

99 Easy Ways To Find Focus And Get Shit Done

*Your Guide
To Working Effectively And Become A
Super Achiever*



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WELCOME TO 99 EASY WAYS TO FIND FOCUS AND GET SHIT DONE

Super-achievers are called that for a simple reason: they get things done more efficiently and usually quicker than others, typically because they are super-organised. But few people are born organised never mind super-organised. To be productive you have to cultivate good habits and smart strategies. Even if you think you are organised already you can become even more so by adding some simple tactics to your daily routine.

To be a super-achiever you need to be dedicated to a vision, persistent, surrounded by a supportive community, open to new ideas, emotionally balanced and willing to work. I have put together 99 easy strategies that will help anyone become more productive; from planning your day more effectively, to developing healthy habits and learning to focus on those things in your life that are truly worthwhile.

This eBook guide started out as a few personal notes made for my own benefit, to keep me on track when working from home, but it soon grew to a much bigger project. To make it simple and practical I have not included lengthy explanations as to why these strategies work, which might be interesting information but not necessarily useful for implementation. However, many have been tested by neuroscience and social scientists, and many have simply been proven to be effective through experience by the people applying them to their lives, so we can be reasonably sure that they work.

Life is short; make sure you're doing what matters to you most. This guide will help you break through limitations stopping you from getting the best out of life. From the **99 EASY WAYS TO FIND FOCUS AND GET SHIT DONE** pick the ones that appeal to you, apply them to your life, and watch yourself join the ranks of super-achievers.

Matz Skoog

The Secret Of Getting Ahead Is Getting Started. [Mark Twain]

FIRST OF ALL

1. Know Yourself

Self-awareness is the starting point for any kind of personal development. Knowing what makes you tick and what works for you is imperative. Being organised and productive is not a one-size-fits-all approach. As an example: when are you most alert and what is your most productive time of day—in the morning or in the afternoon? Decide when you do your best work and plan your day accordingly.

2. Remember there are only 24 Hours In A Day

Recognise that there are only 24 hours in the day and that no one can work all of them. If you're constantly working long hours, skipping meals and getting less than enough sleep then you're more likely to burn out than achieve brilliant results. Remember that, along with work, you have a life to live. Otherwise what's the point of all that effort? If you are well organised and manage your time efficiently you shouldn't need to work ridiculous hours to be productive.

3. Timing Your Tasks

Cerebral work, such as creative writing, tends to be best done in the early part of the day and intellectually less demanding activities, such as routine admin, later on. Generally it's a good idea to do smaller and easier chores when your energy is low, like just before lunch, and tackle more challenging tasks when your energy is higher, which is normally first thing in the morning (after breakfast of some sort) or after a short break.

4. Schedule Your Day

This is such an obvious piece of advice it hardly needs stating. However, everybody has his or her own favourite system of how to make a daily schedule. But there are strategies for planning, that when you become aware of them, will enable you to get even more out of your day than you do already. The most obvious strategy is of course to write a to-do list. Five minutes spent making a simple timeline for the day ahead of you might save precious hours of productive time.

THE TO-DO LIST

5. The To-Do List

To retain information in your head requires energy. Cerebral activity is physically tiring. Making yourself tired will not help you stay organised. A pen and some paper is the best way of remembering things externally, and it's much more permanent than trying to commit them to memory or using a computer (see 10. below). To prevent squandering energy on remembering things write everything down: shopping lists, meeting notes, appointments, important dates and people's birthdays, et cetera. A to-do list is by far the most effective tool for staying on top of things. It's simple and effective and it's tremendously satisfying to tick off one item after another as the day progress. If of all possible approaches for staying organised you only chose one single strategy let it be the good old-fashioned, tried and tested to-do list. (And don't fall into the tempting trap of when you do something that's not on your list adding it retrospectively – and then crossing it off!)

6. To-Do Lists And Goal Setting

One benefit of writing even the most basic outline of must-do tasks is that it will provide you with a sense of purpose and make you more aware of your future possibilities. For one thing, writing out a bunch of to-dos forces you to set basic but very concrete goals for the day. Goal-setting, which I will address later, is along with the to-do list two of the most useful tools to adopt if you want to be productive, so for this reason alone it is well worth developing a system that works for you.

7. When To Make A To-Do List

The best times of day to prepare your to-do list is last thing at night and first thing in the morning. In the morning it provides focus for your day and in the evening it helps clearing your mind from overload of unnecessary information. At work, take time to look at the list when you get to your desk first thing in the

morning and review it again last thing just before you stop work for the day. Reprioritise your list, cross off the things you completed and add new things that need to be done. If you can reference and tick things off your list you will be able to see your progress in black and white, which will contribute tremendously to increased motivation and help you to stay on top of your workload.

8. Get A Head Start

Following on from the strategy above, the best way to hit the ground running in the morning is to start the night before. By taking a few minutes to look over the next day's commitments before you go to bed will prime you for the morning. The busier the following day is promising to be, the more important it is to do this quick survey the evening before. Being thus prepared means you will waste less time in the morning deciding where to start, or gathering materials, or maybe discovering a crucial item or piece of information is missing.

9. Planning Will Give You A Good Night's Sleep

Spending 10 minutes in the evening, reviewing and updating your to-do list for the following day, will help you sleep better. Doing this just before bed will enable you to "park" anxiety and thoughts about upcoming challenges. The fact that you don't have to expend mental capacity on remembering what you need to do the following day will calm your mind and relax you in when you're getting ready for bed.

10. Writing By Hand Versus Typing

Nowadays most of us keep notes on our phone, tablet or laptop, but research has demonstrated that the act of writing by hand aids memory more effectively than typing because it engages visual, kinesthetic and logical faculties in combination with each other—and I think there is a satisfying creative element involved in the act of writing by hand. Handwriting stimulates both the left and the right brain in multiple ways, making it more likely you will remember what you write than if you had used the keyboard on your smart phone, and it will have the added benefit of improving your hand writing.

