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**CREATE YOUR ROADMAP**

## CRUSHING “SOUNDS NICE SYNDROME” FOREVER!

Have you ever had a friend that screws up all the time... in the same exact way?

Maybe it's overeating; maybe it's dating “that guy” over and over...

But they're always speeding towards disaster, and asking for your help once they get pulled over! Even stranger, no matter how many times they ask for your advice, there's always something that stops them from actually taking it!

That can be a frustrating experience. But the ugly truth is... people spend most of their lives searching for advice, receiving it and then doing nothing with it.

Many people read self-help books and fill themselves with the knowledge inside, and they enjoy what they hear, but then never act on it.

That's why we're going to be proactive and COMBAT “sounds nice” syndrome.

This is going to be an action oriented guide to getting in mental and physical shape, and then taking advantage of that boost to get stuff done. So if you're here with me today, thanks. You've put yourself ahead of the pack, and made a real investment in yourself that will greatly increase your ability to make any “skill” work!

But we're still not out of the woods yet. 90% of people will read this book, think something along the lines of “that's nice”, shut it away and never act on it.

Instead of just throwing information at you, I'm going to help you to actively engage with these tips and apply them to your life.

During many parts of this book, I am going to ask you to act on the preceding chapter.

Even those sections that are exclusively about mindset are going to ask you to write something down. This way, you will engage with a much greater amount of the material and you will be making the most out of this guide that you can.

And I'm not telling you can't skip around this material and get a feel for how it works... but that's the only thing skimming will do for you.

The people who do what I ask them to do in this course when I ask them to do it, will be the people that I see on the other side.

Even if it sounds silly, difficult, awkward, strange or whatever else, do it. Because, if you do, **I promise you** that your life will improve for the better.

Let's get started.

## HOW PLANNING CREATES YOUR DESTINY

Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve.

This is something that was discovered by many years ago, has been heard by millions and truly understood by very few.

Those few who have truly understood it and adopted it into their lives have become very successful.

But how can you know when you have succeeded if you don't know what success is?

That's the paradox of achievement...

## NOBODY CAN TELL YOU WHAT SUCCESS IS UNTIL YOU'VE DEFINED IT.

That means if you set the wrong goals – or set no goals at all, or lack the commitment to follow through – your life feels like an endless slog...

Like you're waiting for the next accident to set you back in life.

You'd be shocked to know how many people go through life without a clear target. They're aimless. And when they wake up in the morning, they might think about the work ahead of them, or the paycheck they'll cash at the end of the week, but they'll give very little thought to the big picture.

You may be working on a deadline, or have a task which does not have a specific time to be completed. If you do not have a game-plan for getting it done, the results will not be satisfying. While procrastination and wasting time impede productivity, lack of effective time-management can be as destructive.

## NOTHING WORTH DOING HAPPENS WITHOUT A PLAN

Businesses make plans, governments make plans, sports teams make plans, but all too often, entrepreneurs think they can just "wing it".

In fact, you might BE one of those people. If so, now is the time to change things up.

If you can set positive and attainable goals – big ones and little ones – you can create a positive feedback loop of achievement that gives you more confidence every day.

And when those problems come knocking, you'll have an unstoppable mental armor- you'll be able to look to times that you've overcome obstacles and made things happen.

What in life, if you had it, would make you feel as if you are successful?

Without the answer to this question, we can't go any further. We can't know how to achieve something when we don't know what that something is. And if we don't know how to achieve something, we're blindly burrowing a hole through life, hoping that we come across something that makes us happy.

So what kind of goals should you set? Any goal is better than none at all, but you can magnify your results if you set the right kinds of goals...

## SMART GOALS.

So, what does SMART stand for?

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### SPECIFIC.

You can't just say "I want to be rich". You need to get really specific. Maybe it's \$1,000. Maybe it's \$10,000. Maybe it's more! If it's not specific, chances are it doesn't fit the next criteria on this list...

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### MEASURABLE.

It's hard to reach a goal if you don't know how far – or how close – you are to reaching it.

Use numbers or their equivalent. Rather than your goal being 'Make good progress with course', your goal can instead be 'Achieve a "Pass" on every

assessment in the course'. Rather than saying 'improve financial standing', say 'make \$10,000 within the next 12 months.' That way, you know for sure whether you have achieved what you wanted to achieve.

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#### AN ACHIEVEMENT.

Sorry, but if your goal is to eat ten Snickers bars today, you haven't set a real goal. If you pick something that's not productive or too easy, you won't have that glowing feeling that comes with getting something done. And that's critical to keeping you motivated.

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#### REALISTIC.

If you set a goal that's too ambitious, you'll crater your self-esteem no matter how hard you work. That's no good! Set a goal that people you've heard of have achieved and that you think you can emulate. If you have a mentor willing to review your goals, so much the better.

For a lot of people, using the word 'realistic' in association with goals can feel defeatist and humble. Really, it isn't. You need to be aware of the environment in which you wish to achieve your goals, if you're ever going to achieve them. If you're not realistic – don't take into account the influences on time that may crop up – then you are likely to never attain your goals.

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#### TIMED.

Place a date next to your goals. Set long term goals that are a few months out, and short-term goals that are closer up. That way you can always give yourself a "performance review" and make sure that you're on track.

Don't limit your goals to a single lofty plan. Once you create your main goal, start breaking it down into smaller, specific tasks. Once you have your long term goals and short term goals, you can start drilling down the day-to-day stuff that needs done. For example, if you're building a custom sales funnel, you'd need to make a squeeze page, create a video or cover image, create a sales letter, make one of those annoying "please don't leave!" pop-ups...

## CREATE A SELF ASSESSMENT!

For this task, you will need a piece of paper and a pen. Or, a word processor.

Think about one thing in life that you want more than anything else. The one thing that, if you had it, you would feel as if you're successful. Then, write it down.

TIP: By “thing”, I could mean financial fulfillment, a certain reputation, a particular job, a happy family life, etc. Try to forget about all the times that you may have failed in the past, and simply...

