



EBOOK

# The 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity

Take Control of Your TIME, Get in the Zone, and Achieve Maximum Results

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# Introduction

This is the part of the book where I'm supposed to tell you I was never very productive, I procrastinated a lot and found myself unhappy and unfulfilled until I learned something that turned it all around...and now I'm going to share it with you.

Nope.

While I've always been scatterbrained and had periodic trouble focusing, I've typically been able to power through it and get some good work done.

But in February 2012 I found myself in a war zone. My son, Ari, was born with a serious congenital heart defect. After having two heart surgeries before he was born, over the course of his first seven months on the outside, he had a series of complex procedures, including two major open-heart surgeries to replace three of the four valves in his heart and to cut scar tissue out of his left ventricle.

Fortunately, I own my own company and was able to be with him through it all, essentially living with him at the hospital full-time.

Unfortunately, I own my own company, so during the quiet times—and there were long stretches of quiet times at Boston Children's Hospital—I had to work in order to keep the company on its feet and keep us all in health insurance.

During the stretches I worked, I had to, for the first time in my career, figure out how to get a lot done in much less time in an environment actively hostile to getting anything done at all.

I only tried to work during the quiet times when Ari was stable and getting better, but even then it was nearly impossible. I was distracted and unfocused. Not at all motivated.

I read time management and productivity books and blogs, but I found a lot of them to be cheesy, too complicated, and too difficult to adopt.

Over the course of Ari's life he spent 430 nights inpatient at the hospital. The majority of that time Ari was doing relatively well, hanging out with family, playing and watching sports, and waiting long stretches for his heart to get better.

Through those 430 days and nights a system started to emerge where I began to get a little work done, then a lot of work, in short stints of time in an environment in which I'm confident was harder to concentrate than most offices.

When we took Ari home after his first seven months in the hospital and life (sorta) returned to normal—here comes the cheese, but it's true—my fascination with the art and science of productivity grew. It turns out there's certainly some art to it, but there's also a lot of science.

As RAIN Group is an executive education company, I started to see a tremendous opportunity to help our clients not only build skills that would serve them as sellers, professionals, and leaders, but also be more productive when applying these skills.

Thus began a journey of studying and researching productivity, and applying what we learned with our clients to help them get the most done and achieve the best results in less time.

And, indeed, we did. It turns out that applying a few select principles produces impressive results.

## Extreme Productivity Challenges Generate Extreme Results

A short while ago, the team at RAIN Group began testing pilots of our Extreme Productivity System (XPS) through a series of 90-Day Extreme Productivity Challenges (XPC) with our long-time clients.

The results have been eye-popping.

One client who applied the Extreme Productivity principles saw a 31% jump in sales activity in their CRM system during the days before their bi-weekly XPC coaching meetings. Shortly after the client noted the activity boosts, they told us they had their best month of sales results ever. No surprise.

With a second client, we ran an XPC with 20 partners at one of the world's largest accounting and consulting firms. Their challenge focused on proactively growing existing accounts. Only four months later, they reported generating 16 times in additional sales won than what they paid us for the program. They attributed this revenue increase directly to the XPC. Again: that's 16 times return on investment on the program in only four months.

A third XPC client, a division at a very large telecommunications company, reported generating \$100,000,000 in additional sales pipeline in half a year. Yes, that's a hundred million dollars.

Based on these results, we've decided to take the Extreme Productivity System big and wide.

### Extreme Productivity Assessment

Since delivering these pilots, we've been updating, refining, and testing different parts of the system, including developing an assessment (which you can take [here](#)). This assessment measures you against the 3 Keys (The XP3) and 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity. While this won't always be the case, as of this writing, you can take the assessment for free as we gather data and build out our database. Note: all data will remain confidential and used as part of a large data set for analysis purposes only.

[Click here to take the assessment now >>](#)

## The Extreme Productivity System Design—Easy to Use, Yet Deep and Rigorous

The Extreme Productivity System (XPS) is built to be simple and easy to apply, straightforward and not hokey, and without complicated tools, flowcharts, or multiple forms to fill out.

We've applied Ockham's Razor to key points of the system to keep it as simple as possible. After years of research on motivation, time management, and productivity, we've developed dozens of helpful hacks and tips. For those of you intent on digging deep into XPS, you'll find a rich toolbox of techniques to sink your teeth into.

But we wanted to create a system that could be applied with minimal effort for those who want to use it the way I play video games. I don't play much. When I do—whether with my kids or friends—I like to turn on the game and start playing. I don't want to take 15 hours to figure out the controls before the fun begins. I might not play long enough to become a master, but if the game is designed for it, even I can get the hang of it pretty quickly.

The Extreme Productivity System is built to be, essentially, taken out of the box and applied for those of you who—like me with a PlayStation®—don't want to take a lot of time to learn the controls. However, like a good game, for those of you who find yourself obsessed and seduced by its appeal, you can dig deep, lose yourself in it, and become a master.

## The XP3 and 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity

The XPS is built on the following 3 Keys (The XP3):

1. Manufacture Motivation
2. Control Your TIME
3. Execute in the Zone

### Manufacture Motivation

Motivation is often thought to be largely innate: people either have it or they don't. They're either go-getters or they're not. Self-starters or not. Proactive or lazy.

Not true.

In the last several years, much research has been done to show that motivation is less an innate, immutable attribute and more like a skill: something that can be learned, practiced, and strengthened.

Let's say you don't feel as motivated as you want. Or perhaps you've never thought of yourself as very motivated. Too many just accept this and go about their days resigned to whatever level of motivation they believe they have.

It's quite the contrary. If you apply the right principles and learn certain habits, you actually can manufacture your own motivation. You can create it seemingly out of nothing and build it to whatever you want it to be.

### Control Your TIME

Productivity has long been thought to be largely a time-management challenge. Learn certain hacks and organize your to-do list the right way and you'll get more done.

True, to an extent. You might get more done, but are you getting your Greatest Impact Activities done? Are you creating more time to work on your Greatest Impact Activities? Are you concentrating deeply and tuning everything else out?

Everyone feels busy, and sometimes it's like there's not enough time in the day to succeed.

Yet some people succeed and some don't. Research shows that people who achieve the highest levels of success have only 24 hours in every day just like everyone else. Shocker, right?

It's not just about getting things done. It's about taking total control over what you do and what you avoid, and not getting derailed by the massive distractions that sabotage so many every day.

### Execute in the Zone

If you want to get more done in the time you have, and you want to have that euphoric feeling of being extremely productive, you must execute in the zone.

The zone, also known as flow, is the mental state where a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity.

In a work context, if you're executing in the zone, you're maximizing your effort per work hour. If you work an hour in the zone, you don't just work an hour, you work an amazing hour.

The zone is not a new concept. From sports to work to studying to recreational activities, the zone is a well-known and studied phenomenon.

What you'll learn in the XPS are the tactics—exactly what to do—to get in the zone, have the stamina, energy and focus to stay in the zone, and, should you fall out of the zone, how to get your focus back.

## The XP3 and 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity

### The 3 Keys

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**1** | **Manufacture Motivation**

- 1. Recruit Your Drive
- 2. Ignite Your Proactivity
- 3. Reengineer Your Habits

**2** | **Control Your TIME**

- 4. Obsess Over TIME
- 5. Say No
- 6. Play Hard to Get

**3** | **Execute in the Zone**

- 7. Sprint into the Zone
- 8. Fuel Your Energy
- 9. Right the ship

### 9 Habits

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# Extreme Productivity Key #1: Manufacture Motivation

## Habit 1: Recruit Your Drive

*Historically, motivation has been thought of as something intrinsic: you have it or you don't. New research shows that we all have motivation inside of us, we just need to draw it out. We can grow it like a skill. Build it like a muscle.*

*Drive is in there somewhere. You can recruit your drive if you know how.*

Don't you hate when it feels like you have to do something versus choosing to do it? Slogging through a task that someone else decides you should do, or doing something that feels mandatory, is deflating.