11. Pick A Medium

Regardless of the point made above about writing by hand planning or making a to-do list is a pretty personal thing and at the end of the day you must choose a system that works for you. If you are addicted to your smart phone, and last picked up a pencil around 1995, fear not: There is a huge range of smartphone apps designed for boosting productivity and assisting with project planning, just head over to the App Store or Google Play to find one that appeals to you. You may need to try a few before settling on one that suits your needs, but once you find one you like you're off and running.

12. Keep Separate Lists

Separate personal lists from business lists. For the same reason that single tasking is more efficient than multi-tasking, so is it more effective to keep your personal to-dos separate from your business ones. When your most urgent task is to finish that overdue sales report for your manager you don't suddenly need to be reminded that you need to buy more loo paper on your next supermarket trip, which should be on your shopping list.

13. Start Afresh

Make a new list every day. As you progress your priorities will change so a new list will help you regularly re-evaluate what's important. Success comes from repeating a few simple tasks over and over again so be disciplined and make your to-do list part of your daily routine. If you write by hand your list will take on a different look every time you make a new one. It will therefore be visually stimulating in a different way each time, which will help your senses re-engage with your priorities daily.

14. Stagger Your Lists

You may wish to create a series of lists. First a master list, with every item you'd like to accomplish in the long-term; another weekly project list, with everything that needs to take place in the next seven days; and then a HIT list (High-Impact Tasks), with everything that need to get done today: Check every day to see what

items should move from the master list, to the weekly project list, to the daily HIT list. By constantly reviewing and updating your plans you will ensure steady progress towards your development goals.

15. Keep It Manageable

There's nothing more intimidating than a mile-long daily to-do list and, realistically, it's impossible to get too much done in 24 hours anyway. Keep your to-do list to a reasonable length. If you put 30 things on your list it will drive you nuts and you will lose motivation. But if you put a small number of important tasks that are within your capacity to complete, with a few that are of high priority, that's manageable. One trick for keeping a HIT list simple is to first make a list of everything that you want to get done today and then slice it in half. There should not be more than 10 items remaining; the rest can go on the weekly projects list or the master list.

16. Stay Specific

The key to a successful to-do list is to differentiate between a task and a project. All to-dos or tasks should have the following features in common: They are concrete actions; they can be finished in one sitting; and they're tasks that only the to-do-list writer can do. For projects that require multiple actions, more time or other people's input make a separate "project list" listing the specific activities needed toward completing that project.

17. Include It All

For every item on your list include everything you need to know to get the job finished so you don't have to scramble around for additional information after you start. Once you get going on the task there should be no excuse for not getting it done. For example, if the task involves calling someone include that person's contact details so you won't waste time searching for them later.

18. Time It

Now that you've made your list (and checked it morning and night), go back and jot down the time you think each to-do will take next to each of them. It might even help to turn the to-do list into a kind of schedule with specific times and places. This is a perfect way to effectively scheduling your day as mentioned above.

19. Give Yourself Enough Time

If a task on your list is a major undertaking leave about 15 minutes of "cushion time" before the next item on the to-do list or calendar to give yourself a sporting chance to get it finished without feeling too stressed. Start the list with at least two items that absolutely must get done today; to ensure you end up each day feeling you have accomplished something significant.

20. Be Flexible

Be tolerant and kind to yourself. If you don't manage to get through everything as planned don't panic and don't beat yourself up. Simply move the remaining item or items over to the next day. Your to-do list is there to help you work more efficiently and productively; it's not a rod for your back. Your list is meant to support and encourage you, and give you a sense of accomplishment, as you cross off each successfully completed task. A sense of failure brought about because of a list with too few items ticked off will demotivate you and reduce your productivity. One excellent way to improve the effectiveness of your to-do list is to prioritise.

PRIORITISATION

21. Prioritise

You can't decide how best to spend your time unless you know what's important. But be aware that there is a difference between a task that is important and a task that is urgent. Urgent tasks have a tendency to distract us from what is less urgent but more important—especially if it is an easy task to complete. An important task may not seem urgent at a first glance, but if left incomplete can have a devastatingly negative impact on long-term plans. This being said, if the fire alarm goes off it is both urgent and important enough for you to drop whatever you were doing and get out of the building as quickly as you can.

22. Prioritising Systems

Use a system that works for you. You can allocate priority values from '*high*' to '*medium*' and '*low*' or use a numerical scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not important at all and 5 is of maximum importance, or if you are strongly visually orientated you can use a colour-coding system. You can even use all three in combination if this floats your boat.

23. Prioritising your to-do-list

Begin by listing the tasks you need to do in order of importance – in other words use your to-do list, which by now you have become so adept at making. Split your list into things to do 'now', 'this week' and 'this month', and make sure you draw up a new list frequently. This will help you stay on target and work effectively.

WORKING EFFECTIVELY

24. Chunking

Break large tasks down into manageable smaller parts will make a big complex job seem less daunting and more manageable. This gives you a feeling of you being in control of your workload, rather than feeling that the work is controlling you. By tackling each small part separately, one by one, you will soon have completed the larger objective without feeling overwhelmed.

25. Keep Checking On Relevance

Review your task list regularly. If there is one item that always ends up at the bottom of the pile ask yourself if it is really that important. If the answer is yes then stop procrastinating, move it to the top of your list, and get it out of the way. If, on the other hand, the answer is no then move it to another day or if possible abandon it altogether.

26. The 80:20 Rule

According to Pareto's Principle (Vilfredo Pareto, 1848-1923, engineer, sociologist and economist), only 20% of your daily tasks really matter because that 20% will produce 80% of your results. Conversely 80% of your work contributes to 20% of your output. This applies to almost everything we do. Concentrate on the most crucial 20% of your workload because this is where you will make most progress.

27. Do Not Disturb

If you are busy and need to work undisturbed hang a sign on your door. Warn your colleagues in the office—or your family and friends at home—not to interrupt you during certain time slots. Encourage them to speak to you when it's convenient for you not convenient for them.

