How to Become as Productive as a CEO

Being productive is arguably the most important element of success in today's world. With all the stresses and distractions most of us experience, however, increasing our productivity and maintaining better work habits can be a real challenge. It is essential to know the real, actionable steps that you can and must take to become a more productive and successful person.

We will discuss a wide range of topics and tips so that you gain the knowledge and skills needed to maximize your productivity. You will learn about everything from the best ways to use to-do lists and why rest and breaks are much more important than you probably realize to how the 80/20 rule will help, as well as a wide variety of other useful tips and approaches. You might want to keep a special notebook in which to complete the various exercises and reflection questions found throughout the book.

To-Do Lists: Do They Really Work?

Yes, they absolutely do—if they're used effectively. Many people question the efficacy of these lists only because they don't understand how to use them to their best advantage.

You need to make and maintain two different kinds of to-do lists: lists for daily goals and big goals. There are different rules for how to make each type of list as effective as possible in helping you improve your productivity.

Rules for to-do lists for daily goals:

- Prioritize and make sure that you are including a list of meaningful things that you can feasibly accomplish in eight hours. It won't do you any good to include a lot of extraneous things that you will just cross off just to make you feel more productive but won't help create meaningful progress towards your goals.
- Organize your list to improve your efficiency. You can do this by grouping tasks that are similar in terms of importance, difficulty, or some other way.
- Make sure that each task has its own deadline.
- Be as specific as possible in delineating your goals and their deadlines. For example, instead of a goal such as "be more productive this morning", choose one such as "write one article this morning by 11am."

Rules of long-term goals:

- Long-term goals can be phrased as broader statements. Keep your broad long-term goals in mind.

Question for Reflection: Do you use to-do lists? Now that you know the rules for effective to-do lists, do you think you have been using them in the best way possible? What changes can you make to how you make and use to-do lists?

Understand the Value of Breaks

Many people make the mistake of forgoing breaks in the mistaken belief that their forging through without rest will make them more productive. Unfortunately, this can actually lead to lower

productivity. It is important to take the regular breaks needed for mental and physical rest in order to keep your brain refreshed and ready to work at its full potential.

When taking a break, make sure to have a snack if it feels like you are low on glucose. Remember that mental effort causes you to use up glucose and that you therefore need to replenish yourself to maintain and optimize your productivity. It will center your mind and help clear your thinking to do an activity such as meditation or going for short walk. It is advisable to work in 90-minute intervals, taking breaks of at least 15 minutes in between. The reason why this is essential is based on the facts of physiology.

Next Step: The next time you take a break, do one of the things that we have suggested here and see how it helps boost your productivity.

Tiredness and Brain Functioning

It has been scientifically established that tiredness negatively affects brain functioning. Sleep is vital, and not getting enough rest each night can lead to deficient decision-making. This might seem like common knowledge, but the extent of the effect is much more significant than you probably realize. People who are sleep deprived have much less blood flow and activity in the brain when they have not had a sufficient amount of sleep. This has been established by way of MRI scans and cognitive tests. It is true that each individual's specific sleep requirements are unique, but we all have one thing in common: if we are deprived of the rest we need, our brain functioning (and therefore our productivity) will inevitably suffer.

Unfortunately, industrialised Western cultures tend to dismiss the importance of rest. This is counterproductive, as our quest for productivity is actually thwarted by our obsession with showing the ability to constantly work. We need to understand our physiological limitations as human beings and intelligently worth within them.

As we read in "Why Your Brain Needs More Downtime" in *Scientific American*, "mental breaks increase productivity, replenish attention, solidify memories and encourage creativity". It is essential that we take breaks at regular intervals in order to retain proper concentration and maintain a high level of productivity. If possible, consider taking naps when needed. An alternative to that is to spend time in nature spots such as parks and riverfronts that are away from busy city streets.

Question for Reflection: Think about a time in your life when being tired has affected your performance. What did you learn from that?

Mindfulness and Productivity

Doing mindfulness training and practice can help you be more productive. Mindfulness is the quality of being fully in the moment, not allowing your brain to wander to the past or the future. This creates a profound feeling of calm empowerment, making you much better able to be productive on a consistent basis.

There is a stubborn bias in Western corporate culture against taking time to get in touch with your existence and the simple fact that you are breathing in and out. People still overwhelmingly believe that in order to be productive, you must be constantly busy in an obvious, even frenetic way. This is counterproductive. The truth is that encouraging employees to be mindful and providing

mindfulness (and possibly meditation) training can dramatically increase employee productivity, engagement, and retention. Some of the ways it does this is through its beneficial effects on sleep, stress levels, and the ability to focus. Luckily, some companies are recognizing their mistake and moving forward, beginning to enjoy the benefits of his newfound knowledge.

Every professional person (in fact, any human being at all) can benefit from practicing mindfulness. It will benefit not only your productivity but your general sense of well-being and happiness.

Question for Reflection: Do you think you have a good level of mindfulness? What will you do to improve in this area?

Try meditation: Look into things you can do to meditate every day. Examples could include simple quiet meditation using an object of focus or mantra (or affirmation), taking yoga classes, taking long, reflective walks, or one of many other quiet and solitary activities. Focussing on a hobby that requires the use of your hands but isn't very demanding on your brain (once you've learned it), such as knitting, can also put you in a meditative state. Once you have tried meditation for about a week, answer the following reflection questions in your notebook:

1. Do you feel more focussed generally? Do you find it easier to concentrate on whatever task is at hand?
2. Do you feel at greater peace with yourself as a human being? How does that boost your sense of health and well-being?
3. Have you found yourself becoming more productive? If that hasn't happened yet, don't give up! Keeping up your meditation practice is certain to reward you in terms of your focus and productivity soon.
4. Which methods of meditation have you tried? Do you want to try others? Why and which ones? When do you plan to do this?

The 80/20 Rule

If you want to be more productive, you need to understand the 80/20 principle. This principle says that only approximately 20% of what you do each day produces about 80% of your results. You need to find a way to focus more on the 20% that produces what you want. You should think about ways to eliminate pointless and perhaps menial tasks that don't help you progress towards your goals. It's essential to properly focus your energy.

- The 80/20 rule was first developed by Vilfredo Pareto, an Italian economist, in 1906. This rule has been adopted and used in a variety of different ways in every area of the business world, especially project management. It is a useful construct and provides a framework by which you can think and plan. Like most theories and rules, it isn't infallible. However, it has special utility in planning workloads and improving productivity.

There are many different ways one can apply the 80/20 rule to boost his or her productivity. F. John Rem sets out a number of different approaches, and we have included just a few below. These will help give you an idea of how versatile this theory is.

- Customer support or call center workers often find that 80% of support and customer issues come from 20% of their customer base. Once this is established, they can take time to concentrate on a root cause analysis and take action to correct the contributing factors.
- The 80/20 rule can be useful in risk analysis. This is because each individual risk always carries a different weight of significance. Once an analysis has been carried out to discover which risks hold the possibility of the most significant damage (taking into account the probability of occurrence), it is best to focus monitoring and activities for risk planning on those specific risks.
- In most businesses, it can be said that around 20% of customers are responsible for 80% of revenues. It can be extremely helpful to focus on those specific customers to encourage them to invest more of their resources and time in your company.

How to Apply the 80/20 Principle to Create More Effective To-Do Lists

As an entrepreneur or professional person, you need to evaluate every item in your workload. There are two main ways in which the 80/20 principle can be applied to boost your productivity. These are:

- For short-term, daily planning: you need to closely examine your daily workload. Find and try to eliminate activities that provide little value, such as administrative tasks that you can outsource inexpensively.
- For longer-term planning: figure out which goals and activities are most necessary to your success and professional development.

The 80/20 Rule and Your Most Productive Times

Determine which parts of the day you find yourself to be naturally more productive. As explained in "5 Tips for Applying the 80/20 Rule", we all have a "productivity 'sweet spot'". Do you find that you are most productive in the morning? Or is the evening the time when you feel most upbeat and alert? Try to find a way to accommodate these tendencies. Try to work during the times when you feel you are most (or around 80% more) productive.

You can also apply these principles to the ways in which you work. For example, if you find that you work best alone rather than with other people, try to spend most of your time working in this way. The key is to get to know yourself and put your knowledge into action wherever possible.

Identifying and Cutting Down on Low-Value Tasks

While it might not be possible to completely eliminate smaller, lower-value tasks in your day, you should make a mindful effort to create plans that cut them down and take up the least amount of your time possible.

To understand what low-value tasks are, you first need to understand and identify high-value tasks. High-value tasks are those that make use of your specialized expertise to generate revenue and provide you with meaningful professional development. For highly trained people, low-value tasks can include repetitive administrative tasks and other mindless or relatively mindless activities.

Remember that high-value tasks make the best and most productive use of your talents and abilities. When you spend too much time on low-value tasks, you are not getting the best value out of your time. It may seem like you're working hard and you probably are, but unfortunately this is not enough. Remember the old adage: work smarter, not harder. Take an intelligent and strategic approach.

If you're self-employed, you are fortunate in having more latitude than someone with a traditional job would do in deciding on your own schedule, tasks, and approaches. Here are some things you can do to cut out the low-value work in your schedule:

- Each time you take on a new job or contract or set a new work goal, take time to decide on how to strongly prioritize high-value tasks in your daily schedule. Look into outsourcing low-value tasks wherever it is possible and affordable to do so.
- Make decisions on the tasks that you will and will not do, and make sure to clear this with your client before beginning the project. This, of course, can and should be done diplomatically and professionally. This is especially useful for trying to reduce low-value tasks that the client might expect but will not really notice or value. Have you ever been at a retail store and the cashier ask you whether you would like a receipt? This is a smart way of checking first before not doing something that the client might expect otherwise, to make sure you will not get in trouble for not carrying out that task. If asked the right way, there is a very good chance that the client will say no, you don't have to worry about doing it.
- Understand that you set your own rules. It is up to you to decide what your rules will be and to ensure other people know what they are up front.
- Try to find ways to automate low-value tasks. This can be especially viable in the areas of setting up standard arrangements, sending acknowledgements, and scheduling.

