



THINGS
EFFECTIVE
TIME
MANAGERS
DO DIFFERENTLY



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INTRODUCTION

Time Diets Don't Work

It's a lovely fantasy.

Eliminate social media, never check email in the morning, get an early start, etc. Follow the rules du jour and you'll be rewarded with frictionless days bursting with easy, mess-free productivity. Picture it: There you are, sipping your buttered coffee, effortlessly executing one brilliant idea after another.

Meanwhile, here on earth...

Rigid time management approaches are difficult enough to stick to when life is predictable, but when the unexpected inevitably happens, the whole program goes out the window and we stumble through free-for-all days that leave us exhausted and bewildered, wondering where the time went.

Set-it-and-forget-it recipes don't work because they don't include the most essential ingredient in any improvement effort—self-awareness.

That's why **you** are the key to your success. Not philosophy. Not systems. Not software. Those things can help a great deal, and you'll find recommendations for each in these pages. But only **you** can cultivate the self-awareness necessary to wield them for maximum effect.

If you're wondering how to do that, you've come to the right place. That's what this book is all about. At the heart of all six things effective time managers do differently is the willingness to see their circumstances, behavior, and time itself for what they are.

A short overview of the chapters to come:

1. Effective time managers use goals.

Goals are not just for setting and achieving. With a mindful approach, your goals can help you make the most of your time.

2. Effective time managers know what's at stake.

You've set a goal. Great! Who is affected and how if you achieve it? Who is affected and how if you don't? Learn how taking a wide view of your goals' impact will motivate you to stick with them when

momentum slows.

3. Effective time managers break down their work.

Chapter three focuses on... well, focus. Anyone can move mountains provided they concentrate on one rock at a time. Sounds simple, right? But there's a prerequisite that's far more challenging. A certain 1993 football matchup will demonstrate why the challenge is worth it.

4. Effective time managers plan continually.

In chapter four you'll learn the most common and time-wasting mistake people make with their plans, why it's destructive, and how just a half hour per day can help you avoid that pitfall and boost your productivity.

5. Effective time managers track their time.

Time tracking can drastically improve your awareness of your work patterns... and that's part of why many people avoid doing it. In chapter five, you'll learn how time tracking can help you to plan and use your daily allotment of 24 hours more effectively.

6. Effective time managers practice time management.

If you only read one chapter of this book, let it be this one. While the idea of practicing something—anything!—you want to be good at seems obvious, it's the least discussed time management principle. We think that might be because the question of *how* to practice remains largely unanswered. We decided to answer it.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find some questions to consider. The point of these questions is to foster awareness and deepen your understanding of how the text applies to you and your situation. We encourage you to think about these questions and perhaps discuss them with your colleagues. You might be surprised to find that this exercise surfaces pain points and innovative solutions that were there all along, unidentified.

Our hope is that you'll walk away from this book with six actionable principles that you can sustainably use with any time management tool, technique, system, or philosophy you choose and ultimately start getting more of what you value most from each day.

Take Your Time Management Temperature

How many of the following statements are mostly true for you?

Mind

- I have difficulty focusing on one thing at a time.
- I am easily distracted by stimuli such as email.
- I spend much of my day at work reacting to crises rather than focusing on activities with long-term value.
- I don't take enough time for reflection, strategizing, and creative thinking.
- I work after hours and rarely take an email-free vacation.

Body

- I don't regularly get adequate sleep and I often wake up feeling tired.
- I frequently skip breakfast or settle for something that isn't nutritious and/or filling.
- I don't exercise enough.
- I don't take regular breaks during the day to renew and recharge.
- I often eat lunch at my desk.

Emotion

- I frequently feel irritable, impatient or anxious at work—especially when work is demanding.
- I don't spend enough time with my loved ones, and when I'm with them I'm not always fully present.
- I have too little time for the activities that I most deeply enjoy.
- I don't stop frequently to express my appreciation to others.
- I don't savor my accomplishments.

Spirit

- I don't spend enough time at work doing what I do best/enjoy most.
- There are significant gaps between what I say is important to me and how I actually allocate my time and energy.
- My decisions at work are more often influenced by external demands than a clear sense of my own purpose.
- I don't feel like I invest enough time and energy in making a positive difference in the world.

Total number of statements that are mostly true for you:

0-4:	Whatever you're doing is working. Keep it up!
5-8:	Some of your approaches probably aren't sustainable.
9-13:	A number of your approaches are almost certainly not sustainable.
14-19:	Time for a total time management overhaul.

Adapted from: theenergyproject.com

CHAPTER 1

Don't Just Set Goals—*Use* Them



*“To live only for some future goal is shallow.
It’s the sides of the mountain which sustain life,
not the top.”*

- Robert M. Pirsig

Here's how to put your goals to work and maximize your time.

First, let's get some basic definitions established.

Outcome goals: These are the hoped-for outcomes of your efforts, the various finish lines you want to cross.

Process goals: These are the achievements—aka: key results¹—that you believe will ultimately result in your hoped-for outcomes. Provided they're measurable, process goals are like industrial strength juicers helping you squeeze every last drop of value from each day.

A lot of people create outcome goals, but because they don't also create the process goals necessary to attain those outcomes, their goals do nothing to help them manage their time. In fact, on their own, outcome goals can actually *impede* effective time management. You may very well achieve a few, but without key results to shape and pace your efforts, that achievement likely comes at the cost of other worthy goals, along with adequate rest and meaningful relationships, not to mention joy. This is the opposite of effective time management.

Used in tandem, however, outcome and process goals allow for less stressful and time consuming productivity. In this way, effective time managers use goals to:

- 1. Mobilize effort:** Not even the most purpose-driven professionals are founts of everlasting motivation.
- 2. Sharpen focus:** It's a humbling fact of life that outcomes are rarely completely within our control. But our actions generally are.
- 3. Reveal errors:** There are no perfect scores in time management. Expect to fail. Then *use* the failures.

Meet Two Effective Time Managers

Here to demonstrate what we mean are Jill and Anton. They each lead digital marketing at their respective firms, and both are expected to increase email conversions over last quarter's tepid results. Jill spends

only a few minutes feeling discouraged by her department's performance. She believes in her organization's business-to-business service, has the full support of her boss, and eagerly sits down to create a plan.

Things aren't so straightforward for Anton. The e-commerce startup he works for has a poorly defined, easily misunderstood brand. His boss isn't receptive to his input, and his team seems dispirited.

Jill and Anton are as different as their situations, but both use their goals to help them maximize their time.