28. Take Regular Breaks.

It has been shown by some highly regarded research that the highest-performing 10 per cent of people tend to work for 52 consecutive minutes at their desk, followed by a 17-minute break. Those 17 minutes should ideally be spent away from the computer, by taking a walk, doing exercise, talking to co-workers or taking a power nap. (If you do decide to take a power nap and are fortunate enough to have your own office, hang a "Please Do Not Disturb" on your door. Some bosses may take exception to finding staff asleep on the job! If you don't have this luxury, then hope for an understanding boss!) Find out what your optimal time is; it may be a little less or a little more than 52 minutes, but it will be somewhere in that region. If you push yourself too far in one sitting your over-all productivity will drop rather than increase.

29. Power Naps

To nap or not to nap: That is the question! You may feel guilty about wanting a nap in the middle of the afternoon, or you may think that taking a catnap will make you feel more tired. Don't! A power nap is eminently helpful for increasing your productivity. It is all about timing. 15 to 20 minutes is all you need to get the full benefits of napping, such as improved alertness, enhanced performance, and a better mood. If you work from home it is not difficult finding space for a nap. I recommend you lay on the floor, on a carpet, rather than on

your bed, as you don't want to fall too deeply asleep and wake up all groggy two hours later. Here too there are plenty of smart phone apps that can help you optimise your rest time.

30. Stand Up

From time to time stand up from your desk and walk around the room. It will only take a minute or two of your time but the effect on your productivity will be significant. Alternatively you may be able to identify tasks that can be done standing up rather than sitting down; phone calls for instance. There is not much more to say about this other than—it works. So get off your backside and do it—right now!

31. Refocus Your Eyes

Many of us spend much of our waking hours staring at a screen, which can strain our eyes and actually make it more difficult to focus on it, and therefore process, what we're looking at. To rest your eyes and regain focus, just stare at a distant object for a few seconds from time to time. Try the "20-20-20 rule" – every 20 minutes, take 20 seconds to stare at an object at least 20 feet away.

32. Overcoming Overload

The next time you're feeling overloaded try giving yourself a few minutes of mindfulness. Give your brain a chance to disengage and reboot. A good way to do this is to pause whatever it is you were doing and focus on your breath, or counting back from one hundred, or simply focus on sensing your body as you sit at your desk. A few moments of this kind of mindfulness can be remarkably effective in restoring your energy, re-engaging with the world around you and recovering your focus.

33. Dump Non-urgent Information

Sometimes we are faced with having to remember minor information and tasks that are not urgent but nevertheless important to keep track of. If something does not need to be addressed straight away write it down to get it out of your head. Write down everything that's swirling around your mind, even the tiniest details. Don't let non-urgent detail preoccupy valuable processing capacity in your brain. It is the same principle as boosting a computer's performance by clearing its RAM, which brings us nicely onto the question of managing your digital office.

ORGANISING TECHNOLOGY

34. Manage Email Alerts

Don't let your inbox drive your day. 50 email messages per day equals 50 interruptions if you let them do so. Don't check your inbox every time a message arrives. Switch off instant alerts, or close the email program altogether if necessary, and allocate a specific time (or times) each day to check your inbox. It is rare that an email requires instant action. Remember "urgent" versus "important" (See Point 21. above).

35. Avoid Inbox Congestion

Get into the habit of keeping your emails organised. If it is *truly urgent* then deal with it quickly by all means, but for anything else have folders for correspondence you need to come back to later on. Your email software will probably allow you to tag messages with color-coded flags so you won't forget to follow them up. If it is neither urgent nor important delete it as soon as possible to keep your inbox clear from rubbish. A clear inbox at the end of the day will make you feel more relaxed and able to focus on what is important. In fact, put "Check Inbox before going home/stopping work for day" on your to-do list.

36. Unsubscribe

Every time you receive an email or text from a company you no longer want to hear from, hit the unsubscribe button straight away. If you do it as and when you receive the messages you get it out of the way without having to expend valuable cerebral energy on having to remember it later. You will soon get hassled less and less without having to embark on a huge inbox cleanup.

37. Push Notifications

Notifications from your smart phone are intrusive and disruptive. There is no need for every app to demand your attention whenever it wants. Review your settings for push notifications and turn off all those that are not essential. And while you're at it why not turn off all those Facebook alerts too.

38. Set Do Not Disturb Modes

Android and iOS both have do not disturb modes. These stop calls, messages, and other notifications from appearing. At the very least, do not disturb modes should be scheduled for when you're sleeping. Quality rest is imperative for being organised and productive. Use the do not disturb setting during times when you are engaged in important work that you need to focus on.

39. Backup Your Phone And Computer

Shit happens. We are all prone to losing, smashing or dropping our phone down the loo every now and again. Spilling hot coffee on your laptop is another potential hazard. Set aside a few minutes a month to keep all your devices backed up so that if the worst happens you will not lose anything that can't be replaced. Don't think: "it'll never happen to me", because it will—sooner or later. Just imagine how much of your hard earned productivity could be lost—in the blink of an eye.

ORGANISING YOUR ACTIONS

40. Realistic Deadlines

Set realistic deadlines for your tasks. Look at your to-do list and estimate the time for each task to be completed but don't be overoptimistic. This is important. Be honest about what you can achieve in a working day so that you don't feel overwhelmed from the start. Falling behind with your intended schedule is demotivating, which will make you lose confidence and set you on a downward spiral path of ever decreasing productivity.

41. Pick Up A Piece Of Paper Once Only

Being organised is all about making decisions, so deal with tasks efficiently. Avoid picking up a job, doing a bit, and then putting it back down again. Once you pick up a piece of paper from your desk decide what to do with it, then: do it, schedule time to do it and file it – or bin it if it's irrelevant to anything. Starting a number of jobs simultaneously means none of them will get your undivided attention and none finished to a good standard.