If you're an employee rather than self-employed, you might think that cutting down on low-value tasks is easier said than done. There are ways that you can approach this, however. If you find that any of the suggestions we have made above are not practicable for you to use, here are some ways you can still try to cut down on low-value work in your day-to-day tasks:

- When you are given more responsibility, recognize that you have an opportunity for restructuring of your work. Present a plan to your manager for this restructuring, ensuring you remain confident, organized, and receptive in your approach. Acknowledge their authority and leadership at all times, asking what you should and should not do.
- Use your successes to your advantage. The next time you receive praise on your performance, think about asking for something that will help you reduce your load of low-value work.
- Try to find a way to schedule blocks of time at work that you can use to focus solely on high-value tasks. If possible, avoid having people interrupt you during these times, notifying them beforehand that you have made time in your schedule to focus on specific tasks and do not want to be distracted.
- Ask your manager about the possibility of automating more low-value tasks that are taking up your time.

Reflection Questions

1. How many low-value tasks have you identified as currently being among your daily tasks?
2. Why do you think you have ended up with having to do these tasks? How do you think they have affected your productivity?
3. Are you surprised by how negatively low-value tasks can affect your productivity? Does this reality conflict with things you have been taught by others or ideas that you have imbibed from your culture in the past?

How to Reduce the Amount of Low-Value Work in Your Schedule

Low-value tasks often fall into one of the following two categories, especially for managers:

- Tasks that are necessary but could be delegated to someone else: Managers sometimes end up doing low-value work because poor organization or delegation practices (or being short-staffed) leads them to mistakenly think that if they don't do it, it won't get done.
- Tasks that have become routine but are unnecessary: It's quite common in workplaces for everyone getting used to certain tasks being done without realizing that they are unnecessary. An example of this would be a long report that nobody reads.

In his Linkedin article, Chris Higgins explains that simply analyzing tasks and keeping in good communication with your team can help you eliminate low-value work from your schedule. If there is a task (such as the long report) that you feel is unnecessary, contact your teammates and ask if they read the report or could do without it. Perhaps a shorter report would be sufficient. If you think that you might not have enough staff and that is why you end up doing low-value tasks at times, look into hiring the appropriate number of people. You can also look into the option of automation. If your company has an IT department, consult with it and see what applicable programs are available. If you don't have access to such a department, talk to the tech-savvy people you know.

Reflection Questions:

1. How will you go about reducing the number of low-value tasks in your schedule? How do you think this will positively affect your productivity?
2. What will be your first step in trying to avoid low-value tasks as much as you can in your workload?

Common Productivity Misconceptions to Avoid

There are some things that people do because they mistakenly think they make them more productive. According to Vivian Giang in her article "5 Things You're Doing that Seem Productive, But Aren't", these are some things that you need to remember to avoid some of the most common traps:

- Stop saying "yes" all the time: Some people labor under the mistaken impression that they have to say yes to everything to show that they have a good work ethic and are a productive person. Sadly, the tendency to always say yes tends to make you less productive, not more.

Learning how to be assertive and say no when you need to will help to boost your confidence, too.

- Avoid memorizing to-do lists: One of the advantages of using to-do lists is to empty your brain of the list itself and keep it in a controlled and easily accessible place that doesn't take over space in your mind. Trying to memorize your to-do list will accomplish nothing other than make you feel unnecessarily overwhelmed.
- Don't fall for the multitasking myth: Many people believe they can multitask but they're mistaken if they think they are accomplishing their work effectively. The human brain is simply not capable of doing many different things at once with a high level of productivity. Instead of multitasking, try "set shifting". Set shifting involves practicing the ability to switch from activity to activity by completely shifting your thinking.
- Never make the most important item the first one on your to-do list: This might seem counterintuitive to many of us, but choosing the most important task for first place on your to-do list can actually make you less productive. This is because if you can't accomplish it quickly, you're going to feel overwhelmed and less likely to complete all the other items on your list.

Reflection Questions:

1. Have you fallen prey to any of these misconceptions about productivity? If yes, in what ways?
2. How can you avoid these misconceptions from negatively affecting you in the future?
3. How and where do you think you picked up these misconceptions in the first place? How can you guard against these ideas?

Become a Morning Person

If you don't currently think of yourself as a morning person, that is something that needs to change! It is impossible to overstate how much of the way you spend your morning impacts the rest of your day. Don't let yourself sleep in. Even staying in bed an extra half an hour can create the lazy mindset that you want to ignore in order to be productive. You're likely to spend that time thinking of excuses for putting off the things you need to do later.

Make sure to use your morning effectively. Don't' fall into the common trap of starting your day checking emails and replying to messages. Doing this first thing in the morning can actually lead to you basing what you do that day on what other people want you to do rather than what you need to do to be productive.

Try exercising your willpower muscles by getting into the habit of waking up early every day. This will not only put you into a more productive and empowered mindset but give you more time during the day to be productive.

You need to come up with a morning routine that you follow every day. Try different things and see what works for you. Some ideas for ways to start your day include meditating, watching the news, going for a walk or run, working out, stretching, or simply having breakfast. Of course, doing more than one or several of these things will be even more beneficial.

Reflection Questions:

1. Are you a morning person? If not, have you ever envied morning people and how productive they seemed to be?
2. How committed are you to becoming more of a morning person? How will this help you?
3. What steps will you take to starting your days earlier? Do you think you'll have any problems with self-discipline? If so, what will you do to deal with this?

Learning about Prioritization

If you want to be more productive, you must learn how to prioritize. One useful tactic is to try to accomplish something especially challenging or meaningful in the morning, so that you feel empowered and encouraged for the rest of the day. This is a good idea because in the morning, you will have the optimal levels of energy to tackle the most challenging tasks. After completing these challenging tasks, you will be less likely to procrastinate and put off doing other things doing the rest of the day. You will feel like a productive person and feel propelled to act like one.

To properly prioritize, you must think about what your goals of the day should be and what needs to be done most urgently to ensure they are fulfilled. You need to foster a sense of confidence in yourself and your own judgment to make these decisions.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you think you are currently effective at prioritizing tasks in your to-do list? Why or why not?
2. What can you do to improve in the area of prioritization? How do you think that improving will help you become more productive and successful?

Recognizing the Two Biggest Productivity Killers

The two biggest productivity killers are multitasking and laziness. Let's go over these factors here and better explain the nature of these productivity killers and what you can do to counteract them.

Laziness can be a tricky one because sometimes it can be difficult to recognize. One way to avoid the trap of laziness is to develop and engage with better self-awareness. Self-awareness will help you understand your motivations for doing certain things, and knowing your motivations will give you insight into whether or not laziness is a factor. Some of the signs of laziness playing a part in your lack of productivity include procrastination (putting things off to later that you could be done now for no good reason), making excuses, and doing unproductive things such as texting, browsing social media, writing unnecessary emails, or even engaging in useless meetings can be instances of laziness. These things tend to give us short-term feelings of enjoyment that lure us away from focussing on the task that needs to be done in order for you to be productive.

Multitasking is a productivity killer because focussing on more than one task at a time drains your brainpower. It has actually been shown to be able to temporarily lower your I.Q. Avoid multitasking whenever possible, and create an environment for yourself when you can focus purely on the task at hand. This can be difficult with all of the distractions of technology we have today, but with some self-awareness and discipline it is possible.

If you feel the need to have noise of some kind in the background when you work, try putting on classical music or another kind of instrumental music without singing. Having music on can be helpful for many people, but sometimes the words in the song can be distracting for the brain.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you agree that laziness can be a major productivity killer? Why or why not? Do you think that sometimes something that seems like laziness might just be a symptom or sign of something else? Whatever your feelings on this and whatever your reasons might be for not being attentive enough to your work, do you recognize that combating this will lead to better productivity?
2. What will you do to combat any tendency to laziness? Do you think that being more mindful and aware of what you are doing at every moment during the day will help you in this task?
3. Does it surprise you that multitasking can be such a productivity killer? Do you often multitask? Think carefully. Do you think that this has affected your productivity in a negative way? Do you sometimes use the idea of multitasking to cover laziness or not wanting to focus? Be honest!

Staying Motivated

The ability to stay motivated is one of the most important factors in productivity but can be challenging in today's stressful and often discouraging world.

An important factor in staying motivated is to see the difference between long-term and short-term goals and having a good perspective on the big picture. You need to live for your long-term vision rather than short-term gratification. Get in touch with your long-term goals and your vision of yourself for the future.

Let's discuss some ways that you can more effectively stay motivated. "How to Stay Motivated and Accomplish Anything" by Suzanne Gerber sets out a list of tips:

1. Know the reasons why you need to accomplish each goal: Take the time to write by hand all the reasons why you need to accomplish each or your goals. It is better to write this by hand rather than type it, as it is believed that this will create more mental connections in your brain and better synthesis and retention.
2. Learn to visualize the details of each goal: Seek to experience the details of the results of fulfilling your goal, imagining how it will feel, hear, and look like at the time. Visualization is far more important than you might realize. If you're involved in competitive athletics, you are probably already aware of this.
3. Be prepared for how to deal with flagging motivation: Think of ways to regain your motivation when it starts to flag. Different people develop a variety of effective strategies. One strategy that might help is imaging the hardships and barriers that other people have experienced. For example, you could think about people living in countries with fewer opportunities.
4. Be flexible with your strategy: While it's vital to have a strategy, it's equally important to be able to change your strategy when needed.

5. Stay aware of your reasons: You need to be aware of the reasons for your desire to achieve your goals. If you don't stay in touch with these, you are likely to lose strength of motivation.
6. Break down your goals and set intermediary targets: Remember to break your larger goals down into smaller ones and set intermediary targets. This will help you feel less overwhelmed when there are many things to be done. Many people successfully harness the concept of "chunking". Chunking involves grouping tasks together in manageable segments.

Learning Motivation Exercise

Here is an exercise to practice how to become more motivated in your work. You can complete this in your notebook.

1. Think of one of your most important gaols. Write down why you want or need to accomplish this goal.
2. Write down pictures that come into your mind as you visualize the achievement of your goal. Does this make you feel more confident and motivated?
3. Write a list of things you will do to help deal with weak motivation. You can keep this list for the next time you have trouble.
4. Reflect for a while on your level of flexibility. Are you flexible? Take some time to think about how flexible you are. If you do not feel you are flexible enough and that this could be negatively affecting your productivity, consider ways you could remedy this.
5. Break down your goal into smaller, intermediary ones. How will you reward yourself when you accomplish the first small goal?

