

3 steps to get more done in less time

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Recently a friend of mine held a productivity summit with 20 or more experts. The content shared came to more than 20 hours.

When he told me about it my eyes glazed over. He noticed.

“ What’s the problem? I’ve put together the greatest minds on productivity. This information is incredibly valuable,” he argued.

“ I have no doubt,” I agreed, “ but it feels like common core math to me. You're taking something extremely simple and making it difficult... on purpose.”

My mind was having a hard time with almost twenty-four hours of varying approaches to getting things done. He asked about my approach and quickly discovered why I wasn’t added to the summit. It’s probably too simple.

Getting more done in less time comes down to three things:

1. Obligation scheduling.

You can’t just mentally plan to get things done. You have to calendar what you are going to do and when you are going to do it. You must make an appointment with yourself and keep it as if it were a dinner with your top client.

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Too often we schedule with the mindset of what we want to accomplish rather than what we must accomplish. If we do that our minds see the events as optional rather than mandatory. By shifting to an obligation frame of mind, you give weight to the tasks and that creates greater necessity.

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2 Effective efficiency.

Efficiency means that we do the best job possible in the least amount of time. First, you need to know how long a task will take. Second, you need to determine if you can shrink that time without losing quality.

A colleague of mine, Mike, struggled with servicing current clients and reaching new ones. “ I just don’t have enough time to work personally with everyone.”

We did some math. His average client visit was one hour. I asked if he could be just as effective in 45 minutes. He said he could. What about 40 minutes? He said yes to that as well. What about 35 minutes? He didn’t feel that would work. We settled on 40 minutes and he freed 80 minutes each day.

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It’s not enough to just schedule, you need to be precise about the amount of time the tasks actually take. Keep track of how long certain actions take and work toward shrinking the time without losing quality.

3. Present focus.

The greatest enemy of productivity is distraction. The ability to stay attentive seems almost impossible in today’s world. You might schedule efficiently and still lose because your mind drifts or call or an email pulls you away. Staying in the “ now” and in the present will increase your productivity.

Here are two “ tricks” that you’ve heard over and over, but still may not be doing.

First, eliminate anything not related to the task. If your phone, or internet or people are not essential to task completion, then shut them down. Period.

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Second, if you have an extra short attention span, then get an egg timer and set it for five or ten minutes as a reminder to stay on point. If you would like to really ramp up your focus by using reminders and timed sessions then consider using .

Personal productivity doesn't require 20 experts. It just requires that you focus on what you should be doing, when you should be doing it without excuse.