Effective Time Managers Use Goals to Mobilize Effort

Jill's clear, measurable goals start earning their keep as mobilizers about midway through the quarter, when her enthusiasm always flags. At this point, she increases the frequency of her goal-tracking sessions to once per week and utilizes visual graphs of her team's progress to reinvigorate her withering initiative. Seeing the process goals slowly stretching across her screen and closing a little more of the distance to the outcome goal is just the shot in the arm she needs to stay the course.

Once committed to a clearly-defined path, Anton's motivation is locked in. It's getting over the initial, "this is going to be hard" hump that's difficult for him. Add in the fact that he doesn't agree with the path, and that hump takes on a "what's the point" aspect as well. It's the process goals that get him moving—they give him a means to guide his team and feel proud of their efforts even if the hoped-for outcome eludes them.²

Effective Time Managers Use Goals to Sharpen Focus

Functional goals help Anton avoid wasting time fighting unwinnable fights and manufacturing morale. They zero in on what he *can* do.³ Now and then he or a member of his team gets sidetracked by futile digressions into brand strategy. When that happens, someone—usually Anton—remembers that while they're fantasizing about what they wish they could do, existing opportunities are passing them by. Then he reminds himself and his team that they might win the chance to pitch their ideas *if* they achieve their goals. In this way, the targets help them all to avoid wasting time chasing their tails.

Despite her zeal, Jill is as likely as Anton to misuse her time if her goals don't clarify both what she wants and what she can do to get what she

wants. Without clear targets, her passion itself may divert her.

Effective Time Managers Use Goals to Reveal Errors

If they find that they're struggling during the quarter, Jill and Anton can use the goals to learn why. Have they identified targets that are uniquely mobilizing to them? Have they carefully considered their situations and crystalized realistic, actionable objectives?

Goals that gather dust are as useful as the ones that get regular attention because they point you toward errors. Maybe the goals are too vague. Maybe they're not aligned with your values or personal strengths. Maybe they're too far outside your sphere of influence. Whatever the case, goals that aren't working for you can help you identify what will—provided you resist the urge to sweep the failure under the rug and pretend you'd never set the goal in the first place.

Effective time managers with well-set goals don't expect to achieve full completion of every goal. If they do, their goals lack aspiration—which is to say, they don't require growth.

Jill

Q2 Outcome Goal:
Overall 2.4% Email Conversion Rate (ECR)
Process Goals:
Increase available resources for ECR focus by 30% by 4/15
7/7 ongoing campaigns mobile-optimized and split-tested by 5/7
All landing pages mobile-optimized and split-tested by 5/30
Re-engagement campaign to inactive/dormant subscribers by 6/15
List segmentation and cleanup by 6/30

Anton

Q2 Outcome Goal:
Overall 2.4% ECR
Process Goals:
Abandoned cart campaign launched w/split-testing by 4/7
10 upsell/cross-sell campaigns launched w/split-testing by 4/30
All pre-existing campaigns split-tested by 5/30
13 standup meetings just for digital marketing by 6/24

Jill and Anton's outcome goals are the same, but their process goals—like their situations—are different. From here, Jill and Anton will use their goals to map out the journey from here to 2.4% ECR, returning to the goals throughout the quarter to help them make decisions about how to use their time.

They're going to make that easier by first defining the stakes... what's at risk if they don't achieve their goals? And perhaps more importantly, what do they stand to gain if they do?



CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Effective time managers use outcome and process goals to mobilize effort, sharpen focus, and reveal errors, which helps them to direct and adjust their time use more efficiently.

Notes

1. John Doerr, *Measure What Matters: How Google, Bono, and the Gates Foundation Rock the World with OKRs* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2018), 7-8
2. *Goal Setting: Outcome Goals and Process Goals, with Stever Robbins* [Video]. Retrieved October 24, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mleOIMvEkR0>
3. Cal Newport, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 137-138

Questions for Reflection

We encourage you to think about these questions and perhaps write out your thoughts and/or discuss them with your colleagues.

1. In what ways do your current goals align with your overall team or business objectives?
2. In what ways do your current goals align with your personal and professional objectives?
3. If you don't typically set goals, why not?
4. Do your goals usually feel:
 - a. challenging but possible?
 - b. possible but only if you work overtime and neglect other important things?
 - c. impossible?
 - d. easily within reach?
5. How do you determine the steps to achieve a goal?
6. How often do you achieve your goals?
 - a. 100% of the time
(Try creating a few stretch goals that are more challenging.)
 - b. 70-80% of the time
(Nice! Keep up the good work.)
 - c. About half the time
(Are you setting process goals along with outcome goals?)
 - d. Rarely
(Consider returning to the section on page 12 titled 'Effective Time Managers Use Goals to Reveal Errors.')

CHAPTER 2

Know the Stakes



“Experience shows that time is not something that can be saved; it can only be spent more or less wisely. One way to approach this is to clarify what really matters to us, live life in accordance with our deepest values, and serve others’ best interests as well as our own.”

- Marilyn Paul and David Peter Stroh

What's at stake? The answer will help you manage your time.

There's some debate about whose madcap idea it was to do this, but in the winter of 1775, a bookseller named Henry Knox pushed and dragged nearly 60 tons of captured artillery across 300 miles in 56 days, arriving with his loot outside of Boston at the dawn of 1776.¹

The British army had garrisoned the city while Continental troops camped along its outskirts and dwindled steadily. Theirs was a ragtag collection of farmers and merchants so rife with dysentery and lacking in weaponry that General George Washington was moved to write despairingly to a friend, "Few people know the predicament we are in."

Meanwhile, the directive from King George III was clear: Put a decisive and thorough end to the American rebellion. And make it snappy.

It's not difficult to imagine that part of what kept Knox doggedly pushing on up steep passes and across less-than-thoroughly-frozen rivers is the awareness of what would happen if he failed. If Washington's sad collection of farmers-cum-soldiers couldn't get their hands on some serious weapons, they had no chance of engaging the British, who—intelligence reports indicated—would likely burn Boston and move on to New York where they'd be well-positioned to squash the uprising. Instead, thanks partly to Knox's incredibly efficient use of his limited time and resources, British soldiers woke one cold spring morning to a troubling sight: two thousand rebel troops and their hard-won cannon staring down at them from a hill above Boston. Less than two weeks later, the British evacuated the city and sailed to Nova Scotia to regroup.