Clean Up Your Environment

Don't underestimate how much clutter and a messy environment can interfere with your productivity. Keep your workspace clean and organized. This will cut down on many potential distractions.

Clutter around you and in your workspace can create a cluttered and chaotic mind, interfering with clear thinking. This psychological effect is widely recognized and very real, so it's essential you do not dismiss or discount it. Remember that organization plays a big part in success, and that minimalism is an integral factor of a productive workspace. Decluttering not only creates a sense of accomplishment and positive reinforcement, but it may also result in your finding items that you thought you lost or of which you have lost track.

Having an uncluttered environment can help significantly with mindfulness, and as we already know, a higher level of mindfulness contributes to better productivity.

Below are some tips you can use for helping to declutter and better organize your environment and life:

1. Learn to see your possessions in a different way: One major obstacle for many people in their decluttering journey is simply the way they look at their possessions. If you connect your possessions to your value and worth as a human being, you're going to have a much

more difficult time. Remember that your possessions are there to serve you, not the other way around. If you have things that you don't use and will never use and are not improving your life, get rid of them.

2. Be more imaginative: Dare to imagine your life in a different way. It can also be helpful to think about how much you would pay if you were buying an item right now. If you don't think you would pay anything for it now if you had to, you might want to consider getting rid of the item if you don't need it.
3. See things from a new perspective: Try to see your space from a new perspective. Try to imagine what you would think of your organization if you were someone else who had never seen it before. What recommendations and advice would you give?
4. Try special challenges, such as the 12-12-12 challenge: Doing challenges such as the 12-12-12 challenge can be useful for getting you started on the path to productive decluttering and organization. This challenge requires finding 12 items in each of the following categories: to be thrown away, to donate, and to be put back in their proper home.
5. Start by filling one trash bag: If you're having a lot of trouble making a start, just fill one trash bag with things to throw away or donate. Once you have done this and start feeling its benefits, you are likely to feel more confident and comfortable in getting rid of things and making your environment more minimalist and serene.
6. Give away one thing daily: Another way to begin the decluttering process is to simply give away one item every day. This adds up after a while and you will begin to feel the benefits sooners than you think.
7. Make the most important things more accessible: One of the benefits of decluttering is that you will clear out space to put the important things that you actually need at hand closer to you as you work.
8. Think about getting some help: If your financial circumstances allow it, consider hiring a professional organizer or even a permanent personal assistant.
9. Digitize wherever you can: While it's often impossible for offices to go entirely paperless, you can at least try to digitize wherever possible. This will take up far less physical space and make your space more peaceful.
10. Make a good start on decluttering before buying any special accessories: Some people mistakenly rush to buy things to help them get organized (such as containers and folders) before getting rid of the things they don't need. This can just lead to more clutter and feeling even more overwhelmed.

Stay Healthy

Your health is an invaluable element of productivity. You need to keep yourself well-nourished so that your brain has the store of glucose needed to function as it should. You also need to keep yourself well-hydrated, as it is impossible to be at your best without doing so. Failing to stay properly nourished and hydrated can also lead to health problems that can make you ill and lead to not being able to work as you would like. Drink water throughout the day to stay properly hydrated.

Below is a list of tips to help you stay healthier at work and improve your productivity through better well-being:

1. Stand up more often: Sitting at work for extended periods of time is generally unavoidable but you can help to alleviate some of its detrimental effects by standing up and moving around at regular intervals. You should get up and moving, just walking around, every hour and a half of sitting. You can also think about getting a desk that you can convert to a standing model so you can stand for as much of the day as you would like while you do your walk. Try to do as many work activities as you can (examples might include phone calls and watching presentations) standing up.
2. Get outdoors more often: You probably spend as much as 90 percent of the day indoors. As such, you are likely suffering from a deficiency of sunlight that can adversely affect your well-being and sleep. The way to try to counteract this problem is simply to make time to get out more often. Try spending time outside in the morning, as this is most beneficial. The body's circadian rhythm can be thwarted by a lack of exposure to intense light. The circadian rhythm is what allows us to have healthy sleep patterns. You should devote between 30 minutes to an hour of each day to enjoying the outdoors. If you have trouble finding an opening in your schedule, maybe your lunch break would be a good choice.
3. Stay at home when you're sick: Make sure to stay at home when you are sick. Going to work when you are sick will likely lead to your being ill and less productive longer. Also, it can put your co-workers or employees at risk of catching whatever you have, compromising the overall productivity of the business.
4. Take your well-earned vacation time: Don't make the mistake of failing to take your vacation time. And when you're on vacation, make sure you spend your time relaxing, not thinking about work or working. You need the revitalization that a vacation provides.
5. Refrain from late-night social media and messaging: Staying up late at night to go on social media and message people is bad for your health and well-being. You need to get a proper amount of sleep.
6. Cut down on the piles of paper around you: Try to cut down on the piles of paper around you, as they can harbour lots of dust mites and adversely affect the air quality of your office.
7. Eat healthily during the day: Stay away from junk and other unhealthy foods, especially at work. It can be very tempting to resort to these snacks during a busy day, but it is best to find healthy alternatives.
8. Avoid mindless eating: Don't fall into the habit of eating mindlessly. Eating mindlessly means eating when you're not hungry and without thinking. Stay mindful in your eating habits.
9. Use the stairs whenever possible: Try to avoid always falling back on using the elevator. Using the stairs more often will help with your cardiovascular health and clarity of mind.
10. Stay hydrated: As we mentioned earlier on, remember to stay hydrated throughout the day by drinking enough water.

Stop Waiting for the "Perfect" Time

One of the most common mistakes we make is waiting for the "perfect" time to do something. Unfortunately, the perfect conditions rarely arise. If we wait forever for everything to be perfect and for it to be the "perfect" time to pursue something, we will probably never do it and achieve our goals. The best thing to do is to take whatever immediate action you can and use the positive feedback you receive from that to fuel more action.

Reflection Questions:

Think about the following reflection questions. You can write your answers to them so you can refer to them later when reflecting on your progress.

1. How many times have you put something off because you didn't feel it was the perfect time? How did this affect what you were able or have been able to accomplish in that area?
2. Is there anything right now that you're putting off because you don't feel it's the perfect time? What can you do about this? What can you do right now that will make you able to pursue your goal?

Daily Morning Revisiting of Your Goals

It can be helpful to revisit your big goals every morning for 5 minutes. Doing this can help you stay on track to reach them.

Each morning, think about the following questions:

1. What are my goals today? How do I plan to go about accomplishing these goals?
2. How will accomplishing my goals today help me move towards accomplishing my larger, more long-term goals?
3. What are you going to do today to put the conditions in place that will help you achieve your goals today?

You should also do some positive morning affirmations to make you feel more confident and competent in moving forward with your day. Here are some examples here:

- I am confident and competent and can accomplish whatever I need to.
- I am a good person and I deserve to succeed. I will make my success my priority.
- I acknowledge that there are often setbacks in life and I am able to overcome them.
- I am a productive professional and I will continue to demonstrate that in how I conduct myself today.

Don't Fall into the Trap of Idolizing Others

Many people fall into the trap of spending far too much time focussing on the careers and successes of other people. Stop watching other people become successful and enjoy their success on television of YouTube. Instead, do something to make it happen for yourself. And don't underestimate how much time you might currently waste watching other people fulfill their dreams instead of focussing on your own. Try keeping a record in a notebook of the time you spend watching TV and YouTube and other similar sources of entertainment. You are likely to be surprised.

Don't get us wrong—it is fine to look up to successful people who you see as role models. You just need to remember that these people are human and make mistakes, so that you avoid falling into any traps that they have. Remember that you are on your own unique journey. You can take lessons form other people's experience as long as you do so mindfully and objectively, not swayed by emotion.

Reflection Questions:

1. Think back to when you were a teenager. Did you idolize anyone? Now let's be honest. Do you still do this now? Do you still spend untold amounts of time admiring the lives and accomplishments of other people instead of keeping your focus on your own life? If so, this needs to stop. It's okay to admire people, but your life must always be your focus.
2. Is there something from another person's life that you feel you can learn from in an objective way? If so, that is perfectly fine. Just make sure that your appraisal is objective and the focus remains on you and your specific circumstances. Each person's life has a specific constellation of circumstances, and this must always be taken into consideration. One size never fits all!

Avoid Negativity

It is important to avoid negativity and negative people as much as you possibly can in your life. Many people find this to be challenging but there are a number of tips you can follow to help seeing more of the positive side of life.

1. Recognize and combat mental distortions that make us tend towards negative thinking: Distortions such as fortune telling, mindreading, and dichotomous thinking make it much more difficult than otherwise to have a positive mindset. Fortune telling is when you make negative predictions of what you think will happen and act as if those predictions had already come to pass. An example of this would be assuming that you will not get a promotion and neglecting your work in retaliation. Mindreading is when you assume that you have knowledge of what other people think. An example of this would be assuming that a friend who compliments your new haircut is only saying that because they hate the way you look and want to hide it). Dichotomous thinking is black-and-white thinking. Thinking that
2. Make sure your goals are reasonable: Setting goals that are difficult or impossible to achieve within the time allotted can put a dent in your feelings of self-efficacy and confidence, thus adversely affecting your productivity.
3. Surround yourself with proof of your achievements: Never downplay your achievements. Some people have a tendency to hide away their diplomas, degrees, and other proof of achievement rather than display them on the wall. This is a mistake. It is useful to remind yourself on the positive things you have done and your abilities.
4. Frame your problems as challenges: Instead of referring to problems as "problems", reframe them as "challenges" instead. You would be surprised at how much of a difference this can make to your mental state and ultimate productivity.
5. Try not to be as critical: While it's an excellent (and necessary) thing to have good critical thinking skills, it's entirely different to have a critical stance on every situation. You may tend to look for ways to improve whatever you see, but try to hold that back a bit in some contexts and look for the positive around you instead.
6. Ask yourself the right questions in the morning: Many people tend to wake up with their heads full of the worries of the day ahead. Instead of dwelling on that, ask yourself the following questions each morning:
    - What are the things for which I am grateful today?
    - Who are the people I can serve or encourage today?