42. Keep A Log Of Results

Keeping a progress log of your workload will provide useful information for future planning. Knowing how long things take to complete, and how often your focus shifts because of interruptions, will provide useful feedback as to how productive and organised you really are. The more aware you become of your personal working habits the more effectively will you be able to plan future schedules.

43. Set S.M.A.R.T. Goals

If you do not already know about S.M.A.R.T. goals setting I strongly recommend you look it up on the Internet. Because, if you are serious about personal development, goal setting is the single most important exercise you can do. Whoever said goals are dreams with deadlines got it in one. A goal without a deadline is no more than wishful thinking. Plan some long-term BHAGS—*big hairy audacious goals*—for yourself. Ambitious future goals will keep you inspired and make it easier to work effectively in the present. Also create smaller process goals that you can accomplish in the short term. This will ensure you continually have a sense of accomplishment and progress.

44. Five Whys

To confirm that you really, really want a particular outcome answer the question "*WHY do I want this?*" five times. Don't give up until you have given yourself five comprehensive, satisfying answers as to why it is *you*

who want to achieve this goal. Make sure you are not doing it because it is something that you think you “*should*” be doing, or because it something your boss, your parents or your best friend thinks you should be doing. For a goal to be achievable it has to be relevant and important to you and—*when the WHY gets stronger, the HOW becomes easier.*

45. Check On Progress

You need to see how well you are keeping up with your goals to stay on target so make weekly checkpoints to track progress. Seeing that you are making good progress on you chosen path, or even excelling on your forecast, will boost your motivation and confidence. And if you discover that you are lagging behind on your goals it may just be the kick up the backside you need to help get you back on track.

46. Multitasking Is A Myth

As a demonstration try this for an experiment. Say, “1,2,3,4,5,6,7” quickly. Now say, “a,b,c,d,e,f,g” equally quickly. I don’t imagine you found this too difficult. Now try saying quickly, 1,a,2,b,3,c,4,d,5,e,6,f,7,g. I would think you found that a lot harder to manage. That’s because your brain was trying to deal with two completely different concepts, numbers and letters, at the same time. The same decrease of mental efficiency happens when you try to accomplish two unrelated tasks together. Stick to one job at the time and you will work both smarter and quicker.

47. The Pomodoro Technique

The name comes from the Italian word for tomato, and if you have seen the kind of egg timer that is shaped like a red tomato you may be able to imagine what this means. The idea is to allocate a set time for a specific task and stick to that task until the timer goes off. This is a remarkably effective way for getting things done and you will be surprised to discover how much more you accomplish when you ‘single task’ in this manner. There are ‘Pomodoro’ apps available for your smart phone but an ordinary egg timer will work just as well.

48. Have An Alarm Clock By Your Desk

Sometimes we are so engrossed in our work that we lose track of time. Having a clock in front of you will keep you aware of the time and if you set it to go off at the end of the time you allocate for one task, this will stop you from running over with it at the cost of another that may also require your full attention. With the alarm set, you won’t have to keep looking at the clock to see how much longer you have to go. This being said, however, if you are in the “zone” and have hit your stride towards completing something truly important you don’t want to interrupt your workflow just because the clock tells you to, just switch off the alarm. The clock is simply there to help you maintain an awareness of progress throughout your working day

49. Don’t Take On Too Much

It’s a simple fact that if you take on too many commitments you can never be fully productive—you simply spread yourself too thinly and will not be able to get anything done, at least neither well nor on time. How many commitments have you made that you don’t really need? Has your day been hijacked by somebody else’s priorities? If your calendar is jammed and if your to-do list is miles long, take 10 minutes or so to look at each item with a careful eye. Check if any of those appointments or tasks can be crossed off to create some sensible margin in your life.

STAYING FOCUSED

50. Intentionality

Stephen Covey, best selling author of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, said: “*The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing*”. Establish your intentions for the day first thing in the morning by reviewing your diary and prioritise those tasks that are most important. Just as you will go in the direction you face, so will your brain focus most effectively on the task that is foremost in your mind. Having clear intentions for your main focus that day will contribute greatly to helping you avoid distractions and increase your chances of getting it done. Take a moment right now to revisit and reinforce your intentions for today. Decide on how best

to organise your time and efforts to ensure you achieve your aims and how you can fit everything you have to do into the hours you have, so that later on you can look back with satisfaction on a productive day.

51. Maintain Motivation

If you start to lose sight of your goals you will also lose motivation, as your reason for working hard fades out of sight. A good way to stay motivated is to keep your goals at the front of your mind. Write them on a piece of paper and pin it somewhere you will see it every day – on your bathroom mirror, by your bed or stuck to your computer monitor. Having your goals there in black and white, rather than kept at the back of your mind, will significantly increase your chances of actually achieving what you have set out to accomplish.

52. Celebrate Success

Celebrating your success and acknowledging your own achievements is really important to keep you motivated day in and day out. It is satisfying when friends, family and colleagues recognise your hard work and accomplishments but you need to do this too. Remember that it is you who have achieved progress, no one else. Congratulate yourself and commit to continue on your path to success.

53. Beating Boredom

Not all work is created equal. Some tasks are essential but unfortunately boring. They still need doing though. The image of the sharply focused entrepreneur who faces every task with enthusiasm and motivation is not true. One way of dealing with tedious work is to break less than inspiring tasks into bit-sized chunks that can be interspersed with activities that you feel more passionate about. Swapping from one task to another if done in a deliberate and organised way is not the same as multitasking, but can stimulate your brain and contribute to keeping you more focused.

54. Think About Obstacles

An excellent way to reinforce positive intentions, strangely enough, is to spend time thinking about the negatives and what's likely to get in the way of getting through your day the way you want. This is called *mental contrasting*, because you are comparing the ideal outcome with the potential reality of the day to come. This type of realistic visualisation is very effective for turning intentions into actions. You are far more likely to achieve your goals if you think about both the ideal outcome and any potential obstacles, and plan for both.

