

Work Smarter with the Gamonnet Method

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WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER: TWENTY ONE (21) TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS TO HACK PRODUCTIVITY

POSTED ON JANUARY 27, 2014 BY JORDAN BATES

Synopsis



“Don’t say you don’t have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michaelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein.”
— H. Jackson Brown Jr.

A lot of folks in our society try to be hyper-productive.

You know — the people who scurry from task to task, always checking e-mail, organizing something, making a call, running an errand, etc.

The people who do this often subscribe to the idea that “staying busy” means you’re working hard and are going to be more successful.

While this belief may be true to an extent, it often leads to mindless “productivity” — a constant need to do something and a tendency to waste time on menial tasks.

Instead of behaving in this way, I choose to do things differently.

Working Smarter, Not Harder

The old adage, “work smarter, not harder” has become a staple in the way I go about work of any kind.

Instead of being robotic in how I approach tasks, I try to be thoughtful and always ask myself if something can be done more efficiently or eliminated altogether.

Managing my time isn’t about squeezing as many tasks into my day as possible. It’s about simplifying how I work, doing things faster, and relieving stress.



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It's about clearing away space in my life to make time for people, play, and rest.

I promise you — there really are enough hours in a day for everything you'd like to do, but it may take a bit of rearranging and re-imagining to find them.

21 Time Management Tips

I compiled this list of 21 tips to hopefully nudge you in the right direction.

Remember: There are innumerable hacks and tricks to manage your time effectively. These are some tips that I find helpful, but everyone is different.

Let this list be a catalyst to get you thinking regularly about how to refine your own practices.

1. Complete most important tasks first.

This is the golden rule of time management. Each day, identify the two or three tasks that are the most crucial to complete, and do those first.

Once you're done, the day has already been a success. You can move on to other things, or you can let them wait until tomorrow. You've finished the essential.

2. Learn to say "no".

Making a lot of time commitments can teach us how to juggle various engagements and manage our time. This can be a great thing.

However, you can easily take it too far. At some point, you need to learn to decline opportunities. Your objective should be to take on only those commitments that you know you have time for and that you truly care about.

3. Sleep at least 7-8 hours.

Some people think sacrificing sleep is a good way to hack productivity and wring a couple extra hours out of the day. This is not the case.



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Most people need 7-8 hours of sleep for their bodies and minds to function optimally. You know if you're getting enough. Listen to your body, and don't underestimate the value of sleep.

4. Devote your entire focus to the task at hand.

Close out all other browser windows. Put your phone away, out of sight and on silent. Find a quiet place to work, or listen to some music if that helps you (I enjoy listening to classical or ambient music while writing sometimes).

Concentrate on this one task. Nothing else should exist. Immerse yourself in it.

5. Get an early start.

Nearly all of us are plagued by the impulse to procrastinate. It seems so easy, and you always manage to get it done eventually, so why not?

Take it from a recovering chronic procrastinator — it's so much nicer and less stressful to get an earlier start on something. It isn't that difficult either, if you just decide firmly to do it.

6. Don't allow unimportant details to drag you down.

We often allow projects to take much, much longer than they could by getting too hung up on small details. I'm guilty of this. I've always been a perfectionist.

What I've found, though, is that it is possible to push past the desire to constantly examine what I've done so far. I'm much better off pressing onward, getting the bulk completed, and revising things afterward.

7. Turn key tasks into habits.

Writing is a regular task for me. I have to write all the time — for school, work, my student organization, my blog, etc. I probably write 5,000 – 7,000 words per week.

The amount of writing I do may seem like a lot to most people, but it's very manageable for me, because it's habitual. I've made it a point to write something every day for a long time.



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I rarely break this routine. Because of this, my mind is in the habit of doing the work of writing. It has become quite natural and enjoyable. Could you do something similar? (Read “The Simple, Powerful Guide to Forming Any New Habit”)

8. Be conscientious of amount of TV/Internet/gaming time.

Time spent browsing Twitter or gaming or watching TV and movies can be one of the biggest drains on productivity.

I suggest becoming more aware of how much time you spend on these activities. Simply by noticing how they’re sucking up your time you’ll begin to do them less.

9. Delineate a time limit in which to complete task.

Instead of just sitting down to work on a project and thinking, “I’m going to be here until this is done,” try thinking, “I’m going to work on this for three hours”.