Often this is because what you're doing doesn't feel meaningful. It doesn't feel like what you're doing will get you where you want to go. Even if it will, if you perceive it as being from someone else's agenda, you don't have psychological ownership over it.<sup>1</sup>

It's their task, not your task, so the odds you attack it with passion and intensity are predictably low. (If you've ever seen a seller be told to prospect versus deciding himself to prospect, you get the idea.)

How we think about the origin of any task makes a tremendous difference in how motivated we feel to do it.

An analysis of 41 different studies on the effect of choice on motivation found that "choice enhanced intrinsic motivation, effort, task performance, and perceived competence."<sup>2</sup>

The reasons? Choice makes the task meaningful and maximizes psychological ownership of getting it done and done well.

If you want to make work (or any task) meaningful to you, you need to first choose your New Reality. A New Reality is the place where you will be when things change for the better. It's your desired future state. It's your measurable change in status.

If you're happy with the status quo, you don't need to do anything differently. But if you want something else—to be in a different place than you are now—you need to define that different place clearly.

You need to know where you're headed. This will give you the "why" of what you're doing. If you're connected to the "why" of what you're doing, you can bear almost any "what."

Once you know your New Reality, write it down. Having studied over 450,000 sales people, 82% of the top 10% in sales performance have written goals. Of the bottom 10%, only 34% do.<sup>3</sup>

After you've written your goals, build a specific action plan to achieve them.

A study in the *Harvard Business Review* focused on what most motivated sales people.<sup>4</sup> They looked at four factors:

1. Task clarity: Whether people knew very specifically what to do with their time
2. Intrinsic factors: Whether people came to the job naturally highly motivated
3. Compensation and incentives: How and how much people were paid
4. Management: Whether supervisors could fire up their teams

The most motivating factor they found?

Task clarity.

When you know your goals (your New Reality) and connect them to your actions, those actions are meaningful. They feel less like drudgery even if they are the same actions that drained you in the past. When you choose where you want to go, the actions you need to take to get there also become your choice.

If you want task clarity (and you do), the best path forward is to plan your actions weekly. A strong focus on weekly actions—just 20 minutes a week planning them—will focus what you do and help you feel motivated to do it.

Finally, don't just plan your actions weekly, track them weekly with someone else.

Researchers at Dominican University studied workplace achievement of objectives set in four-week blocks.<sup>5</sup>

One group didn't track their objectives weekly or share their results with a partner. Only 43% of them achieved those objectives.

Another group wrote their objectives and tracked them weekly with a colleague. Seventy-six percent of them achieved their objectives...almost double the success.

Planning actions and tracking them with an accountability partner (even better, with an iron-clad commitment contract—see page 28), is a powerful force in recruiting your drive.

### Takeaways to Recruit Your Drive

- Choose your New Reality
- Plan actions weekly
- Track progress weekly with an accountability partner

## Habit 2: Ignite Your Proactivity

*Getting started on hard tasks is hard. Once you start, it's much easier to keep going.*

The energy drink market is predicted to be \$84 billion by 2025.<sup>6</sup> Why do people drink energy drinks? Because they're the best way to hydrate? Because everyone knows how healthy they are? Because they taste oh so good?

No. People choke down energy drinks so they can do things.

Getting started is hard. For most people, an energy drink is a catalyst. It helps them get going.

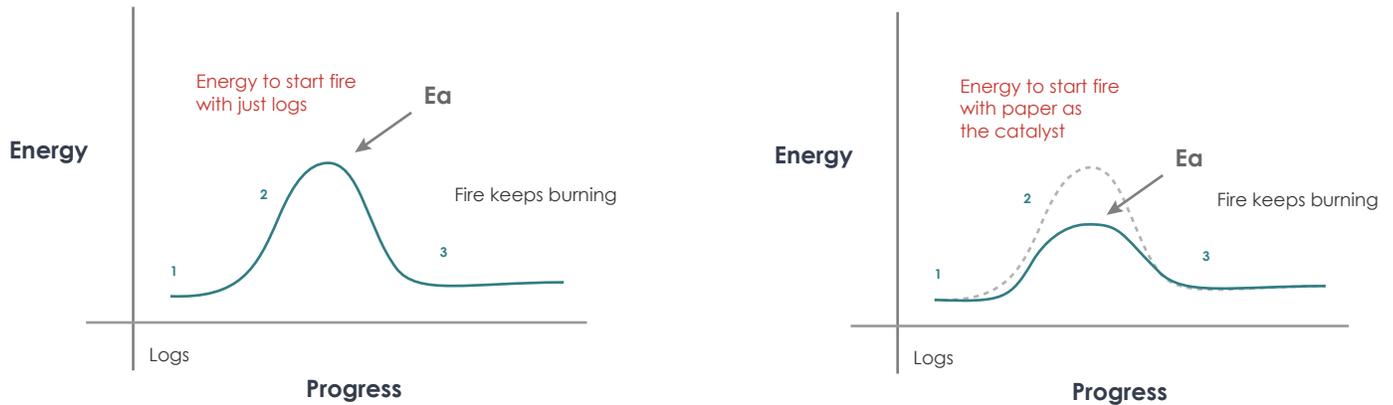
Chemical reactions operate the same way.

Let's say you want to cozy up to the fire in the evening with your General Foods International Coffee and a nice Nora Roberts novel. First order of business: light your fire. (Come on baby...)

So you put on some logs and take a flamethrower to your fireplace. Right?

That would do the trick, but that's a lot of energy and expense to light a fire. On the other hand, lighting one match under a log isn't enough to do the trick.

However, put some dry paper under the logs and light the paper, and the logs will shortly catch fire and then burn for quite some time.



The paper is the catalyst that helps start the fire. Once it's started, it will keep burning without requiring much energy.

A catalyst lowers activation energy requirements. It works in chemistry, but it also works with human behavior.

Twenty percent of people are chronic procrastinators.<sup>7</sup> These folks even have a name: procs (rhymes with Crocs). Everyone is a periodic procrastinator. This is because something we want to do or know we need to do seems difficult and requires a lot of energy, so we avoid it.

We've identified three catalysts that can help you get started on important tasks by lowering the activation energy perception and actual requirements. Try them and you will ignite your proactivity.

20% of people are chronic procrastinators. Everyone is a periodic procrastinator.

### Put it Here and You'll Do It

A study in the *British Journal of Health Psychology* analyzed the results of people who committed to the following:

During the next week, I will partake in at least 20 minutes of vigorous exercise on [DAY] at [TIME OF DAY] at/in [PLACE].

Group 1 committed to "keep track" of whether they exercised.

Group 2 committed to "keep track and read a pamphlet on the benefits of exercise."

Group 3 committed to "keep track, read a pamphlet, and make a plan for when and where to exercise."

In Group 1 (the control group), 38% of people exercised at least once per week. Group 2 (the motivation group) exercised weekly at a rate of 35%. Group 3 (the intention group) exercised weekly at a whopping rate of 91%.

These results have been proven time and again in different psychological studies and through our own work with clients. We know this:

*If you put it on your calendar, you're much more likely to do it.*

Not everything should go on your calendar, just the important things: the areas where you want to invest your time that will get you outsized return in the form of achieving your goals.

For example, if you're in sales you might need to prospect. See in the example calendar that prospecting time is noted on Monday. Prospecting could also be your GIA (see page 14) and your other Investment time (see page 17). Or it could be working on strategizing for account growth or winning a big opportunity.

