ON THE TIME WE DEVOTE TO TASKS IN QUADRANT 3 AND SPENDING THAT TIME ON QUADRANT 2 ACTIVITIES

AVOID SAYING 'YES' TO EVERYTHING THAT COMES ALONG AND CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO FOCUS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT IS BEING ASKED

ASK YOURSELF "IS THIS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I CAN BE DOING RIGHT NOW? OR IS IT JUST THE NEXT THING?"

NOTES

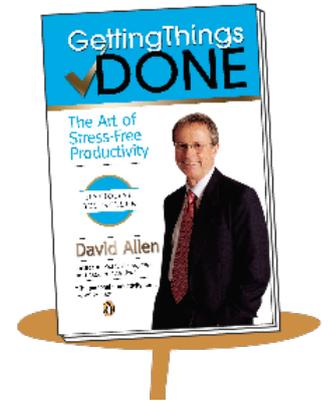
GETTING THINGS DONE

How To Actually Get Things Done

THE THEORY

Widely considered as the best advice out there on the subject of “Getting Things Done”, is the book by David Allen, appropriately called, “Getting Things Done!”

The main premise of the book is that your brain has not evolved to be the modern day task management tool that we expect it to be. Although many of the ideas in the book are common sense, the way the author has presented them makes us look at them in a new way.



Basically the book is all about getting the things we have to do out of heads and in to a system so that we can accomplish more.

The brain is quite bad at remembering all tasks and ideas as they come to you. It's also quite bad at recalling things at the right time and in the right place. How many times have you woken up in the middle of the night and you've remembered to buy a new light bulb, or put the bins out! Or you're driving along and remember to cancel an appointment. Thinking about things when you are not in a position to do anything about them is just a waste of time and akin to worrying.

In his book, David describes a system to compensate for our brains weaknesses. He claims that your brain works best when it isn't cluttered up with ideas and tasks. The act of de-cluttering your thinking allows you to be more creative and concentrate on what the brain does best.

Which is problem solving and concentrating on the present moment. The book gives a lot of attention to this idea which is why it is often described as being very “zen-like”.

The book describes a system which allows you to get your tasks out of your head, and present you with the right things to do at the right time and in the right context.

GTD SYSTEM

Having a GTD system gives you control over your tasks, frees you from stress and helps you to be more productive. The key to making it work however is having trust in the system. If you do not truly trust your system then you won't really let go of the tasks and you will continue to store tasks in your head. So, let's look at how to implement and use a productivity system according to David Allen's book.

GETTING THINGS DONE SYSTEM

To start this exercise write down a project or situation that is mostly on your mind at the moment. What bugs you, distracts you, or interests you or in some other way consumes a large part of your conscious attention?

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Got it? Good.

Now describe in a single written sentence, your intended successful outcome for this problem or situation. In other words, what would need to happen for you to mark this topic as complete?

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Now write down the very next physical action required to move the situation forward. If you had nothing else to do in your life but get closure on this, where would you go right now?

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Got the answer? Good.

REFLECTIVE THOUGHT

Did you get any value out of the past two minutes of thinking? The majority of people who perform this exercise experience a sense of control (however tiny), relaxation and focus. You'll likely be feeling more motivated to actually do something.

If you did feel anything positive during this exercise, think about this:

What changed? What happened to create that improved condition within your own experience?

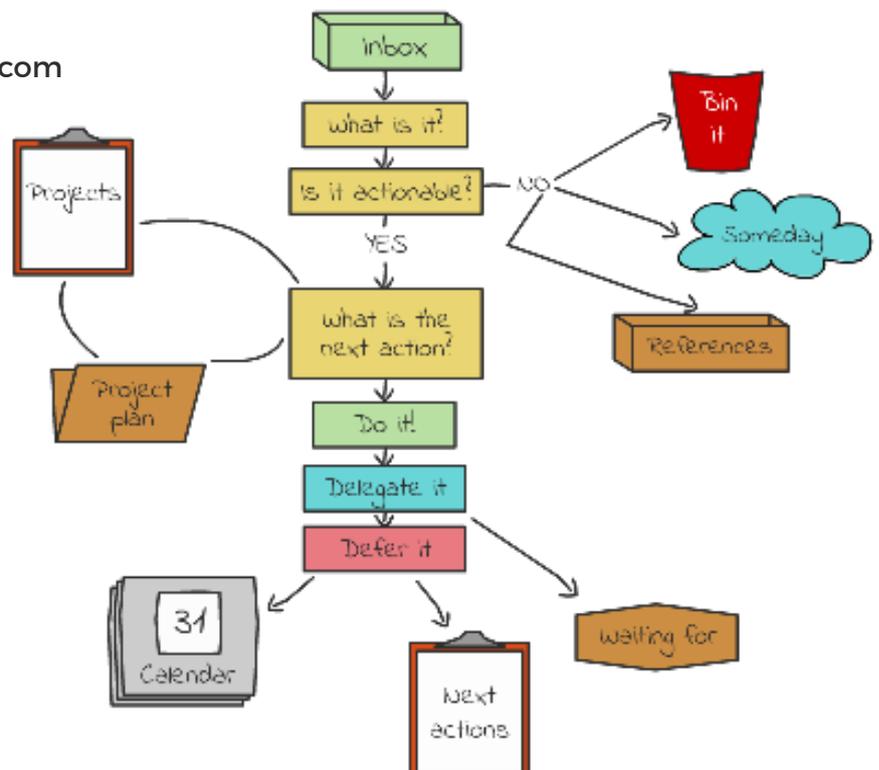
The situation is no further along, at least in the physical world. It's certainly not finished yet. What has happened is you've acquired a clearer definition of the outcome desired and the next action required.

