Easy Productivity
Secrets

"Get More Done In Less Time"

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INTRODUCTION

Are you one of the millions of people wishing they could get just a few more hours in the day? If you had an extra hour every day, what would you do with it? Sleep? Spend it with family and friends? Invest it back into your business? Use it on a hobby? Whatever the answer may be, the aim of this book is to help you create an hour (or more) of free time for you to use as you wish, by creating a more productive lifestyle.

Working from home is serious business and it takes a level of dedication most people who work outside the home wouldn't be able to handle. It also comes with its own set of problems—and that's why we've written this book to help you. While we can't stop your friends and family from calling or stopping by during your work hours, we can help you set yourself up for success.

In this book, we'll cover why most people struggle to stay productive, how to setup the perfect home office atmosphere, even if you don't have a spare room in your home; and then we'll share our favorite productivity tips to help you make the most the of the time you do have available to work.

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WHY MOST PEOPLE STRUGGLE TO STAY PRODUCTIVE

There are two big reasons why people struggle to stay productive: distractions and lack of motivation.

ELIMINATING THE DISTRACTIONS

This is certainly easier said than done, especially if you're a work-at-home parent. After all, the point of working at home is to be available for your family when they need you, right?

WRITE OUT A LIST OF POTENTIAL DISTRACTIONS

Sit down and write out an honest list of things that distract you while you work. For most of us, this list could include things such as: email, social media, texts, phone calls, instant messages, and the kids.

KEEP THE LIST IN YOUR WORK AREA

Keeping this list somewhere in your work area will help you recognize the distractions before they become a problem. For example, close your email box and only check it at predetermined times during the day. Sign out of all instant messengers. Turn the phone on silent. Make sure the children are occupied for a little while. Taking these steps means you are consciously making the effort to remove the distractions and focus.

TALK TO OTHERS AROUND YOU

When your friends and family members learn to respect your work time, this makes things a lot easier for you. Talk to your spouse and children (if they're old enough to understand) about the time you've dedicated to

work your hours. It is best if the people in your life can treat your work-at-home job as if you did not set your own hours. They need to see it as a traditional job with set hours, during which they leave you alone. They wouldn't call you at the office 15 times in three hours if they knew your boss was around, would they? Give the people in your home some sort of signal when you're working, so they know to leave you alone unless it is an emergency. For instance, if you have office, keep the door closed when you're working. The closed door is the sign your family needs to leave you alone.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Being productive is a skill. Any skill you obtain will require practice and repetition to fine tune and perfect. Even the most productive people will become distracted from time to time. If you find yourself becoming distracted, take a few minutes to center yourself and refocus yourself on your commitment to your client, and your business. Then, get back to work. Eventually, it will become easier for you to re-center and focus each time you get distracted, which in turn makes it easier to stay focused.

FINDING THE MOTIVATIONAL SPARK

No matter how much you will it done, the work you have to do isn't going to do itself. Finding your motivation will be easier on some days than others, but the key is to make sure you can get to that motivation when you need it the most.

CREATE AN "EMERGENCY SITUATION"

When you create an emergency because you know the project is on the last hours before its due, you're going to get more done in those last few hours than you did in the days before. If you can fake yourself out into an emergency situation, you'll get more done than if you tell yourself you have a few days and it can wait.

JUST SIT DOWN AND DO IT

No more excuses. Sit down at your work area, and do what needs to be done. Once you finally bite the bullet and get over whatever it is that was

stopping you from starting the project in the first place, you will find it easier to get more done than you thought.

If you still find yourself having trouble, think about the reasons why you love this project. Even if it's the most boring project in the world and you loathe it, it has to be done, and there's something that will make you love it—even if it's what you can do when it's done. And, when it gets finished, you'll be able to cross it off your to-do list, and move onto something you enjoy more. Plus, when the project is complete, that's money in the bank. Money you need to pay your bills. If the idea of getting the payment *still* doesn't motivate you—think about what life would be like if you were in the corporate would, and what your boss would say if you were like this at your traditional job. Most of the time, the motivation to work will come at the very least, out of the desire *not* to go back to the traditional clock job.