► **June 24 - 30** | Washington, D.C. Today 35°F/32°F Tomorrow 42°F/31°F Friday 42°F/30°F

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
8AM		Greatest Impact Activity <b>Sprinting</b>					
9							
10							
11		Daily Huddle	Sales Meeting	Daily Huddle	Daily Huddle	Daily Huddle	
12PM				Investment Activity		Accountability Check In Action Plan Next Week	
1		Prospecting <b>Sprinting</b>		<b>Sprinting</b>			
2		Meeting with coach	Investment Activity		Investment Activity		
3			<b>Sprinting</b>		<b>Sprinting</b>		
4							
5		Work out		Work out			Work out

### Proactivity Catalyst #1: Calendar Investment TIME.

### Become Mentally Tough Like Navy SEALs

The United States Navy's Sea, Air and Land Teams, known more commonly as Navy SEALs, are universally renowned as an elite military unit.

In the early 2000s, the military needed more SEALs, but also needed to keep the elite standards for whom they admitted to the program. They were afraid, however, that too few would pass the required tests.

To maximize SEAL candidate success, the military developed a mental toughness program in which candidates learned essential skills. One such skill was positive self-talk.

Passing rates for new SEAL recruits improved from 25% to a third, a 32% increase in passing rates.<sup>8</sup> If it works for the SEALs, it can work for you.

The average person says between 300 and 1,000 words to himself every minute and this inner voice can be a harsh critic.<sup>9</sup>

*What you're trying to change are self-limiting beliefs; anything you say to yourself that limits you.*

For example, you might believe:

- I can't get up early to exercise
- I'm terrible at leading sales meetings
- I'm not good at big-picture strategy and I won't be
- I can't concentrate with all the distractions
- If I try it, it won't work
- I'll never dig out of the pile so I can't be proactive

This turns into negative self-talk. To change the belief, change how you talk to yourself.

Negative self-talk	Positive self-talk
I can't get up early to exercise	I can set my alarm tonight one hour earlier to exercise
I'm terrible at leading sales meetings	I need to learn what a great sales meeting looks like, then I can learn to lead one
I'm not good at this and won't be	I'm not good at it yet, but I will learn and get there
I can't concentrate with all the distractions	If other people can tune out distractions, so can I; I must research how (or...just keep reading this book)
If I try it, it won't work	I tried it and it hasn't worked, but I can learn to make it work
I'll never dig out of the pile so I can't be proactive	I haven't been able to dig out, but I can do it if I get help to manage my time and learn to say no

Henry Ford's old adage still holds true: whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right. Positive self-talk will help you be more productive all-around.

Regarding proactivity, positive self-talk goes one step further.

If you think you can't, you won't even bother to start. And if you think you can, you're more likely to get to it.

## Proactivity Catalyst #2: Talk to Yourself

### Rapid Activation Talk

Positive self-talk can get you in the success mindset. There is, however, a different kind of self-talk that will help you get started on important activities. We call it Rapid Activation Talk.

Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio studies the impact of rational and emotional decision making on people's behavior.<sup>10</sup> He states that the "gut reaction" part of your brain has to be activated in the right way if you want to do something that otherwise would seem emotionally difficult.

It's not enough to have the logic; you have to have the right emotion to get started.

People tell themselves they should work out right now all the time, then don't. That's because the thinking part of their brain quickly becomes overruled by the feeling part of their brain.

Here's what happens. You think, "I should work out right now," or, "I should brainstorm strategies to drive account growth for the next hour." Then, seconds later, the emotional center of your brain tries to sabotage you. "This is hard. I don't feel ready. I can do it later (but I won't). Something else—like skimming Facebook or checking email—is more important (even though it isn't)."

In order to pre-empt the feeling part of the brain from shutting you down, you need to head it off at the pass, and you only have a few seconds to do it.

Rapid Activation Talk is the solution. All you have to do—like any school-age child ready to start everyone racing—is say “3...2...1...Go!” and immediately get started. There are various ways to practice Rapid Activation Talk. It’s worked well for so many people that there’s a whole book dedicated to it.<sup>11</sup>

For all the various researchers and authors who have their versions of Rapid Activation Talk, the point is universally the same: you have a short amount of time to get started before your brain tells you “that’s too hard.”

### Proactivity Catalyst #3: Say “3...2...1...Go!”

#### Takeaways to Ignite Your Proactivity:

- Calendar Investment TIME
- Talk to yourself
- Say “3...2...1...Go!”

### Habit 3: Reengineer Your Habits

*You have to do things differently, and do different things, if you want different results.*

One of my many productivity killers was losing the first hour of the day to aimless internet browsing. I didn’t do it every day, but it was certainly a tendency. I’d sit at my desk, turn on my computer, and while my email was firing up, I’d open a web browser and start reading the news.

Next thing I knew, bye bye hour.

It was a habit I had to break.

If you want to do something—anything—differently in your life routine, you have to understand habits and how to change them.

### The 4 Elements of Habit



Here we boil it down for you.

Habits are comprised of the following four elements:

1. **Trigger:** Something happens that cues a sequence of actions you tend to do. For example, your phone buzzes in your pocket.
2. **Thought:** The cue triggers a thought, even if it's fast or subconscious. The thought might be, "I should reach into my pocket now to check the message."
3. **Response:** You take an action. Hand goes into pocket, takes phone. You check message.
4. **Reward.** This is your gain or payoff. "Oh great. That report I'm waiting for is in. I'll stop what I'm doing and take a look."

If you want to change this or any habit:

- Change the trigger
- Change your thought
- Change your response (of course, this is the key goal)
- Change and clarify the reward

Here are three hacks to help you reengineer your habits.

### Hack #1: Say "When I, Then I. Will I?"

In one study, researchers noted epilepsy sufferers had trouble remembering to take their medications on time.<sup>12</sup> In fact, before intervention, they only did so 55% of the time.

Then researchers asked them to make a "When I, Then I" statement, such as "When it's eight o'clock in the morning and I've finished brushing my teeth, then I will take my prescribed medication."

Those who made the statement increased their compliance taking their meds to 79%.

This worked for me. It's how I broke my morning mindless internet browsing habit. I said, "When I turn my computer on in the morning, then I will focus immediately on my Greatest Impact Activity for the day, not reading news stories."

Habit broken.

Note that "When I" calls attention to the trigger, which is, in this case, turning on my computer. The "Then I" statement introduces the thought of what I should be doing versus something else, making the thought conscious, and directing my response where I choose.

### Response and Reward Affect Thought

The more often you respond a certain way to a trigger (e.g., working out when you wake up), the easier it is to do it. At first you have to fight to do a new behavior, which feels like a big tax on your brain. Do that behavior every day for 100 days, however, and doing it the 101st day is easier and requires less thought. There's even a name for this phenomenon: automaticity.<sup>50</sup> It's not actually automatic, but it feels automatic.

When it feels automatic, what you've done is changed the thought that precedes the response.

Reward affects thought, too. Know you're charging towards a meaningful goal (which is your reward), and you'll think differently about a task that'll help you get there. Give yourself an explicit reward (e.g., take your favorite stroll along the river if you achieve your daily work target by 3 p.m.) and you'll think differently about what you do all day.

Choosing to focus on my Greatest Impact Activity (GIA) helps me achieve the long-term reward of career success that I'm seeking, not the short-term reward of seeing who won the game.

### **Greatest Impact Activity (GIA) Definition**

The one activity that, should you do it consistently at high quality, will get you the greatest eventual return on your time investment.

It's not, however, just about saying, "When I, Then I." You must ask yourself, "Will I?"