55. Prime Yourself For Success

In addition to thinking about obstacles (above) take a moment to visualise the most important part of your day going exactly as you hope. Try to imagine, really imagine, what it will feel like to have successfully overcome the challenges you have faced and overcome throughout the day. Recall a time in the past where you behaved just as you want to behave today, and bring that vividly to mind. Priming yourself in this manner will make it more likely that you will do exactly as you imagined when the moment for action comes.

56. Clearing Your Head

Some people thrive on working in a busy and bustling environment. However, if you are not of that ilk and you sometimes need to clear your mind from multi-sensory input and day-to-day worldly interferences, create a tidy and quiet area in your office, house or flat, where you can sit peacefully, without visual or audible distractions. A few minutes of quietly mindful contemplation can do wonders for your capacity to be effectively and productive. It's all very good being tidy and organised in your mind but you also need to maintain a tidy environment to work effectively.

MANAGING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

57. Remembering People's Names

Organised people always seem able to recall other people's names. A simple and effective strategy for remembering someone's name is to write it down shortly after you meet them (preferably when they're not

looking). Another system for making sure a new name sticks in your mind is to use it three times immediately after meeting the person for the first time. For instance: *"Hello BOB. How nice to meet you BOB."* *"What do you do BOB?"* You are certain to remember a lot more names that way. Promise.

58. Phone Calls Are Meetings

Calls distract you from the task at hand and often you have no control over how long, or how useful, the conversation will be. But if you treat your phone calls like meetings and have an agenda and a clear outcome in mind you can retake some of that control. If you also state this up front you will be making more of the time you have to spend on the phone. This approach also sends out clear signals to the caller that you expect to do business, not make idle chit chat. Most people will respect you for knowing your mind and being organised.

59. Stand Up When On The Phone

This is a really useful tactic when you want to sound convincing or if you need to have a tricky conversation by phone. So next time you are on the phone, stand up straight with a confident power posture, raise your head and keep your eyes focused on a spot just above your normal eye-level. This stance and your posture will naturally make your voice sound more authoritative, which will give you an added advantage over the caller. Try this for yourself; you will notice a significant difference in how you feel and how you talk. This will be especially handy in a negotiating situation, or if you need to make a complaint of some sort.

60. Diarise Everything

In between work meetings, birthdays, family visits and drinks with friends it is all too easy to forget something. So put literally everything in the calendar on your phone or in your paper diary. Whether it's personal or business find a way to remind yourself of what's coming up. Your smart phone will definitely have an app where you can program alerts for important events, but keeping a paper diary as a backup is an excellent way of maintaining awareness of what's on your schedule for the day.

61. Learn To Say No

Instead of providing an answer then and there when someone asks for your help, it's often better to tell the person you will get back to them. This will allow you to give their request some consideration, and check your commitments and priorities. Then, if you can't help, simply tell them: *"Sorry, but I've really thought about this and given my other commitments I really can't give your request the time and consideration it merits."* Polite, but firm. Rather than resent you for saying no, most people will respect you for having the confidence to choose your own priorities.

62. Be Assertive But Nice

Another strategy when someone calls or appears at your door with a request for your participation in some activity is to take a moment to breath and silently count to three before replying. This will over-ride the natural inclination to reply yes immediately, which we all tend to do, as most of us are of a kind and generous nature. However, by giving yourself a little extra time before you reply you will be able to consider whether the request fits into your own priorities. If the answer is yes then fine, by all means help out. But if it is no, then just say no. Practice saying no ahead of time: *"I appreciate you asking me, but no."* *"Thank you for asking, but no."* *"Thank you for thinking of me, but no."* A wise person once said that 'No' is a complete sentence. No further explanation is necessary.

KEEPING TIDY

63. Clean Your Kitchen Every Evening

I don't mean you should clean the oven, defrost the fridge and mop the floors, but doing the washing-up and tidying your kitchen before you go to bed will save you precious minutes - and stress - the next day. Waking up to a greasy worktop and dirty dishes first thing in the morning will distract you and impact how you approach the rest of your day. If nothing else, keeping your kitchen clean is a very good habit to adopt—an added bonus, which is certain to be appreciated by your significant other.

64. Keep A Tidy Desk

A messy workspace will affect your productivity. For the same reason that you should clean your kitchen it is also essential to productivity that you keep your desk tidy. Keeping your work area free from clutter and unnecessary papers or objects that have nothing to do with the tasks in hand will enable you to focus more effectively on what is important. I'm sure you have heard the expression; *a tidy desk means a tidy mind*. There is definitely truth in that saying.

65. Give Everything A Home

It's easy to lose stuff that doesn't have a home. Being organised means keeping things in their proper places. Organised people keep order by storing things properly and by labeling storage spaces accurately. Create easy-to-access spaces for things you use all the time, and don't let your storage spaces get cluttered. Be creative about finding places for things. In addition, NEVER label a file as "miscellaneous". That's a huge no-no. You will always be going through the whole darnn thing just to remember what was in it in the first place.

66. Invest In Storage

A propos of keeping tidy, it is a good idea to furnish your office space or study with decent storage facilities; a box for cables and chargers, a file for financial papers and invoices, a drawer for stationery et cetera, et cetera. No one, but no one is sufficiently well organised to keep everywhere spotless and tidy all of the time. Crap accumulates. So treat yourself to some decent organisational equipment to make keeping things in their proper place feel less like a chore. Attractive box files, different-coloured A4 folders and snazzy clips are a great way to keep papers that belong together alongside each other. Taking a morning off for a trip to IKEA may be just the right thing to do for solving all your storage problems.

67. De-clutter Regularly

Put aside time each week to organise your stuff. Highly organised people make sure they find time regularly to arrange their things. Stuff does not stay tidy on its own; it needs to be reorganised continually and consistently. An additional benefit from spending time tidying up your workspace and your office or study is that it breaks up the routine. It can be a surprisingly cathartic and relaxing exercise.

