

10 Easy Ways to Get Things Done

Written by Sue Wilson

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Here are 10 actions that you can take today that can make you at least twice as productive as your colleagues.

1. Avoid meetings that lack an agenda.

Meetings can only be productive if people know why they're meeting in the first place. An agenda provides focus and purpose. The lack of an agenda guarantees meandering conversations that dive into rat holes. They're a waste of your (and everyone else's) time.

2. Never pick up on an unknown caller.

Unless you're working in telesales or product support, there's no reason why you should ever take a call from somebody you don't know. After all, when was the last time you took an unexpected call that was truly important? Days? Weeks? Months?

3. Permanently turn off your voice mail.

A voice-mail message consumes minutes of your time (more if you have to replay) to communicate information you could absorb from an email in seconds. Explain in your outgoing message that you don't use voice mail, and instead provide your email address.

4. Hone your email program's sorting rules.

It takes time and energy to change gear to sort through (and respond to) a long list of disconnected messages. Most email programs allow you to route different types of messages into folders, where you can review and respond en masse rather than piecemeal.

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5. Periodically disable email and texting.

When you must do creative work or absorb complex information, the last thing you need is your computer and phone chirping and beeping for your attention. Whatever it is, it can wait until you've finished the task at hand. Trust me.

6. Give social butterflies short shrift.

For some people, a day at work means an endless coffee klatch. They wander the halls searching for somebody, ostensibly to discuss business but really just to chat. Don't let these time leeches hobble your success. Just say no. If necessary, get rude.

7. Reward your body with high-quality fuel.

What you eat determines your energy level, and your energy level determines how much you can get accomplished. Sugary treats provide a quick energy boost but then create an even deeper dip. Heavy foods take energy to digest, leaving you with less to use.

8. Take a five-minute walking break every hour.

The human body is not designed to sit for hours at a stretch. Attempting to do so inevitably creates aches and pains that leech your energy as your body tries to compensate and heal them. So get up and move! Use a timer if you have to.

9. Make your decisions more quickly.

Most people waste an extraordinary amount of time obsessing about (and second-guessing) their decision making. However, you're always better off making a good-enough decision

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quickly than waiting for an imaginary best decision.

10. Completely disconnect for 12 hours every day.

If you stop pretending to be productive when you're eating and sleeping, you'll be far more productive when you're actually working. Being always available is an unfailing recipe for stress, illness, and bad decision making. Give it rest.

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