People who tell themselves to do something (e.g., "When I, Then I.") don't do it as often as those who ask themselves if they will.<sup>13</sup>

They both work, however, so use them together. Define your "When I, Then I." statements so you know what you want to do when. Then, for the most important of your desired actions, ask "Will I?" in the morning. You then give yourself the best chance of actually doing it.

For example, you might say, "When I turn on my computer in the morning, then I will get right to work and not read news stories." If this is a critical habit for you to change, then ask yourself in the morning, "Will I actually focus on my GIA and avoid the news stories when I start to work?"

Adding "Will I?" to "When I, Then I." makes the practice that much more powerful.

### **Hack #2: Change Your Environment**

Our environment affects our behavior in two major ways:

1. When we're in a particular place, we tend to do (or not do) specific things.
2. How the environment is designed drives us to do some things and not others.

I don't like to write at the office. When I'm there, my brain is in grow-the-company mode.

Quality management, product development, marketing, sales, global expansion. These are great investment areas for me, but they're not writing.

The office environment is a trigger itself. Consciously or subconsciously, it affects my thinking. Which affects my responses.

When I want to write, I go someplace else.

The other way we can change our environment is to be in the same place, but change conditions.

I'm working on losing weight.

Do you think it would be a good idea to have a piece of chocolate fudge cake and a box of chocolate chip cookies on my desk?

Open?

Fresh-baked and warm?

With vanilla ice cream ready to be scooped on both?

Probably not. I wouldn't make it 15 minutes—never mind a day, a week, a month—without giving in.

Many of us want to be less distracted by our phones at work. Phones are the chocolate fudge cake of distraction.

Why, then, do we leave them on our desks, right in front of us, when we work?

Turn it off and put it in a drawer—better yet, in another room—and you might just find it out-of-sight, out-of-mind.

Noise, music, clutter, phones, browsers, inboxes, chair, computing environment, door-open-or-closed...the list goes on. All these environmental factors affect your productivity one way or another.

### 35% Productivity Increases with Multiple Screens

Research conducted by Fujitsu Siemens Computers found that workspaces equipped with three-screen displays increase productivity by 35.5%.<sup>51</sup> Small changes to your environment can make a big difference.

The idea behind all of them, however, is the same. Change your environment to change your habits.

### Hack #3: Make Your Morning Routine Sacred

A keystone habit of extremely productive people is to have a consistent morning routine that starts the day off right. The XP morning ritual goes as follows:

1. **Read short-term objectives and actions.** Know what you want to do this quarter, month, and week. The best practice is to have these objectives listed right above your action plan or to-do list so you're forced to look at them every day. You can keep your longer-term goals there, too. This will help keep you grounded and focused on what's most important.
2. **Ask, "How's my mindset?"** If it's not good, you won't be productive.<sup>14</sup> Too many people dive into work in a bad mood, then have bad days. If you can catch yourself early in the day, the simple fact of recognizing that you're not in the best mood is often all you need to shake off negative energy and have a more productive day.
3. **Ask "Will I?" for critical tasks.** You know what you need to do. After all, it's right there on your action plan for the week. But sometimes people don't do what they tell themselves to do. Ask yourself if you will do it, and there's a significantly higher chance you will.<sup>15</sup>
4. **Be better than yesterday.** Ask yourself how you can be better than you were yesterday. Literally, yesterday. What should you have done better? Then give yourself one, and only one, piece of advice to be—you guessed it—better than yesterday.
5. **Start with your GIA (Greatest Impact Activity).** Energy, focus, and willpower are like wells. When you take water out of the well, it'll fill back up, but it takes some time. If you use your energy, focus, and willpower with Mandatory activities like answering emails, firming up appointment schedules, and other non-Investment activities, you steal away that energy and focus from what will get you the greatest return.

Identify your Greatest Impact Activity for every day and focus on it first. It might not be easy, and other tasks will have to wait, but if you do it, you're much more likely to be productive and successful.

#### Takeaways to Reengineer Your Habits:

- Say "When I, Then I. Will I?"
- Change your environment
- Make your morning routine sacred

# Chapter 2: Control Your TIME

## Habit 4: Obsess Over TIME

*Most time management systems are too complex. Do (and don't do) a few simple things and you can reclaim significant lost time, then spend that time the way you want.*

Almost everyone at some point in their career will toy with adopting some kind of time-management system. Few stick with it. The challenge is that many time-management systems focus too deeply on the activity level—what to do first, what to do next, what the priority order is—without paying enough attention to the bigger picture.

At RAIN Group, we find it instructive to think of time in the following four levels:

1. **Treasured**
2. **Investment**
3. **Mandatory**
4. **Empty**

Time is finite. If you're spending it on one thing, you're not spending it on another. Extremely productive people accumulate time in the Treasured and Investment categories, and proactively fight dwelling in the Mandatory and Empty zones.

If you want to be most productive, you shouldn't just make time management a priority; you must obsess over TIME.

Where does obsessing over TIME start? With understanding it, tracking how you spend it, and choosing how you should spend it.

### 4 Levels of TIME

Level	Description	Action
Level 4: <b>Treasured</b>	Time you hold dear	Take some now, maximize for future
Level 3: <b>Investment</b>	Time that generates outsized return	Increase: prioritize, calendar, maximize
Level 2: <b>Mandatory</b>	Time you feel you must spend	Minimize/outsource
Level 1: <b>Empty</b>	Time you waste	Eliminate/minimize

The key to success and achieving top performance is maximizing Investment time.

**Treasured time** is time you hold dear. This is where we all want to get. For different people it means different things:

- Quality time with loved ones
- Vacation with friends and family
- Alone time
- Sports and games
- Working (yes, some people are most fulfilled at work)

If you spend the rest of your time wisely, you'll find yourself with more time available for Treasured activities. Make enough money and you can retire early and do what you want. Build the right work habits and you'll get more done in fewer hours, giving you more Treasured time every day.

*The key to maximizing happiness and fulfillment is taking Treasured time.*

**Investment time** is the time you focus on becoming more effective, getting the right things done, and achieving top performance. You get an outsized return on your Investment time as it pays dividends to gain skills and knowledge, accumulate experience, and drive priority initiatives forward. Investment time can also be personal, such as Investing in exercise, that can affect your happiness and professional success.

*The key to success and achieving top performance is maximizing Investment time.*

**Mandatory time** is time spent doing things you feel you must do (even if, in reality, you don't). Commuting to work, shaving, mowing the lawn, paying bills, filling out expense reports, proofreading your proposals, printing and binding presentation material. All are examples of Mandatory time.

Note that "feels like" is not "must." You can minimize Mandatory time by turning it into Investment time, such as listening to business books while you drive. You can also turn it into Treasured time by listening to books you enjoy, so you free up an hour in the evening to do something else. You can move closer to where you work and minimize the commute or try to work from home.

You can choose to delegate Mandatory activities, like hiring a landscaper to mow the lawn, using a delivery service for your groceries, having your laundry done at a fluff and fold, or outsourcing the proofreading of your proposals to others.

And you can actually reduce Mandatory time by questioning the activity itself. Does this need to be done at all? Does this need to be done by me?

In fact, minimizing and outsourcing Mandatory time makes you happier.<sup>16</sup>

So do it.

*The key to Mandatory time is minimizing or converting it into Treasured or Investment time.*

**Empty time** is exactly as it sounds: time spent, nothing gained. At least with Mandatory time, if you need to spend 30 minutes to get a haircut, your hair gets cut. If you're just flipping through Facebook, watching YouTube videos, or reading *Us Weekly*, you're simply letting time pass.

Now, it's quite possible you treasure this time. If that's the case, groovy. But most people would prefer to decrease the time they spend watching TV, playing games on the internet, scrolling through Facebook, or puttering around the house aimlessly.<sup>17</sup>

We all need some Empty time. Doing nothing or being mindless is important for recharging. We all need brain rest. However, most people would like to reallocate a good chunk of Empty time to better use.

