



How to Get 30% More Productivity from your Team in 30 Days

INTRODUCTION

You know this scene all too well:

Your brand has recruited top talent for nearly every function. Your team has completely bought into the strategic plan for the organization and the company culture has them motivated to win. Your team has spent weeks brainstorming, strategizing and planning to meet those key performance indicators and make sure you knock the next quarter out of the park to truly move the needle.

You arrive in the office early, ready to be wowed by the progress the team has made. You blasted Bon Jovi in the car on the way to work because you're ready to make some decisions and Beat. That. Deadline.

But instead of arriving to a polished project update presentation with hard data to drive your decision making, you receive multiple emails asking to push the presentation back because of blah blah excuse. Then you wonder, "How could this have happened?"

Taking a look around the office and you realize everything but work has captivated your team's attention.

In the morning it's making the perfect cup of coffee while they debate the merits of Everything vs. Whole Wheat before deciding on a banana instead. Walking by desks, you see screen after screen with windows open to email (most of it probably junk mail), Facebook, LinkedIn, HootSuite, Mashable, Huff Post and Reddit. Team members talking about weekend plans while clustered around each other's desks look up to smile and say hi as you walk past.

Just when it seems they've put those unnecessary distractions aside, office chatter turns to grumblings of lunchtime hunger pains. The passionate Chipotle fanatic is persuading office mates into going for burritos instead of burgers.

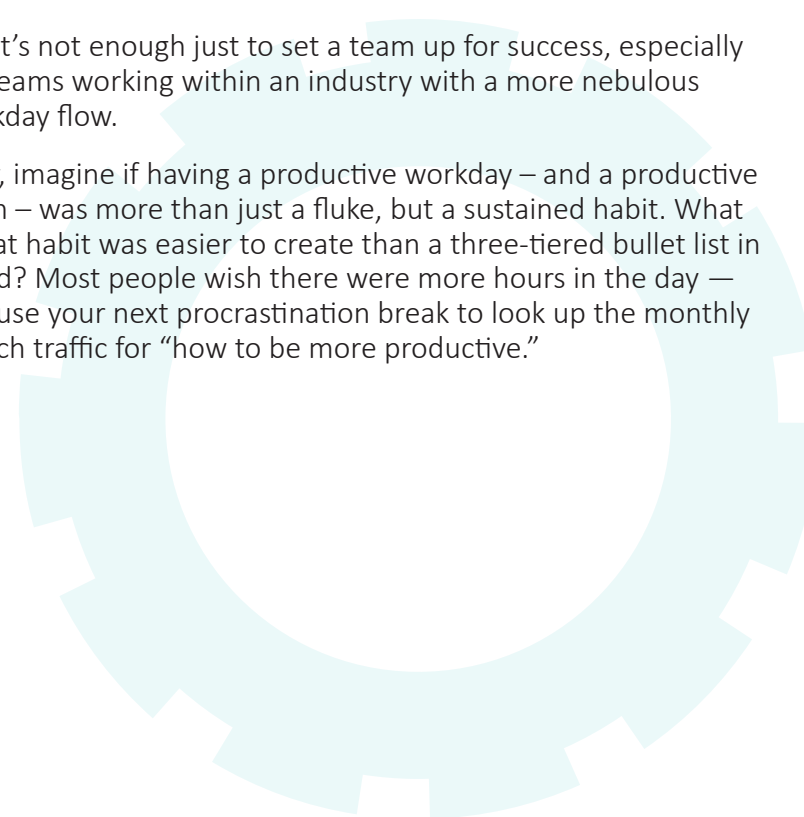
Later, the team's wasted morning has manifested into a state of panic with a stressful afternoon evolving into a long night at the office.

As a manager or director, you know the distractions all too well: texting, gossip, online forums, social media. Even that team chat room, as helpful as it is, can be the black hole engulfing your team's productivity.

In fact, according to HubSpot, **28% of the average office worker's day** is spent focused on unnecessary distractions. That includes an **average of five hours each week** surfing websites not related to work.

But it's not enough just to set a team up for success, especially for teams working within an industry with a more nebulous workday flow.

Now, imagine if having a productive workday – and a productive team – was more than just a fluke, but a sustained habit. What if that habit was easier to create than a three-tiered bullet list in Word? Most people wish there were more hours in the day — just use your next procrastination break to look up the monthly search traffic for "how to be more productive."





“Try using Doodle.com to schedule meetings with large groups of people. Instead of going back and forth endlessly on email, people can select days and times from the polling calendar and then Doodle aggregates the responses and tells you which option works best for everyone.”