- What tasks am I excited about doing today?

7. Take a break from bad news: There is so much bad news everywhere today that it can be quite demoralizing for the spirit and can interfere with productivity. Keep up with current events by all means (this is a necessity today), but do whatever you can to avoid reports of bad news.
8. Don't obsess about other people's lives on social media: It is well known that social media can have a seriously negative effect on people who obsess over the lives of others, assuming that their lives must be happier than their own. Remember that your social media friends and connections likely only post the best and most positive aspects of their lives. Trying to use their social media posts as a way to gauge the quality of their actual lives will mislead you and make you feel bad about your own life and prospects.

The Power of Routine

Many people today underestimate how important it is to have and stick to a routine. You'll remember that we discussed earlier how helpful it can be to get up early and have a morning routine. That is a major part of the daily routine we are discussing here. Routines not only give you more time in your day to be productive but also put you in the correct mindset. Make exercise a part of your daily routine. It will make you healthier and better able to think clearly.

In order to set a routine, you must think about your goals for each day as well as your long-term plans. Make sure that the things you do each day are contributing towards the fulfillment of both kinds of goal. Remember that good health and well-being must play a part in all of your goals, as they are necessary conditions of the best success.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you have a routine that you stick with? If not, how do you think this deficiency has affected your productivity?
2. How will you go about setting a routine for yourself? What will be your first steps in this process?

Setting a Routine

You need to understand and take heed of your own body and mind and their rhythms when setting a routine. You will probably not be surprised to learn that some of the most successful people in the world have had very specific routines especially tailored to suit their personalities and what needed to be in place for them to succeed.

Jack Dorsey, a co-founder of Twitter, has explained that he gives each day of the week a theme. Here are the specifics he has decided are best for him:

"Monday: Management and running the company

Tuesday: Product

Wednesday: Marketing and communications, growth

Thursday: Developers and partnerships

Friday: Company culture and recruiting"

Jack Dorsey has said that this type of scheduling helps him remain focused even when interruptions occur. He especially values the weekends for the chance to really rest and regain energy for the coming week.

Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, is said to have asked himself every night "What good have I done today?" He devoted a great deal of his life to the quest for self-improvement. He did this in very concrete ways each and every day of his life. He constantly pursued better fulfilment of various virtues, such as cleanliness and temperance. Franklin had a very strict daily routine.

You might have heard of Evan Williams, a founder of Medium, Twitter, and Blogger. His schedule shows a good example of a person who understands his own personality, rhythm, and productivity needs. He has learned that taking a break in the middle of the day to exercise at the gym drastically helps his productivity at all other parts of the day.

Below are some tips you can use in helping you set up a productive daily routine:

1. Make time for a healthy breakfast. This doesn't need to take a lot of time. It just needs proper planning.

2. Disengage from social media and email at night by going the "zero notifications" route.

   Not disengaging from social media and notifications at night will deprive you of the rest and relaxation you need to be at your most productive the next day.

3. Keep track of your habits. It will help you understand yourself better.

   Many people have little insight into their own habits and patterns. Keep track of them for a while to get a better understanding. This will help you become better equipped to determine what is likely and less likely to work for you.

4. Do creative work when you find you are most creative.

   Some people find that they are most creative at certain times of the day. Evening seems to be a common time. Wherever possible, try to schedule creative work for whatever you determine to be the most conducive time.

5. Think about having an alarm that not only tells you when to wake up but when to go to sleep, as well.

   If you're a person who has a difficult time remembering to get to bed and go to sleep in time, think about having a special alarm that notifies you of when you should go to sleep. This will help to solidify a healthier body clock and productivity routine.

6. Keep up a routine on weekends, too.

It's important to take time off at the weekend but it can be helpful to keep up some sort of special weekend routine then, too. This can be important for maintaining a sense of peace of mind and help you unwind in other ways.

Outsourcing: Understanding the Possibilities

We have already mentioned how outsourcing can help you cut low-value tasks from your schedule. Let's go into that at greater length here.

Outsourcing is when you delegate a task or tasks for a source external to your business or organization. It can be useful not only to have an outside person or organization complete the work but also to allow you to focus more completely on the things that are most integral to your function and success.

There are a number of different kinds of outsourcing: onshoring, nearshoring, offshoring, and staff augmentation. Let's talk about them here:

Onshoring: Onshoring is outsourcing that assigns work to individuals or business from the same country as the company's headquarters. An example of onshoring would be to hire an external auditing form to help with financial tasks. There are several benefits to onshoring. These include: having a working culture that is similar or the same as one's own, the same or close-by time zones, no language barriers, and a greater likelihood to visit or see one another in person.

Nearshoring: Nearshoring is outsourcing when you delegate work to an individual or business in a country close to your own. Some of the benefits of nearshoring can include a relatively easy ability to visit the business, almost no liability, larger reductions in cost, and similar (or perhaps identical) time zones. Some drawbacks might be considerations regarding infrastructure, a possibility that there might be problems with communication, and a somewhat or entirely different work culture.

Offshoring: Offshoring involves delegating work to individuals or organizations in a distant country. The benefits of offshoring can include very limited (if any) legalities, a work cycle of possibly 24 hours, and dramatically lower costs. Some of the possible drawbacks might include issues with infrastructure, big time zone differences, drastic differences in structure and work ethic, and divergences in communication styles and measures of success.

Staff augmentation: Staff augmentation is when you take on extra staff in-house on a temporary basis for the purpose of increasing the size of the team for a specific project or endeavor.

It can be useful in another way, too. You can use outsourcing to have other people do the work that you cannot do excellently. This is important, as devoting too much of your time to tasks that you cannot do well when you could be focussing on things you do have expertise in can be a terrible drain on your time and productivity.

If outsourcing the things you cannot do excellently is not a possibility, it would be a productive choice for you to pursue education and/or training so that you can do them well.

Better Harnessing Your Commute Time

If you spend time commuting each day, it is well worth your time to figure out ways to make that time more productive. If you take a form of public transportation, you will be especially free to make use of your time by reading and using technology to learn. If you drive, you will by necessity be more limited, but you can still listen to podcasts and other recordings, such as audiobooks.

Remember what many people say: the best way to double your income is to triple your learning. This is a generalization, of course, but it's certainly true that learning more is likely to propel you forward on your path.

Below are some tips you can use to make better use of your commuting time each day:

1. Get properly organized the evening before.
   Getting yourself fully organized the evening before will make you more relaxed and give you a greater sense of control in the morning. You'll be much likelier to avoid morning panic and rush.
2. Use the solitude of your commute to think
   You can think about a variety of things; just a couple of examples would be aspects of an upcoming presentation you'll be giving or what you will say in a specific conversation. If you are driving, you won't be able to do this as much as you could on a train or bus.
3. Learn by listening: You can download talks, audiobooks, seminars, and even university coursework and listen to it on your device or in your car during your commute.
4. Networking and socializing: Carpooling or taking the train or bus could give you the chance to socialize and network. Socializing and the ability to talk to people can improve your mood and give you the chance to discus work and your career.
5. If you have kids, maybe you can enjoy some bonding time
   If you have kids and the first part of your commute involves dropping them off, enjoy some valuable bonding time. You can have fun conversations and just enjoy one another's company.
6. Leave home early
   Leaving home earlier will make you less likely to be in a rush, thereby creating a better sense of empowerment and control over your life.
7. Find inspiration in your surroundings
   This is an especially good tip for the creative among us and for those who commute by train or bus.
8. Think about commuting with your partner
   Whenever you can, perhaps consider commuting with your partner.

Be Contrarian

Be contrarian? What do we mean by that? We mean don't be afraid to be different in your habits. Doing what you know to be most rational for you and your path (as opposed to everyone else and their paths) is often the best choice you can make. Why go grocery shopping, movies, or the gym during peak hours when everyone else is doing so? It doesn't make very much sense, does it? Why not go during the off-times? Many of our habits don't make much sense? We just fall into them and stick with them if we are not mindful enough.

One important thing to remember when seeking to try a contrarian stance is that it's not enough simply to go against the crowd simply for the sake of doing so. You need to find your own path, the path the coincides with your own worldview and beliefs. Your contrarian positions should stem from that, not just reactionary rebellion.

One of the benefits of contrarianism is the fact that it can lead to better creativity. This is because it can unleash your imagination and take away the limiting ideas and beliefs of conformity that have been holding you back.

In his article "3 Contrarian Hacks for Achieving Work-Life Balance", Kent Julian sets out his ideas regarding productivity. They are outlined below:

1. The strict idea of work-life balance is a myth. Work-life harmony is the real goal we need to be working towards. Kent Julian points out that there are very few times in life when it is at all possible to have a real balance in the time spent on work and outside work. The key to dealing with this is to create a better sense of harmony among all the different parts of our lives.
2. Change your understanding of productivity itself. Julian argues that the traditional idea of productivity as being the amount, or quantity, we produce is insufficient. We need to look at productivity from a qualitative perspective.
3. Embrace simplicity. To be a productivity contrarian, focus more on simple approaches and be skeptical of some of the increasingly complex productivity systems being promoted. Try making your to-do lists using the old-school method of pen or pencil and paper. It will give you a better sense of control than you probably anticipate.

Get Things Right the First Time

This sounds like common sense but you'd be surprised at how many people simply do not understand how important it is to try to get things right the first time around. Not getting things done right the first time around and having to re-do them causes a waste of time, energy, and willpower that could be much more productivity spent with greater forethought.

In some industries, it is especially essential to get things right the very first time around. In all industries, however, being fastidious enough to do things right the first time can be highly advantageous reasons. There are certain steps that you can take to make you more likely to do things right the first time around. These include:

1. Recognizing the necessity of having a culture of responsibility: Everyone on the team has a real feeling or sense of responsibility for the project.
2. Creating a culture of ownership: This is strongly related to the culture of responsibility. Every member of the team must have a sense of ownership of the work at hand.
3. Keep up a culture of truth: Sometimes people in high pressure industries feel the need to lie when they get things wrong. This is something that needs to be strongly resisted as it is counterproductive.
4. Know your stuff!: You need to study your task thoroughly, especially when there are high stakes.