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### BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF. WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT? WRITE IT DOWN!

Have you done that? If not, make sure that you do it, right now.

Now that you've written down or typed this thing, tell me what it is. Speak it out loud.

Now whatever it is, I respect your goal and think it's a very good choice.

I'm not going into answering machine mode. The reason that I respect and like your choice is that you have been honest with yourself about what you want, disregarding any negative thoughts in your head.

Include the obstacles that you will need to overcome, the people you will need to influence, the extra knowledge and/or skills you will need, etc. Obstacles to be overcome vary greatly, from problems associated with your mindset to travel arrangements. Think of every possible thing that you could do in your life to work towards your goal, and write it down.

Once you've set those long-term goals, start breaking them down into 3-5 daily tasks that will allow you to achieve your long-term plans. It's very easy to set unrealistic goals to “push yourself” into success. Don't be too strict on yourself!

You're going to write these things down, and...

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### CREATE A “SUCCESS CHECKLIST” THAT YOU CAN FOLLOW ON A DAILY BASIS.

Put them in order of difficulty, do the hardest tasks first, and promise yourself a reward once you've completed the big tasks.

This means that every day, you'll have a chance to hold yourself accountable and make improvements. This is all about establishing a positive routine: if it's not perfect at first, don't worry about it.

You need always to focus your mind on what you want. If you do this, you will attract to you elements of what you want. We will talk about this in more detail, later on. But, for now, it is important for you to know that, in order for you to open the door to your success, you need to first understand and believe in what it is you want to achieve.

Your goal may not have been for riches. But, money is a very easy figure to work with when thinking of success. Plus, money often opens the door to many of the other great things in life, such as a fulfilling job, the ability to travel, possessions, the ability to go out and meet people, etc.

Why are the people who write down their goals much more successful than those that don't?

It can perhaps most simply be termed that those people now have something of a grapple hook from where they stand, now, and where they want to be.

They have a straight road. A straight line. And from any other place that they may be, they can see where that road is and it will be much easier to return to it.

So much more of their time – and your time, now – and efforts will be spent on working towards what you want.

## THE CONFIDENCE TO EXECUTE

There aren't many things that will help you achieve your goals faster than a positive frame of mind. I'm not saying that you need to dance in a circle or chant positive thoughts at yourself throughout the day.

But I am saying that humility is an overrated virtue – and that having an over the top, extreme confidence in yourself is going to help you reach your goals more quickly.

You've got friend problems. Family problems. Boss problems. Co-worker problems. And a whole host of people who doubt you and don't believe in you.

## SO, YOU'D BETTER MAKE SURE THAT YOU BELIEVE IN YOU.

Feeling overwhelmed, anxious, stressed, or burdened will only slow you down.

The more you are able to remain positive and upbeat, the more you will accomplish.

Even if you're facing a task which is especially large or difficult, developing unstoppable self-confidence can help you to accomplish more than you thought you could.

No matter what your religion, spirituality or scientific beliefs are, you're blessed to be here. You're the result of millions of years of strife and turmoil designed to create the strongest, wisest, most attractive and best prepared person there is.

Do you think that was an accident?

You're capable of the very best things imaginable in life.

But that's not something that's always natural or easy to recognize.

Acknowledging your greatness doesn't just begin and end with your self-esteem. It extends to everyone that you come into contact with in your life.

Your attitude can transform you from a magnet for failure to a magnate of success.

By acknowledging your own greatness, other people will acknowledge it in you. The more they recognize drive and confidence in other people, the more they'll see it in themselves – and look up to you for showing it to them!

The bottom line is, it is all-important and beyond sensible to recognize that you are great and that you are capable of great things. Take a moment to think about the people that you admire.

The artists of varying kinds, athletes, public figures or even members of your own family. Do you think that they achieved what they did, and helped people to feel as good about themselves and of life as they did, by playing small and being afraid?

#### REMEMBER AND VERBALIZE YOUR BEST QUALITIES.

You're going to need to put that pen and paper or word processor to use again.

#### THINK ABOUT THE BEST THINGS ABOUT YOU.

To begin with, just think about them. Spend 5-10 minutes making a list in your mind of your best characteristics. What do you see in yourself? What do other people say about you?

Once you've done that (remember: spending at least 5 minutes on it, to make sure you get a good list), write down the ten best things.

TIP: Don't be tempted to be petty. I know it's mildly amusing to put something like “Always gets on the right bus”, but try not to resort to that.

#### A GOOD IDEA IS TO EXPAND WHATEVER YOUR PETTY IDEA MIGHT BE INTO A BIGGER, MORE SIGNIFICANT ONE.

Think about what qualities in you these things illustrate about your relationship with life and other people. Instead of always getting on the right bus, you can say that you're well-organized.

Similarly, instead of saying something like “I’m always on time for meetings”, try something like “I respect people who I feel have earned my respect.” That might seem vague and a bit out of touch, but that’s exactly what you’re doing.

The people at the meeting have earned your respect, in one way or another. They have gone the proper way of organizing the meeting. They may be discussing an important issue to you. They probably have a field of expertise that you find useful. There may be some money involved here. Your boss may be in the room, whose opinion you probably have to respect if you want to keep your job. There is a huge list of reasons why you would respect them. And, you’re showing this respect by being on time.

Self-help books often make the mistake of assuming that everyone has a 9-to-5 job in some serious company, and incessantly talk about meetings and giving speeches.

But really, these things have their equivalents in other walks of life. Meetings in your life may be with friends, colleagues, family and so on, all people that you are likely to respect.

Okay – hopefully, you’ve got a grasp on this and have managed to come up with your list of ten.

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NEXT, READ THE LIST ALOUD.

Now, you’re probably thinking, “I had to try really hard to come up with that list. Obviously, it’s just one side of the story.” Actually, it isn’t. That list that you’ve just made is all you ever need to think about, and ever should think about.