*– Molly Borchers, (W)right On Communications
Sr. Communications Strategist*

To boost your team's motivation, get more things done with fewer resources, and drive productivity from your team, have each member try each of these tips once a day for 30 days.

DAY 1: COMMIT TO STARTING OFF RIGHT

There is no denying that your first hour of work can set the tone for the entire day. Begin with a productive writing session, for example, and the creative juices will continue for hours to come. Yet, with a few wrong decisions, you may find yourself at 10:30 a.m. asking where the first two hours of your day went.

Morning productivity is all about forming habits that stick. This way, when Monday rolls around and being productive is the first thing you want, you'll be thankful it's become second nature to open Google Docs instead of Facebook.

Starting your morning off well begins by eating a healthy breakfast long before you step foot into the office. Remember, what you eat has a direct effect on how productive you are at work. Experts suggest foods low in glycemic carbohydrates to provide sustained energy throughout the day. For those of us who are not dietitians, this means plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. For example, a breakfast of eggs, bananas, yogurt, or blueberries can help to boost memory and counteract stress.

DAY 2: SCHEDULE YOUR EMAIL CHECKING

Fight the temptation to check your email when you first sit down at your desk. When you begin your day in the chaos of your inbox, you enter a productivity vacuum of reading, replying, and organizing that can steal your most precious early-morning hours of creative thinking. In addition, you'll establish a day-long habit of checking your email all too often (more on this danger later).

For those who do not drive themselves to work, try checking your email on your commute. It might also work well to set aside

five to 10 minutes as you get ready for work to monitor your email for any vital to-do items. But after a quick check, shut it down. Your productivity will thank you.

During the day, schedule time every few hours in your calendar to check your email. If it strikes your fancy, you can even set an auto-responder that lets people know that you only check your email a few times a day so that the expectation for immediate response is mitigated.

DAY 3: BUILD TINY HABITS

Is the urge to click the Gmail tab still too strong? The easiest way to achieve productivity goals is to build "tiny habits." These are small, easy-to-do actions that bring long-term changes in your behavior. To make new habits stick, identify the following elements:



1. Authentic motivation to change the habit
2. Simple actions that make the new habit easy to accomplish
3. A trigger that causes an action, which leads to a reward

For example, if you know checking your email is a major distraction for you, schedule times to check your inbox. If you complete it in under 15 minutes, reward yourself with a snack break. Try this technique for any behavior you want to transform into a habit: reading, meditating, or even flossing your teeth.

DAY 4: PRIORITIZE PRIORITIZING

Although we might not all be Type A personalities, it doesn't mean we wouldn't benefit from a more organized to-do list.

Build out your list, separating tasks by different priority levels. While it is always tempting to pick the smallest tasks, setting priority levels will remind you to tackle the most important projects first.

A word of caution on to-do list making, especially for those notorious for color coding and label making (you know who you are): spending the first hour of your work crafting a beautiful to-do list can be just as detrimental to your productivity as checking your email first thing. Try using your commute or even the night before to set your priorities. If you use a cloud-based app like Evernote or Basecamp, your list will be synced between your devices effortlessly. This way, you can arrive at the office ready to work.

DAY 5: DO THE CREATIVE WORK FIRST

As you set your to-do list, prioritize any creative work for the morning. Although we might not all be morning people, give it a try for a week or two. You might be surprised by how much better your brain works when you start a creative project in the morning instead of during the post-lunch lull.

DAY 6: EAT THE FROG FIRST

Similar to tackling the creative work first, try what we call "eating the frog first." That means, do the big projects first. You know, those on which you want to procrastinate. Those that take up your brain power. If you do them while you're fresh, you'll have the rest of the day to focus on smaller tasks.



DAY 7: IDENTIFY WHAT DISTRACTS YOU

They say in healthcare, “It is difficult to prescribe the right medicine if you haven’t identified a diagnosis.” Therefore, to set productivity habits that last months, not days, it is vital to know what exactly it is that distracts you. Spend today tracking how you spend your time, whether it’s using a time tracker like **RescueTime**, a spreadsheet, or old fashioned pen and paper. Be honest with yourself through the process, noting what distractions hit you and when.

At the end of the day, evaluate how you spent your time at work. Look for cause and effect trends. Maybe it’s whenever you are researching, you fall prey to reading the news. Or perhaps when you check your email, you find yourself shifting from a LinkedIn new connection email to 30 minutes of social media scrolling.