Effective Time Managers Consider Potential Losses/Gains

For our marketing team leaders, Jill and Anton, the stakes are less dire. Neither the fate of a gestating nation nor the lives of their friends hang in the balance as they work towards their quarterly goals. But *something* does. And before they get started on their process goals, Jill and Anton take a few moments to consider the stakes and write them down.

Jill

The sales team is depending on us to get them sales qualified leads (SQL). Without SQL, their numbers suffer, and that's not fair.

The product team is depending on the sales team to get their "babies" into the hands of folks who will benefit from them. Without SQL, the product team works hard only to have the fruits of their labor sitting on a shelf.

Most importantly, there are teams all over the globe whose objectives will be easier to achieve with our products. But they can't use our products if they can't buy them. They can't buy them if they don't know about them, and they won't know about them if the sales team doesn't have the SQL.

Get the email conversion rate (ECR) up and we'll have more sales qualified leads to hand off. Which means more sales, more user feedback for the product team, and more businesses reaping the benefits of our service. This is a win-win-win-win.

Anton

We've got problems in Marketing that an improved ECR won't fix. But if we can get ECR up and sustain forward movement, that may buy us credibility come next year. I might be able to leverage that success into a presentation at All Hands proposing a complete rebrand. And if we get approval on the rebrand, the opportunities for growth will multiply.

If we can't get our ECR up, I may lose my whole team. Our metrics make them look bad, and they resent the terrible brand guidelines they have to work within. I've fought long and hard for them, thinking I was helping, but I've inadvertently cultivated a 'what's the point?' mindset. Without a rebrand, they think their work is meaningless and doomed to fail.

We've got to get some points on the board. If we don't, they're going to quit or worse, become dead weight.

The theme here, if you haven't spotted it, is sustainability. This is one of the key things that distinguish effective time managers. After all, good or even great time management is not terribly difficult to achieve for a day or two. But truly effective time managers are *sustainably* effective—in part because they're mindful of the impact their actions may have on themselves, others, and their team or organization as a whole.

How to Cultivate Awareness of the Stakes

With practice, this mindfulness becomes ingrained. The most effective time managers can tell you what they, their teams, organizations, and customers stand to lose and gain not just from their goals and projects, but from any given task down to the smallest to-do. Effective time managers know *why* they're doing what they're doing.

To cultivate this ability, ask yourself what you're doing and why at least once per day. Think about who else is impacted and how by your efforts. Jot the answers down—these are your stakes statements.

A few examples:

- **What?** Submitting the week's hours to the team admin
Why? If I don't submit my hours weekly, the team admin is overwhelmed at the end of the month, which impacts her ability to attend to other duties and puts the organization in a tough position if discrepancies surface at the last minute. By taking this minute or so each week to submit my hours, I save her and the organization stress and myself the guilt of having created unnecessary difficulty.
- **What?** Goal-setting meeting with manager
Why? If I don't discuss my goals with my manager, I may end up efforting at cross-purposes with my organization, and I will be frustrated if, at the end of this quarter, I've worked as hard as I can only to discover that what I've achieved isn't usable. Getting my manager's input and guidance now will help me and my team focus on what matters most.
- **What?** One-on-one with direct report
Why? If I don't take the time to meet regularly with my direct reports, I leave them to guess at whether they're on the right track and deprive them of the opportunity to get direction and appreciation for

their work. This slows progress and hurts the organization's culture. By taking this time to meet, I can support and guide my team's work, helping us all to effort in alignment, make the most efficient use of our time, and build a healthy workplace culture.

An open-eyed look at the landscape reveals that even though our work may not be the do-or-die stuff of revolutions, there are real-world consequences to our actions. Furthermore, we are almost never the only ones depending on our best effort. Effective time managers cultivate awareness of these interdependencies and possible consequences to help them make judicious use of their time.

(At this point, some of you may be thinking, "I can't possibly be *more* aware of the stakes. I'm already too aware! The pressure is part of why I struggle to manage my time." We've heard this before, and while we sympathize—a few of us have uttered that same protest—we ask you to consider that your admirable awareness of potential losses and gains is not the problem; you are missing other pieces of the time management puzzle, which leaves you no choice but to rely too heavily on the one or two you have. If you've already got this piece, please skip ahead to chapter three. Once you're using all six principles, you will find relief.)

How Effective Time Managers Use the Stakes

By articulating at the outset both a) what may be lost if they don't complete their projects and b) what might be gained if they do, Jill and Anton:

- **Clarify Priorities**

Knowing the stakes simplifies all the difficult time management decisions they'll have to make throughout the quarter. For example, when inspiration for a time-sensitive new social media campaign strikes, the stakes will help Jill resist her impulse to dive in headfirst. Instead, she'll offer the new project to an intern, scheduling a few hours per week for coaching rather than the many she'd spend if she insisted on spearheading the campaign herself.

- **Recover From Setbacks**

When Anton's hardest working team member quits halfway through the quarter, his awareness of the stakes will help him avoid sinking

much time into lamenting the loss and instead focus his attention on creative ways to move forward.

- **Care About Details Without Getting Lost in Them**

While goal-setting often creates a satisfying sense of having set up a series of pins that only require knocking down one after the other, Jill and Anton know that executing is hairy and that they can expect to get mired in the details now and again. It's their awareness of what's at stake that guides them back to the bigger picture.

In time, you won't need to write these statements out in order to identify the stakes of most tasks, though we recommend continuing the practice when it comes to goals and large projects as a way to help you determine how to allocate your time—the higher the stakes, the higher the priority. Note that stakes statements are useful only when they include realistic rather than contrived or exaggerated potential losses and gains.



CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Effective time managers regularly consider what's at stake, using the answer to help them clarify priorities, recover from setbacks, and care about details without getting lost in them.

Notes

1. David McCullough, *1776* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), Kindle edition, 1294-1724

Questions for Reflection

We encourage you to think about these questions and perhaps write out your thoughts and/or discuss them with your colleagues.

1. Think about one of your goals for this month/quarter/year. Who is impacted and how if you achieve your goal? If you don't?
2. Now think about a task or chore that you dread. Who is impacted and how when you do it? When you don't?
3. Consider your answers to the second question. Are the stakes low enough to justify dropping it altogether?
4. Is most of your work:
 - a. high stakes?
 - b. low stakes?
 - c. a mixture of high and low stakes?
 - d. I really can't tell (*Imagine you continue reporting to work but instead of working, you read all day. Who is affected? How?*)
5. How do you currently prioritize your goals/projects/tasks?
6. In what way are each of the following impacted by your current work?
 - a. Board of Directors
 - b. CEO
 - c. Manager
 - d. Immediate supervisor
 - e. Coworkers
 - f. Partner/family
 - g. Self

CHAPTER 3

Break the Journey Down



“Then it began to dawn on us: There was no miracle moment. Rather, it was a quiet, deliberate process of figuring out what needed to be done to create the best future results and then simply taking those steps, one after the other, turn by turn of the flywheel.”