You see – by being positive about yourself and seeing good in yourself, you will be more confident and act in a positive way. There’s no need to worry about being arrogant. Good people have a right to feel good about themselves. And, it won’t make life hell for other people around you, because you’ll be too positive a person to make your positivity a negative for someone else. You’ll be confident in yourself, and that’s the best for all concerned.

Now, here's a test for you. Keep that list safe, and read it to yourself every time you get up in the morning. Have it next your bed, under your bed, in a drawer or something like that.

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AND AS SOON AS YOU SIT UP IN THE MORNING, READ IT.

It should help you to think that this process is about you supporting yourself: it's about you going against the grain of what everyone else does in order to be successful where they are not.

This is you starting the day with your war cry that you are going to fight for yourself and your future success. You don't necessarily need to read your list aloud, but it is best to do so whenever possible.

Again, remember to keep whatever you write down or type in a place where you can find it. It is important that you come back to it on a regular basis.

But there are many more ways in which you can regularly and actively bring about positivity of your mind:

#### DON'T BE SMALL-MINDED

In your relationships with your family, friends, colleagues and other important people in your life, exercise patience with them. Believe that you are good enough to be patient enough so that you can get through the minor conflicts and disagreements that you have with them, and don't allow yourself to be drawn into an argument or allow such problems to become controversies. Always keep in mind that you have a greater purpose and that you are good enough to not fall into such flimsy traps.

#### CONDITION YOUR BRAIN

This is much simpler than it sounds. I'm sure that you've seen the films, read the articles and heard the stories of how laughter can cure illness. Well, it can certainly cure irritation and anger. So, whenever you feel such emotions coming on, have a hearty laugh. This may be in contradiction to your character. But, if you do it, you will show others and most importantly, yourself that you are

undeterred by the situation, and remain positive. It is also a good idea to spend a minute at the beginning of every day, laughing heartily. Maybe you can play one of your favorite comedy shows that you've recorded, and accumulate the time, through that. An alternative is simply to occupy your mind by thinking about your hobby or greatest pleasure in life. Think about this for about five minutes, and it should help to refresh and revitalize your emotions.

#### TURN NEGATIVES INTO POSITIVES

At the end of every day, write down all of the negative things that happened during your day, and be thankful for them. Then, be determined that you will turn these negative things to your advantage in some way. Think about how they might improve your personal qualities, whether they have helped you to make a decision that was previously “torturing” you, the wisdom you have gained, what the negative thing has allowed you to do that you could not otherwise do, etc. Your strength grows out of your struggles.

#### MAKE CRITICISMS YOU GET CONSTRUCTIVE

Sound impossible? It isn't. Firstly, take any criticism that you receive as an opportunity to apply self-criticism, and discover how much of it is true. You will be astonished at some of the things that you discover. And then, you will be able to go about solving those problems in yourself. Also, compliment other people while not mentioning their negative qualities.

Then you can amuse yourself by seeing how quickly those same people start to recognize the positive qualities in you.

#### EMULATE OTHER SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

This will encourage you to strive to be greater than yourself, and enjoy doing it. If you choose to admire and emulate the right sort of people – those who have achieved what you want to achieve, through hard work – this will help you to pursue self-improvement with a positive attitude.

As you will be aware, as you've just now read it, there is a lot to remember and to act upon in this section. As with all sections of this book, and in life in general, it is important to reflect on what you have just experienced. Do you remember everything? Probably not. Read through the parts that you don't remember as clearly as others, or simply read the whole section again, so that you can take in as much as is possible.

**BECOME UNSTOPPABLE**

## DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL PREPAREDNESS

It doesn't matter how much work we know needs to get done if we aren't "into it" emotionally. One of the problems with time management and self-improvement is that we create all these terms like optimization and batching and measuring and timing... like a bunch of scientists gathered around a machine, looking for ways to perfect it.

But we have unique histories, backgrounds, and challenges, and we can't perform at our best all the time. In fact, there are times when we don't feel like doing anything at all.

If you have depression, insomnia, obesity, problems in your relationships in the workplace and at home, or other serious issues, pushing them to the side can be easier said than done.

I can't tell you without a doubt that you'll feel better by repeating affirmations or mantras. And any instant "self-healing" method will be flawed by necessity because of the person that is putting it into action. But you don't have to clap your hands together and demand your motions to change an instant.

## SEE, HUMAN BEINGS AREN'T MACHINES...

Our emotions come in many subtle varieties. So, conscious effort might not bring you from the pits of the despair to the heights of empowerment and gratitude. But we can take small steps.

Think of the worst emotions you can feel. Mourning, depression, powerlessness, fear. You can't wipe those emotions away instantly, but you can ask yourself to feel a little bit better.

## UNPACK YOUR WORST EMOTIONS

Start by asking yourself why you feel the way you do. Chances are, it'll be tied to other emotions - guilt for not performing as well as you could, jealousy of someone else's who's made it, shame.

These aren't exactly positive feelings. In fact, living with these kinds of emotions can tear life apart. But they are active emotions. It takes more energy to be angry at someone else than it does to feel sorry for yourself.

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#### DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM PERSONAL ANGER

Your next step should be to slowly distance yourself from personal anger against others. It's not helpful to be enraged, but once you're finished being upset, you usually calm down and take a more distant appraisal of your situation. These feelings aren't always good either. But again, we're improving things.

See how simple it is to transform hopelessness into mere disappointment?

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#### REVVING YOURSELF UP

It's hard to be optimistic about your future when you're in a place of extreme depression. But, when you're musing about your future with a neutral state of mind, it's easier to allow positive thoughts for the future to creep in. Allow yourself to trust in your skills, to trust the people around you, to set new habits and believe that tomorrow will be better than yesterday.

When you're trying to escape from a \*neutral\* frame of mind, you'll find that you're more receptive to positive stories and uplifting messages.