Many will be tempted to skip this step, arguing that it will take a lot of extra time to record your day. But don’t ignore this one. Although it will add work to one day, it might just save you hundreds of hours of lost productivity in the future.



“Make prioritization a no brainer. Categorize activities to help juggle competing priorities. For instance, customer or revenue-generating activities are always your first priority, managing your team second, managing up third, and administrative tasks last. Identify categories by color code or short acronyms to make it easy to see at a glance what tasks are the highest priorities.”

– Julie Wright, (W)right On Communications President

DAY 8: TRY WORKING FROM HOME

To many people’s excitement, working from home has become a more common benefit of the modern workplace. But just because you are far away from the distractions of co-workers, doesn’t mean you are home free. In fact, when you work from home you often become your own worst distraction. To maximize productivity on your out-of-office days, mimic your regular workday as much as possible. This means getting started at a normal hour, taking a shower, and dressing as if you are going to the office.

And just because you are working from home doesn’t mean you actually have to work from home. Go to a coffee shop to eliminate the temptation to clean the bathrooms or alphabetize the bookshelves. Finally, remember that working from home is a luxury and commit to doing more — perhaps even getting ahead on your blog writing for the week.

When managing team members who are working from home, schedule early morning video chats or conference calls to help start your remote workers’ day with more structure. Talking through workflow, deadlines and deliverables in-real time is more efficient and productive.

DAY 9: LISTEN TO COFFEE SHOP SOUNDS

If you can't get out of the office to work in a coffee shop, try pretending. Really! The whoosh of espresso machines and caffeinated chatter typical of most coffee shops creates just the right level of background noise to stimulate creativity.

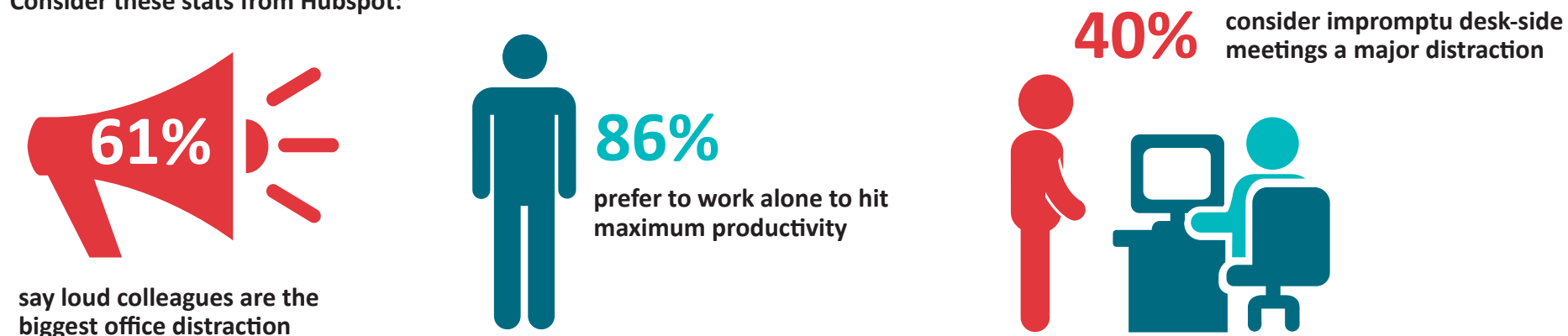
In a series of experiments that looked at the effects of noise on creative thinking, researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign had participants brainstorm ideas for new products while they were exposed to varying levels of background noise. Their results, published in *The Journal of Consumer Research*, found that a level of ambient noise typical of a bustling coffee shop or a television playing in a living room, about 70 decibels, enhanced performance compared with the relative quiet of 50 decibels.

One of our employees swears by this trick. Her favorite websites for coffee shop noises are soundrown.com and coffitivity.com.

DAY 10: KEEP AN EAR OUT FOR LOUD TEAM MEMBERS

Everyone has their ideal work environment. While some prefer deafening silence, others rely on coffee house buzz to keep them on task. Despite our varying preferences, the frustration of loud co-workers is universal.

Consider these stats from Hubspot:



In other words, loud team members can kink workflow productivity. Yes, it may be tempting for team members to stop by a co-worker's desk on the way to get coffee to talk about their day or for them to ask you a question in person instead of via Hangouts or Slack. It happens all the time, but it's usually not malicious or intentional.

Often interruptive team members don't realize they're intruding on their co-worker's productivity. Create a working environment where pre-planned team member collaboration and socializing is used so that the off-the-cuff interruptions are unnecessary or minimized.