*The key to Empty time is to eliminate as much of it as you can.*

If you're like most people, changing your Mandatory and Empty time habits will be hard. Delegating, eliminating, or minimizing your Mandatory and Empty time means changing habits.

Where people tend to spend their time on any given day is a reflection of how they're likely to spend time for months and years to come. Time is a habit. If you want to be extremely productive, you first have to understand how you spend your time.

Tracking your time is the best place to start.

## Track Your TIME

The key to professional success is maximizing your Investment time. When you do, you'll eventually gain the financial freedom and independence to enjoy more Treasured time and do what you want.

To get started right now, keep a time log. This might sound mundane. Who wants to spend time all day recording what they do, for how long, and what TIME level it falls under? Some people can't get themselves to track time no matter what. It's effort.

The reality is it doesn't take that long, it's Investment time, and it works.

It's similar to keeping a food journal. According to a Kaiser Permanente study of 1,700 people, "those who kept daily food records lost twice as much weight as those who kept no records."<sup>18</sup>

There's no doubt: if you want to maximize your time, you have to know where you're spending it.

To track your TIME:

- 1. Set activity goals**

When you know what you want to accomplish in a given day, you can define activities that will get you there. We call these your Greatest Impact Activities (GIAs). Let's say you're in sales and you need to fill your pipeline. Your objective today is to generate one meeting with a potential buyer. You can set your GIA goal as, "spend at least four hours obsessively prospecting with no distractions."

When it comes to time tracking, focus on activity over outcomes. You can control that you spend X number of hours concentrating on a specific activity, but you can't necessarily control the outcome which, in this case, is how many meetings you set.

- 2. Track activity and TIME level**

When tracking, always note your activity (e.g., tech support) and your category (e.g., Mandatory). Time tracking software and apps (see #3) will allow you to do this fairly easily. By tracking both, you can see what you're actually spending your time on, and you'll be able to make conscious decisions on how to minimize Mandatory and Empty time and maximize Investment and Treasured time. In the words of Peter Drucker, "What gets measured gets managed."

- 3. Use technology and timers best suited to you**

Absolutely use timers. You can use everything from a stopwatch on a watch, phone or desk, an online timer of which there are many, or those built into software like Toggl, RescueTime, TimeCamp, MyHours, or ATracker.

If time tracking software isn't your thing, you can use a simple timer, and track your time in Excel, Word, a physical notebook, or a note-taking technology like Notes on your phone, Evernote, or OneNote.

The method you use doesn't matter; what matters is that you are tracking your activities and TIME categories.

In the words of Peter Drucker, "What gets measured gets managed."

Easy way to  
remember TIME:  
Take Treasured  
Increase Investment  
Minimize Mandatory  
Eliminate Empty

#### 4. Track in periodic, obsessed daily chunks

Time tracking should be done at least periodically in obsessed daily chunks. It's impractical to track your time meticulously every single day. You can always track gross time spent (e.g., 3 hours prospecting, 2 hours meetings, 1.5 hours meals and breaks, 2 hours TV), but this kind of tracking isn't the obsessive tracking that will allow you to change your time habits. You must get more granular if you want to get the kind of data that will make a difference.

The obsessed tracking days should be the work days and non-work days you choose to 1) understand where your time really goes using timers and tracking in real time, and 2) focus on changing your time habits.

Choose periodic days to track obsessively. Make it a priority and track in real-time to the minute.

Don't target zero Empty or Mandatory time. You can't get to zero, and you don't want to. Human brains need down time. But after watching a favorite TV show to unwind, did you really feel good about watching the second, third, or fourth?

Fun fact: the average adult underestimates the amount of time they spend watching TV by one full hour per day.<sup>19</sup> Most adults actually watch 30 hours of TV per week—an average of a whopping 4.3 hours a day!—but they think they watch closer to 20 hours a week.

The sooner you figure out where your time is going, the sooner you can start maximizing time spent on what's actually important to you.

#### Takeaways to Obsess Over TIME:

- Take T, Increase I, Minimize M, Eliminate E
- Put your greatest impact activity (GIA) first
- Track your TIME

## Habit 5: Say No

*One word will set you free.*

- A colleague asks you to join a meeting because they'd value your opinion at the end.
- Your to-do list has 32 items on it and they're all important to one degree or another.
- Your boss came by for the third time today, this time for a status report update since the one he got two days ago.
- An employee of yours is stuck on a problem and asks you to take over on a part they're not sure about.
- You get a satisfaction survey from the health insurance company about your recent doctor visit.
- A potential client reaches out and wants to talk, but you're pretty sure they won't be a good client even if you win them.

Anything here can kill your time and your ability to take the Investment actions you need to achieve your goals. It's hard to do the thing you know you should.

Say "No."

You might read this list and think, “I’m a good team player. I shouldn’t say no to my colleague.” “I shouldn’t say no to taking a meeting with a potential buyer even if they may not be a good fit.”

But are you sure? Sure you shouldn’t say no?

With your colleague, do you really need to go to the meeting for an hour? Why not ask them to take a five-minute walk with you and summarize the meeting? Maybe they can brief you during an upcoming commute instead.

Hour saved.

## Create a To Don’t List

Be brutal with your priority list. If you have 32 priorities, you have none. Get a colleague or coach to help you be brutal and say “No” to the lower priority priorities.

You don’t have to lose them altogether. That’s mentally taxing.

Create a To Don’t list. We all have To Do lists. We all need To Don’t lists. Items on your To Don’t list can be temporary or permanent. You can think of your To Don’t list as a parking lot for ideas that are not topping the priority list now. It may not be no forever. It’s no for now. Or it may be something that looked like it could be a priority, but after vetting you know it won’t yield a good enough return. This one is a no unless something changes.

When it’s time for a new priority, with your handy To Don’t list, you have a menu of ideas to get you going. The next top priority might just be one you said no to previously. Or it might be something new. In any case, keep a To Don’t list so you can know what you’re *not going to focus on*.

## Do Less: If it’s Not Gung Ho, It’s No

For your Investment activities, if you’re not fully enthusiastic about doing it and the return it will get you, say “No.” Don’t do it.

Also, even if you’re gung ho about more than one priority, trying to do too many will kill them all.

Most people have too many concurrent priorities. As outlined in the article “The Art of Strategy is Knowing When to Say No,” Brian Halligan, founder and CEO of HubSpot, really wanted to expand into Europe.<sup>20</sup> However, he knew he couldn’t do it well until he finished changing the company’s go-to-market focus. It pained him to say no to Europe (for now) and put it on hold, but he did. A year later, he put Europe back in motion and succeeded.

Do less. If it’s not gung ho, it’s no.

Solid advice for all of us.

## Derail the Derailers

In the opening of this section, I shared ways that people might derail your time.

Here are specific ideas for how you can derail these derailers.

- **Boss:** I know, sometimes you can’t just say no. Depends on the boss and the situation. Most people just do the reports. Instead, talk to your boss about how important the report is. You might say, “I’m trying to close the Jones deal. Do you want me to do that or the report?” Have a chat with him to review your priorities. Talk about what the boss needs and see if he can receive it once every other week instead of three times each week. Maybe someone else can do it. The “No” is in there somewhere—tactfully.

- **Employees:** Don't just do their work. Ask them to find a time to talk you through the problem. Then let them take it back and see how far they get. Too many bosses take on the work of their employees and it kills their productivity.<sup>21</sup> Don't let work transfer from their plate to yours.
- **Satisfaction survey:** They make it sound ominous if you don't respond! But will they cancel your policy? Fine you? I don't think so. Skip the surveys.
- **Potential client:** Can't say no? Sure you can. Like with the boss, you can do it tactfully, but do it if it means you won't close the Jones-type deals for 50 times the size because the mosquito deals are eating you and your time alive.