And once you imagine that better future, it's must easier to expect it. To demand it. To be so excited about it that you motivate yourself towards taking unstoppable positive action. So next time you feel down, don't try and leap for the top, just reach for the next rung.

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#### LET YOUR EMOTIONS HAPPEN

Don't feel like you have to rush yourself to the next level of emotions - that would be a psychological game, a way of fooling yourself into taking that "big leap" and it's not what you're after.

Never feel guilty about your emotions. Give yourself time to feel what you feel instead of bottling it in, forgive yourself, and then let it fade.

### **"FEELING LIKE IT" ALL THE TIME!**

Have you ever known that you needed to do something important and felt a little... sluggish? No matter what your plans are, it's going to be tough to execute them when you're feeling sleepy, anxious, or otherwise below your peak.

If your joints are hurting you, if you're having mood swings, if you have serious problems concentrating on work for more than ten minutes before you get distracted by your email or a sudden urge to watch something on Netflix...

Then it's time to take a look at your body and motivation.

The quickest way to improve your mood long term is to get in better shape, and the quickest way to improve your mood short term... is to get in better shape!

Think about the food that you're taking in. Your thoughts, willpower, and ability to succeed are deeply impacted by what you eat. If you're an entrepreneur, your brain and body are your most important tools!

And they need the right kind of food to do well.

Remember when we talked about how few people act on good advice? We get plenty of health and nutritional advice all the time, from every direction. Even McDonalds and Burger King will tell you exactly what's in their food.

But the more the public knows about nutrition, the more we studiously avoid the facts.

Almost three quarters of the US is on the path towards being medically overweight. The numbers of people looking to pharmaceutical relief for

depression and addictions is at an all-time high, and our energy levels are at an all time low.

So, regardless of what you know about food, ask yourself: have you put that knowledge into action?

Marketers can be especially challenged when it comes to getting in shape – so many of us are doing all the critical tasks ourselves and are always using computers, cell phones, and TVs.

Lots of time behind the desk, and less time at the gym.

Your body is an investment that you've GOT to be willing to make.

Positive emotion comes from positive motion, and the more you move, the more energy you HAVE to move.

If you can spend even 15-20 minutes a day working out, you'll get a faster start to your mornings, better rest at night, feel less anxious and more focused when you ARE at your desk, and have a much higher overall energy level.

### GIVE YOURSELF "THREE FIFTEENS"

Starting today, resolve to give yourself "Three Fifteens".

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#### SPEND 15 MINUTES AT A LIGHT JOG

...every morning as soon as you wake up. Breathe steadily and focus on being grateful for the skills you have individually, the support you have from friends, family and associates, and the plan you have long term. Visualize your success and think about your daily plan for achieving it.

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#### WHEN YOU GET INSIDE, DO 15 CRUNCHES.

The lower abdominals are the weakest muscles in your torso because they are rarely worked, and they're the first to sag after childbirth and after menopause.

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#### FINALLY, DO 15 PUSHUPS.

It shouldn't take you more than a couple of minutes.

This isn't designed to be the most powerful and effective workout in the world, or give you a shredded body. It's designed to "wake up" the major muscle groups and get you on the path towards a great day before breakfast. You'll have already accomplished something out of the norm!

You don't have to hew to this exactly. If you pick up any exercise book, there will be a rich inventory of exercises you can perform while on the go. Refer to it for correct form and posture if you want to, but remember that's it's most important for you to take steady action!

## LET'S TALK ABOUT DIET!

Your energy level isn't limited to just working out – if you can change your eating habits, you can change your overall energy level. Notice that I didn't just say "diet". Even if you can't afford to eat free range everything, you can set great habits regardless of your budget.

So what does our brain need to keep our thoughts clear and planning our successful futures?

## PROTEIN

Lean protein helps your body build and repair the insides. It makes you stronger, crushes hunger, and keeps you focused.

The best sort of protein to eat is lean protein. To build your brain power eat the following:

Fish, eggs, beans and dairy products are all key. Some nuts (walnuts and Brazil nuts) aren't bad because they've got a mix of protien and healthy fat, but you shouldn't scarf them down by the bowl – a handful or two is plenty.

## COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES

We're not talking about processed breads. In fact, you'll feel a lot fresher if you stay away from breads altogether – or at least cut your intake drastically. You'll

find plenty of fiber and antioxidants in spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, and other vegetables.

Even better, your body burns more energy digesting these foods and getting to the nutrients inside them.

## FATS

As I touched on earlier, a little fat isn't bad for you; it creates the hormones you need to focus. Look for foods that are high in Omega-3 and Omega-6.

Pick up some almond butter (a healthy, delicious, and expensive alternative to peanut butter), avocados, and olive oil.

## A NOTE ON COFFEE

Good news, coffee junkies – a whole lot of what you've been hearing about your drug of choice is a total myth.

It's not true that coffee "dehydrates" you. Your body retains roughly the same amount of water from a cup of coffee as it does from a cup of water!

It doesn't stunt your growth, give you ulcers, or cause cancer. In fact, coffee has great antibiotic properties and is, on the whole, pretty good for you.

But.

Very few of us drink "coffee" as is.

If you're drowning your coffee in sugar, whipped cream, chocolate, sprinkles, and all the rest, you're doing yourself a disservice. You shouldn't treat coffee like a hot milkshake. Try and dial down the amount of "stuff" you add to your coffee.

If you decide to cut down on your coffee intake, do it slowly instead of going cold turkey unless you have time for a three day migraine that will leave you feeling pretty wiped out, grumpy and basically horrendous to live or work with.

## THINK SMALL AND REGULAR

Instead of piling all your food into one meal, look at eating every four or five hours and going heavy on fish, nuts, and green vegetables.

What our bodies can't use right away, it stores. So if you just eat one or two big meals, it's likely that they'll go right to your hips. Keep things light and give yourself a steady supply of positive energy.

