

# 3 ways to manage your time and boost productivity

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I used to have a major problem: I said yes to every opportunity that came my way. I know I'm not the only person who does this. After all, many entrepreneurs they possibly can. At college, we were told that taking on "more" would maximize our potential for getting a good job and making more money. We all strive for more.

But at some point, and eventually burn out. The result? We lose momentum, and our efforts undo themselves. I faced this same problem until I figured out a time-management method that actually worked. It helped me achieve the tasks I set forth for myself and also allotted time for personal and family gain.

I quickly learned that there are three important steps for better time management. They aren't quick fixes or steps you can simply cross off a list. Like any true solution, they require long-term consistency.

## **1. Define your working style.**

Paul Graham, cofounder of Y Combinator, talks about the . Many people believe that all they need to do to remain productive is schedule blocks of time to work on given tasks. But not everyone can achieve his or her goals using the same means of planning.

Graham suggests there are two types of leaders and entrepreneurs. The first type functions on the "manager" schedule. These people thrive when they plan out their day in one-hour blocks. Why does this work for them? Because, according to Graham, their style of working is "... embodied in the traditional appointment book, with each day cut into one-hour intervals."

A manager's day is full of meetings, calls, errands and small tasks. But a "maker" does not accomplish much with this method of working. A maker is someone like a writer or a developer, who needs large blocks of time to accomplish one project. For a maker, a meeting in the middle of the day is a nuisance. It cuts off this person's workflow and very quickly destroys his or her focus.

Are you a manager or a maker?

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## **2. Develop your schedule template.**

Once you understand your personal working style, you need to prepare a schedule for yourself. If you're a manager, your daily schedule essentially follows the same format:

- 9 a. m. Check email messages.
- 10 a. m. Schedule meetings and calls.
- 11 a. m. Attend meeting.
- 12 p. m. Take lunch.
- 1 p. m. Make calls.

And so on and so forth. But as a maker, your schedule operates on a weekly or sometimes even monthly basis. You don't work in order to accomplish small tasks. You work in order to complete projects.

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Leadershipcoach Kendra Kinnison suggests inserting blocks in your schedule for what is truly . This includes key meetings, lunches, exercise, sleep, family time -- anything that can't possibly be forsaken.

She then recommends thinking critically about those blocks and deciding whether it would benefit you to group certain activities all into one day. For instance, if you're an entrepreneur who's a maker at heart, perhaps it would be best to get all your meetings done in one day. That frees up the rest of the week to work on other responsibilities.

Finally, make sure to track the actual time you spend working on your self-assigned tasks. If it takes you much longer to finish something than you allotted, you might need to rethink why. Did you get distracted while working? Or did the task require significantly more effort than you initially had in mind?

### **3. Prepare for unplanned events.**

Scheduling your day or week is easier said than done. It's almost inevitable that unplanned events will threaten to derail you. The trick is to prepare for the unplanned. My own scheduled "maker moments" often are interrupted by coworkers whose questions require immediate answers. I schedule a quick five- or 10-minute break every hour during maker time. People know they can approach me during those small breaks, but the rest of the time I'll be focused on other tasks.

Scheduling office hours for yourself is another option. , CEO of Venngage Infographics, says he knows he is most productive in the morning and

afternoon. He schedules his office hours from 5 to 6 p. m. It's only after the workday that people have the opportunity to talk to him about any and all concerns.

The same strategy applies to distractions, such as answering emails or pings. If you get a lot of emails in a given day, answering each one as you receive it really can put a damper on your productivity. Schedule a specific time to answer all your emails in one shot. I recommend spending an hour either as soon as you get into the office or at the end of the day.

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When you spend time to be introspective about as you'd like to be, you open yourself up to discovering what can and will work for you. Whether you're a maker or a manger, you should reflect on which habits improve your productivity and which habits hinder it. Only then will you really be able to boost your productivity and say yes to more opportunities.