The big point about saying no? It's difficult. It's emotional. But it's necessary if you want to focus on your priorities and not other people's.

### Takeaways to Say No:

- Do less: If it's not gung ho, it's no
- Derail the derailers
- Keep a To Don't list

## Habit 6: Play Hard to Get

*Be impossible to distract.*

Ever hear of Nir Eyal? (Most haven't.) He wrote a book titled *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*. You know who has heard of him? Everyone at every technology, gaming, and social media company trying to get you addicted to their products.

They do it well.

Two decades ago when I started working, I was selling. Prospecting. It was just me, a phone on my desk, and a ticking clock. Now we all have email, texting, Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, multiple phones, YouTube, and everything we could ever read always available on the Internet on our desks and in our pockets.

Deloitte, one of the Big Four accounting firms, conducted a study in 2017 that showed people checked their phones 47 times a day.<sup>22</sup> People aged 18 to 24 actually checked 86 times per day. We have messages coming at us all day, and we're checking to see what we might have missed constantly. We are living in a world of ever-increasing distraction.

Think this has no effect?

- People are distracted every 11 minutes.<sup>23</sup>
- Interruptions make you 20% dumber.<sup>24</sup>
- Even three-second distractions double workplace errors.<sup>25</sup>
- When people get disrupted, it takes on average 23 minutes and 15 seconds to get back to task.<sup>26</sup>
- After only 20 minutes of interrupted performance, people reported significantly higher stress, frustration, workload, effort, and pressure.<sup>27</sup>

Distraction is an epidemic, and it's getting worse. (Thanks, Nir.) This is one of the reasons we use strong words in XPS like "obsess over TIME." Most of us have phone and media habits that drive us to be distracted constantly, thinking we are multitasking and it's fine, but it's killing our productivity.<sup>28</sup>

Be free from the shackles of alerts.  
Turn them off.

Our advice here is simple, powerful, effective, and (emotionally) difficult to do.

Play hard to get. Be impossible to distract.

First, turn off all your alerts. With alerts on (ding, buzz, ring), there's no way to avoid constant distraction. Alerts are shackles.

Turn off your alerts, and you'll be free of those shackles.

Close and log out of applications that might distract you.

Literally put the distractions (like your phone) in another room while you're concentrating.

Do these and you give yourself a fighting chance.

Second, signal "Do Not Disturb." Close your door. Put headphones on even if you're not listening to anything. Put up a sign that says, "On a deadline. Come in if it's an emergency. If not, please check back later."

You can even turn on your email out-of-office assistant. Everyone knows that a day here and a day there you won't be around. Have it say, "I'm not available today and not really checking email. Back on Friday. If you need help, contact my colleague Jim Smith at..."

Third, if you're in a spot in the office where people interrupt you, spend some time working someplace else. If they can't find you, they won't distract you.

You don't need to do these all the time (yes, keep your alerts off all the time), but practice these strategies and gift yourself the space to focus, concentrate, and get done what you want to get done.

Play hard to get and you'll be impossible to distract.

#### **Takeaways to Play Hard to Get:**

- Be free from the shackles of alerts
- Signal "Do Not Disturb"
- Be someplace else

# Chapter 3: Execute in the Zone

## Habit 7: Sprint into the Zone

*Maximize your effort per work hour.*

I've always prided myself on being an excellent multitasker. I could stay on top of my email and other messages, work on a project, attend meetings on and off all day, and maintain an open-door policy in case people needed to talk.

Then I happened by an article one day.

"Media multitaskers pay a mental price, Stanford study shows."<sup>29</sup> So I thought, well, it can't be that bad. The researchers said that multitaskers are "suckers for irrelevancy" and they go on to say why. Not mincing words, are they? The crux: multitasking isn't just bad for productivity, it's very bad.

Not only that, multitasking makes you dumb. It physically shrinks your brain.<sup>30</sup>

So just stop, right? Unfortunately for us multitaskers, multitasking is bad, but it feels good, so it's hard to stop.<sup>31</sup>

Here's how to stop.

If you want to get more done in the time you have, and you want to have that euphoric feeling of being extremely productive, you must execute the zone.

The zone (also known as flow) is the mental state where a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity. When you're in the zone:

- Time feels suspended—you don't notice it passing and yet it's really flying!
- You feel extreme focus
- You achieve exceptional clarity of goals, actions, and rewards
- You're not just happy, you feel euphoric just by focusing on and working on the task
- The task feels increasingly effortless
- You feel in control and confident the activity is doable
- You feel rewarded simply by the fact of engaging the activity<sup>32</sup>

If you want to maximize effort per work hour, get in the zone.

If you want to get in the zone, establish a daily routine of obsessed, planned Sprints.

Sprinting is a form of timeboxing. A popular technique in many project-management and software-development methods, timeboxing allocates a specific time period (or time box), to a pre-planned activity.

### **TIME Sprinting Definition:**

20 minutes minimum of obsessed focus on a planned activity.

Establish a daily routine of obsessed, planned sprints.

The rules for TIME Sprinting are:

1. **Sprint:** Work on a planned task for 20 minutes minimum with a visual timer on and counting up.
2. **Relay:** Perform four TIME Sprints in a row with up to 6-minute breaks in between. Each 4-Sprint-in-a-row sequence is a Relay.
3. **Extend:** You can extend a TIME Sprint up to 90 minutes but no more. At 90, take a break.
4. **Focus:** If you feel a distraction, don't task switch. Write it down, keep Sprinting.
5. **Track:** Record your Sprints and Relays. Track a Sprint for every 20 minutes (e.g., if you extend a Sprint and go 40 minutes, it's two Sprints).

TIME Sprinting is one of the most powerful and effective strategies of the XPS. If you do it, you need to obsess over it just like you do when deciding how to spend your time.

When you are TIME Sprinting, follow the rules. Yes, put a timer on. Yes, do absolutely no task switching or media checking. Be impossible to distract when you're Sprinting.

When I first tried TIME Sprinting, I chose my activity, put my timer on, and started. Then, literally three minutes later, I opened a web browser by reflex for no reason. Three minutes! Then I closed it. A few minutes later, I reached to check my text messages. Instead, I put my phone down. But a few minutes later, I motioned to check my email inbox. I found myself having to practice "Free Won't" (see page 27) to stay focused in the Sprint.

I had no idea I was media multitasking this much! But I was. My productivity was suffering immensely.

Now I TIME Sprint a lot. Do I do it all the time? No. I go to meetings without a timer. Periodically I clear out emails one by one without a timer. Fifteen minutes between meetings? I might not put the timer on. Sometimes I need a timer break.

However, if I feel like concentration will help, I put the timer on and Sprint.

It makes all the difference.

#### Takeaways to Sprint into the Zone:

- Establish a daily routine of obsessed, planned Sprints
- Relay: Do four successive Sprints throughout the day
- Sprint through distraction. Don't task switch.

## Habit 8: Fuel Your Energy

*I'm so tired, I haven't slept a wink. I'm so tired, my mind is on the blink. - The Beatles*

Everything we've covered so far about XPS is useless if you're too tired. If you're sluggish when you're working, your results will be predictably sluggish.

Sure, an energy drink or coffee can give you a boost, but energy, and the stamina to sustain it over long stretches of time, is fuel that drives productivity.

If you want to achieve extreme productivity, fuel your energy.

Time is finite—once it's gone, it's gone. Energy is not. It can be renewed and strengthened. While there's a huge body of research and study on maximizing your energy, we tend to summarize it simply as follows.