- Jim Collins

Humble your focus to manage your time.

Rich Stadium. 1993. It's a chilly January day in Orchard Park, New York. On the field, a football ricochets off the hands of its intended receiver and lands in the arms of the other team. Moments later... another touchdown for the visiting Houston Oilers, another humiliation for the hometown Buffalo Bills.

If disgust were a sound, it'd be the shuffle and clatter of Bills fans as they leave the stands mid-game, the roar of so many car engines accelerating out of the parking lot. They abandon the playoff match in droves, and who can blame them? Just look at the scoreboard: 35-3, Oilers. This season is all but over for the Bills.

Two decades later, The New York Times will quote Buffalo quarterback Frank Reich on the stunning upset that followed. "... I don't think anyone was thinking about winning the game at that point."¹ And yet—one play, one yard at a time—that's exactly what they did.

The Comeback, as the '93 matchup is known today (except in Houston where it's referred to as The Choke), took two field goals, five touchdowns, and five conversions to achieve. And those twelve accomplishments resulted from thirty times that in yards passed or rushed² and some fifty to sixty individual plays. By the time Steve Christie kicked the thirty-two yard field goal that would clinch victory for Buffalo in overtime, the Bills had strategized, played, and won nearly a dozen games-within-the-game.

Effective Time Managers Break Shiny Goals Down into Not-So-Shiny Steps

Jill and Anton work through their days, weeks, quarters, and years the same way the Bills played the second half of The Comeback—not by focusing on the hoped-for results but on the smaller, more humble, less glamorous micro-successes that are most likely to bring them closer to their goals.

Jill

Process Goal #1:

Increase available resources for ECR focus by 30% by 4/15

Breakdown:

Teamwide Reallocation Project:

1. Book a conference room for an hour.
2. Invite team to a brainstorming session.
3. Can we order in a meal/snacks? Check budget.
4. Go over notes and compile a list of candidates.
5. Email poll to team: vote in two to three changes we can implement immediately.

Intern Rotation:

1. Schedule meeting w/intern program admin.
2. If okayed, set up meeting w/Audrey and Max to discuss timeline.
Also, do they want to handle the migration?
 - a. If yes, leave them to it (w/deadline).
 - b. If no, set up a meeting w/Audrey, Max, and all three interns to announce rotation/objectives/expectations.

Immediate Actions for Email Marketing:

1. Ask Max for list of things she thinks will better support her efforts:
 - a. What can she do/stop doing?
 - b. What might we (team) do/stop doing?
 - c. What can I do/stop doing?
2. Ask Max for analytics data for all campaigns.
3. Run Max's time report.
4. Campaigns we can ditch (newsletter, maybe)?
 - a. If yes, meet w/Max to discuss pivot.
 - b. If no, meet w/Max to discuss efficiency strategies.

Immediate Actions for Content Marketing:

1. Ask James for ideas: how can he drive engagement with Max's email campaigns w/o abandoning web content/ad content?
2. Can we "tease" the eBook he's writing by offering the first chapter to subscribers?
3. Go interdepartmental: ask department heads to submit white papers for possible inclusion in campaigns.
 - a. Get a list of topics from Max

Anton

Process Goal #1:
Abandoned cart campaign launched w/split-testing by 4/7
Breakdown:
Content Dev—work w/Kris and Simone: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Research● Identify split-test markers:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Coordinate w/Rashid● Drafts to Graphics by 4/3● Iterate w/Graphics● Test and finalize by 4/7● Communicate w/Analytics re: reporting needs
Graphics—work w/Simone and Rashid: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Research<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Keep it simple; we need it out the door, not perfect● Kick drafts back to Content by 4/5● Iterate w/Content
Tech—work w/Caroline: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Research● Set up backend● Coordinate w/Content

Both Jill's and Anton's process goals represent small wins on the road to the bigger win, the increased Email Conversion Rate. But even these smaller wins are bigger bites than they can chew. So Jill and Anton cut them up. On their own, the projects and tasks that make up their breakdowns are unimpressive. Still, it's on the unimpressive that they'll focus, knowing as they do that effective time management demands it.

Why Effective Time Managers Break the Journey Down

At first glance, some of this breakdown may look like extra work. "Why all these meetings," some might wonder of Jill's approach. "If you want more resources, re-assign someone temporarily." She could do that, sure. But she'd be sacrificing whatever that someone's already assigned to and risking her team's commitment with her unilateral decision made without asking for ideas or input from her staff. Either way, she's wasting time, not

using it efficiently.

Similarly, Anton could ditch all of the “Research” legs of the journey in an effort to save time, but since his team has never implemented an abandoned cart campaign before, he knows that doing so would only create more work down the road.

Effective time managers break down the journey to goal completion for the same reason the Buffalo Bills rushed and passed all those yards and racked up those conversions, field goals, and touchdowns: there *is* no 38-point play. There’s no one colossal effort that renders all the “extra” work of the breakdown pointless³. The “extra” work, it turns out, is just the work.

Still, there’s no guarantee of victory. In fact, just to make our argument as clear as possible, let’s pretend for a moment that the Bills lost that game. After all their hard work brought them to overtime, Steve Christie’s field goal bounced off a goal post, then the Oilers took possession of the ball and ran it all the way down the field, scoring the game-winning touchdown. Do the Bills go home regretting the “extra” work? Would their time have been better spent if they’d spent the entire second half repeatedly trying to win the game in one play?



**There *is* no
38-point
play.**

Of course not. And if Jill and Anton fail to reach their goals, they will still have made better use of their time than if they skipped research and simply reassigned a team member. Why? Because breaking the journey down:

- **Prevents Burnout**

If they focus on one whole process goal at a time without breaking each one up into as many projects and tasks as they can, Jill and Anton will exhaust themselves and their teams unnecessarily. They may achieve a goal but then be too spent to work effectively towards the next one.

- **Builds Momentum**

By keeping their focus trained on one humble, incremental micro-success at a time, they energize rather than exhaust

themselves.

- **Drives Engagement**

Research shows that progress motivates people more than anything else⁴. And motivated teams waste less time than frustrated or apathetic teams.