Now that you know what hinders your productivity and what you can do about it, let's move onto building the ideal work environment, to help keep you as productive as possible.

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SETTING UP YOUR PERFECT WORK ENVIRONMENT

It does not matter how motivated and focused you are, if you don't have the tools you need, and the right environment to do your work in. That's why we're going to show you how to set up the perfect work environment. Though you may find your perfect environment to vary slightly, make adjustments that work for you until you feel your work environment is perfect.

ERGONOMIC DESK, KEYBOARD AND CHAIR

If your work-at-home job means you'll be spending a lot of time on the computer, then you're definitely going to need an ergonomic desk, keyboard, and chair. If you plan on spending hours on end in your office, then you may as well do it in comfort. When you are comfortable, then you will be more productive.

If you not comfortable in your chair, you'll spend time (which though only minutes at a time, could add to hours) attempting to find the perfect position that doesn't cause your back to hurt after a while.

Typing, whether people realize it or not, is hard on the hands and wrists. When you don't use the proper posture, which is easy to forget, you run the risk of creating repetitive motion injuries, causing pain in the fingers, hands, and wrists. Let this go for too long, and you could end up with Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, something that in most cases requires surgery. If you don't like the design of the ergonomic keyboards (they can take a while to get used to) then you should at least consider a wrist pad to use at the keyboard and mouse. Many mouse pads come with gel rests attached to them.

Your desk should allow for your chair to be at the proper height, and for your monitor to be at the proper distance from your face. If your desk

doesn't have enough room to properly address this, you'll find yourself in an awkward position, which will lead to pain.

Designing your office with ergonomics in mind isn't always the most cost effective option, especially if you're just starting out. If you must cut corners to save money, get the bare minimum to get yourself started, and upgrade everything one piece at a time, until your work area is as comfortable as you can possibly make it.

PROPER LIGHTING

Proper lighting is key to your productivity because if you work in an area that is too dark, you will strain your eyes. Straining your eyes leads to headaches and feeling tired. If you're working in an environment that is too dark, you'll see it in your mood, because you'll feel tired.

The best situation is one that uses a combination of natural light and artificial light. Natural light will help improve your mood, and it can also help you save on your energy bills.

If possible, set up your home office in a room or area of your home where a lot of natural light comes through the majority of the day, and lean on artificial light as a secondary option, for when you must work at night, or it is cloudy outside.

Choose a brightness that enhances your mood. Too bright, and you'll hate it. If it's so dark you can't see, then you need to go for something a bit brighter. Compact fluorescent light bulbs produce a nice white light at a fraction of the wattage of traditional light bulbs.

It's a good idea to have an overhead light, but if this is not possible for your setup, at least have a lamp either on your desk for dedicated task work, or a corner lamp near your desk. Do not rely solely on the light from your monitor to help you see if you work at night, as this will cause eyestrain.

QUIET ROOM/CORNER

In the ideal home office scenario, you have a spare room you can dedicate to your home office. However, the reality of your situation may be that you only have a small amount of space in another room of your home to

dedicate to your home office. While a corner of a room means you won't be able to take the Home Office Tax deduction, it is certainly better than working out of a cubicle in a corporate office, isn't it?

Wherever you setup your office, try to make it in the quietest part of your home. When the environment around you is quiet, you will be able to focus more on the task at hand.

If you have to work while watching the children, the corner may have to be in your living room, so you can see all the activity, and of course it won't be as quiet as you'd like, but there is a solution for that as well.

HEADSET

If you need to be able to block out noise from the surrounding room, then a headset is an absolute lifesaver. You can turn on white noise from SimplyNoise.com, or music of your choice to block out the noisy distractions. If you have small children around, opt for using the headphones on one side, so you can still hear what you need to.

If you have older children, tell them that when you headset is on, you're working and should not be bothered unless it is an emergency. This is the signal you need, similar to keeping the office door shut when you're busy, to let those around you know you mean business.

Plus, if you have regular calls with clients, you can use the headset and a service like Skype to make the calls you need from your computer—saving on your long distance bill. If you're not much of a typist, you can also use the microphone on the headset for dictation purposes, using a program to type as you talk.

ORGANIZATION MATTERS

Being organized will also help keep you productive. When everything has a place, and every place has a thing, you will be far more productive, because you know where everything is when you need it, and won't have to waste valuable time looking for something.

How you organize your home office is up to you. An organizational system that works for one person may or may not work for another. The simple

fact is that we could write another book just on home office organization, so here are a few tips to help send you in the right direction:

USE A FILING CABINET

If most your business is conducted online, you don't necessarily need paper copies of everything, so there's no need to create a folder for each of your clients. However, you should create a folder for contracts, so you have a paper copy to refer to just in case an issue arises. Always save your bills, receipts, business cards from contacts, etc. Filing everything will make it easier to find when you need it. If you don't think you'll need it, save it anyway, in a miscellaneous file. Clean that miscellaneous file out once a month, and file everything in it accordingly. You'll treasure your filing system when it is time to file taxes!

KEEP A PEN AND PAPER ON YOUR DESK

As digital as we all are inclined to be, it is always a good idea to have a pen and paper close by to jot notes down on as needed. This is especially helpful if you have a meeting with a client, and need to take notes on what was discussed. You can type them up and organize them later if it helps you. If so, it's a good idea to email them to your client to make sure everything is clear and the two of you are on the same page.

ORGANIZE YOUR EMAIL BOX

It's easy to get flooded with email. The more people you work with, and the more newsletters you sign up for, you'll drown in no time. If you use [Gmail](), you can label everything accordingly, and even set up filters to automatically label emails with your client's name. For instance, if your client's name is Jane Doe, you can create an email filter so that all emails from JaneDoe@email.com will be labeled Jane. Then, you can read and archive the message, so that later if you ever need to find it, just look at the Jane label. Emails can have multiple labels, if you'd like.

While it may take a considerable amount of time to setup the initial label structure and filters, you'll save yourself so much more time later, because you'll be able to find things easier. You can even use filters to automatically move junk, so you don't have to waste time reading things that aren't valuable to you.

USE AN ONLINE FILE BACK UP SERVICE

Computer crashes happen all the time. Even if your hard drive is salvageable, you never know when a virus may render your main computer useless for a while. Having an online back up means you can access your client files and other important information whenever you need to, from any computer you need to.

Some options include:

- Amazon Cloud
- DropBox
- Google Drive
- Carbonite

All of these platforms allow for data access from your computer or smartphone, so it's also an excellent way to back up your phone data.

Now that we've covered the basics of setting up your home office for success, we'll share our best productivity secrets with you!

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PRODUCTIVITY SECRETS

Implementing just one of these tactics will help add more time to your day. Implementing all of these tricks will maximize the amount of time you have to get things done. You'll either get more accomplished every day, or reach the end of your to-do list with time to spare, that you can use however you want. You'll find yourself much less stressed, and looking forward to work.

NIGHTLY TO-DO LIST

At the end of your day, make a to-do list for the next day. This will help you focus your attention on what needs to be done when you look at it tomorrow. In addition, it helps clear your mind so you can get a deeper, more restful sleep. With deeper and more restful sleep, you will have more energy to work with the next day.

PRIORITIZE

Work on the tasks you dread the most, first. With those out of the way, you'll feel more accomplished, and moving through the rest of your day will be easier. As you prioritize the dreaded tasks, work on what is due first.

MAKE DEADLINES

While most of your clients will give you deadlines, it is always a good habit to make your own deadline ahead of the client's. This way you have a bit more flexibility in your schedule. If the project is due on Friday, give yourself a Thursday deadline. Getting things done early is better than having something happen on Thursday that prevents you from getting the project done by the real Friday deadline.

When it comes to things you need to do for your business that aren't assigned by clients, make your own deadlines. For example, if you want to increase your client base, set a deadline to have X number of clients, and work for it.

You'll be more productive when you have a deadline, too.

DON'T OVERLOAD YOURSELF

It's easy to overload yourself when you work as your own boss. Whether it is because you need the money, or you underestimate the amount of time the projects on your plate will take you to complete, there is always a chance you will overbook yourself.

It is important to remember that you are only one person, and as a small business owner, you are already playing several roles. You should not have to do the work of 20.

You're bound to overload yourself from time to time, and there is nothing wrong with working your butt off to get everything done to reach the deadlines and keep the clients happy, as long as that's not what you are doing all the time.

If you are constantly overloaded, you're going to burn out. And when you burn out, you won't be as productivity. You will dread work, and because you dread it, will not likely get as much done as you would if you were not stressed out.

If you find yourself overloaded, slowly cut back your work. Schedule more time for fewer projects. If money becomes an issue, it may be time to increase your rates.

CLEAR BOUNDARIES

One of the hardest obstacles in working from home is learning how to set clear boundaries between work and home, or work time and play time. People who work outside the home can easily leave their work at work, because they clock out and leave every day. When you work at home, it's not easy to do. In order to be successful, you need clear boundaries and rules to follow. What works for you may not work for others, but

regardless of what the boundaries are, they need to be followed closely. Without these boundaries, your personal and professional life could suffer.

It's easy to want to work right through the weekend or right through holidays. In certain circumstances, this may be necessary, but it should never be a regular habit. Weekends and holidays should be reserved for family time, and if you *must* work, increase your rates. Wouldn't an on-call technician charge more to fix your air conditioning system after hours or on the weekend? Yes, and you should, too!

Don't work where you play, and don't play where you work. While the fact that you can work wherever and whenever is enticing, it blurs the lines you are attempting to set. As awesome as it may sound, don't work from your laptop in bed. Your bed is for sleep and relaxation, and it should remain that way. You'll be less productive because you're tempted to take a nap, or to watch your favorite show on television.

SET "WORK HOURS"

While you do have the freedom to make your own schedule, and change that schedule as necessary based on your current work and family demands, try to set work hours.

For someone who has a child in school, these hours could be 7am to 3pm. This gives you an uninterrupted time to work. For someone who has young children in the home and a day full of interruptions, it may make sense to work from 8 pm until 2am, leaving a bit of time for sleep before the children wake for the day.

Whatever your work hours may be, don't be tempted to clean house or run errands during your work hours. If you had a traditional job, you wouldn't be home to wash dishes, do laundry, or sweep the floors. Those things can wait until after work, whether you work in the home or outside it.

LEAVE EMAIL AND SOCIAL MEDIA ALONE

For most self-employed people who work from home, email and social media are critical parts of the business. However, they can be tremendous time suckers. You should schedule time to check and reply to your email

and address your social media presence. Close out the email and social media tabs whenever you're working on a project. If you must have social media open during a project because it is related, turn off your chat functions, so you at least appear to be offline. Commit to checking your email and social media only at the predetermined times on your schedule. Save all personal social media activities for your personal time when you are "off the clock."

<u>OUTSOURCE</u>

If you have a task you need done, but aren't exactly a professional, don't be afraid to outsource it. For example, a web designer who is skilled at coding and basic graphic design may be asked to write the website content. Instead of spending hours agonizing over the keyword research and the best way to present the content, it may be better to outsource the writing to a seasoned freelancer. Yes, it requires spending money, but in the time you would have spent working on the content, you could easily move onto another project and make more money than you pay out to the person you hire, and save yourself hours of frustration in the process.

There are many different marketplaces online to help you find qualified freelancers for nearly any task. Whether you need: content, web design, web development, graphic design, search engine optimization, marketing, advertising, accounting, or any number of other things, you can find a qualified professional to help you. Check places such as:
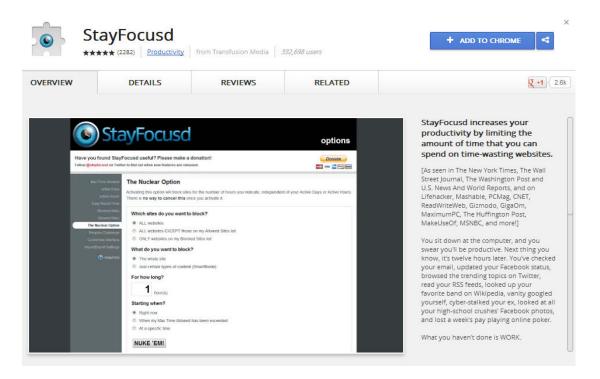
- [eLance](#)
- [oDesk](#)
- [Freelancer](#)
[Guru](#)

<u>BONUS: BROWSER ADD-ONS</u>

Set yourself up for success while browsing the Internet for work, with browser add-ons. Options vary depending on browser, so we'll cover the two most popular ones: Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox.

GOOGLE CHROME ADD-ONS

StayFocusd

This allows you to limit the time you spend on certain websites. Is Facebook killing your productivity? Add it to the list on this add on, and you'll be kicked out after you've hit your time limit! If you really need to buckle down, use the "Nuclear Option" to block time-wasting websites all together, limiting your browsing capacity only to the websites you need for work.
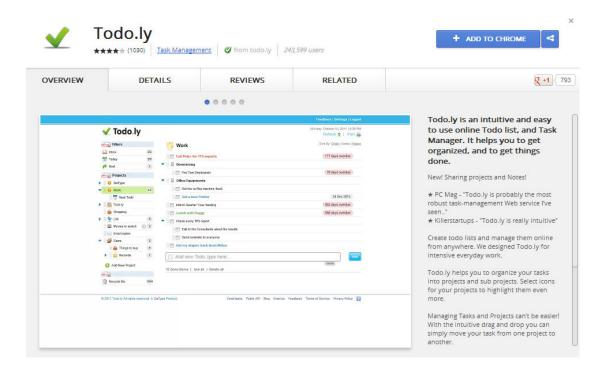

Cool Clock

This handy browser add-on gives you a clock, calendar, hourly desktop time notifications, an alarm, and a timer. Find out how long it takes you to do a certain task. Use it to track time for billing clients. Remind yourself when it's time to move on to the next task.

Todo.ly

This is a task management tool. Use this to make your nightly to do list, and manage it online from anywhere. Need to work on the go? Forgot your to do list? No problem! Computer crash? No problem!

MOZILLA FIREFOX ADD-ONS

[Idderall](#)

This is the same thing as StayFocusd for Chrome. It will help you block time wasting websites, so you can focus on getting your tasks accomplished.

[Simple Timer](#)

Find out how long you're spending doing various tasks every day. It'll help you see how you're managing your time (are you spending an hour every day playing games on Facebook?) and could be useful in calculating the amount of time you are spending on a project for client billing purposes.

[Prevent Tab Overflow](#)

If you're researching, or doing anything online that requires you have multiple tabs open, it can be a pain in the neck to constantly bounce back and forth trying to find the tab you need. With this add-on, all of your tabs will stay visible, so you do not have to waste time scrolling through everything. Keep in mind, however, the more tabs you have open, the slower your computer/browser typically runs. You are usually better off with fewer tabs open.

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CONCLUSION

You're ready to go implement these tactics and make yourself more productive! By making just a few changes to your office setup and the way you run your business, you can save yourself precious hours, ensuring you're making the most of the time you have.

Before we let you get started making yourself more productive, here's an important tip. Multi-tasking, though it sounds great and may make you *feel* like you are getting more done, is actually counterproductive. Have you ever tried to talk on the phone and write an email at the same time? You either end up almost completely ignoring the conversation, or typing words you speak on the phone, rather than what you mean to say in the email. Your brain cannot do both, and must choose which one to focus its attention on. While you think you may be doing two things at once, you're only rapidly switching your attention back and forth between them… and in the process are sacrificing speed and accuracy.

Research shows that when the brain multi-tasks, less attention is spread across more tasks, making it easier to get distracted, and to mess up what you're doing. So, instead of trying to do five things at once, do one thing at a time until you're finished with your list. Try to block all like tasks together, because it makes it harder for your brain if you are constantly switching back and forth from task to task.