68. Keep Only What You Need

More stuff means more clutter. People who live organised lives only keep what they need and what they really, really want. Having fewer things allows you to get the best out of those things that you have kept, rather than letting half of what you own collect dust. So, instead of renting storage space, keeping packing boxes or even, in extreme cases buying a larger home, get rid of as many things as you can. As an experiment, choose one space in your house to purge from clutter. Be ruthless. Go through shelves, drawers and boxes. Set aside everything you find that you don't need. Then bin these things immediately or take them to the charity shop in the High Stree. You will be amazed at how satisfying and productive this will make you feel.

69. Stay Away From Bargains

When you have got rid of all the things you don't need resist temptation to replace them just because you see something on sale, or because it is Black Friday. Organised people do not fall victim to sales advertising. Being cheap doesn't make an item better or more useful. There is a reason why something cost less, typically because it is worth less. Rather than seeking out bargains invest in quality. It may cost a little more up front, but you will end up with something more valuable that will probably last you longer, which will save you time and therefore make it possible for you to be more productive.

70. Resources And Tools

Lack of funds may make it challenging to acquire good equipment. However, do consider the true impact of not having access to the right tools, training facilities or appropriate information. Weigh up the cost on your productivity, and consequently on your earning power, versus the monetary cost of bringing your tools and resources up-to-date. Successful and organised people never skimp on good tools and resources. They know these are imperative for working effectively. For instance, rather than spending wasted hours in frustration battling with an outdated laptop, perhaps it is worth it in the long run to invest in that new computer after all.

YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

71. A Peer Network

To be successful you need a network of peers that will normalise your achievements. It's no good surrounding yourself with "yes men" who will like everything you do. Your grandmother may love you and think everything you do is fabulous, which is great, but chances are she's not be the right person to give you constructive feedback. You need to surround yourself with people who will give you a balanced and objective view on your achievements, both good and bad. Surround yourself with flatterers and you'll never grow.

72. Accountability

Once you have an established objective and a smart goal tell someone else about it – partner, parents, brother, sister, a colleague or a best friend. Research has demonstrated that if you make your intentions public, even just to one single person, the chances that you will actually do it increases dramatically. Our natural sense of pride and commitment, and to some extent guilt, will guarantee that we make more of an effort to do what we said we would do when other people are aware of our objectives.

73. Delegate

If you are working in an office and have a junior colleague you could, no should be delegating some of your responsibilities to him or her. Good delegation not only saves you time, it has the added bonus of motivating other team members. Even if you are not a manager there are always opportunities to share work among colleagues who are less busy or who have specific skills that are more relevant to the task in hand than your own. The key to good delegation is making sure the person you delegate to feels valued and respected, that way they will be happy to provide the support you need.

74. Social Network

To keep on working and producing at a high level of efficiency it is important to have people you can confide in. Supportive family members and friends provide a protective factor during tough times when you might feel like giving up. While simply talking about a situation with a friend or loved one may not make your troubles go away, doing so allows you to share your feelings, get support, receive positive feedback, and hopefully enable you to come up with possible solutions not just to your immediate problems but that will enable you to move forwards.

PRODUCTIVE HABITS

75. Establish Good Habits

Good habits are an essential part of being organised and productive, bad ones are counterproductive and conducive to bad organisation. But establishing new good habits and dumping bad old ones is hard, even when you know the benefits of the former and the damaging effects of the latter. To acquire a good new habit, resolve to apply yourself religiously to it for 30 days, after which you will find it has been incorporated into your natural pattern of behavior. To banish a bad one, vow at the start of each day that you will not succumb to it. Again, after 30 days you will find it a thing of the past.

76. Create Rituals

Rituals will help important actions remain consistent over long periods of time and they are helpful in overcoming procrastination. Establishing certain patterns of behavior that you consistently follow can boost productivity as they reduce the need for decision-making. For instance: *WHEN I get up in the morning THEN I have a cup of coffee, THEN I sit down and write for half an hour, THEN I have a shower.* Rituals are personal and you need to establish ones that work for you, and this kind of "WHEN—THEN" strategies can be very effective in helping you stay on course.

77. Wake Up Early

Most successful men and women have one thing in common—they start early as it gives them time to sit, think and plan their day. When you get up early, you are more calm, creative and clear-headed. As the day progresses your energy levels starts dropping, which affects your productivity and your performance. Knowing this helps you to prioritise things. Also, if you were to get up just one hour earlier each morning you would gain 15 working days in a year. Thought-provoking when put like that. Make sure you get your required seven or eight hours per night, however, but any more is wasting precious hours of your life.

78. Be One Step Ahead

The early risers are one step ahead of the crowd: they're usually calm, collected, and accomplished while everyone else is rushing around like headless chickens; eating breakfast on the hoof, looking for car keys and throwing everything into their brief case because they did not take 10 minutes the evening before to plan for the following day. Being one step ahead of the crowd means you waste less time by being disorganised or having to put the result of bad decisions right. The added benefit of starting work early is fewer distractions from colleagues and getting more of what you planned to do actually done. So if you haven't already got into the habit of early rising, start tomorrow. Go to bed an hour earlier so that you won't be too tired. It may take a while to adjust and you may not feel the benefit straight away, but stick with it. Millions of super successful people can't all be wrong.

79. The Three-Minute Rule To Beat Procrastination

Procrastination is a biggie. It's a topic that deserves a book on its own. I am therefore deliberately not addressing this issue in great detail. However, there are a couple of strategies that I would like to share with you. First is the three-minute rule. When you find yourself putting off an important task—for whatever reason—don't try to analyse what is stopping you, leave that job to your therapist. Instead, settle down and commit to starting the job and doing it for three minutes—only. As you get started something happens in your brain and suddenly it becomes easier to continue working on it than to stop doing it. It may not work for you every time, but it is worth a try. And if this doesn't work *then* talk to a therapist or coach.