How Effective Time Managers Break the Journey Down

Tools can help here. Jill uses Brightpod™—project management software built specifically for marketing and creative teams. The startup Anton works for uses Pivotal Tracker™, an agile project management tool for software developers, and he supplements that with custom spreadsheet templates that support his team’s unique needs. No matter the industry, there are useful tools for mapping the journey from here to goal completion, breaking it down into projects, phases, tasks, sub-tasks... the more humble the focus, the better. Some examples:

Software Development	Marketing	Manufacturing	Other
Jira	Markodojo	LiquidPlanner	Zoho Projects
Pivotal Tracker	Wrike	Workzone	Trello
VersionOne	Workfront	TeamGantt	Matterhorn
Targetprocess	Brightpod	ProofHub	Basecamp

If Jill and Anton show up for work every morning with their sights set exclusively on their end target, they will likely misuse their time. It is only by 1) identifying the many projects and tasks (and mini-projects and sub-tasks) necessary to reach their goals, then 2) taking their eyes off of the goal and training them on the next step in the journey that they can make the most of each day.

Enthusiasm will inevitably flag—unlike the Buffalo Bills, neither Jill nor Anton work within full view of an audience and for only the time it takes

to play an American football game. Stakes statements can help re-center and motivate. But almost without fail, running out of steam is the result of not enough breakdown. So once the stakes statements have done their job, effective time managers take a careful look at the leg of the journey in which they stalled and break it down even further.

Stalling is not failure; it's a natural part of the process. And that's why daily planning—the focus of the next chapter—is part of the process too.



CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Effective time managers break down the journey to goal completion into sub-projects and sub-tasks, preventing burnout, building momentum, and driving engagement.

Notes

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Questions for Reflection

We encourage you to think about these questions and perhaps write out your thoughts and/or discuss them with your colleagues.

1. If you knew you weren't going to achieve a goal that mattered to you, would you still work towards it? Why or why not?
2. Think about a time you surprised yourself by achieving a challenging goal or completing a difficult project. What factors contributed to your success?
3. Think about a time you surprised yourself by *not* achieving a goal or project that you thought was within your reach. What, if anything, could you have done differently?
4. True or False? Projects are naturally broken down into manageable pieces once I start working; there's no point in doing it ahead of time.
5. Explain why you answered the last question the way you did.
6. Strengthen your breakdown muscle: Think of a project or goal you're currently working on. How would you break it down into five pieces? Ten? Fifteen? (We're not suggesting you break down projects further than necessary, but doing so as an exercise can be fun and enlightening—there are often more legs to a journey than appears at first glance.)

CHAPTER 4

Prioritize Planning Over Plans



“... the best generals are those who arrive at the results of planning without being tied to plans.”

- Winston Churchill

To effective time managers, *planning* matters more than plans.

Imagine you've decided to take a road trip across Canada from Vancouver to Montreal.

- You do your research, set your itinerary, and head out in your camper van with your dog and a carefully curated playlist.
- At your first overnight stop, you find the campground unexpectedly full and spend two hours searching for an alternate site before giving up and pressing on to your next stop six hours down the road.
- You could use an extra day of rest and sightseeing after that marathon drive, but you have an itinerary to keep. You're behind the wheel again at the appointed hour, only to lose time to road construction halfway to your next stop.

On and on it goes. By the time you hit rush hour in Montreal, you're exhausted, twelve hours behind schedule, and no longer interested in exploring the city. You turn around at your first opportunity and head home early. You need a few days to recover from this 'vacation' before going back to work.

This is exactly how so many professionals approach work—crafting a beautiful grand plan and then calling the planning done. When executing the plan proves impossible, struggling time managers assume they didn't prepare thoroughly enough. Or they blame outside forces, unaware that the real culprit is their own misprioritization.

How Effective Time Managers Prioritize Planning

Effective time managers accept that they can't predict the future, even at the executive level—that omniscience bosses are supposed to have? It's fictional, and they know it.

So why do they bother making plans at all? Because it's the making that helps them manage their time, not what they've made.

Let's re-imagine that cross country trip...

- ★ You've got your itinerary, but instead of enshrining it on your dashboard, you treat it like a sketch and redraw the picture bit by bit each night as you plan the next day.
- ★ That's how you discover that a major sports tournament in Kamloops, B.C. has drawn spectators from across the province who've filled up all the campsites in the area. You reroute and replace the hike you'd planned in Kamloops with a visit to a dog friendly winery in Kelowna, camping there overnight instead.
- ★ You avoid road construction the same way, and when you eventually arrive in Montreal, it's midmorning—the traffic is still intense compared to the rural stretches of your trip, but it's not rush hour. Besides which, you're well rested and ahead of schedule, ready to enjoy your visit.

The difference is not a better plan; it's continual planning. And it's how effective time managers prioritize planning over plans.

Effective Time Managers Plan Continually

Does this mean they're always planning and never acting on their plans? No. It means they never consider the planning finished.

Jill and Anton plan daily, breaking projects and tasks down even further than they did in the breakdown phase. At the end of each workday, they ask themselves, "What specifically will I work on tomorrow?" They consider their resources and limits, and then they develop a plan that leverages the former and honors the latter.

For example:

Jill

On Wednesday afternoon, she learns that the in-house graphic designer has been freed up for the next week, so she asks him to create a set of mobile-friendly images for her email campaigns and blocks out two hours of her Thursday morning for writing the project brief—a bite-sized portion of the larger mobile optimization project.

Anton

He has a dental appointment on Thursday morning. He prefers to tackle cognitively demanding tasks first thing, so instead of pushing those tasks into his afternoon, he leaves them off Thursday's agenda entirely, scheduling meetings and several administrative to-dos for that afternoon instead.

But remember: the planning isn't finished. When Thursday arrives, Jill and Anton review their day plans and adjust as needed. They continue adjusting as needed throughout the day and end their workdays by planning the next one. This small daily investment (around 30 minutes total) brings short- and long-term time management dividends in the form of:

- **Greater Flexibility**

If effective time management seems like an exercise in rigidity, you're in for a surprise. The best time managers are able to take advantage of unexpected opportunities thanks to continual planning. Their timelines, progress, and next steps are always documented, which frees them up to take detours without fear of getting lost. It's for the same reason that they don't get sidelined when issues arise.

- **Stronger Distraction Resistance**

When you have a game plan, particularly an ambitious one, distractions have to get over a very high bar to reach you. Twitter, office gossip, or legitimate work that doesn't need your attention yet—none of that is as compelling when your objectives for the day are clear and you've mapped out exactly how to reach them. Getting closer to your long-term goals is satisfying in a way that temporary diversions rarely are.