But what created that? The answer is thinking. Not a huge amount, but just enough to solidify your commitment and the resources required to fulfil it.

FURTHER READING/STUDY

For further insights into the techniques David Allen provides you should check out his book:

Getting Things Done - David Allen
Or visit David's website:
<http://www.gettingthingsdone.com>



TAKEAWAYS

HAVING A GTD SYSTEM GIVES YOU CONTROL OVER YOUR TASKS, FREES YOU FROM STRESS AND HELPS YOU TO BE MORE PRODUCTIVE

TO IMPLEMENT THE SYSTEM YOU NEED AN INBOX, A CALENDAR AND A 'PROJECTS LIST', A 'SOMEDAY LIST' AND A 'WAITING LIST'

COLLECT EVERYTHING IN YOUR INBOX AND PROCESS THE ITEMS ONE BY ONE USING THE GTD RULES

THE KEY TO MAKING IT WORK HOWEVER IS HAVING TRUST IN THE SYSTEM. IF YOU DO NOT TRULY TRUST YOUR SYSTEM THEN YOU WON'T REALLY LET GO OF THE TASKS AND YOU WILL CONTINUE TO STORE TASKS IN YOUR HEAD

PROCRASTINATION

Learn How To Avoid The Dreaded Problem We Call Procrastination



THE THEORY

What exactly is Procrastination?

Put simply, procrastination is the act of putting off doing things that you should be focussing on right now, usually in favour of doing something more comfortable. Procrastinating can have a devastating effect on your productivity and can stop you from hitting your goals and progressing in your career.

The good news is there are steps you can go through to avoid procrastination.

Step 1. Recognise that you're procrastinating

We all procrastinate, and if you're honest with yourself, you will probably know when you're procrastinating. Here are some of the indicators to look out for to help you know when you're procrastinating. Filling your time with low priority tasks; Sitting down to start a high priority task and immediately deciding to do a trivial task like make a cup of coffee; Leaving an item on your to-do list for a long period of time; Saying yes to unimportant tasks so you can fill your time with these instead of tackling the important ones; or waiting for the "perfect time" before you get started.

Step 2. Work out why you're procrastinating

The reasons why you are procrastinating will vary depending on you and the task, but it's important to try and identify the cause so that you know how best to approach it.

Step 3. Break your procrastination habits

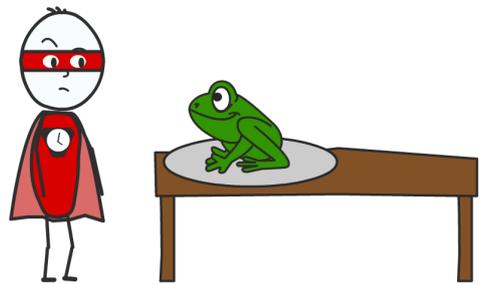
So you've identified the cause of your procrastination, now what? It's important to know that procrastination is a habit. Which means you won't just break it overnight. It will take repeated practice and awareness to develop new habits to replace your old procrastination habits.

THE CHALLENGE

Eat a frog first thing every day

There's an old saying that says if the first thing you do each morning when you wake up is eat a live frog, nothing worse can happen for the rest of the day! I don't know about you but that sounds like a pretty safe assumption!

Your 'frog' should be your most difficult task on your to-do list. The task which you're most likely to procrastinate on. Because if you eat that first, it will give you energy and momentum for the rest of the day.

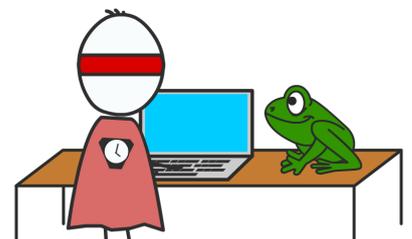


Write down your current 'to-do' list below:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Now it's time to circle your FROG and do that task first.

If you don't, if you let him sit there on a plate while you do a hundred unimportant things, you are wasting valuable time and energy and will trick yourself into thinking you are being productive.