**DOING EVERYTHING FASTER!**

## DROP PERFECTION AND WIN!

Perfection is a natural flaw that the vast majority of people strive for. It's an admirable quality, and in an ideal world perfection would be king.

The thing is, perfectionism isn't time efficient and often doesn't help us get the job done very quickly... and that should be your TOP goal as a marketer. The faster you can stop dilly-dallying and get things done, the faster you'll get serious results.

My aim here is to offer some practical, real-world ready tricks to help you beat the perfectionist and start working more quickly and more efficiently.

## OVERCOMING PERFECTIONISM...

It is natural to want to create the best possible piece of work; however with the demands of modern society productivity is much more important than being able to produce one perfect piece of work. So it's important to start by lowering your own expectations of yourself, you can't expect to be churning out perfect work at a high turnover; however, you can expect to turn out good quality work.

Think of yourself as a salesperson, you want to get the ten \$100 sales you can get in one day instead of spending all day working at the one \$500 sale, after all, ultimately you will make more money from the ten smaller sales won't you?

What many of us forget is that perfection often leaves us high and dry, with a backlog of work to catch up on and a lack of cash rolling in because of this lack of productivity!

## SET A TIME LIMIT!

The best thing you can do if you want to give productivity a try is to set yourself a time limit. For example – you can use a timer and see how long it takes for you to write a “perfect” blog post. 45 minutes? A couple of hours. Find out how quickly you can finish in 30 minutes.

Set a timer for 30 minutes and start writing. By the time you finish, you'll probably have a load of nonsense.

## INCREASE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY

But keep practicing and train yourself to be productive inside that time limit. Once you're well practiced and producing your work within your time limit, start producing extra work. Produce two or three pieces in the time it would have previously taken you to produce one.

The thing with this is that the more practiced you get, the less mistakes you make, and the better you get at it. You'll soon find yourself producing work almost to your normal high standards, practice really does make perfect, or at least pretty close to it!

## THE FEAR OF FAILURE

One of the things perfectionists fear most is failure. That horrific feeling of having worked for hours, days, weeks on what you perceive to be a fantastic piece of work only to have the recipient shake their head like a disapproving boss in a Dilbert cartoon and shatter your self-esteem in one fail swoop.

The great thing about changing the way you work in this manner is that you can be much more relaxed about the odd occasion where things don't work.

If you've worked on something and it isn't quite right, you're going to feel a lot less worried about it if you've spent one day working on it than if you'd spent one week working on it.

## SUCCESS IS SO CLOSE!

The blow of failure can be softened with this method of working, and the thrill of success can be heightened. You are creating multitude of chances to succeed.

If you succeed only half of the times you finish a piece of work you are still reaching the dizzy heights of success more than you were previously.

## COMMON AS MUD!

Something you need to know is that almost every conscientious worker makes the mistake of being a perfectionist at the beginning of their career and needs to learn how to work better and faster. Yes, this problem is as common as mud and it isn't going away any time soon.

Think about it, while in education people are taught to write perfect essays and thesis with detailed research, references and footnotes etc. After having this drilled in for so many years what else can we expect but for people to go into their working life doing exactly the same?

But now it's time for you to set your inner perfectionist free.

## CONTROL YOUR INBOX – OR ELSE!

Our inboxes are becoming busier by the day, and we could easily spend more time working through emails than we could actually getting on with our work. The thing is isn't a good way for anybody to spend their time. Email is supposed to be a tool to help make your day more productive, not a hindrance to your ultimate goal. But somehow, email has evolved into a real monster, and the number one time-killer for many businesses.

There are tips for managing your inbox and today we will go through these, along with how people waste time in their inbox, so that you can see where your own flaws lie and then how you can fix them.

## ONCE YOU'VE READ AN EMAIL, TAKE IT OUT OF YOUR INBOX.

You know what the problem is, you spend a half hour sifting through hundreds, even thousands of emails, that don't relate to each other, trying to remember when it was sent, who sent it, what it was called, all because you know it contains some pertinent information you need for the report you are writing. But can you find it? Unlikely.

Then there are those pesky, you're inbox are full messages, which mean you spend the next 3 hours sifting through your inbox deleting old messages you don't need any more to make space for new one's which can't get in because your inbox has 12,000 emails in it.

So, let's overcome some of these issues, you wouldn't let your mailbox at home build up like this, your neighbours might think you'd died!

So what to do with your emails once you've read them...

## FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR EMAIL

And there are five.

DEAL WITH IT IMMEDIATELY

DELETE IT

DELEGATE IT

DELAY THIS JOB

DO I NEED THIS JUST IN CASE?

The first of these three actions are very self-explanatory, obviously, if you delegate the email, make sure you keep on top of the actions with the member of staff you delegate to!

Now if you delay it, you want to schedule to do the work, you don't want it slipping into that black hole only to get chased a week after it was due by an unhappy sender! Now assuming you are using Microsoft Office (other email packages have similar options to this). You can choose to transfer the email into your tasks folder.

Once the email is in Tasks you can then:

- Change the heading, make sure you choose a heading that makes sense and will be easy to find, email headings often don't.
- You can set up a date and time you want the task completed by.
- You can set up a reminder to get the task started
- You can track your progress in getting it completed
- You can prioritise the task
- If you need to get more people involved, so if it is going to be a team effort you can invite them to the task

Now, for the 'Do I need this just in case' emails you can just store them in a sub-folder. Think carefully about how you name your sub-folders so that you have well-organised and easy to navigate folders.

Some of the mail you get that goes in these folders you may find that you can set up a rule on the inbox to automatically place emails into the subfolders for you,

automatically clearing your inbox at no effort for you. So for example, if you get a weekly newsletter that you can go back and read when you have a spare 10 minutes then you could set up a rule that says anything with newsletter in the subject line gets transferred to the newsletter sub-folder. That's one less thing for you to deal with.

## TURNING OFF EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS

Finally, turn off email notifications, having a sound or pop-up telling you that you have new mail is very distracting from whatever you are working on and will make you want to stop that and go and see what new mail you have. Don't. Designate times to check your mail, if you need to close your mailbox between these times (this is what I do).