- **More Accurate Time Estimates**

The ability to predict how long a task or project will take is a skill, not a gift. Day planning develops this skill (especially when coupled with time tracking, the subject of the next chapter). When you're new to day planning, it's common to overestimate—sometimes wildly—what you can accomplish in a day, week, or month. This can be

frustrating, but those who continue to do it daily steadily gain perspective.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. The boons of continual planning are numerous; we've chosen to highlight those that make the most noticeable impact on time management in the shortest amount of time. More generally though, effective time managers prioritize planning because it allows them to deliberately use their time rather than getting caught up in the tide of the day.

Tools for Day Planning

Anton does his daily planning with a desktop app that integrates with his project management software. Jill uses an old school Franklin Planner—she prefers something she can carry with her and write in by hand. There is no best tool for day planning. It's the habit that's important; whatever tool helps facilitate it is the one that's right for you.

Paper Planners	Desktop Software	Web Apps	Mobile Apps
Full Focus Planner	Daycast	Any.do	Schedule Planner
Traveler's Notebook	Todoist	Sunsama	TimeTune
Planner Pad	Organizer Pro	DayViewer	TickTick

Whether you prefer analog or digital, structure or free-form, there's a day planner out there that will help you take your time management game to the next level so long as it's the *planning* you prioritize, not the plans.



CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Effective time managers prioritize planning, not plans, and enjoy greater flexibility, stronger distraction resistance, and more accurate time estimates as a result.

Questions for Reflection

We encourage you to think about these questions and perhaps write out your thoughts and/or discuss them with your colleagues.

1. Do you plan your days? Why or why not?
2. In a 1957 speech, Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "Plans are worthless, but planning is everything." Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Planning is:
 - a. what I do before I start working.
 - b. an integral part of my work.
 - c. only necessary before starting big projects with lots of moving parts.
 - d. destructive to creative work.
4. Think about your answer to the previous question. Explain why you made the choice(s) you did.
5. Consider the following statements and decide whether each is mostly true or mostly false for you:
 - a. If I make a plan, I need to follow it to the letter or I feel dissatisfied.
 - b. I don't plan because something always messes up the plan; it's less stressful to just go with the flow.
 - c. Plans make me feel hemmed in.
6. If any of the above statements were mostly true for you, try this exercise: For two weeks, plan daily, preferably the night before, then throw out the plan before diving into your day. At the end of two weeks, assess. Did the act of planning alone make a positive impact? If yes, how?

CHAPTER 5

Track Time Like a Scientist



“In life, there is data and there is narrative, and often the narrative trumps data because we don’t know the data. If we know the data, that’s no promise we’ll change the narrative, but if the narrative has some flaws in it, it certainly helps.”

- Laura Vanderkam

Track time to surface and resolve time management issues.

What if everyone got paid in sacks of one dollar bills? Banks don't exist, and receipts are unheard of. With no record of how you spent your bag of cash, it'd be hard to figure out why you can never afford to do the things you most want to. "There's just not enough," you might say glumly, never realizing that in fact you've *got* the money you need to take the family to Disneyland or rebuild your deck. It's just that right now you're squandering it at restaurants and coffee shops. If only you had a way to track your spending! How plainly obvious the problem would be.

So it is with time.¹ Each day is a fresh 'sack' of 1,440 minutes to spend however we choose. There's no such thing as a bank for time because time is impossible to save, and neither do we get receipts for our time transactions. "There's just not enough," so many of us say glumly², believing that our twenty-four hours simply won't cover the projects and goals we most want to achieve.

Ah, but maybe they will.

Effective Time Managers Track How They Spend Their Time

If you've read to this point, there's little doubt that you're serious about improving your time management skills. So if the idea of tracking your time expenditures inspires a degree or two of resistance in you, we're certain that the issue is not a lack of discipline, but an understandable desire to avoid two things:

1. Bad Tools

From complicated spreadsheets to interruptive apps, there's no shortage of terrible, excessively bureaucratic, and—ironically—time-consuming ways to track time.

2. Disappointment

If we don't track our time, we never have to come face-to-face with how we're spending it, which is almost never *quite* how we imagine we are.

The remedy for number one is easy—better tools exist!—but it will be only marginally useful without addressing number two. To that end, a scientific approach is in order.

Consider that oft-uttered lament, “If only I had the time,” and put it to the test by tracking how you currently use your time. Cultivate, if you can, a detached attitude. You are gathering data, that’s all. Within a week or two, some things you hadn’t noticed before will become clear. Common examples include:

- **Travel Time Adds Up**

Regardless of whether you drive, bike, or use public transportation, it’s easy to underestimate how much time you spend travelling from place to place. The good news is that travel time can often be leveraged. For example, if you typically spend a half hour reading the news in the morning, you could instead find a radio station or news podcast to listen to on your morning commute. Now you’ve got a half hour to spend elsewhere.

- **Social Media Is a Hungry Beast**

At this point, most of us know that Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and the like are purposefully engineered to ensnare attention as deftly as a slot machine.³ But because we don’t have to sit in a casino to use these modern day slot machines, the time spent on them isn’t plainly obvious. If you’re an average user, it’s upwards of two hours per day.⁴ Imagine if you cut that down to just half an hour....

- **You Are (Probably) Your Biggest Distraction**

One of the benefits of time tracking is that it tends to foster increased awareness of when we turn our attention to something other than the activity we’re tracking. If you’re clocked into “Write white paper,” for instance, and interrupt your work to check email or Slack, you’re more likely to notice the interruption than if you’re not tracking your time.

Would discoveries like these be disappointing? Perhaps. But they’re also exciting; look at the opportunities you have to improve!

Effective time managers aren’t afraid to record how they use their time because they recognize that while perfect time management isn’t an

option, good time management is. If, that is, they're willing to shine a light on patterns and habits that get in their way.

How Effective Time Managers Track Their Time

The short answer: In whatever way works best for them, the way—in other words—that they'll use and continue to use regularly. One of the most effective time managers we know of is Cal Newport, a computer scientist and the author of six books, two of which profoundly influenced the one you're reading now. Newport uses an analog method he calls time blocking. Every evening, he takes pen and paper and carves his day into blocks of time, deciding how he'll use each block and leaving room to make adjustments as needed.⁵ Note that he *records* those adjustments. At the end of the day, he has reliable documentation of how he spent each hour.

Folks who need to invoice for their time or submit hours for payroll may find a real-time time tracking app more useful than Newport's method. Which brings us back to the first thing serious students of effective time management want to avoid: bad tools.