5. Recognize when you need to say "no" to customers: Knowing when to say no to customers can be essential to success. It is all a matter of judgment.
6. Keep up an excellent level of communication with your team: You need to communicate with your team on a clear and consistent basis in order to get things right.
7. Always have a contingency plan: You always need to have contingency plans in place in case things go wrong despite your best laid plans.
8. Assemble a team with the desire to succeed: Being surrounded and assisted by people who have a real desire to succeed is necessary to your own success.

Try Blogging

Regardless of your industry, blogging each day can help you become more productive. Blogging is a creative activity that will help to make you feel more capable and empowered. It will also assist you in consolidating and synthesizing your knowledge and new learning.

There are several different blogging platforms online. If you're not very experienced in this area, you will probably want to select one of the free and more user-friendly options. You should keep in mind, however, that even some of the free platforms might have extra paid options that you can choose to add on if you choose. For example, certain themes might require a fee.

When choosing a blog theme on your chosen platform, keep in mind that different themes can have different benefits and/or requirements. You will want to ensure that the theme you choose lets you have a reasonable level of customization options, is responsive to the reader and is able to display as it should on all types of computers and devices.

The most important aspect of your blog, of course, will be the writing. You have to decide what the main purpose or objective of the blog's content will be. Some options might be to become and or show yourself an expert in your field, to get leads, or the build an email list. You also need to consider what the "voice" or tone of your blog will be. How would you describe it? Will it be authoritative and task-focused, or do you plan to bring in a casual and fun vibe as well?

When beginning a blog, you should make a schedule that you stick to regarding how often you post. If possible, you should aim for two or three times per week. Once a week at the very least should be the minimum. You want to stay in the habit and not forget about your blog under the pile of other work that you need to do. Another thing to consider with blogging is the way you will encourage readers to take action while they are reading your blog. Options with regard to this could be a call to action with a form they can fill in to request a quote, a link to a sales page, or an email opt-in box.

Be confident in your writing. You have experience and expertise that other people are interested in and you need to let yourself shine. Make sure to include your unique insights and find ways to add to your industry's dialogue and conversation. Try to avoid repeating the ideas everyone else is saying. Your goal should be to provide value-added content to your readers.

One of the ways in which blogging can help empower you in your career is the fact it gives you the chance to establish yourself as a thought leader in your field. It has personal branding power. Blogging can also allow you to better communicate with stakeholders in a way that comes across to be more personal and authentic than other methods might, to more effectively control your image, and to improve the presence of your business' public face. It can also improve brand loyalty.

With today's world being so focussed on the power of social media, blogging's ability to do all these things, especially building your personal brand and communicating with stakeholders in an authentic way, means that is an invaluable tool for your business.

You can try reading the blogs of other businesspeople and professionals to help you get inspired. Below are some famous CEO blogs that you will enjoy perusing:

- Bill Gates, Co-Founder and Technology Advisor of Microsoft and Co-Chairman of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: Bill Gates' blog, *Gates Notes* (www.gatesnotes.com)
- Richard Branson (Founder of Virgin Group): Richard Branson's blog at www.virgin.com/richard-branson
- Reid Hoffman (Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of Linkedin): Reid Hoffman's blog at www.reidhoffman.org

Blogging Exercise:

1. Do your research and decide on a blogging platform. Take into consideration all the advice we have given above in doing so.
2. Decide on what your blog's focus will be.
3. Check out what kinds of themes your blog platform has. Which one best suits your needs and desires for personal branding? Think about what your reader might assume about you and your blog from the theme you choose.
4. How often will you post on the blog? What will be the nature of your posts?
5. What features of your blog will make it most appealing to your audience? You should aim for this to encompass both its content and appearance.
6. Do you feel confident in your writing skills? If not, don't be discouraged! It is well worth your while to devote time to improving in this area, as it will improve your credibility with your audience.

Personal Branding and Thinking of Yourself as a Thought Leader

Personal branding becomes progressively more important as each day goes by. You need to create a coherent and cohesive brand for yourself that your audience and others will identify you with. Make sure to remain consistent, keeping it always in mind when you produce content or make any other public move.

Presenting yourself as a thought leader can be a vital component of your personal branding. Being a thought leader means that you are seen as a leader in your field who others turn to for inspiration and advice. Being a thought leader is an invaluable position for any professional.

How to Become a Thought Leader

Becoming a thought leader will make you better known and respected by others in your field. It will also make you more productive, because it will boost your self-confidence and help you more effectively consolidate and deploy your knowledge and skills. Remember that it's not productivity fuels success, and success, in turn, increases confidence and productivity! It's a wonderful cycle that will greatly benefit you if you take the right steps and allow yourself to reap the benefits.

Thought leaders give other people in their industry new and valuable insights. To be a thought leader, you will need to have a high level of expertise and be willing to put in a lot of work. It's not something that will happen overnight, but it is a good goal to work towards that will make you more productive in every respect. It will also improve your profile and reputation in your industry and make others look at you with respect. It will help to consolidate your position and make you an invaluable member of your network.

In order to become a thought leader, you will need to:

- Create your own personal brand: As we touched on earlier, you will need to continually work on creating and maintaining your own personal brand. Your personal brand is your reputation as an expert in a specific niche or area, and it is a key element in framing all your marketing messages. You can use your personal brand to build your base of fans and admirers, as well as your social media presence and your relevance in local industry networking circles.
- Maintain a blog: As we have discussed, creating and maintaining a blog can be key to creating a personal brand and eventually becoming a thought leader. Having a blog and regularly writing posts for it will make you help to find your "voice." You have probably heard people talking about finding their voices and it is discussed so much that it might seem a bit trite, but the importance of this really cannot be overestimated. Once you have found your voice, you will be able to write content to suit it. One of your goals with your blog will be to build a following of readers.
- Don't' be afraid to start niche: It is best to start in a smaller niche because then you will be able to become really dominant within it. That's what you need to do. You need to make yourself visible and your name well-known by the people in your industry. Take time to figure out how you should specialize and build on your reputation.
- Find and interact with the influencers: Find the influencers in your industry and seek to get to know them, work with them, and gain their recognition and respect. Being able to do this will have an immeasurable benefit on your reputation and your ability to become a thought leader. The support of influencers will give you valuable exposure in your field.
- Build up a network: You need to build a network of people in your industry including influencers whenever possible. You should look for mentors who can help you in your journey to becoming a thought leader. This mentor and the influencers who recognize you can bring a lot more attention to your blog and your endeavors generally. This will bring about other opportunities.
- Don't be afraid to be a disruptor: Never be afraid to be a disruptor. In fact, you should seek to be one! You need to say something new and interesting in order to become a thought leader. Be a leader rather than a follower.
- Use your blog to gain leverage in getting more publication opportunities: Having a blog with a substantial following will put you in a better position to get other, more formal publication opportunities (for example, in industry publications). It could also make you get opportunities in areas such as in public speaking.
- Your niche must be in a topic that you love: You need to be passionate about the topic where you will have your niche. If you aren't, it will show and you'll be unlikely to be

successful in building a personal brand and becoming a thought leader. If you're successful, you will have to be ready to talk about your topic in a variety of venues and ways. For example, you could be interviewed on it. You will need to be prepared to talk about the same ideas again and again.

- Understand the value of authenticity: Authenticity is vital to becoming a thought leader. You must be authentic in your passion for your niche and your original ideas.
- Be prepared to get lots of experience: You will need to be patient and stick to your goals in becoming a thought leader. This will require getting a large amount of experience in talking about your field.
- Be ready to ask for help: Many people find they need help from an expert (such as a branding expert) as they try to become thought leaders. There's nothing wrong with this! It takes a wise person to know when they need help and ask for it as necessary.
- Don't' forget about in-person networking: With all the online focus today, it's all too easy to forget about the importance of in-person activities and networking. Make sure to devote a decent amount of time to in-person networking in your quest to build a personal brand and become a thought leader.
- Be more social: Be more social both in real life and on social media. Make sure to be involved in the most effective social media platforms and take part in them each and every day. Your goal in this is to have regular posts with high levels of engagement. Make time to interact with established thought leaders and influencers in your field.
- Approach conventional media: Don't neglect how helpful it can be to be published and paid attention to in conventional media. Pitch stories to them and follow up with leads. Don't be afraid to be bold!

Self-Development Projects

Keep up self-development projects at all time. Self-development (or self-improvement) will not only help you to improve your objective knowledge and skills but also your sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy, thus making you much more likely to be meaningfully productive. Some of your self-development projects might not be directly connected to your work. They could be endeavors such as improving your fitness by going to the gym each day or reading a book every week. If you have employees, having and following a personal development plan also sets a good example for them. You will lead by example.

Write out your personal development plan. The plan needs to set out the areas in which you could improve, including in ability and skills, attitude, and personal character. Include categories, such as organization, communication, leadership, and others. Make sure to break down in bullet points the different things you need to do in order to reach each personal development goal.

You can do the following things to help make it more likely that you will stick with your plans:

- Tell other people about it: Letting other people know about your personal development plans will help to keep you accountable. It is especially helpful to tell senior managers who can help keep you accountable.

- Make the commitment to living by the rules needed to achieve your goals: You must commit to living by specific rules each day of your life that will help you progress towards your personal development goals.
- Refine your goals when necessary: Remember to periodically reassure your goals and refine them as needed.

While it is true that nothing in life can guarantee success, creating and using a personal development plan can make it much more likely to occur. This is because it helps you ensure that you keep everything in your life going in the direction you need it to in order for you to achieve your goals.

In order to begin your journey of creating a personal development plan, you must first think about a very critical question: what is important to you? What do you want? What are your strengths, and what areas do you need to improve in?

