



It's About Time

5 Reasons Why We Don't Get Things Done – 5 Solutions for Improving Productivity

As an experienced professional organizer and productivity consultant, I've determined that there are 5 main reasons why we get stuck, and eventually get stressed about the lack of available time to get things done. These reasons include: 1) we waste our time, 2) we work reactively, 3) we try to meet everyone else's needs, 4) we procrastinate, and 5) we lose interest. Below are a few strategies you can use to help you make better time choices.

1. We get derailed by time wasting activities.

Examples include, interruptions, email, meetings, electronic gadgets, internet use, conducting personal business, running errands. These activities derail productivity by consuming more time than necessary. Each time we interrupt a high-value task, it takes longer refocus and get back to it.

What's the Solution? PLAN

- Make a plan for your week, review important goals and projects that need your attention **THAT WEEK** (plan 25% in advance);
- For recurring activities (checking email) set aside specific blocks;
- Re-estimate how long things take to do; plan to allowing for 50% more time, most task take longer than you expect;
- Practical tips: close your door if you have one, close email accounts and internet browser when you are focusing on a high-level task; turn off your phone for specific period of time.

2. We tend to work reactively, not proactively.

Many times, we confuse urgency with importance. Items on your to-do list are largely a set of intentions. They only become commitments when we make time for them.

What's the Solution? SCHEDULE

- Schedule, schedule, schedule! Commit specific time blocks;
- Create non-negotiable time for important high-value tasks;
- Consider your natural energy cycles and when you work best;
- Schedule the more challenging items first (day or week).

3. We spend our time meeting other's needs.

Remember, time is finite, and goal based. Give your time the highest priority, and schedule the most important activities during your best working hours. These are those activities that will help you to keep your most important projects moving forward. Constantly being available to solving others' urgent issues will not help further your projects, and will lead to you becoming less productive.

What's the Solution? PRIORITIZE

- Respect your time and learn to say no;
- Avoid becoming distracted by urgency;
- Set expectations for your colleagues, employees, and co-workers.

4. We procrastinate.

What does it take for us to engage in an activity? We want to like what we are doing! We want to be excited about it! Most often, we disengage from complex assignments because we find them to be overwhelming. Projects might be unpleasant, or too large to do in one sitting, or the time we've allotted to work on it isn't conducive to delivering our best performance.

What's the Solution? ENGAGE

- Break large tasks and especially projects into small manageable pieces (Ask yourself: "what's the next action");
- Define that next action as a task in your planner and schedule in your calendar. Be specific, use action word to describe activity (*call, read, research, attend, review, draft*);
- Be sure the scheduled time slot is appropriate for high-level performance (match natural energy level).

5. We lose interest.

How often have you started a complicated task, or tried to solve a problem, toiled through iterations of the plan, and found yourself ignoring it before you've resolved the issue or completed the project? Projects that have and keep our attention are those we tend to complete.

What's the Solution? COMPLETE or MOVE ON

- Measure the project tasks against your goals TODAY;
- Identify whether it's a low-value vs. high-value activity;
- Evaluate how you can keep it moving forward:
 - delegate it to another set of eyes,
 - do it (just get it over with), or
 - decide that it's not important enough for your attention and remove it from your radar.
 - If it's not working for you, drop it.

I encourage you to:

- Revisit your expectations about your daily time choices;
- Be open to changing your habits about how you spend your time;

Allow your goals to drive your choices about how you schedule your next 24 hours.

If you would like to discuss specific organizing goals or need help to get started, contact Clearing House to schedule an organizing session. We will help you design and implement a system that meets individual needs.