80. Don't Wait Until The Last Minute

The longer you wait to do something, the more difficult it will be to get it done on time and to a high standard. If you want to be more productive, and for your life to be less stressful, then don't put off until tomorrow what can be done today. Putting in the effort to get things done as soon as possible is not only best practice; it will also give you a great sense of achievement and satisfaction. Some people claim they work better under the pressure of a tight deadline. This I suspect is more often an excuse for being disorganised than anything else.

81. More On Procrastination

When finding yourself in procrastination's grip, asking yourself some tough questions might help release you from that incapacitating inertia. Picture the benefits of getting the work done. What will be better as a result, for you and for others? Imagine how great that will feel. Think back to the last time you got something like this done—what were the upsides? Then identify the first small step you need to take. Tie that first step to something that is important to you. Then find a way to link that first small step to something you are definitely going to do today and that you enjoy doing. Amplify the downside of inaction and sharpen your sense of the costs of not getting it done. What commitments can you make, ideally involving other people? Finally plan a short-term reward for getting it done.

82. The Five Whys—Again

If you still find yourself reluctant to take action and make progress with a task that needs doing use the "WHY" question again. Ask yourself five times what is stopping you from doing what you know you need to do. Explore what is holding you back. Do not give up until your real blockage surfaces and then come to a conclusion as to what you can do to address that? This insight will help you avoid the same situation happening again and again. The discipline of being clear about why you take the actions you take will help you build resilience and a strong mindset.

YOUR MIND-SET

83. Be Courageous

Most of us aren't born courageous, so we shouldn't expect to acquire courage magically, without practice. It's a habit, a muscle you can exercise. You become courageous by performing courageous acts. Get in the habit of expressing what you think from a place of conviction. To get better at it practise saying what you think about small, inconsequential things: pleasantly, politely – but firmly.

84. Grow Your Confidence

Confidence is not a prerequisite for being proactive and doing things. Confidence is the product of taking action. To be proactive takes courage, so by growing your courage for action you will also strengthen your confidence. Do something every day that is a little bit outside your comfort zone, but not so far beyond it that you feel anxious and panic-stricken; just a small challenge that you would not normally consider. Perhaps opening a conversation with a stranger or ordering an unfamiliar food in a restaurant. For each successful challenge your comfort zone will expand and with it your confidence.

85. Beating Impostor Syndrome

Impostor Syndrome will stand in your way from being productive if you don't deal with it. The root cause of this is to some extent a failure of your imagination, together with a hugely unhelpful image of what other people are like. You feel like an impostor not because you are uniquely flawed, but because you simply cannot imagine how deeply flawed your fellow humans are too. Because you mistakenly feel unworthy impostor syndrome will stop you from performing at your best. The solutions to knocking this pesky syndrome on the head lies in making a courageous leap of faith and truly believe in your own value and abilities.

86. Stop Worrying

Ruminating and worrying about the future is the least productive, and possibly the most destructive and demotivating thing you can do to yourself. Studies have shown that 92% of your worries are unnecessary. One such study claims that: 40% of things you worry about will never happen, things of the past that can't be changed constitutes 30% of peoples worries, needless worries about health 12%, petty miscellaneous worries 10%, real legitimate worries 8%. That means only 8% of your worries are worth concerning yourself about, the remaining 92% are demotivating and destructive distractions.

87. Connect With Your Values

We are all governed by underlying values that determine how we feel in any given situation and why we find some things more important than others. Our values are fundamental to our psychological make-up and our identity. The value-based decisions we make day after day define and influence everything we do. When your actions are in alignment with your deep-seated core values you are more likely to feel motivated and able to work constructively and productively. It is vital to spend some time considering what your basic values are. Your aspirations are unlikely to come to fruition if your objectives are incompatible with these values.

88. Your Greater Mission

Working with focus and a sense of purpose will be easier if you also have a greater mission in mind, a passion to guide your actions, something that goes far beyond your personal success. Decide on what your main passion is; what you would be happy doing for free if making money was not an issue. Perhaps a cause you would even lay down your life for – global warming, saving the oceans, having a happy family, giving free rein to your artistic expression or working towards a fairer society for all. Choosing something that is truly worthwhile and world enhancing – and totally in alignment with your core values – will make achieving your goals both more worthwhile and easier.

89. Resilience

You need to be resilient to be consistently productive and organised. Having confidence in your own ability when the going gets tough can play an important part in resilience. Research has demonstrated that your self-esteem is a vital factor in coping with stress and recovering from difficult events. In times of stress remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments and of situations when you were successful and felt confident. Practise positive reinforcement through positive statements such as, *"I can do this," "I'm strong,"* or *"I'm good at my job."* Becoming more confident in your own abilities, including your ability to respond to and deal with a crisis, is a great way to build resilience for the future.

90. Acknowledge Your Wins

After all the work you have done to get through uncertain times and picked yourself up after tough experiences, acknowledge your own achievements together with those who helped you achieve these positive results. Give yourself credit for a "win" that feels affirming, and allow yourself to feel pleased. Practise accepting who you were, as well as feeling proud of whom you are becoming. Emotional resilience is about more than recovering from challenges – it's about thriving in the face of those challenges.

91. Embrace Change

Flexibility is an essential part of resilience. By learning how to be more adaptable you will be better equipped to respond when faced with a life crisis. Resilient people often utilise these events as an opportunity to branch out in new directions. While some people may be crushed by abrupt changes, highly resilient individuals are able to adapt and thrive.

92. Be OK With Discomfort

When we are navigating a situation in flux, most of us will feel somewhat unsure of ourselves. This is normal. Accepting yourself and your situation is a good place to begin. Calm the inner voices of fear, blame, or resentment, and resist the urge to create drama around the uncertainty. Appraise the situation from a balanced place, realising that it is OK to feel genuinely uncomfortable at times. You'll build emotional resilience if you use these situations to practise accepting yourself despite the discomfort you feel.

93. Intelligent Persistence

One thing successful people know: Dedication and blind persistence are two very different things. You can work hard but not smart. When something is not working, you have to change it. Don't just keep banging your head against the wall. Instead of doggedly using the same ineffective tactics, super productive people pivot and try to tackle the problem from a different angle.