Your personal development plan is something you will need to stick with over the long haul. Nothing is ever accomplished overnight. Put in the time you need to make a high-quality personal development plan. Your time investment will eventually pay off. According to Eva Lu, in order to create a personal development plan you will need to go through the following nine steps:

1. Define your goals: Decide on between five and 10 goals that are important to you and write them down in your plan. These can be specifically career goals or other goals such as ones that will improve your life overall, such as learning and taking part in a new hobby or getting in shape. The goals you choose should be ones that would make you a happier person.
2. Priorities: Take some time to really consider which of the goals is the most important to you, and choose one as your top priority and main focus. Perhaps you might decide that you main focus is to gain a specific transferrable skill that you can use across various parts of your life that will help with your success. An example of such a transferrable skill, according to Lu, is the ability to speak effectively. Speaking skills help to improve communication and confidence.
3. Set a deadline: Set deadlines for your goals. It is important to be realistic with these. It won't do any good to be unrealistic and set yourself up for failure.
4. Understand your strengths: You need to understand and recognize your key strengths. If you're uncertain what your strengths are, try asking some of your family and friends. Remember that not everyone has what we might traditionally think of as a "talent". This doesn't make your strengths any less valid or impressive, however. Some of your strengths might be that you are a fast learner, intelligent, a good communicator, patient, or well-organized.
5. Recognize opportunities and threats: Examine your current habits and behaviors. You need to determine whether they are helping you or hurting you in your pursuit of your goals. Try to think of and write down about five habits or behaviors that you will stop doing in order to help you be more likely to be successful. When you determine which of your habits and behaviors are helping you, commit to doing these more.
6. Develop new skills: You will need to learn new skills in order to progress in your career and achieve your goals. Remember that whenever you want something new in your life, you must pay a price. The price you need to pay for greater success is to devote more time to learning more skills.

7. Take action: Determine the actions you need to take to achieve each of your big goals. Write down between three and five important things you will need to do. Make sure to set a definite timeframe for each thing.
8. Get support: Think of people who you can turn to for support in your journey. These could be professional people, such as career counselors or fitness coaches.
9. Measure progress: One of the many reasons why it is important to monitor your own progress is the fact that seeing your success will help to motivate you. Write down the things in which you are exceling. If you decide that you are not doing well in a specific area, think about how you can alter your strategies.

In "42 Practical Ways to Improve Yourself" by Celestine Chua, we read about numerous steps you can take to improve yourself. Let's go over some of them here:

1. Regularly read personal development articles: You could even read one every day. Try looking at some of the personal development blogs available online. You might be surprised at the wealth of knowledge and advice available out there. It is helpful to contemplate and understand other people's perspectives.
2. Be kind to everyone: In making the conscious effort to be kinder to people, you will cultivate important qualities such as patience and compassion. You will find that you feel better about yourself when you're kind, as well.
3. Make friends with prominent people in your field: Try to get to know important people in your field and get acquainted with their attitudes and skill sets. You will learn from them.
4. Meditate: Try to meditate every day. It will help you to feel calmer and more mindful. Make sure to use mindfulness activities in your daily meditation. We discuss the importance of mindfulness in other areas of this book.
5. Give up the TV habit: The programs and ads that litter most of the TV stations are a lower form of consciousness and can be demoralizing to the spirit. Try giving up TV for a while. You'll probably feel much better.
6. Keep a journal: A journal will help you clarify your thoughts and improve in self-awareness. Keeping a journal will give you the chance to reflect on your own thoughts and progress. Write in your journal everyday, if you can.
7. Avoid being around negative people: try to avoid being around people with a lot of negative energy. You will find that their negativity will brush off on you and make life more difficult.
8. Identify and quit bad habits: Spend some time reflecting and determining what your bad habits are. Once you have identified them, work on eliminating them.
9. Create a life handbook: Create a life handbook in which you set out your purpose, values, and goals so that you can make the most of your abilities and life.
10. Work on overcoming your fears: Working on identifying and overcoming your fears will help you improve your life. It is important to know that the areas where you have fear are ones where you can grow.
11. Create an inspirational environment: Try to add inspirational items to your environment. These can include things like pictures, paintings, framed messages, and so on. Make sure that you have a calm space where you can think clearly. You will want to make sure that everything is tidy and clean.

12. Take a course or two: Think about taking a course in order to give yourself new knowledge, skills, and insights.
13. Read every day: Don't underestimate how much wisdom is to be found in a book. There are an abundance of books on a variety of topics that you will find useful.
14. Try a new hobby: There are lots of hobbies out there that you can try. Trying some of them will help you develop mentally, emotionally, and/or physically.
15. Try learning a new language: Trying to learn a new language is a challenge but one that is well worth taking. It will help with your confidence and give you a meaningful skill.
16. Be aware of your flaws: Being aware of your flaws will help you to try to conquer them and make you a better person.
17. Learn to be a better public speaker: Consider joining a local public speaking club such as Toastmasters. Many people are afraid of public speaking. Perhaps you are one of them. Getting practice in public speaking will help with your confidence and ability to succeed.
18. Find a coach or mentor: Having a coach or mentor to help you in your self-improvement journey will increase your chances of real and lasting success.
19. Make your own personal development: Crate your own personal development blog that will help other people improve in the same ways that you have and will continue to do. Wrtie articles about your journey and personal approaches that will help you consolidate your thoughts and inspire others.
20. Recognizing your blind spot: In the area of personal development, the term "blind spots" refers to realities about ourselves of which we are unaware. Understanding and recognizing our blind spots is a crucial step in your self-improvement journey.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you attempted any self-development projects in the past? Were they successful? If not, where do you think you went wrong?
2. Which self-development projects do you have in mind for the near future? Which one do you think you will attempt first?
3. How could you step outside of your comfort zone in your personal development plans?
4. Does anything you have learned here about self-development surprised you? How do you think you can use your newfound knowledge?

Boost Your Confidence

A healthy level of self-confidence is essential to success in life. No matter what the other circumstances, having low self-confidence is certain to hold you back in some way or another, perhaps in a very significant way.

But self-confidence can be an elusive thing. It takes a lot of work to build it up, especially if you have certain challenges or people and circumstances around you that are interfering with your self-image. You can take control of your confidence, however. There is no doubt that you have the power to do this. You just need to know how.

Below are steps that you can take to set yourself up for better self-confidence and the greater productivity that is sure to result.

1. Challenge your inner critic: We all have inner critics, some of them harsher and more unfair than others. If you have a low self-confidence, it's very likely that your inner critic is out of control. You need to challenge it and silence its unfair attacks. Use logic to do this. For example, if you find yourself thinking that you are bad at everything, ask your inner critic "what evidence is there that this is true?" Put your inner critic on the spot and disarm it.
2. Take care of yourself: You must take care of yourself if you are to improve your self-confidence. Good emotional and physical health are important components, so you need to take time for self-care. Get enough sleep, eat healthily, and get exercise. You should also take care of your appearance. You deserve it!
3. Help other people: Helping other people can make you feel empowered and help you more easily see your high value as a human being. Instead of spending time dwelling on your perceived shortcomings, look into volunteering or mentoring someone.
4. Set yourself up for success: To help you build up your confidence, set some small goals that you know you'll be able to achieve. This will help you better believe in your abilities. It will make you better equipped to successfully achieve larger goals. Spend time thinking about your achievements. You deserve to recognize your own successes.
5. Use positive affirmations: Don't underestimate how powerful positive affirmations can be. They can help you make real changes to your self-image, and this is key to transforming your life and becoming more confident. Try positive affirmations that counteract some of your specific self-confidence challenges. For example, if you have confidence issues about your appearance, you should try positive affirmations about your appearance when you look in the mirror.
6. Use visualization: Use visualization to practice seeing yourself in a positive way. This will help you improve your self-concept and self-confidence. Spend time visualizing yourself doing all the things you hope and plan to.
7. Know you are the equal of anyone: Never fall into the trap of thinking other people are better than you. It's simply not true! You are equal to everyone and are just as deserving as they are. Remembering these things on a consistent basis will boost your self-confidence.
8. Overcome your fears: Overcoming fears is a wonderful way to improve self-confidence. Try to face your fears each and every day. One of the most important fears for you to overcome is that of getting out of your comfort zone.
9. Maintain your personal boundaries: Knowing and maintaining your personal boundaries is an integral part of good self-confidence. You need to know how to say no to others when it is necessary. Having more control over your life will lead to better self-confidence, which in turn will likely lead to more control.
10. Be tougher in the face of rejection: One way to make yourself better able to deal with rejection without it adversely affecting your self-confidence is to try to desensitize yourself to it.

Improve Your Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (also referred to as EQ) is another area in which improvement is likely to improve your self-confidence and productivity. There are several things that you can do to improve your emotional intelligence. These include:

1. Learning to reduce negative emotions: This is an incredibly important part of emotional intelligence. It is essential that you refuse to let negative emotions adversely affect our judgment and overwhelm us. The most vital rule to remember is that you need to change the way you think about a situation before you can change how you feel about it. One way you can reduce negative emotions is to work on alleviating the fear of rejection. Avoid putting all of your emotional eggs in one basket, and always try to have viable alternatives. An example of misguidedly putting your eggs in one basket could be thinking that your life will be ruined if you do not get into a certain educational program. A better way of thinking of this would be to think of viable alternatives of what you can do if you do not get into the program of your choice. Another thing you need to do is cut down on negative personalization. You can do this by resisting making negative assumptions about a person's behavior right away. It is best to take the time to think of the situation in multiple different ways before you react. You need to avoid personalizing other people's behavior (in other words, taking other people's behavior) personally. It probably doesn't have much (or anything) to do with you.
2. Cut down on stress and stay cool: Keep cool and avoid getting frazzled. These are important keys in avoiding being reactive (so that you can be calmly assertive instead). Try to get a bit of fresh air and splash your face with cold water if you are feeling anxious and nervous. It has been found that anxiety levels can be alleviated by cool temperatures. You can also try to energize yourself by way of aerobic exercise. It will make you feel more vital and confident.
3. Learn how to express difficult emotions when needed and to be assertive: Life often requires the ability to effectively and appropriately set boundaries with others. It is necessary that people know where we stand. You need to know how to set your own priorities, say no without guilt, and disagree in a pleasant way. You can try the well-known XYZ technique when expressing emotions. This involves saying "I feel X when you do Y in situation Z."

Better Productivity in Your Job Search

If you're currently changing your career or searching for a new job, you need to make your efforts in that area as productive as possible. There are several things that you can do. You will find a list of them below:

1. Make a real plan for your job search. This is the area in which people tend to fail. We think that as long as we are putting in time doing our job search, that we don't have to do it in an organized way. That is misguided. You need to make a job search schedule and make sure you spend all the time allotted to it actually on real job search duties. Break the various duties involved in the job search into categories. You can decide on devoting a different category to each day of the week.
2. Keep entirely focussed on job search tasks during the time you have set aside for you job search. Don't fall into the trap of being distracted by things such as social media. Also ensure that you do your job searching activities in a calm environment.
3. If you have a serious problem dealing with distractions, think about using a distraction-blocking app. You could also think about tracking the time you spend on your job search by

using a time tracking program. It might surprise you to see you are spending less time on your job search than you think. If that happens, you can make the necessary adjustments.