When it comes to questions asked by other team members, take it from our Sr. Communications Strategist Molly Borchers. She always says (in the most loving way possible), "If you can find the answer on Google, don't ask the question." Encourage team members to attempt to solve problems and find solutions independently instead of messing up co-workers' mojos all day long. Remind team members to avoid putting themselves in a place where they are asking to be micromanaged.

DAY 11: KNOW WHEN MEETINGS COULD HAVE BEEN AN EMAIL

You may have seen the popular office meme: “I survived another meeting that should have been an email.”

There is a reason it gets a laugh — it’s all too relatable. According to Atlassian, the average office worker spends over 31 hours each month in unproductive meetings. Now, imagine a workplace without meetings. Bliss, right? While some meetings, of course, have their necessary place, be sure to do a self-check before you send out that Google Calendar invite.

DAY 12: KNOW WHEN EMAILS SHOULD HAVE BEEN A MEETING

On the flip side, sometimes it’s actually MORE efficient to have a quick meeting or phone call, rather than go back and forth incessantly on email. The point here is to use your judgment.

If an obligatory meeting is in order, be sure to include an agenda in the calendar invite. This will keep the meeting on track and on time, and also provide an outlet for attendees to write down questions before it even begins. This way, you can prepare your answers for these questions in advance and avoid scheduling yet another follow-up meeting.



“Just because a team member thinks there needs to be a meeting, doesn’t mean everyone on the meeting invite has to go with it. Question meeting invites and request an agenda in advance. What’s the goal of the meeting and can it be accomplished without requiring eight team members to carve out 30 minutes to discuss? Should that off-site meeting actually be a videoconference? What’s the purpose of the meeting and your role? If you are not needed for the full agenda, can you plan to participate for only the portion relevant to you? There’s no one singular formula for effective meetings.”

– Chancelor Shay, (W)right On Communications
Sr. Communications Strategist

DAY 13: TAKE A BREAK

Nothing interrupts a productive workflow like the rumbling of your stomach. So, when the clock strikes noon, don't ignore what your body is telling you. Skipping lunch is not only dangerous to your health, but your work habits as well. But what about non-lunchtime breaks? Is it bad to take the occasional walk around the office or grab a second (or third) cup of coffee from the breakroom?

Often we think that the ideal productive day would involve eight plus hours of endless tapping on our keyboards. But in reality, the average person switches tasks **every three minutes**.

Maximizing our productivity is all about finding the right balance. And getting more done in a day involves identifying what tasks are most important. No matter what crucial projects may be on your to-do list for the day, remember taking breaks is just as important.

DAY 14: TRY THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE

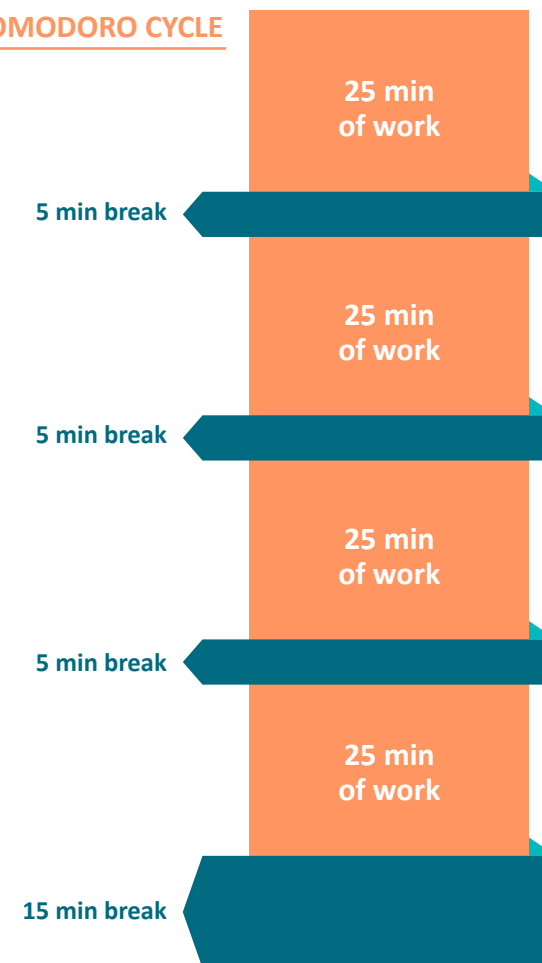
There is only so much time you can work non-stop before your brain starts to fry. Experts have found that working in 90 minute intervals maximizes productivity. In fact, the human mind can only work for 90 to 120 minutes before it begs for a break. Using your prioritized to-do list, pick your most important task and focus on it solely for 90 minutes and then reward yourself with a break.

