

## ***99 Sure-Fire Ways to Boost Your Productivity, Boldly and Brazenly Go Where You've Never Gone Before, Outsmart Your Boss, and Make the Coming Year a Rousing Success ...***

- 1. Nuke it! The most efficient way to get through a task is to delete it. If it doesn't need to be done, get it off your to do list.*
- 2. Daily goals. Without a clear focus, it's too easy to succumb to distractions. Set targets for each day in advance. Decide what you'll do; then do it.*
- 3. Worst first. To defeat procrastination learn to tackle your most unpleasant task first thing in the morning instead of delaying it until later in the day. This small victory will set the tone for a very productive day.*
- 4. Peak times. Identify your peak cycles of productivity, and schedule your most important tasks for those times. Work on minor tasks during your non-peak times.*
- 5. No-comm zones. Allocate uninterruptible blocks of time for solo work where you must concentrate. Schedule light, interruptible tasks for your open-comm periods and more challenging projects for your no-comm periods.*
- 6. Mini-milestones. When you begin a task, identify the target you must reach before you can stop working. For example, when working on a book, you could decide not to get up until you've written at least 1000 words. Hit your target no matter what.*
- 7. Timeboxing. Give yourself a fixed time period, like 30 minutes, to make a dent in a task. Don't worry about how far you get. Just put in the time.*
- 8. Batching. Batch similar tasks like phone calls or errands into a single chunk, and knock them off in a single session.*

9. *Early bird.* Get up early in the morning, like at 5am, and go straight to work on your most important task. You can often get more done before 8am than most people do in a day.

10. *Cone of silence.* Take a laptop with no network or WiFi access, and go to a place where you can work flat out without distractions, such as a library, park, coffee house, or your own backyard. Leave your comm gadgets behind.

11. *Tempo.* Deliberately pick up the pace, and try to move a little faster than usual. Speak faster. Walk faster. Type faster. Read faster. Go home sooner.

12. *Relaxify.* Reduce stress by cultivating a relaxing, clutter-free workspace.

13. *Agendas.* Provide clear written agendas to meeting participants in advance. This greatly improves meeting focus and efficiency. You can use it for phone calls too.

14. *Pareto.* The Pareto principle is the 80-20 rule, which states that 80% of the value of a task comes from 20% of the effort. Focus your energy on that critical 20%, and don't overengineer the non-critical 80%.

15. *Ready-fire-aim.* Bust procrastination by taking action immediately after setting a goal, even if the action isn't perfectly planned. You can always adjust course along the way.

16. *Minuteman.* Once you have the information you need to make a decision, start a timer and give yourself just 60 seconds to make the actual decision. Take a whole minute to vacillate and second-guess yourself all you want, but come out the other end with a clear choice. Once your decision is made, take some kind of action to set it in motion.

17. *Deadline.* Set a deadline for task completion, and use it as a focal point to stay on track.

18. *Promise.* Tell others of your commitments, since they'll help hold you accountable.

19. *Punctuality.* Whatever it takes, show up on time. Arrive early.

20. *Gap reading.* Use reading to fill in those odd periods like waiting for an appointment, standing in line, or while the coffee is brewing. If you're a male, you can even read an article while shaving (preferably with an electric razor). That's 365 articles a year.

21. *Resonance.* Visualize your goal as already accomplished. Put yourself into a state of actually being there. Make it real in your mind, and you'll soon see it in your reality.

22. *Glittering prizes.* Give yourself frequent rewards for achievement. See a movie, book a professional massage, or spend a day at an amusement park.

23. *Quad 2.* Separate the truly important tasks from the merely urgent. Allocate blocks of time to work on the critical Quadrant 2 tasks, those which are important but rarely urgent, such as physical exercise, writing a book, and finding a relationship partner.

24. *Continuum.* At the end of your workday, identify the first task you'll work on the next day, and set out the materials in advance. The next day begin working on that task immediately.

25. *Slice and dice.* Break complex projects into smaller, well-defined tasks. Focus on completing just one of those tasks.

26. *Single-handling.* Once you begin a task, stick with it until it's 100% complete. Don't switch tasks in the middle. When distractions come up, jot them down to be dealt with later.

27. *Randomize.* Pick a totally random piece of a larger project, and complete it. Pay one random bill. Make one phone call. Write page 42 of your book.

28. *Insanely bad.* Defeat perfectionism by completing your task in an intentionally terrible fashion, knowing you need never share the results with anyone. Write a blog post about the taste of salt, design a hideously dysfunctional web site, or create a business plan that guarantees a first-year bankruptcy. With a truly horrendous first draft, there's nowhere to go but up.

29. *30 days.* Identify a new habit you'd like to form, and commit to sticking with it for just 30 days. A temporary commitment is much easier to keep than a permanent one.

30. *Delegate.* Convince someone else to do it for you.

31. *Cross-pollination.* Sign up for martial arts, start a blog, or join an improv group. You'll often encounter ideas in one field that can boost your performance in another.

32. *Intuition.* Go with your gut instinct. It's probably right.

33. *Optimization.* Identify the processes you use most often, and write them down step-by-step. Refactor them on paper for greater efficiency. Then implement and test your improved processes. Sometimes we just can't see what's right in front of us until we examine it under a microscope.

34. *Super Slow.* Commit yourself to working on a particularly hideous project for just one session a week, 15-30 minutes total. Declutter one small shelf. Purge 10 clothing items you don't need. Write a few paragraphs. Then stop.

35. *Dailies.* Schedule a specific time each day for working on a particular task or habit. One hour a day could leave you with a finished book, or a profitable Internet business a year later.

36. *Add-ons.* Tack a task you want to habitualize onto one of your existing habits. Water the plants after you eat lunch. Send thank-you notes after you check email.

37. *Plug-ins.* Inject one task into the middle of another. Read while eating lunch. Return phone calls while commuting. Listen to podcasts while grocery shopping.
38. *Gratitude.* When someone does you a good turn, send a thank-you card. That's a real card, not an e-card. This is rare and memorable, and the people you thank will be eager to bring you more opportunities.
39. *Training.* Train up your skill in various productivity habits. Get your typing speed to at least 60wpm, if not 90. Learn to speed-read. Develop your communication skills.
40. *Software.* Take advantage of productivity software to boost your effectiveness. Lifehacker recommends new items every week.
41. *Zone out.* Enter the zone of peak creativity, and watch your output soar.
42. *Denial.* Just say no to non-critical requests for your time.
43. *Recapture.* Reclaim other people's poor time usage for yourself. Visualize your goals during dull speeches. Write out your grocery list during pointless meetings.
44. *Mastermind.* Run your problem past someone else, preferably a group of people. Invite all the advice, feedback, and constructive criticism you can handle.
45. *Twenty.* Take a piece of paper, number 1-20, and don't stop until you've listed 20 creative ideas for improving your productivity.
46. *Challenger.* Deliberately make the task harder. Challenging tasks are more engaging than boring ones. Compose an original poem for your next blog post. Create a Power Point presentation that doesn't use words.
47. *Asylum.* Complete an otherwise tedious task in an unusual or crazy manner to keep it interesting. Make phone calls using pretend foreign accents. Fill out government paperwork in crayon.

48. *Music.* Experiment to discover how music may boost your productivity. Try fast-paced music for email, classical or new age for project work, and total silence for high-concentration creative work.

49. *Scotty.* Estimate how long a task will take to complete. Then start a timer, and push yourself to complete it in half that time.

50. *Pay it forward.* When an undesirable task is delegated to you, re-delegate it to someone else.

51. *Bouncer.* When a seemingly pointless task is delegated to you, bounce it back to the person who assigned it to you, and challenge them to justify its operational necessity.

52. *Opt-out.* Quit clubs, projects, and subscriptions that consume more of your time than they're worth.

53. *Decaffeinate.* Say no to drugs, suffer through the withdrawal period, and let your natural creative self re-emerge. See *How to Give Up Coffee*.

54. *Triage.* Save the lives of your important projects by killing those that are going to die anyway.

55. *Conscious procrastination.* Delay non-critical tasks as long as you possibly can. Many of them will die on you and won't need to be done at all.

56. *TV-free.* Turn off the TV, especially the news, and recapture many usable hours.

57. *Timer.* Time all your tasks for an entire day, preferably a week. Even the act of measuring itself can boost your productivity, not to mention what you learn about your real time usage.

58. *Valor.* Pick the one item on your task list that scares you the most. Muster all the courage you can, and tackle it immediately.

59. *Nonconformist.* Run errands at unpopular times to avoid crowds. Shop just before stores close or shortly after they open. Take advantage of 24-hour outlets if you're a vampire.
60. *Agoraphobia.* Shop online whenever possible. Get the best selection, consult reviews, and purchase items within minutes.
61. *Reminder.* Add birthday and holiday reminders to your calendar a month or two ahead of their actual dates. Buy gifts then instead of at the last minute.
62. *Do it now!* Recite this phrase over and over until you're so sick of it that you cave in and get to work.
63. *Inspiration.* Read inspiring books and articles, listen to audio programs, and attend seminars to keep absorbing inspiring new ideas (as well as to refresh yourself on the old ones).
64. *Gym rat.* Exercise daily. Boost your metabolism, concentration, and mental clarity in 30 minutes a day.
65. *Lovey dovey.* Romantic love will spur you on to greater heights, if for no other reason than to persuade your partner you aren't such a loser after all.
66. *Troll hunt.* Banish the negative trolls from your life, and associate only with positive, happy, and successful people. Mindsets are contagious. Show loyalty to your potential, not to your pity posse.
67. *Halliburton.* Cut corners to save time and money when the outcome is mainly for show anyway. If it looks good, it is good. It's easier to manufacture excuses than results.
68. *Nuke.XML.* Split your RSS feeds into two lists: those that help boost your productivity vs. those that taketh it away. Force yourself to unsubscribe from all the feeds in the second list. You won't miss them. Just be sure this blog makes the first list.

69. Evil eye. Practice your best evil eye in a mirror, and use it liberally on anyone who enters your space to interrupt you.

70. Vulcan logic. Ask for a part-time assistant by explaining to your boss that you're being paid \$25/hour to do \$10/hour tasks, which is costing your employer a lot of money.

71. Voodoo. Display voodoo replicas of your boss and co-workers on your desk, labeled with their names. Whenever you overhear someone complaining of health problems (headache, upset stomach, runny nose, etc), stick a pin into the corresponding part of their doll. Then call them over to your workspace for some unrelated reason.

72. Scooby snacks. Grab a bowl of your favorite snacks, such as grapes, tamari almonds, or Trader Joe's Oriental Rice Crackers. Eat one piece for each microbial piece of work you complete. One bite per sentence. One bite per line of code. One bite per email. Ranks, Raggy.

73. Iraqi Freedom. When you're bleeding time and money on a project that's spiraling out of control, when morale is in the toilet, and when you can't even get yourself to believe your own lies anymore, that's the best time to go on vacation.

74. WoW.die.die.die. Give online gaming a rest, and re-invest that energy into your real life, which is probably suffocating beneath a pile of dead, smelly orcs.

75. Politician. Throw money at your problems until they succumb. Either this will work, or you'll put your successor in such a crippled position that they can't do any better.

76. Upgrade. Modernize your tools – a faster computer, a better PDA, a hotter girlfriend.

77. Coach. Hire a personal coach to keep yourself motivated, focused, and accountable. After several months of pep talks, you'll be qualified to start your own coaching practice.

78. *Proactive.* Just do it, and deal with the consequences later. It's easier to request forgiveness than permission.

79. *Polyphasic.* Six naps a day keeps your laziness at bay. You can catch up on sleep when you're dead. See *Polyphasic Sleep* for details.

80. *Captain Kirk.* If you boldly and brazenly act like you know what you're doing, people will assume it's true. Use this strategy to get promoted to the point where you can delegate all your work to those who really know what they're doing. Orion slave girls are standing by.

81. *Hyundai.* Lower your standards, and just get it done anyway you can.

82. *Saturn.* Dictate the terms you want as totally non-negotiable, and make them sound as generous as you can. But at the first sign of resistance, cave in immediately and agree to re-negotiate everything.

83. *Blockade.* Slide a heavy piece of furniture in front of your office door. When drop-in visitors complain they can't get in, tell them you're refactoring your office for greater productivity.

84. *Eye for an eye.* Punish those who add tasks to your plate by filling their plates with even more.

85. *Bait.* Put candy dishes on everyone's desk but your own.

86. *Quagmire.* Fill out and mail a generous assortment of business reply cards in your boss' name, checking the "bill me later" boxes. A few dozen magazine subscriptions and some Franklin Mint collections ought to slow him down a bit. A new Civil War chess piece every month means he'll be playing chess in under 3 years.

87. *End run.* Suggest to your boss' boss that your boss is overworked and needs more help. If you implement the previous tip, this will likely be true.

88. Fasting. Digest information, not food.

89. Toddler. Throw a tantrum until someone finally solves the problem for you.

90. Armageddon. Use Overwhelming Force to totally dominate your problem. Treat your molehill like a mountain. Use a bazooka to kill a cockroach. Send a real human being to serve in Congress.

91. Model. Find people who are already getting the results you want, interview them, and model their attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. Then you'll have someone to blame when things go wrong.

92. The Secret. Use the Law of Attraction to manifest the done-ness of your project.

93. Illuminati. Form a secret society to ensure that things always go your way. Eventually take over the planet to guarantee you'll never have to work again.

94. PMS. Accept the fact that you can still get your work done even when you're miffed at everything.

95. Anakin. Would your problems be easier to solve if you turned evil? The dark side beckons...

96. Spammer. Sign up for a free email account, and subscribe to every e-zine, e-newsletter, and mailing list you can find. The shadier the better. Once you've completed all the double opt-in processes, set that account to forward to your boss' email.

97. Steve Jobs. On the rare occasions you actually do manage to get something done, talk it up like a madman. Say "This is huge!" to everyone you meet. People will assume you're 10x as productive as you are.

98. *Guru.* Instead of doing your actual work, spend most of your time reading magic blogs. Within a few months, you'll have acquired enough knowledge to start your own. Eventually you'll realize that 50% of the web consists of semi-useful tips written by chronic procrastinators. The other 50% is porn.

99. *Uber-Guru.* Stick with the first 50%.

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