Email is ultimately there to help you with your organisation and communication, but its ease of access can very easily take over everything, soon meaning you spend most of your day in there.

So in summary:

- Get decisive
- Get organised
- Get strict

## INCREDIBLY FAST CONTENT FOR THE BUSY BEE

There is something to be said for a great piece of writing, there is something to be said for a writer who can write such a piece quickly. The thing is it isn't as difficult as you may think. There are some simple tips any writer can adopt to try and reduce the amount of time taken to write something such as an article.

Take a look at the tips below and see what you can do to va va voom in your writing speed.

## KEEP A LIST OF IDEAS

You will get ideas at the strangest and most inconvenient times, keep a list of ideas, in your phone, on a notepad, somewhere you won't lose it. Don't tell yourself you'll remember it because you'll kick yourself down the line.

## LET YOUR IDEAS NURTURE

Give your ideas time to mature and grow wings. Let them mature and become something concrete before starting a whimsical article that you will give up on a third of the way through because you realise you're going nowhere.

## EDIT, EDIT, EDIT THE IDEAS

Revisit your ideas list; it's going to grow, big, so keep it edited and well looked after.

Are there ideas that just aren't maturing?

Are there ideas that are maturing into something you just aren't comfortable writing about?

Could you give those ideas to someone else if you don't want to waste them?

You won't write about everything you think of, the trick with this list is to skim the cream off of the top.

## RESEARCH WELL

Once you've picked your topic, do any research you need to do up front, decide what areas of the topic you want to cover, what angle you want to take, your voice, and make sure you have any and all of your facts straight and referenced.

## STICK TO A FEW MAIN POINTS

Don't go overboard, you aren't writing War and Peace here, or even your final thesis. Keep it short, sweet and to the point. Keep your reader engaged and entertained and most of all don't go off on tangents.

## PLAN

Don't just start writing aimlessly. Plan your work, write headings, notes and use your research to help you structure your writing, this will make the writing so much easier, and only takes a 2-5 minutes itself. It also keeps you on track.

If you are rewriting another article/blog post as well this is a great way to not fall into the copying trap. You can read the article, take bullet points of the ideas you want to use then walk away from it and work from your notes.

Don't write your article while reading the one which inspired you!

## USE BULLET POINTS

Bullet points are fantastic; they get your point over quickly, making it quick for you to write what you are trying to say. They keep you organised in your writing.

Plus, they offer the reader a chance to briefly see what your article is about, they can skim through and decide if this piece of writing is for them, rather than skipping it altogether because it's one big piece of text, which, let's face it, is scary by anybody's standards!

## REVISIT

After you've finished your piece of writing...walk away. Go make a cup of coffee, watch a movie, go for a walk, anything. Just don't look at that piece of writing again for at least an hour. Give it and you, time to settle.

Once you have refreshed, go back to it, read it through, edit it, and you are done. A nice quick piece of writing that is of high quality.

## PRACTICE

Practice this method, set time limits and stick to them, and keep practicing, your first few attempts will probably not be great. But then things rarely are when you try them for the first time are they?

There's a lot to be said for juggling a heavy workload, most of us do it, but how we do it says a lot for our personalities. I hope that these tips, help you keep one of the more enjoyable parts of your day within your schedule and that you learn a new way to write that allows you more freedom and time for other things.

## BRIGHT IDEAS FOR SPEED READING

Reading is something you either love or you hate, but you have to do it at some point every day. Something that is a fantastic skill to learn is speed reading. Some advantages to learning how to speed read are:

1. You can learn new business strategies more quickly and so put them to work more quickly!
2. Spend less time pouring through business documents and more time actually making money!
3. Gives you the opportunity to better understand the bigger picture quickly and easily.

The best place to start with this is to help you understand exactly how you read naturally. As humans we develop natural reading habits that tend to slow us down, it is highly likely that you will have a few of these habits yourself and it is important that you understand what your reading habits are so that you know what you need to stop doing to help you on your way to becoming a great speed reader.

## SUB-VOCALISATION

This is when you read each word aloud in your head as you read it, it can significantly slow down your reading as you can understand words much more quickly than you can say them.

To stop doing this you need to acknowledge that you do it and then tell yourself that you will not do it anymore, then practice until the 'voice' is gone. If you can't do this you will be resigned to reading at only 250-300 words per minute which is the normal rate of speech, so it's well worth practicing this method.

## READING WORD BY WORD

When you read each word individually you can miss the overall meaning of what is being said and it takes much longer to read the passage.

To stop doing this practice reading in blocks of words, hold documents/books/newspapers further away from you and read in blocks of 2, 3, 4 etc. words. The more blocks of words you can read together the quicker you will be able to read.

## EYE MOTION

People who read slowly tend to focus on each word and work their way across the page without using their peripheral vision, making the process of reading very hard work for their eyes.

To overcome this and speed up your reading, you can soften your gaze on the page by relaxing your face and utilise your full eye, move it less, use your peripheral vision. You'll find that you take in more blocks of words and read much more quickly because there is much less physical effort involved.

## RE-READING OR REGRESSION

This is where people jump back and re-read text they've already read, sometimes by accident, sometimes to check you read it right. By doing this you lose the flow of the content, slow down your progress, and decrease your understanding of the subject.

To stop yourself doing this use a finger or a pen to help you follow the page as you read. This will ensure you know where you are on the page and will help you stay focused.

## CONCENTRATION

It's easy to get distracted when you are reading so you need to make sure that when you read you do so in an environment where your concentration isn't going to be disturbed consistently. You don't want to read an important document in a room with a TV on for example.

Don't multi-task, and remove distractions, including internal distractions such as deciding what to buy for your daughter's birthday, or rehashing an uncomfortable meeting. You want all of your concentration to be on the reading, the key to speed reading is to take in everything you read.

