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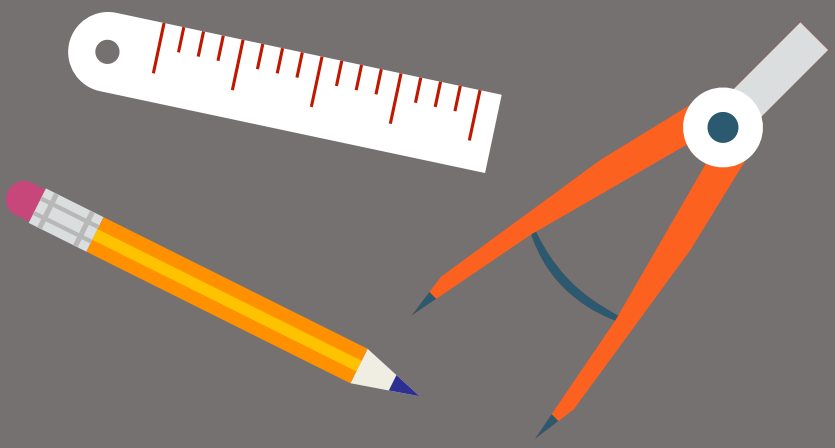
17 Habits Of Highly **Productive People**



PRACTICAL TOOLS

17 Habits Of Highly Productive People

1. They Get To Work Early

Productive people know the importance of showing up for work early. Instead of rushing anxiously, they stroll in calmly. This sets a relaxed tone from the start of the workday and ensures extra time to get things off on the right track.

2. They Don't Watch The Clock

They don't need to. Productive people are on time when it's important, and set their own professional pace. There's no need to count the minutes until the day is over. They do more in a shorter time than most, and so they leave when the day's work is accomplished.

3. They're Organized

Their workspace is professional, and everything needed is within reach, not tucked away or scattered everywhere. Clutter can and often does hinder productivity. Productive people keep the office organized so they don't spend unnecessary time looking for what's important.

4. They Don't Get Lost In Their Devices

Even when they have it with them, they're talking to YOU, not to their phone or iPad. Tumblr founder David Karp says he avoids answering emails on his phone in the first 15 minutes of his workday. If he sees something important, he flags it for later.

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5. They Do 4 High-Intensity Hours Of Work

Most people work an eight-hour day, but only half of that day is likely to be truly productive. A chunk of the day will be taken up with meetings, responding to calls and other mundane activities. Productive people schedule their most important, high-value tasks in the morning, and stay with it until what needs to get accomplished is completed.

6. They Focus On Strategic Tasks

High-value tasks are what companies and clients pay for – coming up with new ideas that drive revenue, reduce costs and lead to continual improvements. But it's difficult to deliver creative insights all day long. Productive people focus on key creative tasks early, leaving time at the end of the day to work through less-taxing tasks, like editing reports or tossing old papers.

7. They Break Large Projects Into Doable Pieces

It's one of the most important time management hacks. For example, organizing a corporate conference in six months may feel impossible. Productive people know to get started by writing a plan and asking for advice from people who have accomplished similar projects.

8. They Delegate Well

Productive managers routinely delegate tasks to focus on their work. They know the keys to effective delegation: describe the task, set a deadline, explain the job sufficiently, stay informed, but get out of the way.

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9. They Only Do What Needs To Be Done

Productive people habitually spot nonsense work in their day and ruthlessly eliminate it. They don't look for how to do something better or faster until asking, "Do I need to do this at all?" Look at it like you were moving and had 10 rooms full of stuff; you'd sort through it and eliminate what was useless BEFORE you load the truck. Productive people do the same with their workload, tossing meaningless activities that hinder getting real work done.

10. They Do Their Own Work First

Flight attendants tell you in an emergency to fix your own breathing mask first, then assist someone else. That would come natural to a productive person. Productive people know they're no good to anyone else unless their own house is in order. Instead of trying to be all things to all people, they respect their own routines and will politely reject or delay requests for their time.

11. They Know How And When To Say 'No'

Saying yes to new responsibilities is a great way to grow your career and remain valuable. But it's a habit some take too far. Productive people know their schedules and protect their time boundaries. If asked to participate in something when they don't have the time, they say no and stick to it. If you struggle with saying no, read *The Power of No: Because One Little Word Can Bring Health, Abundance, and Happiness* by James Altucher and Claudia Azula Altucher. They'll set you straight.

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12. They Embrace Values

Understanding what's really important, personally and professionally, helps productive people manage time. If family time is a top value, productive people adjust work schedules according to that value. They'll stay a little late each evening to get work done, for example, so the weekend is free to spend time at home. Keeping that value as a priority drives them to use time and energy wisely while at work.

13. They Admit Mistakes And Move On

Covering up mistakes wastes everyone's time. Productive people know there's no sense crying over spilled milk, or passing the blame, or shrugging it off. The sooner you own up to mistakes, the sooner you give yourself a chance to learn from them, solve the problem and move on.

14. They Write Stuff Down

Productive people journal their thoughts, ideas and plans before turning in. It helps clear the mind to recognize plans and strategies that work best. Writing things down sharpens communication and thinking skills to help us be better leaders. It also helps us remember important details that we'd likely forget.

15. They Read And Read And Read

A book chapter, a magazine article, whatever it is doesn't matter.

Productive people read because they know getting inside another person's thoughts (even in a fiction novel) fosters creativity and improvement.

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16. They Keep Goals In Sight

Productive people believe that every minute spent in planning saves 10 minutes in execution. Even if it takes only a minute, they remind themselves what was left undone and what to tackle first the next day. This allows them to go into tomorrow feeling better prepared, more confident, and less stressed.

17. They Stay Aware Of Their Environment, And How To Control It

We all spend a great deal of time in suggestive environments, often unaware of the effect outside forces have on behavior. We hear a constant barrage of distractions that sap our focus. Ads scream at us from TV, radio, our computer. Links on the Internet encourage us to keep clicking. Notifications and "pokes" on our smartphones beckon.

It's a conspiracy – one we all know about but don't try very hard to defeat.

Dan Ariely, a behavioral economist and New York Times bestselling author of *"Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions,"* helped created the smart-calendar app, Timeful.

"One of the big lessons from social science in the last 40 years is that environment matters," Ariely says. "If you go to a buffet and the buffet is organized in one way, you will eat one thing. If it's organized in a different way, you'll eat different things. We think we make decisions on our own, but the environment influences us to a great degree."

His point is that productive people recognize these influences and distractions, but by keep goals clear, they block out the noise and get things done.

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