**Mind:** Practice positive self-talk and mindfulness to feel energetic and ready to tackle your GIAs.

**Body:** Eat, sleep, and move to drive energy. Be active.

**Spirit:** Find your personal path to feel at peace and happy. Find whatever spiritual path that's right for you. Take Treasured time to refuel your psyche.

Here are 14 scientifically proven ways to boost your energy.

1. *Eat protein, decrease carbohydrates.* Carbohydrates make you crash.<sup>33</sup>
2. *Eat small, frequent meals.* Especially at lunch, eating smaller meals is proven to help you boost energy.<sup>34</sup>
3. *Be active.* Moving increases oxygen flow and releases chemicals in the body that help wake you up and sustain energy. Quick walks (e.g., between TIME Sprints), stretches, and mid-day workouts drive energy.<sup>35</sup>
4. *Get physically fit.* All the research shows fitness and energy go hand-in-hand. Richard Branson says exercise and being fit doubles his productivity.<sup>36</sup>
5. *Drink one cup.* Too much coffee or tea can induce crashing, but one cup here and there gives the boost without much of a subsequent dip.<sup>37</sup>
6. *Take a nap.* Don't power through fatigue. Power nap for 20 minutes or so.<sup>38</sup> Short naps burn away sleep inertia.
7. *Get enough sleep.* Besides the obvious (feeling tired), not getting enough sleep decreases mental performance. Getting only five hours five nights in a row produces similar effects of having a blood alcohol content of .06.<sup>39</sup>
8. *Sleep enough, but not too much.* Conventional wisdom says sleeping from seven to nine hours for most adults is the right amount. Research shows that six or seven hours might be better for longevity and cognitive health.<sup>40</sup>
9. *Alcohol and sleep don't mix.* If you want a good night sleep, tone down the alcohol.<sup>41</sup>
10. *Try yoga.* It might just help you fight depression and anxiety.<sup>42</sup>
11. *Practice mindfulness.* Mindfulness is great to fight anxiety and increase energy.<sup>43</sup>
12. *Take Treasured time.* The mental health benefits of leisure activities include lower levels of depression and improved physical and psychological status.<sup>44</sup>
13. *Don't watch excessive TV.* It does, indeed, lead to snacking and bad health.<sup>45</sup> Bad health isn't good for energy.
14. *Go outside to feel alive.* A little bit of air and sky reinvigorates.<sup>46</sup>

#### Takeaways to Fuel Your Energy:

- Mind: Practice positive self-talk and mindfulness
- Body: Eat and sleep for energy, be active
- Spirit: Take Treasured TIME, find your spiritual path

## Habit 9: Right the Ship

*It's easy to quit smoking. I've done it a thousand times. - W.C. Fields*

Changing habits and being productive isn't easy. We all fall off the wagon. The key is getting back on, and staying on, for longer and longer periods.

If you fall off, here are three strategies to get you back on.

## Practice Free Won't

Deeply ingrained habits—for me, checking my phone while working—happen almost without thought. The thought is there, but it's so fast that we start doing the behavior without seeming to initiate it consciously.

In the late 1970s and early 80s, Benjamin Libet conducted a series of experiments to see whether conscious thought initiates physical behavior. His experiments showed that some triggers make some behaviors happen seemingly without thought.<sup>47</sup> He concluded (not without melodrama) that we may not actually have free will.

That's not the interesting part though. What's fascinating is that while conscious thought may or may not cause us to initiate certain behaviors, conscious thought can conclusively cause us to stop that behavior. So perhaps we have no 'free will,' but we certainly have 'free won't.'

On page 12 we outlined how saying, "3...2...1...Go!" can get you started on an activity. If you want to stop an activity, it works in reverse.

Say "3...2...1...Stop!"

Start browsing on Facebook during a TIME Sprint? "3...2...1...Stop!"

Start eating Doritos at 8 p.m. after a good day of healthy eating? "3...2...1...Stop!"

Reaching for your phone while you're concentrating? "3...2...1...Stop!"

Excessive TV. Drinking too much coffee. Multitasking. Losing focus. Not starting with your Greatest Impact Activity. Doing something better delegated to someone else. Joining an hour-long meeting that, after 5 minutes, you can't add to or get anything from.

**Right the Ship Hack #1: Practice free won't. Say "3...2...1...Stop!"**

## Make Micro Change

As we discussed on page 8, getting started on anything takes activation energy. If you know you're getting started on something difficult, it takes that much more. I've talked to people who are literally daunted by the idea of focusing for at least 20 minutes so they don't start a TIME Sprint.

Where 20 minutes might seem like a lot, five minutes almost never does. If you're having trouble getting into difficult tasks, make the task smaller. Here you can shrink the Sprint to just five minutes, and lower the activation energy bar significantly.

Make it a micro sprint and you'll achieve micro change. Tell yourself you're only committing to five minutes of focus. I mean, who can't do five minutes?

I'm not the first to suggest this. The FlyLady has done great work here, too. She's a home-clutter busting expert who gives the following advice: put a timer on for five minutes and start cleaning.<sup>48</sup>

### Micro Change

If something you want to happen isn't happening, make micro change. Examples:

- Having trouble getting into the groove of prospecting? Make one call, send one email.
- Having trouble getting started working out? Do three push-ups.
- Want to get good at piano? Take one lesson. Practice once.
- Want to clean the house? Start in one room for five minutes.
- Want to read one business book a month? Get a book and read the first page.

You can't finish in five minutes—everyone knows this—but the point is that nobody stops when the timer is up. Once you're in it, you keep going because you're over the activation energy hump, and you're getting satisfaction and pleasure from the progress you're making.

Same idea works with TIME Sprints and any seemingly large tasks. Don't go 20 minutes. Go five.

Make micro change.

Your productivity house will be sparkling clean in no time.

## Right the Ship Hack #2: Make micro change

### Make a Commitment Contract

Losing weight has been a challenge for me. I fluctuate up and down 10 pounds, but I want to fluctuate down 20 and have for years. I haven't been able to see it through yet.

Ian Ayres, Jordan Goldberg, and Dean Karlan are Yale economists. They surmised several years ago that people who sign iron-clad commitment contracts would be more likely to stick to a commitment they made to themselves than if they didn't make a contract.

They found that those who make a commitment contract with a referee (i.e., an accountability partner you report to every week) increases chances of success by up to 200%.

Putting money at stake increases chances of success by up to 300%.

They've now studied 400,000 commitment contracts with over \$35 million dollars on the line.

According to Goldberg, when a referee is used in the commitment contract, the average success rate is 61% for goals related to money and finance.<sup>49</sup> (For those wanting to lose weight, the success rate is a not-too-shabby 47%.) When the goal involves using both a referee and a financial stake, the success rate for financial resolutions is 87% (and a healthy 73% for pound-droppers).

I gave it a try. To right the ship that was sinking due to my outsized waistline, I made a commitment contract. If I didn't make my weight every week, I had to send money to an organization I despise.

I lost the weight, and am now where I was just after my senior year of high school.

Note that you can make a commitment contract late in a process like I did when dieting alone wasn't working, or you can do it early to prevent commitment failure.

In any case, if you want something badly enough, put your money and reputation where your mouth is. Make a commitment contract. Put something at stake. Have an accountability partner.

A commitment contract could give you the incentives (or disincentives) that put you over the top to bring to life the change you want.

## Right the Ship Hack #3: Make a commitment contract

### Takeaways to Right the Ship:

- Say "3...2...1...Stop!" Practice Free Won't
- Make micro change
- Make a commitment contract

# Conclusion

The pursuit of productivity is not new, but it's more important than ever. In the last several years, distraction has become an epidemic while, at the same time, we all have more demands on our time than ever before.

