

Tips For a More Productive Life

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Time spent on the important but non-urgent aspects of your business are the most vital for success. In other words, the most successful entrepreneurs spend most of their time on long-term planning, developing relationships and training staff to take on delegated tasks. Virtually no time is spent answering e-mails, plowing through an inbox or attending meetings. In my experience working with entrepreneurs, I've made a number of observations which I think are worth passing on.

Most entrepreneurs operate solo; they're the cook, maitre d', busboy and bottle washer of their business. They have families to attend to and are desperately trying to keep all the plates on the tray without dropping any. I believe that's why so many startups fail. There's no way to manage that kind of chaos the way most of us try to manage. Those who succeed are truly special, and recognize that they require assistance in a number of areas in their lives.

If you find yourself working night and day and still feel you're spinning your wheels, try the following:

Measure Productivity

I'm going to assume that you have a long-term (five years) and shorter-term (six months to one year) vision for your business. Your daily activities and actions are guided by this vision, so it's critical to start with a solid plan.

Your plan will be accomplished in small steps, taking action consistently over time. Once you acknowledge that you can't possibly do everything you think you should do, have to do or want to do, ask the question "What is the best use of my time and energy today?"

Many entrepreneurs I've met have one- and five-year plans for their company's income, products and impact. They break down that vision into smaller pieces that they call spokes, or their daily actions.

Each day, they make a list of the six most important things they can do to move forward on their spoke. The actions are simple, small and measurable. They put no more than six tasks on the list at a time. Typically, they then schedule

a two-hour chunk of time during the day when they can turn off their phone and focus on making progress on those six steps. If those items are not completed, they roll the items over to the next day, making sure to finish the carry-over items first.

Given the above, you can accomplish six steps toward your long-term goal in a short period of time each day. At the end of the day, you can measure your productivity in small, consistent actions. Your "list" becomes a sort of diary of accomplishments, and you can refer to it for motivation.

Juggling Projects

If you're like most entrepreneurs, you don't consciously choose projects. Take 10 minutes right now, and make the following lists:

- ❖ Projects I'm currently working on
- ❖ Roles I'm handling in my life and business (parent, spouse, manager, thought leader, accountant, mail clerk, etc.) Be honest and list them all.
- ❖ Things on your mind that you aren't getting to (unfinished business, creative pursuits, new product ideas, etc.)

Now, looking through the filter of your long-term goals, which of these roles and projects emerge as priorities? Which are the ones that if you paid full and consistent attention to would make the biggest difference in your feelings of vitality, your relationships and your financial success?

If you take these top priorities and apply the method outlined in the section above, you'll see an immediate increase in energy and productivity.

Doing "enough" is a decision, not a thing. If you're clear on your vision, have balanced your priorities to include health, relationships and inner work in addition to your business, and you are taking small, consistent actions each day, you are doing the best you can. Act as if you've done enough, acknowledge yourself, rest and rejuvenate, and watch your results expand.

Tips For a More Productive Life, continued



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