The time constraint will push you to focus and be more efficient, even if you end up having to go back and add a bit more later.

10. Leave a buffer-time between tasks.

When we rush from task to task, it’s difficult to appreciate what we’re doing and to stay focused and motivated.

Allowing ourselves down-time between tasks can be a breath of fresh air for our brains. While taking a break, go for a short walk, meditate, or perform some other mind-clearing exercise.

11. Don’t think of the totality of your to-do list.

One of the fastest ways to overwhelm yourself is to think about your massive to-do list. Realize that no amount of thought will make it any shorter.

At this point in time, all you can do is focus on the one task before you. This one, single, solitary task. One step at a time. Breathe.



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12. Exercise and eat healthily.

Numerous studies have linked a healthy lifestyle with work productivity. Similar to getting enough sleep, exercising and eating healthily boost energy levels, clear your mind, and allow you to focus more easily.

13. Do less.

This is a tactic recommended by one of my favorite bloggers, Leo Babauta. Basically, do less is another way of saying do the things that really matter.

Slow down, notice what needs to be done, and concentrate on those things. Do less things that create more value, rather than more things that are mostly empty.

14. Utilize weekends, just a little bit.

One of my favorite memes depicts a gentleman casting his work aside, declaring, "It's Friday! F#\$%\$88u this shit." The following image reads "Monday", and the man is stooping to pick up the papers he'd tossed to the ground.

This is comical, but I've found that it's amazing how doing just a little bit on weekends can really lessen the workload during the week. Aim for 2-4 hours per day. You'll still leave yourself plenty of free time for activities.

15. Create organizing systems.

Being organized saves tons of time, and you don't have to be the most ultra-organized person in the world either. Systems aren't complicated to implement.

Create a filing system for documents. Make sure all items have a place to be stored in your dwelling. Unsubscribe from e-mail lists if you don't want to receive their content. Streamline, streamline, streamline.

16. Do something during waiting time.

We tend to have a lot of down-time where we don't try to do much. Waiting rooms, lines at the store, time on the subway, on the elliptical at the gym, etc.



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Find things to do during this time. I tend to have a lot of reading for classes, so I bring some of it almost everywhere I go and read during waiting time.

17. Lock yourself in.

No distractions, no excuses. Sometimes, the only way I'm going to get something done is if I'm under lock and key, alone in a room. If you're like me, realize it, and act accordingly.

18. Commit to your plan to do something.

I kind of mentioned this already, but it's worth repeating. Don't flake on your own plan to do something!

Be resolute. Be committed. Be professional about it, and follow through. A firm will to accomplish what you decide to accomplish will take you anywhere.

19. Batch related tasks together.

Let's say that over a given weekend you need to do two programming assignments, write three essays, and make two videos. Rather than approaching this work in whatever order you feel, group the like tasks and do them consecutively.

Different tasks demand different types of thinking, so it makes sense to allow your mind to continue to flow with its current zone rather than switching unnecessarily to something that's going to require you to re-orient.

20. Find time for stillness.

In our go, go, go world, too many people don't find time to just be still. Yet, it's extraordinary what a stillness practice can do. Action and inaction should both play key roles in our lives.

Discovering time in your life for silence and non-motion reduces anxiety and shows you that there is no need to constantly rush. It also makes it easier to find your work pleasurable.



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21. Eliminate the non-essential.

I know this one has been mentioned in one capacity or another already, but it's one of the most useful tips you can take away from this post.

Our lives are full of excess. When we can identify that excess and remove it, we become more and more in touch with what is significant and what deserves our time.

One Last Tip (The Best One)

There's one final tip I want to mention. If you remember one thing from this post, remember this:

Enjoyment should always be the goal. Work can be play.

We get so caught up in busyness that we forget to enjoy what we're doing. Even when we focus on working smarter, we're still often too focused on getting things done.

This should never be the point. Always ask yourself: What can I do to spend more time enjoying what I'm doing?

The goal should be to arrange your commitments in a way that you're happy living out the details of your daily life, even while you're working.

This may sound like a pipe dream, but it's more possible than ever in today's world. Be curious. Be open to opportunity. Know yourself. Embrace your passions.

Wonderful things will happen. Best of luck implementing these tips, and let me know if I can do anything else to help you.

Your Friend,
Jordan Bates



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This article originally appeared at *Refine The Mind*.