94. Managing Emotions

Balancing your emotions is a key element to success. It is easy to be derailed by your feelings, which is unproductive and demotivating. With awareness you will be able to control anger and frustration and channel them into your work. Don't try to ignore how you feel. Instead acknowledge your feelings and remind yourself that you have a choice. You can't control everything that happens to you, and you have no control over external conditions, but you can control how you react to them and decide how to deal with them.

A HEALTHY MIND AND BODY

95. Eat A Healthy Breakfast

Do I need to explain this? There are countless studies confirming the importance of breakfast for maintaining our health and energy levels. Healthy people have more energy and are more productive. No matter how busy you are, eat a decent breakfast. It'll fuel you.

96. Get Some Exercise

Not to be too repetitive, but healthy people are more productive. Exercise makes you healthier, so be sure to get some exercise every day. You don't need to fork out a king's ransom on gym membership and spend

hours on the cross-trainer or lifting weights to reap the benefit of exercise. A few push-ups and sit-ups on the bedroom floor in the morning, a walk around the block at lunchtime, using the stairs rather than the lift and walking the dog last thing at night will do absolute wonders for your sense of wellbeing.

97. Meditation

Much has been written on the benefits of meditation because its tangible results have been demonstrated over and over again. Meditation is a sure way to enhance focus because it takes a great deal of concentration. One study revealed that students who meditated for just 20 minutes a day, for four days, performed better on certain cognitive tests. For a mini-meditation moment try the 5-5-7 exercise: Sit on a chair relaxed but poised (not slouching in other words), both feet on the ground, your hands resting on your lap, your eyes closed. Without changing your usual breathing tempo inhale for five counts, hold your breath for five counts, exhale for seven counts. Repeat this ten times whilst focusing on nothing but your breath and trying to empty your mind of other thoughts.

98. Read

Feed your brain every day by reading. Smart people read a lot. Find time each day to read for at least half an hour. Schedule time in your diary to make sure you remember to do this. Read for personal development, business development and for enjoyment. Commuting to work on the train, bus or tube is an excellent time to catch up on reading. Put an audio book in your smart phone as an alternative to or as well as carrying around an actual printed book, so that if you don't get a seat you can still "read", which will make standing much more bearable. Reading introduces you to new ideas and new ways of looking at things. It will keep your mind sharp and help you stay motivated and productive.

99. Be Kind To Yourself

Finally, no one feels in the mood for tackling every kind of task every day. That's fine. Embrace your productive days but forgive yourself if you do not manage to achieve peak performance all the time. Feeling guilty will only contribute to eroding your sense of self-worth, which will reduce your productivity further. So if you have a bad day rather than wallowing in guilt and self-pity, ask yourself what stood in the way of getting everything done that you had intended to do. Finding the answer to this question, and applying yourself to the solution, will be much more effective in helping you to avoid similar circumstances in the future.

BONUS ADVICE

100. Find Your Passion

It is really hard to get shit done if you are not pursuing a direction you feel truly passionate about. Conversely a clear direction will drive your passion. So know what you want, know what you need to do to get what you want, and persevere in your determination to do what it takes to get there. This is perhaps the most important advice I can leave you with. With passion in your heart, direction in your mind and with courage to take the right actions organising your life and becoming more productive will simply be a natural step for you towards being the best version of yourself and living the life you desire.

101. Get A Coach

I would say this, wouldn't I? If you are already well disciplined and work effectively on your own; then good for you, but if you are like most people you will sometimes feel that a little direction and support is what you need to get unstuck. A good mentor or coach will provide the guidance and perspective that will enable you to forge on successfully. A coach is well worth the investment. He or she will help you maximise your potential by making it achievable for you to go beyond what is possible to do alone. But as you are reading this eBook I suspect you may have already figured this out.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this guide as much as I enjoyed putting it together. It would be really great to receive your feedback. Let me know what tips you found helpful, and which ones were less useful. And if you would like to work with an experienced coach who will enable you to maximise your potential and become more organised, motivated and productive get in touch. I would be delighted to hear from you and to help, so do drop me a line at: matz.skoog@gmail.com

ABOUT ME



Coaching individuals and groups has been a central aspect of my work as a performing arts leader and international tutor for the last 25 years. It's a skill others have recognised in me and a role that I find deeply satisfying.

I started out in life as a dancer, trained at the Royal Swedish Ballet School and in Russia. During twenty years as a professional dancer I progressed from the corps de ballet to become a principal artist, performing on stages throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Subsequent to my dancing career I was appointed Artistic Director of two major national ballet companies English National Ballet and the Royal New Zealand Ballet. I am now a teacher, coach and artistic consultant.

Over forty years of working in the performing arts, twenty-five of them as a teacher and coach, I have helped some of the most ambitious high performers discover what they need to do to achieve success and, most importantly, what is stopping them from maximising their potential.

Now I am using that experience to help professionals from all walks of life to build courage and confidence, find clarity of direction to what's next in life and business, deal with transition and change and perform at a higher level. People I work with typically go from feeling overwhelmed for any variety of reasons to becoming confident, motivated and able to get to where they want to be.

My clients are ambitious professionals looking for clarity of direction to what's next in life and business. They tend to be passionate, smart and qualified but still have challenges they wish to resolve to enable them to do even better. In all cases they are ready to talk and reflect on problems, business and life.

I have full certification in Executive Coaching and Mentoring, accredited by The City and Guilds of London and the Institute of Leadership and Management, and I continue developing and extending my coaching expertise so that I can provide you an excellent coaching experience.

Other things you may want to know about me:

- I left Sweden in 1979 to seek adventure, fame and fortune
- I have over the past 25 years lived in both the UK and New Zealand
- I currently live in the countryside outside of London
- I appreciate food and wine – sometimes to my detriment
- I enjoy visiting museums and art galleries
- I am practical and good at DIY
- I am happily married and have two adult sons
- I am passionate about personal coaching



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