

9 Key Strategies to Work Smarter not Harder

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1. IDENTIFY WHAT IS IMPORTANT v URGENT

Ensure important tasks, for example strategic planning, are not lost in doing urgent tasks, e.g. phone calls. Some urgent tasks, if not important, can be delegated or left until later.

2. IDENTIFY and Manage DISTRACTIONS

Phone, email, surfing the web, and people entering your office can all contribute to a huge drain on your time. Develop a system to control these and ensure tasks, which require the least thinking, are done at a time of low energy.

3. PLAN AHEAD and BUDGET for things taking longer than expected

Planning ahead is vital to ensuring you are maximizing your time and not having surplus time which you are either unprepared for or should be doing something else that is more important that requires other people.

If you find that you are always stressed and barely meeting deadlines it may be a sign that you are not allowing for the unexpected.

When setting deadlines allow for things such as: -

- People not being available as soon as you expect
- People forgetting to do tasks
- Sickness
- Being tired and not getting things done as well or as quickly as you expect
- Unexpected technical problems
- Other important tasks materializing unexpectedly

TIME BLOCKING is an important tool. This is a process where you allocate specific periods of time to do important tasks.

4. IDENTIFY KEY AREAS

This is a way of grouping tasks so you can monitor areas where you spend your time and ensure balance. Listing tasks according to your key areas can be a way of prioritizing tasks. E.g. Marketing, Admin, Strategic Planning.

5. BUILD IN RESERVES of Time for Rest and Fun

Always allow a buffer between meetings, or busy times so that you can cope with things taking longer and ensure your energy levels are high. This is so important in avoiding burn out and stress. Making appointments with yourself can make a difference.

6. CHOOSE TASKS ACCORDING TO YOUR ENERGY LEVELS

There are times of the day when you are more mentally alert than others. Do those tasks that are mentally challenging at a time when you are fresh. Use times when you are tired to do routine tasks.

7. KEEP A TO DO LIST

When you think of a task write it down immediately. This will allow you to not waste energy on trying to remember tasks. This can be a great way of capturing creative ideas and being able to prioritize tasks.

If you incorporate this with your key areas, it will make prioritizing simpler. Each day you can create a daily 'To Do' list from your master list and number each task in order of priority. Seek to follow that order and do not get distracted.

8. USE A PLANNER DIARY

Keeping all your notes, diary, etc, in one place can ensure that you do not lose them.

They are also there for easier reference.

9. MULTI TASK

If at all possible, combine tasks to make more efficient use of time. Use dead time (e.g. traveling) for planning, reading, etc. If traveling to a location, do other tasks that require travel in a similar location.

Attribution and Further Resources

Jane Johnson is a leading Performance and Life Purpose Coach and founder of Aspect Coaching and the International Life Purpose Institute. She has worked with senior and middle level executives, professionals, solo entrepreneurs, small business owners, consultants and coaches to enhance their success/impact and purpose in their career/business. She has also helped many find more fulfilling work.

Further resources can be found at www.aspectcoaching.com

Coaching Exercises

The document includes some exercises to help you take the information from this document and apply it to your situation in a practical manner. Having a diary or journal to document your discoveries can be most helpful.

- What tasks do you have at the moment that are important but not urgent that you have not been attending to?
- List 3 areas that are distracting you at the moment?
- Does your schedule feel comfortable? If not how can you add extra time for the unexpected?
- What are the key areas of your role?
- How may you incorporate your key areas into your planner?