4. Keep your job search materials properly organized. Keeping your materials organized will make it much easier for you to quickly put together applications for specific jobs.
5. Keep a record of everything that you do in your job search. It is important to keep track of everything you do in your job search. This will help you stay aware of whether you are doing enough and keep yourself accountable.

Better Self-Awareness: Another Key to Productivity

It certainly makes a lot of sense when you think about it, doesn't it? Without a high level of self-awareness, how can you really be aware of your motivations, what you are doing, and why you can do to improve? And how can you keep track of your progress as you become more productive?

Learning to cultivate and maintain a strong sense of self-awareness always pays off. It may sound like a relatively simple thing to do, but many people actually find it rather challenging. In Western cultures, we live in a relatively superficial society that tends to pay the most attention to the external and appearances rather than what is going on inside. We're not encouraged to be introspective.

If you used to be more introspective but have moved away from that, you need to find a way back. And if you've never been introspective, it's time to learn how to do so. Introspection is the ability to look and dwell inwards, understanding and knowing yourself in all your dimensions. Perhaps you find this a bit uncomfortable if you've never really tried it before. That's a possibility. You will get better at it and feel more comfortable with practice.

What is Self-Awareness?

Self-awareness is knowledge and understanding of the self. It includes having real insight into your own motivations, ideas, emotions, and actions. Self-awareness is essential for self-evaluation, and self-discipline. People who have a high level of self-awareness are able to closely and effectively monitor their inner world.

Many people don't realize that self-awareness has a non-judgmental quality. You need to accept and acknowledge what is going on inside you and to be kind to yourself. You must be aware of your mental processes and reactions. By being aware of these and adjusting when necessary, you can change the mind's preconceptions and conditioning. You must understand and be at peace with yourself. Proactively managing your behaviors, emotions, and thoughts is essential to harnessing your self-awareness.

To be self-aware, you need to act consciously rather than passively. Sadly, most people operate on "automatic pilot". People who operate on automatic pilot tend to go through life in a relatively unconscious state in terms how they feel and what they're doing. One of the most important elements of preserving being on auto pilot is to resist your mind wandering.

Be aware of cognitive biases that can interfere with the clarity and accuracy of your thoughts. One common cognitive bias is confirmation bias. Confirmation bias occurs when we search for and interpret information in such a way that our pre-conceptions are confirmed.

Below are some of the ways by which we can cultivate a better level of self-awareness:

1. Learn to see things from different perspectives: It is true that feedback from others can give you better understanding of different perspectives. While some of what people may say could be biased or dishonest, you will gain practice in being able to recognize balanced and genuine feedback.
2. Become a better listener: Learn to become a better listener by paying more attention to body movement and language, as well as emotion. To be a good listener, you need to show understanding and empath without any judgment. Being a better listener in general will make it easier for you to listen to yourself.
3. Give yourself the space you need: Give yourself the space you need to spend time doing relaxing things that allow for introspection.
4. Maintain a journal: Keeping and regularly writing n a journal can give you better insight into yourself and your life. It will give you practice in introspection and make you more mindful.
5. Become more mindful: As we discussed earlier, cultivating a better sense of mindfulness is essential to self-awareness. In mindfulness practice, you need to pay attention to your changing inner state in a non-judgmental way.

Self-Reflection Questions:

1. Do you think you're a good listener? If not, how will you go about becoming more effective in this area?
2. What will you do to make sure you start looking at things from different perspectives? How do you think this will help you?

How to Boost Your Self-Discipline

Self-discipline is an extremely important factor in productivity and success. Self-discipline will also help you be a happier person. It will make it easier for you to make decisions that will benefit your life. You will be able to more easily make rational decisions.

You should be aware that self-discipline is a learned behavior. There are several things that you can do to make yourself more self-disciplined:

1. Keep temptations out of reach: "Out of sight, out of mind" is a very valid expression. Getting rid of elements of your environment, such as junk food, can help you have better self-discipline.
2. Eat regularly and in a healthy way: It's important to read healthily and regularly in order to keep up a good level of self-discipline. Not eating enough and letting yourself get really hungry can make your sense of self-control weaker.
3. Don't make the mistake of making yourself wait until it feels "right": It can take a significant amount of time for new, positive habits to become entrenched. This means that at the beginning of your journey, you might find yourself feeling like the time isn't right yet. This is an illusion.
4. Set up time for treats, breaks, and rewards: It is important to take the time to give yourself treats, rewards, and regular breaks in order to promote self-discipline.
5. Learn to forgive yourself: You must be kind to yourself in order to foster better self-discipline. Don't be too hard on yourself when you falter on something. Use your mistakes as learning experiences and move on.

6. Don't' be afraid of starting small: It is best to start small in your journey towards better self-discipline. Begin with smaller issues and move on from there.
7. Decide on what you want to do differently: Take time to reflect on what you can do differently to make a difference in your life. If you want to achieve a specific goal, look at what people who have achieved that goal do. Consider whether following in their footsteps in a particular area could help you succeed.
8. Take the initiative: As an adult, you cannot just wait passively and wait to be told what to do. Start small and don't let yourself get discouraged.
9. Us to-do lists: You'll remember we discussed earlier how important to-do lists are. Make sure to have a tasks list each day.
10. Plan the choices you will make: Plan your choices in advance and set yourself up for success. An example of this would be deciding the number of emails you will respond to before you more on to another task if you goal is being better at keeping up your emails.
11. Understand that failure is a part of the journey to success: Accept your failures as something that happens to everyone as they make their way to success. Also, make sure to celebrate your successes and reward yourself.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you think you deal with failure in an effective way? Or do you think you let it hold you back and make you less productive? Where do you think your ideas about failure come from, and how do you think you could change them?
2. Brainstorm about what you want to do differently in your life. Give yourself the time you need to really think about this.
3. What small things could you start with in helping to build your self-discipline?
4. What do you currently do to keep yourself healthy and in shape? What will you do to improve in these areas?
5. Have you ever made the mistake of waiting until things felt "right"? How did this hold you back in your productivity?
6. Which temptations could you keep out of reach to help you achieve better self-discipline?

Reward and Treat Yourself

Reward yourself for being more self-disciplined and productive. This is not only for the sake of self-care but also because rewarding yourself will help with self-discipline. You need to engage in self-care to be at your most productive in the first place, and you should give yourself extra rewards for your performance.

Don't fall into the all too common trap of thinking that you have to be a stoic and do away with treats. This is actually counterproductive and will probably result in lower productivity. Giving yourself a treat will help you to feel cared for and energized, and this will help to support your self-discipline. People who refuse to give themselves treats tend to feel deprived, and feelings of deprivation can make us feel depleted.

You might be wondering what kinds of treats you should give yourself. Do they have to be expensive? No, they don't. Something being a treat heavily depends on your framing it as such. Pretty much anything, even the simplest thing, can be a treat if you see it that way. Do you love the

smell of vanilla? Maybe make some vanilla cookies and enjoy the smell filling your house (as well as the delicious snack afterwards).

If you don't have time at a given moment to take much time out for a treat (although you need to remember to take your breaks), try to see some of the things you work with as treats. As Gretchen Rubin points out in her article, "even a box of freshly sharpened pencils" can be a treat if you appreciate them and frame it that way. Also, take the time to give yourself a more significant treat on occasion, as well. This is important to your mental well-being and productivity.

Be aware that you do not have to wait until you are rewarding yourself to give yourself treats. Whether or not you think you think you specifically deserve a reward, you should give yourself little treats on a regular basis.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you reward yourself? Why or why not? How often do you reward yourself?
2. Do you give yourself treats on a regular basis? Did you realize that this is as important as it is to productivity?
3. What can you do to reward yourself the next time you have a success? Do you have any ideas? If not, take some time to brainstorm and keep the list you come up with for your reference.

Thinking Like a CEO

Learning how to think like a CEO will help you to become more productive. Jennifer Bridges' video "How to Think Like a CEO" sets out a number of things that we can do to put ourselves in the CEO mindset.

1. Become a big-picture thinker: Be in better and more constant connection with your overall vision for your goals and success. Make sure to include high-level strategies.

2. Make sure your goals align to company strategy: When planning your goals, ensure that they support the long-term strategies of your company or general endeavors.

3. Maximize your financial literacy: Always work on improving your financial literacy. There are few things more important to productivity and success in a variety of areas.

In the article "22 Vital Traits of a CEO (Excerpted from How to Think Like a CEO by D.A. Benton)", we see a useful list of traits that you should aspire to if you want to think more like a CEO and be more productive. Some of these include:

1. Be competitive: Be competitive and be ready to struggle for your successes. Don't expect the journey to be easy.
2. Be straightforward: Be straightforward and plain in your communication with others.
3. Recognize and admit mistakes: Everyone who tries to do something meaningful in life will make mistakes. It is inevitable. Don't try to hide from them. Acknowledge them, do what you can to correct them, and move on.
4. Pay more attention to detail: Being detail-oriented is an essential part of thinking like a CEO and being more productive.