Everyone says it's difficult to change. Everyone is right.

It's difficult to get motivated enough to make the change. It's no easy feat changing how you spend your time, and maximizing effort per work hour is so much harder in our new never-ending-distraction world.

However, if you have the right roadmap, you can manufacture your own motivation, control your TIME, and tune out all distractions while you execute in the zone.

And you'll become extremely productive.

## Summary of Key Points: XP3 and 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity

### Manufacture Motivation

1. **Recruit Your Drive.** Motivation is more a skill than an innate have-it-or-don't attribute. You can recruit your drive, building your motivation like a muscle.
2. **Ignite Your Proactivity:** How you manage your calendar and your expectations of what you will get done every week drives whether you get it done or procrastinate.
3. **Reengineer Your Habits:** Understand habits and you can change them as you wish.

### Control Your TIME

4. **Obsess Over TIME:** Know where your time goes and you will find more, and then devote that time to your Greatest Impact Activities (GIAs) that will help you achieve the best return and success.
5. **Say No:** People and activities will try to derail you from what you should be working on. Not all, but a lot, of time loss is preventable if you say "No."
6. **Play Hard to Get:** People and technologies will try to interrupt you. If you're not available, signal "Do Not Disturb," and turn off your technology alerts. You'll be impossible to distract.

### TURN THE PAGE!

On the next page, we outline The XP3, 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity, and the 27 hacks. Print it and hang it by your desk for a daily reminder of how to improve your productivity.

### Execute in the Zone

7. **Sprint into the Zone:** Sprint and Relay and you will get in the zone. You'll feel an energized focus, achieve full concentration, and enjoy the process as you maximize your effort per work hour.
8. **Fuel Your Energy:** You can't be extremely productive if you feel tired and sluggish. Take care of your mind, body and spirit, and you'll feel energized.
9. **Right the Ship:** We all lose focus and fall off the wagon. The secret to long-term extreme productivity is not to be perfect all the time, but to get back at it quickly when you fall into unproductive habits and patterns.

# Extreme Productivity Model™

## 9 Habits to Take Control of Your TIME, Get in the Zone, and Achieve Maximum Results

XP3

9 Habits

Hacks

### 1 | Manufacture Motivation

- 1. Recruit Your Drive
- 2. Ignite Your Proactivity
- 3. Reengineer Your Habits

- ◆ Choose your New Reality
- ◆ Plan actions weekly
- ◆ Track progress weekly
- ◆ Calendar Investment TIME
- ◆ Talk to yourself
- ◆ Say "3...2...1...Go!"
- ◆ Say "When I, Then I, Will I?"
- ◆ Change your environment
- ◆ Make your morning routine sacred

### 2 | Control Your TIME

- 4. Obsess Over TIME
- 5. Say No
- 6. Play Hard to Get

- ◆ Take I, Increase I, Minimize M, Eliminate E
- ◆ Put your GIA first
- ◆ Track your TIME
- ◆ Do less: If it's not gung ho, it's no
- ◆ Deraill the derailers
- ◆ Keep a To Don't list
- ◆ Be free from the shackles of alerts
- ◆ Signal "Do Not Disturb"
- ◆ Be someplace else

### 3 | Execute in the Zone

- 7. Sprint to the Zone
- 8. Fuel Your Energy
- 9. Right the Ship

- ◆ Establish a daily routine of obsessed, planned sprints
- ◆ Relay: Do 4 successive sprints
- ◆ Sprint through distraction. Don't task switch.
- ◆ Mind: Practice positive self-talk and mindfulness
- ◆ Body: Eat and sleep for energy, be active
- ◆ Spirit: Take Treasured TIME, find your spiritual path
- ◆ Say "3...2...1...Stop!" Practice Free Won't.
- ◆ Make micro change
- ◆ Sign a commitment contract

# Extreme Productivity Challenge

## Help Your Team Achieve Exceptional Increases in Productivity and Results

Sellers today are more distracted than ever. The never-ending dings, rings, and buzzes that interrupt workflow every few minutes are killing focus and productivity.

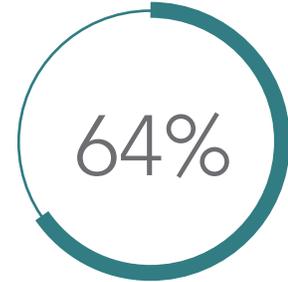
And they're killing your sales results.

You need a highly-motivated and focused sales team that brings their A-game day in and day out. In a unique, transformational, 90-day experience, the Extreme Productivity Challenge (XPC) teaches your sellers and sales managers how to get more done in the time they have, helping them to achieve exceptional increases in productivity and results.

In the Extreme Productivity Challenge, participants learn how to:

- Maximize motivation, make consistent progress, and achieve goals
- Control TIME with the simplest, most effective time management system
- Ignore distractions, focus, and get in the Extreme Productivity Zone
- Master The XP3 and 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity
- Implement an accountability system to maximize execution
- Achieve maximum output per work hour by focusing on the activities that get outsized returns

Your team will be introduced to the 90-Day XPC Plan, Roadmap to Habit Change, and TIME Analysis and Tracking Template, three proprietary tools that will help your sellers internalize their new knowledge and maximize their efficiency and productivity.



64% of companies do not believe their sellers manage their time, focus, and personal effectiveness well.

### Program Approach

- Extreme Productivity Assessment
- 1-Day Intensive Workshop
- 90-Day Extreme Productivity Coaching
- Ongoing reinforcement

## Contact Us to Transform Your Team

If your team needs to learn to:

- Develop quarterly, monthly, and weekly productivity plans
- Change habits
- Recover lost TIME and regain focus

Contact RAIN Group today at 508-405-0438 or [info@raingroup.com](mailto:info@raingroup.com).

# About RAIN Group

## Unleash the Sales Potential of Your Team with RAIN Group

RAIN Group is a sales training, assessment, and performance improvement company that helps leading organizations improve sales results. We've helped hundreds of thousands of salespeople, managers, and professionals in more than 73 countries increase their sales significantly with RAIN Group's consulting and sales methodology.

We can help you:

### Implement Sales Training that Delivers Real Results

RAIN Group's sales training system inspires real change and delivers real results that last. Our rigorous approach includes sales team evaluation, customized training programs, robust reinforcement, and coaching to help you and your team develop sales and negotiation skills, and maximize your results.

### Grow Your Key Accounts

At most companies, there's a huge, untapped opportunity to add more value—and thus sell more—to existing accounts. We help our clients capitalize on these revenue growth opportunities. Whether it's simply increasing cross-selling and up-selling or implementing a major strategic account management program, we can help.

### Identify Who Can and Will Sell with Great Success

Our assessments measure sales attributes and skills, identifying the factors that really make a difference in sales performance. Whether you're looking to hire someone who can and will sell, or looking to improve sales performance, we'll help you build the most successful sales team.

### Implement World-Class Sales Coaching

We coach sellers, professionals, and leaders individually and in groups to achieve the greatest and fastest increase in sales results. And we train and certify leaders and managers in our RAIN Sales Coaching system. Often, it's RAIN Sales Coaching that truly unlocks the team's potential, and keeps them motivated to produce the best results consistently.

Find out more about how RAIN Group can help you  
unleash the sales potential of your team by visiting  
[raingroup.com](http://raingroup.com) or calling (508) 405-0438.

## RAIN Group's Clients

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CONVERGYS

HITACHI  
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LEE HECHT  
HARRISON

OPTUS

Monitor  
Deloitte.

## Global Locations

Boston - Bogotá - Geneva - Johannesburg  
London - Mumbai - Sydney - Toronto

## Connect with Us



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