



Working Smarter

What is working smarter? Working smarter is about how you deal with your time both in the work place and the rest of your life. It enables you to have an effective, enjoyable and controlled method of how you manage your time.

Working smarter creates the opportunity to ensure that you make the best use of time and your life. It enables you to control your time and to ensure that the work that you do produces the most effective results.

- To work smarter you need to take control of your time. Anything that you don't control steals your time, and these can vary in their impact. Working Smarter will assist you here and remove or reduce any negative effects.
- To work smarter you need to be disciplined and to think of your own needs.

The first step is to try and analyse the causes of the problem:

- What factors steal my time?
- Is the problem something I create?
- What can you do to improve the situation?
- What factors are beyond your control?
- It is easy to make excuses, as then you do not have to address the problem.
- What excuses are you guilty of making, which are really avoidance tactics?

The Four Ds of Time Management

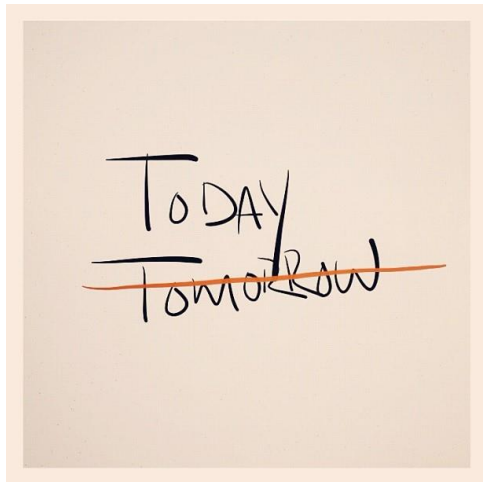
The first step to working Smarter is to ensure that when a new task arrives, whether that's via email, through a conversation or paper on your desk, is to ask yourself these four questions:

- Does this need to be done at all?
- Do I have to do it or should I delegate it to someone else?
- Should the task be delayed to a more appropriate time?
- I know it has to be done by me and right now.

This creates the four D's of time management:

- **Drop It** - Reflect on what the consequences would be if the task did not get done at all – how would your objectives be affected? If it is simply a task that makes you busy but doesn't contribute, then consider dropping it.
- **Delegate it** - Should you do it or could someone else complete the task just as effectively, freeing you up for tasks that you really must do.
- **Delay It** - If it doesn't have to be done now, when is the best time for the task.
- **Do it** - The task needs to be done and done now. Get on with the task and get it out of the way.

If you use these principles it means you will only have to deal with a task once and at the right time.



Do You Make the Most of your Time?

You'll get more done if you establish schedules and stick to them as much as you can, but you have to stay flexible and adaptable to the unexpected. Otherwise, when unplanned things happen, it will cause you just as much stress as trying to work without a plan.

Even if you are busy, it doesn't mean that you are always productive. We are often busy however at the end of the day, it's

difficult to see exactly what we have achieved.

You have to ensure that you make the most of your time and work in the most effective way. You need to ensure that you create your own routines and processes to make the most of your time.

You also need to consider the impact you have on other people's time when you plan your own work.

- If you are manager do you call meetings unnecessarily?
- Do you ever change your mind after you have started a task or work without deciding the direction?

These can be huge time wasters and it means you are not establishing your objectives in the first place. Be clear of your aim and direction at the start.

- Do you always assume that other people are busy because they haven't mentioned they have time to spare?

Part of being in a team is to ensure we share resources, don't be afraid of asking for help.

The following model will help you to remember:

- Listen
- Evaluate
- Act
- Review
- Next Steps

Avoid Time Traps

Do you ever?

- Spend a disproportionately high amount of time in the work places where the most congenial people are, rather than where the most important issues arise.
- Waste too much time getting daily updates on routine activities as opposed to waiting for a more meaningful weekly summary.
- Jump to eagerly into the routine and more straightforward work and putting off the more complex and difficult work.
- Not starting the more important work early in the week and at around 10am in the morning.
- Not bothering to make a schedule for each day or if you do schedule, over scheduling – scheduling each day so tightly that it is impossible to stay on track and the schedule quickly becomes meaningless.