If repeating 90-minute work sessions isn't right for your work style, test out the **Pomodoro Technique**. Work on one task for 25 minutes. Take a five-minute break. Repeat this process three more times, and then take a 15-minute break.

DAY 15: PROGRESS ONE "IMPORTANT" BUT NOT "URGENT" TASK TODAY

Work on one task today that is "important" but not "urgent." This way, you are progressing big picture items while keeping the small, day-to-day stuff going. Rather than put out fires all day, this helps you actually work on things of substance over the long term.

ONE PROMODORO CYCLE



DAY 16: EAT LUNCH AWAY FROM YOUR DESK

We all have those days where we forget to eat lunch. Or if we do take the time to eat, it's often with a fork in one hand while the other stumbles across the keyboard.

Yet, multitasking can reduce our productivity by up to 40%. When you add the effect of these 30 minutes of unproductive work to the fact that more than a quarter of workers don't take a break other than lunch, it is no surprise afternoon motivation dwindles.

That's why we built a lounge and break room in our office. Our graphic designer Keely Smith tries to take her lunch out there as much as she can. As you follow Keely's lead and implement leisurely lunches back into your work routine, be sure you are doing them right. Use this time to connect with teammates outside of work-talk or meet employees with whom you otherwise wouldn't cross paths. It is great to be able to call on friends in other departments for advice or perspective.

DAY 17: EAT BRAIN POWER FOR LUNCH

Aside from those with whom you eat, choose what you eat wisely. Employees who eat healthy food all day long are 25% more likely to have higher job performance. And compared to workers who were obese, employees who eat healthy food and exercise regularly are absent from work 27% less and perform 11% better at their jobs.

In addition to lunches, be sure to utilize your breaks to eat a healthy snack. Avoid foods high in sugar that lead to a drop in blood sugar and the dreaded afternoon slump. Instead, try berries, avocado, or almonds to keep your brain well fed, and encourage yourself to choose water or coffee over soda.



Your brain accounts for 2% of your body weight but consumes 20% of your daily calories



“Bring fruits and veggies like berries, cucumber, basil, etc. in a little baggie to make infused water throughout the day. It feels like a treat, but is totally healthy and keeps you hydrated and focused.”

– Erica Gadbois,
*(W)right On Communications
Communications Strategist*

DAY 18: AVOID PROCRASTINATION

According to HubSpot, the average worker procrastinates for 2.09 hours each day. And once distracted, it takes the average person 23 minutes to regain focus on their original task. Sound familiar? We each have our go-to escapes: reading the news, sorting our inbox, cleaning our desk, monitoring Twitter. The scary part is we are incredibly good at rationalizing why said distraction is a part of our job description or will make us better employees.

For most of us, we are increasingly susceptible to procrastination depending on the size or importance of the project at hand. But don't be fooled — when we procrastinate, we think about the worst parts of our project and the job grows before our eyes. Instead, recall your priority list and listen to the motivation of one of our favorite ad campaigns: Just Do it.

Even if you successfully avoided checking your email first thing in the morning, don't let email be your afternoon escape either. The average person checks their email 36 times in an hour. That adds up to 13 hours a week spent reading, deleting, sorting and sending emails. Don't convince yourself that you need to respond to an incoming email that very minute. Instead, remember what we told you on Day 2 and schedule breaks to check your email throughout the day.

DAY 19: SET A CAP ON YOUR RESEARCH TIME

Whether you spend your days crafting art in Illustrator or crunching numbers in Excel, creativity is a necessary attribute of a successful employee. But when innovative ideas seem out of reach, how do you stop an afternoon brain cramp? Following the theme of fighting procrastination, try setting a cap on your research time. It is tempting to follow link after link as you look for ideas, just to find yourself in a sea of GIFs and even further away from your starting point.

One of the most effective ways to kick start your momentum and reduce afternoon headaches is to turn your eyes away from your screen. In the United States, the average person spends 444 minutes or 7.4 hours every day staring at a computer screen. To avoid symptoms of dry eye, shut your laptop and break out the legal pad or journal to restart your brainstorming process. Try doodling or drawing a flowchart to gain perspective on the scope of your project and begin making connections. Finally, remember to use your non-work time to brainstorm. While it is important to be able to leave work at work and achieve the coveted work-life balance, there is no denying that many of our best ideas come while driving or taking a shower.