## SCAN

When we are taught to read we are taught to start at the top and read everything until we reach the end. However, when you learn to speed read, you learn to scan through the document. Take in headings, bullets, bold or highlighted text and make an informed decision which information is important for you to read and which can be skipped. You don't necessarily need to read everything just because it is there.

## NOTATE

Make notations, use a notepad or the margins of the document and notate quickly and in few words a summary of what you are reading. This will help jog your memory and remind you what you have read when you go back to the notes at a later date, and save you needing to re-read the document again.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

Now you know how to be a successful speed reader, you just need to ensure that you become successful at this useful life skill.

- **Practice, and never stop practicing.** You can never be too good at speed reading. Think how long it took you to learn to read and imagine how good you could become at speed reading. So don't give up!
- Don't start with War and Peace, as when we teach children to read you need to start easy. Maybe an easy and short novel that you will enjoy. Work your way up to those harder business documents.
- Choose appropriately, there will be times when speed reading isn't appropriate, for example if you need to proof legal documents, you are probably going to want to fine tooth comb these!

- Use a pointer, pen or your finger to help push you and keep your speed up.
- Benchmark your current reading speed when you start, this will help you to understand how much of a difference you are making. Everyone is different so it's good to know what your reading speed is. You can find online tests to help you benchmark this such as <http://www.readingsoft.com/>

Overall, enjoy the efficiency speed reading brings to your life and business. It's a fantastic skill to have and will bring you many more minutes, even hours in the day.

## PRODUCE GOOD QUALITY GRAPHICS QUICKLY & CHEAPLY

There are occasions when you will want to create graphics quickly and most importantly you won't have the budget to call in a graphic designer to help you out. This article will help you understand how you can produce such graphics with little or no graphical experience, for those times when the budget and / or timeframe don't allow for you to call on an expert.

Using programs such as Paint and desktop publishing packages such as Microsoft Publisher, both of which come free with your MS Office suite, or if you wanted to invest you could get things like Adobe's Photoshop and InDesign which have far more functionality. Combine these with the resources I'm about to provide you with and you can create a wealth of graphics very easily.

## FREE RESOURCES

There are hundreds of websites out there giving resources away; you can get fonts, images, even textures for that perfect graphic. A selection of my favourites are:

### FONTS

- <http://www.fontsquirrel.com/>
- <http://www.1001freefonts.com/>
- <http://www.fontspace.com/>
- <http://www.1001fonts.com/free-fonts-for-commercial-use.html>
- <http://www.urbanfonts.com/free-fonts.htm>

### TEXTURES

- <http://www.cgtextures.com/>
- <http://www.textureking.com/>
- <http://freestocktextures.com/>
- <http://www.texturemate.com/>
- <http://www.brusheezy.com/>

## PICTURES

- <http://www.everystockphoto.com/> - This site takes the effort out of searching, as it's a free image search engine so you only need to go to one place and it searches all of the relevant sites for you. You will want images with a commercial creative commons licence to use them for free.

## DESIGN INSPIRATION

It depends what you are designing where you will want to go, below are a few suggestions to help get you started but take a look around the web and see what you think is working, see what people are talking about and why.

- <http://thedesiginspiration.com/> - Daily showcase of good design in: Articles, Logo's, Illustration, Website, Business Cards, Fonts, Creative Photo's, Patterns.
- <http://www.formfiftyfive.com/> - Graphic Design blog showcasing great graphic design
- <http://creattica.com/> - A designer inspiration community and free resource site.

If you need some training to use the packages above you should be able to find free videos on YouTube to help you with the basics. If you want more in-depth training there are courses and training videos and books available so it just depends on the level to which you wish to take your knowledge, or rather, how much you enjoy it!

## MAKING SOCIAL MEDIA WORK FOR YOU

Welcome to the world of social media, it's daunting, it's fun, there's a lot to take in, but it can be a great revenue stream, as long as you get it right. There are a lot of short cuts and tools that can help you; some good, some not so good, and this where I aim to help you today.

Let's start with the overview, there are hundreds of social networking sites, there are niche one's for different industries and different interest types, aimed at different age groups etc. If you really know exactly who your target market is, ideally you want to find out where they are, it may be they aren't on one of the main social media sites. So always keep in mind who you are targeting, if you know WHO you want to be talking to at all times then you won't get side-tracked which is very easily done!

For the sake of this article I'll focus on the main social networking sites which are most commonly used:

- YouTube
- Facebook
- Twitter

Other big social networking sites which are commonly used and should always be considered as well are:

- LinkedIn
- Google+
- So.cl
- Pinterest
- Vimeo

## YOUTUBE

Over 72 hours' worth of video is uploaded to [YouTube](#) every minute! If this doesn't make you want to get a piece of it then I'm not sure what will. The great thing about YouTube is that once your video is uploaded you can embed it into your website, share it in emails, people can share it in social media.

The video isn't static it becomes a living entity moving around the web at the will of the users. Your job is to give them something they want to view. Some great examples of affordable and simple viral videos are:

- <http://youtu.be/ZUG9qYTJMsI>
- <http://youtu.be/CpwbzY-loLQ>
- <http://youtu.be/AxHt4-GDvck>

You can also do some quick video blogs or vlogs if you wanted and tie them in with your website blog. Some great tips for doing these quickly are:

- Using the YouTube Quick Capture button which will utilise your PC/Laptop camera and allow you to live record your video straight into YouTube.
- If you have a new phone with 3G, video and YouTube capability you can just record your video, hit the button and send it straight in to your account. If your phone doesn't have the new capabilities, you can go to YouTube and choose the Upload from Mobile option and it will upload it that way for you.
- Animoto.com – Lets you create slide shows with your videos/photos, add music to them then just upload them into YouTube. Probably one you're more likely to save for personal use but still good to know!

## FACEBOOK

There are few people who aren't familiar with Facebook so I won't tell you how to suck eggs. I will however tell you about EdgeRank and why you need to be careful how you post to Facebook because of it.