Yes, they are legion. But they're not the only options. Here are four worthy choices and a few details about each:

Daycast	Created by us, Open Door Teams, this desktop application lets you plan your days as far in advance as you like, then clock into tasks as you work. Daycast will track the time you spend on each. Integrate Google Calendar to automatically add events to your day. Set time estimates and get notifications when you reach them.
Timely	Plan your days and track your time with this web, desktop, and mobile app designed to look like a calendar. If you're not a stickler about privacy, you can request access to their automatic tracker that records everything you do, but we don't recommend that. Purposeful planning is also part of time management.

Harvest	It takes a bit of extra work to plan your days with this web, desktop, and mobile app, but that additional effort might be worth it for those who don't want to use a separate tool for billing. With Harvest, you can easily turn the time you've tracked into invoices, then send them to clients with just a click.
TimeCamp	We strongly advise limiting yourself to the web application if you try TimeCamp. In our experience, the desktop apps were difficult to use, but planning and tracking time with the web version was a breeze.

*For a time tracker to get our recommendation, it **must** allow its users to plan their days and track time against the plan. When you divide day planning and time tracking into two separate tasks, overall time management suffers.*

Jill uses Newport's time blocking method. Her many adjustments showed her that she tends to spend the lion's share of her time on lower stakes work, leaving little to spare for the projects and tasks that will more aggressively move her towards her goals.

Anton uses Daycast. He's discovered that he's significantly less productive all around if he doesn't get a minimum of ten hours per week of deep, uninterrupted work.

Their discoveries highlight something no one talks about: Time tracking requires courage. After all, there's a reason Jill prefers lower stakes projects—there's less to lose if she fails. And to get the focused time he needs to perform at his best, Anton has to maneuver around his boss, who values open offices and constant interaction. Willful ignorance would be easier for both of them, especially when you consider that making change—Jill purposefully devoting more of her time to higher stakes projects, for example, and Anton carving out deep work time in an environment that doesn't support it—is no simple task. Small incremental improvements add up to significant differences, but small incremental improvements don't offer the easy out that 'there's just not enough time' does.⁶



CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Effective time managers track time like scientists, adopting an investigative attitude that helps them spot inefficiencies that might otherwise go unnoticed.

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Questions for Reflection

We encourage you to think about these questions and perhaps write out your thoughts and/or discuss them with your colleagues.

1. Do you often feel like you don't have enough time to accomplish what you'd like to?
2. If you answered yes to the above question, what would your ideal week look like?
3. What percentage of each workday would you estimate you spend on:
 - a. Email
 - b. Deep, focused work
 - c. Meetings
 - d. Commuting
 - e. Shallow to-dos (necessary but not cognitively demanding tasks)
4. Are you willing to track your time for one week and compare the results with your estimate? With your ideal week (question #2)?
5. Consider your answer to the previous question. If you answered yes, what do you hope to gain from the experiment? If you answered no, why?
6. If you're tracking your time now or have in the past, make a list of time tracking methods/tools you've used and what you liked and disliked about each.

CHAPTER 6

Practice Time Management



“... no matter what your ability is, effort is what ignites that ability and turns it into accomplishment.”

- Carol Dweck

How to start where you are and get better at managing your time.

Yogis hear it all the time: “I’m not flexible enough for yoga.”¹ What the bystander fails to understand is that flexibility is a *result* of yoga, not a prerequisite. Similarly, the two most common concerns that arise when struggling time managers investigate ways to improve are:

- **“I’m too busy for this!”**

It’s not at all unusual to want desperately to be an effective time manager but feel paralyzed to do anything about it thanks to a ceaseless tide of phone calls and emails and meetings and deadlines and tasks and projects. As attractive as time management is, the last thing you want is to cram more chores and actions into your already overflowing days.

- **“I don’t have the discipline.”**

Also not unusual: wanting to be an effective time manager, trying, failing, and concluding (especially after many attempts) that you simply lack the self-discipline.

Peace and discipline are *results* of effective time management, not prerequisites. But how do you get there? Practice.

Effective Time Managers Practice Time Management

Pro basketball Hall of Famer Ray Allen broke records with his three-pointers. He made it look easy, effortless, and so people assumed that it was. But former teammates and coaches of the now-retired athlete tell a different story. One of consistent daily practice.

“Our nickname for him is ‘Everyday Ray,’ ” [Miami Heat coach Erik Spoelstra] said. “It’s every day. It’s not every other day. It’s not some days. It’s every single day Ray.”²

The biggest difference between effective time managers and those that never feel they have enough time is that effective time managers *practice* time management. Their tools and techniques may vary wildly, but what

never varies is their regular, daily practice of time management.

- Laura Vanderkam tracks her entire day in thirty minute increments using a spreadsheet.³ Cal Newport, a proud digital minimalist, uses Black n' Red notebooks to pre-block and track time.⁴
- Michael Hyatt swears by paper and pen for planning⁵ while Tim Herrera enthusiastically embraces digital tools like Trello and Google Keep.⁶

It's easy to get caught up in the products and specific methodologies effective time managers use, but what makes Vanderkam, Newport, Hyatt, and Herrera effective time managers isn't their spreadsheets or Trello boards; it's that they practice daily the principles of time management—specifically time tracking and day planning in the above examples.

This is a fundamental shift in perspective for many: Effective time management is a skill, not a gift, and skills must be developed. The tools you use matter, sure, just like we'd bet Ray Allen has shoe preferences. Technique matters too; if Cal Newport tried to track his time using Vanderkam's after-the-fact, 30-minute method, it'd probably create friction for him. But the tools and techniques won't do the work for you. That's why the focus of this book is the principles of effective time management, not tools or techniques.

It's also why we believe *anyone* can be an effective time manager. No special talent required.

How Effective Time Managers Practice Time Management

Time management is something of a misnomer—no one can guide or govern time. Rather than wasting energy fighting the inexorable, those who make the most of each day turn their attention to themselves, noticing which time management efforts bring a measure of peace and which exacerbate the struggle. Then they make choices. What works for someone else might be worth trying, but effective time managers are just as willing to discard tools and techniques that don't work for them as they are to try something new.

You can bring this out of the realm of philosophy and into your practical

day-to-day by using this simple, four-step formula for practicing time management:

1. Identify pain points.

Suppose that one of your process goals for this year is to meet with your direct reports weekly. You've been tracking your time, and your time report shows that you've only kept monthly meetings. Your time management practice has surfaced an issue you can now address.