DAY 20: GET THE BLOOD FLOWING

A wave of tiredness often comes alongside the afternoon slump. To give yourself a boost of energy, get away from your desk and add some variety to your working environment. Studies show that surrounding yourself with natural light will keep you energized while you work and help you fall asleep more easily at night. If possible, opt for a standing desk (or hybrid) to keep you alert and the blood flowing. Finally, if your workload requires a lot of writing, consider booking yourself a conference room to shut out distractions and maximize productivity. No matter what, get away from your desk for at least a portion of each day.

It takes the average person 23 minutes to regain focus after procrastinating



DAY 21: DROP THE BEATS

If coffee shop sounds won't do the trick, maybe music will. There is nothing like the right song to boost motivation. And with Spotify's playlists organized by genre and mood, it is easy to find the perfect soundtrack for your workday. Match your playlist to the task at hand. Try **"Relax & Unwind"** for researching, **"Deep Focus"** for intense writing sessions, and **"Indie Pop"** for designing.

DAY 22: CANCEL THE NOISE

To help block out the distractions of a noisy office, get a nice pair of noise canceling headphones — it will be worth the investment AND may help keep nosy co-workers at bay.

DAY 23: SCHEDULE THE DEEP WORK

Don't let your frantic schedule get in the way of your brilliant brain's ability to do great work. If you have to write a strategy, a big report or develop a mammoth PowerPoint presentation, schedule it in your calendar as if it were a meeting. And then keep it. (And maybe do it while wearing those noise canceling headphones). You'll be glad you did.

DAY 24: ADOPT THE TWO-MINUTE RULE

The two-minute rule (from David Allen's Getting Things Done system) says that when a task will take you less than two minutes, just do it—don't add it to your to-do list or capture it for later.

DAY 25: HACK YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

Tools like Scoop.it, Buffer, Muckrack and HootSuite make it easy for you to find good content and repurpose or share. Our President Julie Wright swears by Buffer. When she's reading a good article online, she just hits a button to have it added into her social media "queue," and she doesn't even have to spend time writing the message.



"I have a Spotify playlist just for blogging, another one for doing research and another one I use to get pumped up before big presentations. Using customized playlists with your favorite artists and songs for a given mood can translate into work productivity."

– Chancelor Shay,
(W)right On Communications
Sr. Communications Strategist



DAY 26: MAKE A “WAITING FOR” LIST

Keep a list of everything on which you’re waiting, to make sure nothing slips through the cracks, and to worry a lot less about the people and things on which you need to stay on top. Or, create a “project matrix” for any big things on which you’re working. Instead of combing through dozens of emails, you’ll be able to view the project’s status easily and quickly in real time.

DAY 27: CREATE A MIND CAPTURE RITUAL

Find your mind wandering off during the day? If you have too much on your mind or find yourself incessantly distracted by the underbelly of the Internet, create a mind capture ritual. Set your phone timer for 15 minutes and then write out everything on your mind in free form. This will clear the cobwebs in your mind so you can be focused and productive. And don’t take it from us. Julia Cameron wrote about this ritual in her book “The Artist’s Way.” You may want to try it first thing in the morning or at lunch, when you’re likely to get distracted.

DAY 28: PRIORITIZE YOUR HIGHEST LEVERAGE TASKS

Make a list of all of the activities for which you’re responsible, then ask: “If I could only do three of these activities all day long, which would I pick?” These are the three activities into which you should invest 80–90% of your time.

DAY 29: PLAN FOR YOUR NEXT DAY

Before you leave work in the evening, spend five minutes reviewing tomorrow’s calendar and to-do list. Some people even print out their calendar for the next day so it’s waiting for them in the morning. If you have any big “frogs” to eat or “deep work” to do, schedule that for the morning. This way, you’ll know exactly what to do when you start your day.

DAY 30: OUTSOURCE WHAT YOUR TEAM CAN’T HANDLE

Tried all of these things and still have too much to do?

At (W)right On, we spend a lot of time working with overburdened teams. Many of our client partners have too much to do and not enough bandwidth to get it all done. Also, internal teams should want to tap into outside strategic thinking and creativity to unearth some fresh ideas. That’s where we come to the rescue. Spend today identifying the parts of your program that you can outsource or that could benefit from outside perspective. Have a looming web project or a video you need to create? Want to progress your company’s PR strategy but are too close to the subject for objective ideas? Want to write your company’s PR strategy but don’t know where to start? Give us a call or **shoot us a note**.





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