5. Don't be afraid of silence: Learn to be silent and listen more. Listening is an essential element of communication and an area in which many people are lacking.
6. Always think before speaking: Take a moment to think before speaking on all occasions.
7. Be brave: Make time to tackle things that you are afraid of. This will help to boost your confidence.
8. Choose to feel secure in yourself: Other people cannot make you feel inferior. This can only happen if you let them.
9. Be flexible: Work on becoming more flexible. This is an invaluable characteristic in an any profession.
10. Have a sense of humor: You'll find that having a good sense of humor will help you through many tricky situations.
11. Foster a sense of curiosity: Being inquisitive and not being afraid to ask questions is an important part of thinking like a CEO.
12. Be nice: Don't fall into the trap of thinking powerful people can forego being nice.
13. Always be ethical and honest: Make the commitment to always being ethical and honest in every area of life.
14. Be tenacious: Make a commitment to working towards your goals and never give up.
15. Don't be afraid of being a bit theatrical: Step outside of your comfort zone and try new things.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you consider yourself to be a competitive person? Why or why not? If you think you are competitive, do you think that being competitive has helped you be more successful in your life? If you don't consider yourself to be a competitive person, how do you think you have been held back because of this? What will you do to heighten your competitive instinct?
2. Do you think being more straightforward could make you more effective and productive? Are you straightforward in the way you communicate with other people? Why or why not? How could you improve in this area?
3. Do you have any problems with admitting to your mistakes? Do you think this has interfered with your overall productivity and success?
4. How detail-oriented are you? If you feel that you might be a bit lacking in this area, have you considered how you might become stronger in this area? Have you ever overlooked a detail and experienced a lack of productivity as a result of this? Give an example of when this has happened? Be specific in how the detail you should have paid attention to and didn't was significant.
5. Do you have problems with listening effectively? Are you one of those people who has trouble staying quiet and really listening? How ill you go about changing this?
6. Do think before speaking? If you're snot sure, keep track of yourself the next time you have a conversation. Do you find yourself eager to speak before the other person has finished what they want to say? This is something that you need to avoid. When the other person in the conversation is talking, put all your energy into thinking about what they have to say. After they are done, take a moment to consider what you want to say, and then speak. Make a point of carrying out this process the next time you talk to someone.

7. How often do you make a point of being brave and stepping outside of your comfort zone? What can you do to improve your performance here?
8. How flexible are you? Take a few moments to consider how flexible you tend to be when presented with tricky or high-pressure situations. Do you think a lack of flexibility has interfered with your ability to be productive and perform to the best of your ability?
9. Work on your sense of humor. Do you have a good sense of humor in general? Do you think you are strong in this area even when it comes to work? Do you think that you are able to draw upon your sense of humor in gaining a sense of perspective in difficult situations? If you have done this before, how has it helped you? If you aren't very good at this, what do you think could be holding you back?
10. Have you lost your sense of curiosity? Many adults find that they have. Our culture tends to discourage us in the areas of curiosity and creativity, and this unfortunately can have a detrimental effect on productivity. What do you think you can do to regain and harness your sense of curiosity?
11. Do you find it challenging to be nice in today's workplace? If so, don't' fall into this trap. It's important to make the effort to be nice in your interactions with others. You might be surprised at how much it will benefit you. Write down one or two ways in which you can be nicer at work.
12. How is your tenacity? Don't let difficulties and weariness with the world weaken you in this area. Tenacity is an integral part of productivity and success. How could you improve you tenacity?

Let's go over some of these steps to thinking like a CEO that we went over earlier with greater detail

Harness Your Competitive Energy

Being a more competitive person will help encourage you to better productivity. Let's go over some approaches that you can take to help heighten and better harness your competitive energy:

1. Compete against yourself: Compete with yourself by thinking of your most significant accomplishments in the past and trying to outdo them. Also try to surpass your goals whenever possible. For example, if you have a goal of writing two chapters this week, try to get to three. This will help you feel more empowered, competent, and confident.
2. Keep focussed on the most important thing, which is being the best version of yourself: The focus of competition isn't always winning or triumphing over someone else. It can also be working to improve yourself for the sake of doing so. Think about your future projects and goals. Take time to consider the ways you will compete and the implications for your personal and career growth.
3. Use the desire to compete to push you to take risks: The need to compete can help to spur you into getting out of your comfort zone and take risks. Competing can help make work more exciting and challenging, keeping you more engaged and innovative.
4. Get more connections by using your competitive energy: Try putting some of your competitive energy into making useful connections and taking advantage of similar opportunities. It's extremely beneficial to have a strong professional network. Try spending more time taking part in activities such as attending conferences and trade shows.

5. Recognize your differences from the competition: Take time to think about how you differ from the competition. You need to recognize your distinct characteristics.
6. Use some of your competitive energy for your learning and personal development activities: Remember how important it is to constantly learn and develop yourself personal and professionally. You can use a strong competitive spirit to help spur you on in this regard.

As we have already discussed, heightening and harnessing your competitive energy can help to make you more productive. Let's go over some of the specific ways in which being competitive can empower you in every aspect of your life:

1. Competitive people are compelled to try harder by the fact they cannot tolerate thinking of other people living their dreams when they don't. This creates very strong impulses that spur them onto the action they need to take.
2. Competitive people never stop striving. This is a key element of their tendency to a higher level of success. They compete against themselves as well as others.
3. Many competitive people are very creative. It seems that being competitive also tends to go along with creativity in many people.
4. Contrary to what some people imagine, competitive people often live happier lives. A reason for this is the fact that they're more likely to achieve their goals.
5. Competitive people are more likely to push their boundaries. They are better able to make it successfully through difficulties and challenges.
6. Many competitive people tend to believe in themselves more. They have a higher level of confidence, partly because of their tendency to succeed through perseverance.
7. Competitive people tend to have a more expansive comfort zone. This makes it easier for them to achieve their goals.

How to Become More Detail-Oriented

While it's important to be a big picture thinker, you also need to learn to be highly detail-oriented. The trick is getting used to distinguishing when each of these skill sets is most needed in a particular situation. It's not the "either, or" situation that so many of us fall into the trap of thinking is the case. You can be both readily able to see and appreciate the big picture and equipped to deal with detail.

Any one of us can be detail-oriented. If you are not used to thinking of yourself in this way, change your mindset. A big part of being detail-oriented is being mindful. You will remember that we discussed mindfulness earlier in the book. Mindfulness, you will recall, is the practice of living entirely in the present moment, not letting the mind wander to the future or past. Being mindful is an important part of being detail-oriented because paying attention to detail calls for an attentive mind that doesn't feel rushed or distracted by other factors. You need to be able to focus effectively.

There are several other steps that you can take to become more detail-oriented in your work.

1. Become a better record keeper: Keeping meticulous records is an essential component to being detail-oriented. Improve your filing system and keep appointment notes, meeting notes, and agendas. To help you stay on task, take time to properly summarize everything at

the end of each day. Make special note of tasks that you will need to carry over to the next day either for follow-up and further action.

2. Get help from others: Consider whether there are parts of your job that you can delegate to others. Do you have an assistant or intern for tasks like following up and setting appointments? If so, delegate more work to them.
3. Improve your time management skills: It is impossible to be detail-oriented without having well-developed time management skills. Create set timeframes for different tasks.
4. Boost your organizational skills: You need to improve your organizational skills if you want to become more detail-oriented. Are you good at organizing your work and your day? If not, you need to do work in this area.
5. Have a good understanding of your role: You need to be fully acquainted with all of the expectations of your role or position in order to be detail-oriented. Do you have a written job description? If so, make sure to re-read if often.
6. Do regular self-assessment: Doing self-assessment on a regular basis will help you be more detail-oriented.

Valuable CEO Personality Traits, Abilities, and Skills

It will help you to strive towards some of the most important personality traits, abilities, and skills of successful CEOs.

1. Willingness to take calculated risks: Successful CEOs are willing to take calculated risks. A calculate risk is a risk taken after careful weighing of the potential benefits and downfalls of taking the action in question. An unwillingness to take calculated risks is almost certain to hold you back in your productivity level and career.

2. Insight into workplace issues: It is impossible for a CEO to be successful without insight into workplace issues. Study these issues and pay close attention as you gain experience with these issue in the workplace.

3. Realistic optimism: Optimism is crucial for a CEO, but it needs to be realistic optimism. Don't make the mistake of confusing optimism or seeing "the glass as half full" with being unrealistic. A successful CEO is always realistic and optimistic whenever a reasonable level of realism allows for it. The key is to have faith in yourself and your abilities to get things done and accomplish your goals.

4. Interpersonal skills and ability to build relationships: Interpersonal skills and the ability to build relationships is essential to success as an executive. Make the effort needed to practice and perfect your abilities and skills in this area. Without good interpersonal and relationship-building skills, you will find productivity and success almost impossible to realize. Diplomacy is part of the communication skills needed by a CEO. In order to communicate effectively, you have to cultivate a sense of how to be diplomatic in your communication of ideas that others might take exception to.

5. Ability to read people: A component of the interpersonal and relationship-building skills we mentioned earlier is the ability to correctly read people. This is something that comes with dedication and practice. The ability to read people means the ability to have deep insight into another person's feelings and motivations.

6. Ability to coach and guide others: Successful CEOs find that many other people look up to them and turn to them for guidance and coaching. Build on your coaching skills and be confident in your ability to give others guidance and advice.

7. Willingness to think outside of the box: You must be able to think outside of the box in order to be a successful CEO. The ability to think in this way is one of the things that makes a CEO valuable to his or her company. This ability will also assist you in every area of your work and life, and it will boost your productivity.

8. A feeling of purpose: CEOs have a sense of purpose. You need to have a real sense of purpose in order to maximize your productivity and success. If you have trouble finding or retaining a sense of purpose, use some of the mindfulness and meditation approaches we discussed earlier. You need to take time for self-reflection and self-examination.

9. Vision: Vision is another quality needed by the CEO. Without vision, he or she will be unable to visualize this or her company in the future and the results of the business' endeavors. In your own life and business, cultivate a better sense of vision.

10. Eagerness to learn: Lifelong learning is essential to success in every area of life. Be enthusiastic in your endeavors to gain new knowledge and skills.

Reflection Questions:

1. How willing are you to take calculated risks? Do you think you might be too risk-averse? If so, reflect on ways you could boost your confidence so that you will be more amenable to taking the calculated risks you need to for success.
2. How optimistic are you? Would you call yourself a realistic optimist? Why or why not?
3. What experience do you have in coaching and guiding others? How could you gain more experience in this area?
4. Are you good at thinking outside of the box? If you are, how has it benefited you? How can you improve in this area?

You Can Be as Productive as a CEO

In this book, we have set out the most important elements of productivity and shown how you can become as productive as a CEO. Many of us almost worship high-level executives, imaging that they have skills and qualities to which we can never aspire. The truth is that we can all work to improve in every area where successful executives excel.

The knowledge and skills you have learned about together with the reflection questions and exercises you have completed have given you tools you need to be more productive. Revisit this book and the notebook you used for your reflection questions every once in a while, to remind yourself of what you have learned and what your true capabilities are.

We wish you the best of luck in your journey towards better productivity and success.

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