TAKEAWAYS

RECOGNISE THAT YOU'RE PROCRASTINATING

WORK OUT WHY YOU'RE PROCRASTINATING

**TRY ONE OF THESE
ANTI-PROCRASTINATION TECHNIQUES**

- **CREATE REWARDS**
 - **ASK A FRIEND TO CHECK UP ON YOU**
 - **CREATE A PENALTY**
-

**EAT YOUR FROG
(YOUR MOST IMPORTANT TASK)
EVERY MORNING**

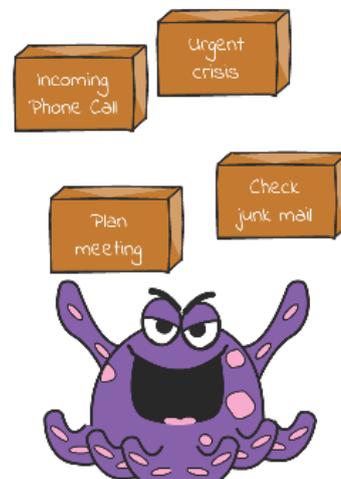
FOCUS

Learn How To Focus On One Task At A Time

THE THEORY

When you try to do too much at once, you can end up doing nothing well. Figure out what matters most in the moment and give it your undivided attention.

The theory is based on how our brain has evolved and how it performs better when it is focussed on one thing at a time. So, let's look at some simple techniques you can use to improve your concentration and so that you can focus on the one thing you are supposed to be doing.



- #1** Once you've picked your most important task, set yourself a time limit. This can be anything from 10 minutes to 1 hour. When you only have a limited time to do something, you are forced to focus on what's important.
- #2** Close down everything on your computer which isn't absolutely necessary for the task at hand. This includes email programs, notifications, social media sites and any other tabs open which you don't absolutely need for the task at hand.
- #3** Use background noise to your advantage. Studies have shown that listening to non-distracting sounds such as instrumental music, sounds of the ocean or even coffee shop ambiance can drown out other noises and really help you to focus and regain your concentration.
- #4** Following basic nutrition advice will also help you to increase your focus. Simple things such as drinking plenty of water, starting your day with a healthy breakfast and getting plenty of exercise in your daily routine are all great starting points.
- #5** With all this focusing you're going to be doing, you need to make sure that you're taking short breaks after each task. Our minds really struggle to focus intensely on tasks for 8 hours a day. Take 5 minutes or go for a walk in between tasks to allow your mind to rest before focussing again.

THE CHALLENGE

Fortify Your Work-Life Balance

Sacrificing your personal life for your job makes you a far less effective worker. It increases mistakes (which take time to correct), blocks the synthesis of new ideas, and leads to inefficiency and poor decision-making. While most of us believe that being available 24/7 is required to compete in today's global economy, a study published by the Harvard Business Review found that making time off predictable, and required, boosted job performance (not to mention satisfaction).

So, identify one or two activities that instantly recharge you—whether it's dancing or meditation—and build them in to your evening or weekend routine. Yes, even if you think you don't have time. Taking even a few hours a week for yourself has the remarkable effect of stretching time, by boosting your energy, fuelling your creativity and perspective, and increasing your patience.

Activity 1

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Activity 2

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TAKEAWAYS

AVOID MULTITASKING — FIGURE OUT WHAT MATTERS THE MOST IN THE MOMENT AND GIVE IT YOUR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION

SET YOURSELF A TIME LIMIT — WHEN YOU ONLY HAVE A LIMITED TIME TO DO SOMETHING, YOU ARE FORCED TO FOCUS ON WHAT IS IMPORTANT

CLOSE DOWN EVERYTHING ON YOUR COMPUTER WHICH ISN'T ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR THE TASK IN HAND

USE BACKGROUND NOISE TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

DRINK PLENTY OF WATER, START YOUR DAY WITH A HEALTH BREAKFAST AND GET PLENTY OF EXERCISE IN YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

TAKE 5 MINUTES OR GO FOR A WALK IN BETWEEN TASKS

ACTION PLAN

KEY SKILLS (WHAT ARE THE KEY SKILLS YOU HAVE LEARNT DURING THIS COURSE?)

WHAT WILL YOU DO DIFFERENTLY IN THE WORKPLACE?

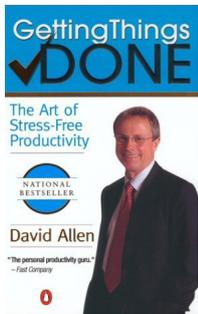
WHAT OBSTACLES MIGHT GET IN THE WAY OF YOU ACHIEVING THIS?

WHAT, OR WHO MAY HELP YOU OVERCOME THESE BARRIERS?



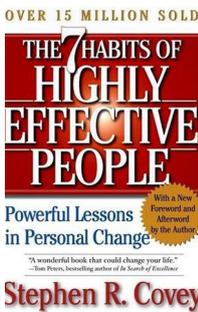
SUGGESTED READING

If you would like more detailed explanations or additional advice on the topic of Time Management you should consult the following literature:



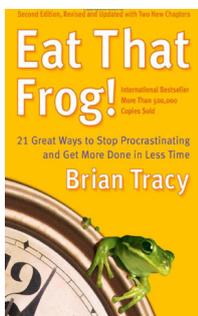
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THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

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EAT THAT FROG

Brian Tracy

This workbook was produced by:

