Science Has It: You Should Stop Doing These 10 Things To Be More Productive

Want to master the 24 hours you have in each day? Use these scientifically-backed strategies to be more productive:

1. Stop ignoring your ultradium rhythm!

Every person experiences a natural lull in productivity after doing an activity for about 90-120 minutes. This period is called the ultradium rhythm, and you shouldn't ignore its power. Instead of trying to "push through" mental fatigue, it's better to take a break <u>when your ultradium rhythm cycles</u>. Get up, walk around and do something different for up to 20 minutes.

You may even want to take a nap, especially if you work for a company that has a <u>napping room or policy</u> as do NASA, AOL and – not surprisingly – Google. After your break or some power shut-eye, come back to your original activity with more energy, creativity and focus.

2. Stop checking your social media accounts every hour!

Are you one of the millions of people who keeps his or her social media account live and active on your smart phone, tablet, laptop or desktop? Doing so presents an attractive nuisance, and you'll end up <u>wasting tons of minutes per day</u>watching cat videos and finding out your second-cousin once removed's neighbor's boss saw a penguin at the zoo. Make a pact with yourself to relegate checking your social media accounts once or twice per day instead of allowing them to suck your time.

Spending time with people as people – and not avatars on a screen – was very useful for <u>one Citrix vice president</u>. He discovered that relationships made in the "real world" were not only more satisfying than those made in social media, but that they produced a stronger sense of supportiveness.

3. Stop saying "yes" to everything and everyone.

Are you a "yes" man or woman? It's time to rethink the way you're responding when you're asked to do something. While you can't always say "no" to your boss, your spouse or your friends, you are allowed to pick and choose most decisions you make during the day. By saying "no," you can avail yourself of the scientifically-based Pareto Principle. The Pareto Principle claims that 20 percent of efforts produce 80 percent of results. Conversely,

20 percent of results consume 80 percent of efforts. Spend your 80 percent doing what matters, not what doesn't.

If this is a difficult principle for you to adapt, don't worry – you can always schedule one day a week to say "yes". That's what TED Talks' guest speaker Tania Luna does.

4. Stop checking your email incessantly.

Most of us habitually check our email on an unstructured basis. That is, we look whenever we feel like it. This turns into a problem because emails can sap time that is better spent elsewhere. Get off the email train by making it a point to only check emails at specific points during your day. For instance, you may want to check yours at lunchtime, and then again in the evening.

Tim Ferris, author of *The 4-Hour Work Week*, recommends picking two specific times each day for maximum productivity.

5. Stop doing everything yourself.

Sure, it can be thrilling to tell everyone that you are "doing it all," but there's no reason to try and be superhuman. Eventually, you'll fail – miserably – without help. If delegating is tough for you, just remind yourself that the old adage "many hands make lighter work" holds true in all aspects of life.

Need a little help? Buy or borrow the Harvard Business School Press book *Hidden Value: How Great Companies Achieve Extraordinary Results with Ordinary People*. In it, author Charles O'Reilly gives tips on how to begin the process if you're uncomfortable with or unaccustomed to delegation.
Reach out and get the assistance you need; in fact, you may want to start looking at areas where others can do the tasks you're doing now. Free up your time to work on other things, and start really being productive.

6. Stop trying to be perfect.

Let's get this on the table right now: You're not perfect and you shouldn't try to be.
A research study published by University Affairs illustrates this point. The study showed that professors who were perfectionists had lower productivity levels than those who accepted the fact that they were only human. The moral of the story is that, on most occasions, being good is good enough.
Besides, Google has had incredible success fostering leaders who weren't top students from universities. That says something.

7. Stop being busy all the time.

A Harvard study and scientific evidence has shown that spending downtime by oneself is more important than we might have otherwise thought. Dubbed "The Power of Lonely" by a Boston Globe writer, the principle suggests that people have stronger memories of moments they spend by themselves. In other words, it's time for a little introspection to get to the heart of who you honestly are, as well as what you want to do "when you grow up."

When Brigid Schulte slowed down, she found the time to pen *Overwhelmed: Work, Love and Play When No One Has the Time*. Schulte shows how doing less can be freeing, and recommends this to anyone who truly wants to be a success.

#8. Stop saying "I can't."

Want to kick a habit or keep yourself from overeating? Don't tell yourself "I can't," because it just sets you up for failure. Instead, replace "I can't" with "I don't." For example, those who say they "don't" do something actually do it in half the cases of those who say, "I can't." If you want to give up smoking, tell yourself you "don't" smoke rather than you "can't" smoke; you'll find that you have a better chance of quitting.

Exercise guru Joe English talks about the power of "I can" in this blog post on Running Advice. While Joe's discussion of "I can" applies mainly to exercise and working out, he touches on some universal strategies all of us can use to be more productive. Rather than thinking, "I can't do this" or "I don't know if I can do this," Joe says he thinks to himself, "You can and you will." Changing the way you think about the obstacles in front of you can have a huge impact on your daily productivity.

9. Stop multitasking.

It seems like multitasking is embraced in our culture as a "given," but it isn't exactly efficient. Researchers examined the skills of multitaskers and were shocked to discover that they didn't do well on any of the tasks to which they were assigned. Focus on single tasks, and leave the multitasking to those who haven't read this article yet. You'll be in good company – the CBS Evening News started discouraging multitasking in their offices and had fascinating results.

10. Stop being so negative.

Are you someone for whom the glass is always half-empty… or just empty? While a little negativity can be understandable, a lot of it will only cramp your style and keep you from achieving your goals. According to scientists from Japan, when we think negative thoughts, we color our world with pessimism and make it harder to attain success.
So start looking at the glass a different way and enjoy your newfound outlook on life, business and everything under the sun.As sales guru Zig Ziglar said: "Winners evaluate

themselves in a positive manner and look for their strengths as they work to overcome weaknesses."

As you can see, being productive means "stopping." If that's tough for you to do, just practice. Changing behaviors takes time. However, doing something for about 21 days usually makes it easier to continue with the routine. Make this day one, and in three weeks your productivity level should be much higher.

Kayla Matthews is a personal development, self-improvement and productivity writer who blogs for Lifehack, Inc. Innovate, MakeUseOf and The Huffington Post. Full Bio

---

This article was originally posted at: http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/science-stop-10-things-productive.html

---

Visit Bishop House's Leadwell Knowledge Base for more resources on the topics that matter most to leaders

New Leader

Whether you just got promoted and don't know where to begin, or you have been in a leadership role for a while, these resources will provide you with valuable insight into the fundamentals of leadership.

Managing Change

Managing change can be challenging. Look here for ideas on how you can manage yourself through change and strategies for leading your team through change.

Effective Communication

Effective communication skills are essential to effective leadership. Click here to explore how to better communicate with employees, peers and others.

Managing Up

How to manage up when your boss has you down. Look here for strategies for dealing with your boss.

Your Development

Look here for ideas on how to develop as a leader and to continue to grow in your leadership knowledge.

Managing Performance

Explore content about being a coach to your employees, guiding them to success, managing poor performers, motivating good performers and more.

Productivity

Insights and tips on how to be more productive as a manager. Learn how to effectively and efficiently manage time, emails, meetings and other aspects of your role as a leader.

Building My Team

Resources for learning how to build a cohesive team as well as strategies for where to start when it is anything but.