

## HOW TO BE PRODUCTIVE

# Planning your week

Thinking smart can turn a potentially overwhelming week into a productive one.

**Start scheduling** Every Friday, spend 15 minutes planning the following week. Break each workday into numerous timeslots (30 minutes to 90 minutes each) containing small tasks requiring a short, focused effort. Try to stick to your schedule for each task – use a timer if you need to.

**Chunk tasks** Stay focused by grouping similar tasks together. Instead of stopping to pay one invoice, pay a few at once. Don't be in and out of email all day, use short email "dashes" instead. Break big tasks into small "chunks" such as planning or brainstorming – they're far easier to deal with. Book chunked tasks into your schedule.

**Be realistic** Don't pack too much into each day. Program in "breathing space" around meetings and events so you have time to physically and mentally make the transition between tasks. This also allows time for unexpected problems. Never getting to the bottom of a daily task list is disheartening, so keep it short and feel successful instead.

**Work at your optimum times** If you have flexibility in your work schedule, use it. Are you good at writing or strategy in the morning? Block out time for these tasks first thing. Hopeless at strategic thinking after 3pm? Use that time for process-oriented tasks instead.

**Get in a rhythm** Start observing your energy levels throughout the day and try to find patterns so you can get into your optimal working groove. Remember: being too busy to stop and observe what is working well is a false economy.

SUE WHITE

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