2. Accept what can't or shouldn't be changed.

Maybe your commute eats up a solid hour every morning and evening. You've put in for a transfer to a satellite office closer to home, but so far, no luck. Unless you want to find a new job, this falls under the heading of can't be changed.

3. Adjust where possible.

After considering the stakes, you decide that meeting with your direct reports weekly is a goal worth achieving. So you quit making the drive to and from work and take a shuttle instead. This extends your commute time by thirty minutes each way but allows you to work while traveling, freeing up more in-office time for meetings.

4. Rinse and repeat.

There will always be new points of friction to be resolved. If you're practicing the principles laid out in this book, you'll notice them much more quickly.

Approach time management this way—as a skill you get better at with continued practice—and you will become an effective time manager.

Jill

When she first started practicing time management, Jill was firmly in the “I'm too busy for this” camp. It was sheer desperation that compelled her to buy a day planner and dedicate fifteen minutes at the beginning and end of each workday to planning.

The first couple of weeks brought no improvement. Then Jill noticed a

pattern in her planner: She kept scheduling her most difficult tasks in the morning, but Jill's a card-carrying night owl; she was tackling cognitively demanding work at the worst possible time and repeatedly taking far too long to complete it as a result.

Instead of trying to be a morning lark, Jill started scheduling her shallower to-dos for the first half of the day and reserving afternoons for deeper work.

Anton

Time management wasn't a skill Anton intended to develop. His days felt chaotic, but his past attempts to manage his time—getting up at 5am religiously, time blocking, and the M.I.T. (Most Important Thing) technique—had failed. He assumed he was too undisciplined. But when he started his current job, he was required to start tracking his time in real time, clocking in and out of tasks as he works.

After a month of this, he noticed he was more focused and better able to resist the urge to check his email or go refill his coffee cup when a task got particularly challenging, and he realized he had his time tracker to thank. By tracking his time in real time (i.e., clicking a button to clock out when going on a coffee run), he was significantly more aware of all the little distractions he never noticed before and more motivated to resist them.

Busy, undisciplined people can become effective time managers if they start where they are and practice, developing their time management skill like they would any other skill: with effort.



CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Effective time managers practice time management, identifying pain points, accepting what can't be changed, and adjusting where possible... over and over.

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Questions for Reflection

We encourage you to think about these questions and perhaps write out your thoughts and/or discuss them with your colleagues.

1. What are some examples of skills you've developed and honed with practice? A few ideas to get you started:
 - a. Walking or using a wheelchair
 - b. Speaking or signing
 - c. Reading
 - d. Counting
2. Choose a skill from your list. How would your life be different if you hadn't put in the effort to practice that skill?
3. In *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Carol Dweck writes that, "Although people may differ in every which way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments—everyone can change and grow through application and experience." Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Besides effective time management, what are some other skills you'd like to develop or improve?
5. Could effective time management help you to develop or improve other skills? Why or why not?
6. Consider the first five principles of effective time management (use goals, know the stakes, break the journey down, prioritize planning over plans, track time like a scientist). Is there one principle that you can begin putting into practice today? If so, which one?
7. If you chose a principle to start practicing, how will you begin?

CONCLUSION

Own Your Day



*“... start where you are, use what you have, do
what you can.”*

- Arthur Ashe

Manage your time more effectively starting today.

We began this volume by telling you that there are no simple hacks or insider secrets for making effective time management effortless. With each subsequent chapter, we made our position clearer: time management requires effort.

But it *doesn't* require endless struggle. With that in mind, we have an implementation approach for you to consider.

Phase A: Plan, Track, Practice

For the next thirty days, focus your improvement efforts on practicing day planning and time tracking.

1. Plan your day. Start today.

Use the last fifteen minutes of your workday to plan the next one. You don't need to purchase a day planner to do this, though you may find it useful to take advantage of one of the free trials offered by the tools mentioned on page 43. (Even better: try them all, one per week. Then compare.)

2. Track the time you spend on the tasks in your day plan.

Keep this simple. Your aim here is to gather data. Hint: Day planning is a task too.

3. Repeat steps one and two every workday.

You'll begin to notice patterns and pitfalls. Use that information to make adjustments. For instance, maybe you already know that you're a compulsive email-checker. If so, add "Check email" as a task in your day plan. Every time you interrupt your work to go to your inbox, track that time. (If you're tracking time on paper, you might choose to decide on an average amount of time to add each time you check.) Having to note the time spent may be all that's necessary to curb this habit, or you may realize that you only compulsively check email when engaged in certain types of work and may therefore decide to close your inbox or work offline at those times.

Either way, you're already managing your time more effectively.

After thirty days of planning your days and tracking your time, you will have a clearer picture of your time management strengths and weaknesses. Use that picture to decide which of the remaining principles to thread in next.

Phase B: Continue & Customize

For example, let's say the last thirty days have shown you that tracking the time you spend on distractions is all you need to stay focused on the task at hand, but you're frustrated because you never accomplish even half of what you plan to in a given day.

Here's what we recommend:

- Plan your workday as you normally would, then challenge yourself: Can you break each task down into at least three? Alter your day plan to include this breakdown.
- Before you dive in, estimate the amount of time each individual task will take you.
- After a week of this, you will likely realize that your plans tend to be unrealistic because you often treat projects as if they're tasks and therefore don't break them down. For example, many people would assume "write blog post" is a task. It's not; it's a project. A small one, sure, but a project all the same. If you believe it's merely a task, you will be understandably frustrated when you struggle to fire off a compelling piece of content without taking the time to brainstorm/make notes, do research, write an outline, write a first draft, get feedback, and edit your work.

For someone with this particular strength/weakness balance, adding in goals or stakes statements before project breakdown will probably only create more frustration.

However, if distractions are a weakness for you but you manage to complete most of what you plan to each day, we recommend adding goals, then stakes statements, and finally project breakdown.

Daycast Can Help

We built a tool that helps us implement all six of the principles outlined in this book. Created to support both teams and solo users, it fosters a culture that regards time as the invaluable resource it is. It keeps us from presuming on ourselves and others and exposes the reasons for success and failure alike. While we love success stories, we leverage failure the same way—as an opportunity to level up. Daily planning and seamless time tracking make it possible.

Effective time management is possible for you too.

Daycast Features			
Day planning	One-click time tracking	Team transparency	Task start time reminders
Status reminders	Task forwarding	Task time estimation	Pre-planning
Time reports	Automatic clock out	Calendar integration	Unlimited tasks & projects

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