Common timewasters include:

- Telephone calls
- Emails
- Friends dropping by
- Conversations around the coffee machine
- Concentrating on trivia
- Doing one of your team members work or doing the work of others
- Meetings
- Not making decisions
- Not planning



Which are you guilty of? Produce actions to eliminate them.

Understanding and using certain processes will assist you greatly. The relevance and extent to which you use them will depend totally upon your job and associated responsibilities. You may find that one process in particular will help you enormously, and just by understanding and developing that area will save you time, possibly stress and enable you to plan and operate at maximum potential.

Working Smarter

- Set priorities - selecting the critical few tasks against the activities from the trivial many
- Avoid routinely taking work home and staying late
- Be selective always – throw away or discard everything you can live without
- Do jobs requiring mental effort when you are at your best
- Do one thing at a time
- Establish a fixed daily routine (if appropriate)
- Establish realistic working goals
- Fix deadlines for all jobs and stick to them
- Check regularly, on how effectively you are using your time
- Never postpone important matters that are unpleasant
- Occasionally analyse your interruptions
- Plan your telephone calls whenever possible
- Set a definite time or arrange meetings to discuss routine matters
- Treat a large job as a series of small, achievable tasks

Conquering your Paperwork and E-Mail Battle

There is a constant avalanche of material arriving on our desks and into our inbox. Use the 4 D method to control the tasks and deal with them once.

One of the biggest obstacles to getting things done is clutter. The human mind can only consciously work on one thing at a time. To be effective, you need to have a clear work area. This means putting all the things, you are not actually doing at this moment out of sight.



Because people do not like clutter, they often try to “clear their desk” by doing all the little jobs that are represented by all the paper. Usually, the paper on a desk is not associated, for the most part, with major progress or maintenance tasks. It consists of all the notes, letters and other things that pile up daily are not terribly important.

People become enmeshed in the “clutter trap.” They feel that if they could just clear all the trivial things off their desk, they would be in a position to start on the important things. Unfortunately, more clutter arrives faster than they can clear the old, and they spend all their time doing unimportant things in a vain attempt to get ready for the important one.

The way to clear your desk is to take all the items on it, make a note of what they are, and file them. This also applies to any email that’s have come into your inbox but are going to be worked on later. Then schedule the task to a particular time.

The Smarter Attitude

The right attitude allows you to unlock your potential simply by valuing your time as if it was the single most important resource you have.



Take More Control

When we begin to take more control, no matter how small, over some of the events on our day, we can begin to boost our productivity. If we have just a few minutes more, we can get more things done.

We can improve our ability to be more assertive, forceful and confident in planning and to be in control of some of the events in the day. Ultimately, the momentum increases

until you become almost unstoppable in your quest to get things done.

Interruptions

A three stage strategy:

- Prevent interruption, wherever possible, either in full or for a period of time during each and every day, by operating on *core times*
- Minimise the length of time people interrupt you for by offering to book an appointment at a later time
- Reduce their distraction and destructive effect, bouncing back after interruption as quickly as you possibly can

Create the Right Environment

- Get rid of that chair in front of your desk, it is simply too inviting
- Look organised, it gives the signals that you are on a mission and communicates urgency
- Face away from the traffic flow or face a screen – do not encourage eye contact
- Learn to close the door – just occasionally
- Use core times, signal that it is your core time to concentrate and not be disturbed and you will not disturb others
- Learn to negotiate timescales – what is the absolute latest time you need this for or, OK, but only if we can cover it in ten minutes flat! – I will schedule a meeting just for us next week on Wednesday etc.

If you are able to implement some of these tactics, you will reap the benefits in how you work and the way you spend your time. Working smarter will enable you to be more fulfilled and effective.