EdgeRank is the calculation/algebraic formula that Facebook use to work out the value of each post, where it should display on each person's timeline and how quickly it disappears. Many people have panicked recently thinking this is a new thing, but it's been around as long as Facebook has, it's just people are becoming more aware of it.

The weight given to things changes regularly (a bit like with the search engine ranking factors)! However, there are some simple guidelines you can follow which will help you get most of your posts viewed, and mean that you don't need to go down the sponsored posts route which is what Facebook are trying to guide people into doing.

There are a lot of third party tools you can use which will save you time as you can send tweets and Facebook messages at the same time. However, in recent months these postings appear less and less in timelines. There are a few ways around it...

- You could set up your own app, which when it posts to Facebook says that it was posted via your company name rather than via Hootsuite or Tweetdeck etc. because your company name is unique, Facebook won't penalise it and so it is treated as a normal post.
- There are third party tools which allow you to change the 'posted via' statement at a small cost. You will need to look around for the ones which best suit you, since most of the ones which offer this do require some sort of payment for the software as well.
- You can post directly to Facebook and set up synching between Facebook and Twitter so that you Facebook updates go straight to Twitter. Twitter doesn't block posts in this way at all.

Something else you want to be aware of is that the posts that get displayed highest and for longest (mainly because they get the best user engagement) are ones with a single photo/image attached. So you need to get snapping, when you want to post an update think about an image you could add to support your update. You want to give your posts the best possible chance of being seen.

Posts with the least chance of being made visible by Facebook are ones with a single link in. Facebook rates these lower than anything else and so will put them at the bottom of the pile so try and draw them to your page and then attract them out where you want them from there. Use tabs, add apps.

Finally, as lovely as it is to have lots of Likes, don't run a when I get to 1000 likes I'll have a prize draw competition. It's against Facebook's T&C's and they could close your page down for good!

You have to use a competition app to run a competition of Facebook which will cost you money so it's best to use your wit and charm to attract people to your page, doing it this way, they will be genuine followers as well!

## TWITTER

Twitter is nice and easy to use but it's easy to find yourself talking into the abyss. Your trick here is to engage, what you want is to find the users on Twitter relevant to your business and get in a conversation with them.

- Answer questions they may have
- Ask them questions
- Send them information you think they will find useful
- Don't try and sell to them!

Yes, I said don't try and sell to them. The quickest way to lose a lead on Twitter is to try and sell. You want to take the soft and fluffy approach. Be friends, these are people who will stick around, be loyal and come back to you time and again, but the minute you put the hard sell on they will disappear.

There are tools you can use to help you manage Twitter; the web interface isn't particularly friendly. I recommend TweetDeck or Hootsuite, but there are a whole host of options out there for you.

When you are starting out, you want to follow some people and get talking to them. Don't follow 1000 people straight off. Follow 10, get talking to them, see who responds and follows you, then after a few days unfollow those who you've

had nothing from and follow 10 more, so on and so forth. Don't do it more than a few days apart, and don't do too many at a time. Twitter does look for this type of activity so you don't want to be too obvious.

You can use hashtags to help you find people on Twitter so if you are a bakery in New York you could search for people who have listed they like cakes in their profile by searching #cakes #newyork.

Alternatively, there are websites people can register at if they want to be found, but remember these won't have everyone on, but may get you started.

- <http://www.twellow.com/>
- <http://wefollow.com/>
- <http://tweepz.com/>

## RESTRICT YOUR TIME

This may seem like a lot of work, but in reality, you only need to spend 20-30 minutes a day on social networking, split it up into 10 minute blocks through the day, respond to people who need responding to. Remember, you don't have to speak to everyone, who might thank you or say something. You'll know when it's appropriate.

At the beginning you may need to put a little more time in, but once you've nurtured the accounts it'll be plain sailing and you will be a social media master!

**HACKING YOUR BUSINESS!**

## DAY TO DAY GAMEPLANNING: THE “LITTLE PICTURE”

Increasing your productivity and getting things done means having a good game-plan. First, you need to know exactly what must be done. Second, even if you do not have a specific deadline, you must also decide when it must be done. The third step is putting yourself to the task of doing it.

You want to accomplish your goals, whether they are short-term or long-term. You also want to be proud of and satisfied with the results. When you are not content to simply “go with the flow,” and instead take your game-plan seriously every step of the way, you are nearly guaranteed success, pride, and satisfaction.

Structure and time-management may come easy for you, if they have been a regular part of your life. If you are not used to these concepts...

## NOW IS THE TIME TO WORK ON THESE SKILLS!

Whether you are setting up a business of your own, working for someone else, or whether your work is taking care of your family, you will reap many benefits from setting up a good game-plan.

If you have ever felt that there are not enough hours in a day to do everything you need to do, this will be a very positive step for you. You will be pleasantly surprised with how much you can accomplish. With a game-plan, you may find yourself getting more done each day than you usually accomplish in a week. Not only will you be more productive, but achieving each goal will come much easier. You will soon appreciate this all-important factor in your success.

Stop me if you've heard this one before:

All you need to do in order to be successful in business is focus on the 20% of things that are giving you 80% of your results.

Do more of the stuff that's making your money. Drop the stuff that isn't.  
Outsource the aspects that you can't do efficiently.

Sounds great, right? But the problem is that if you're a solo entrepreneur, it's difficult to know for SURE what methods are getting you the results you want.

That means...

**THE 80/20 RULE IS WORTHLESS UNLESS YOU'RE TRACKING EVERY IMPORTANT ASPECT OF YOUR BUSINESS.**

That doesn't just mean the money that's coming in. It means your performance.

The first step towards becoming more productive is to TRACK your productivity!

Deadlines and structure are your friend. If I tell myself that I'm going to write a chapter of this book in 20 minutes, I'm going to block that time off, I'm going to do it as FAST as I can, and once I'm finished, I'm stopping right away.

This isn't an expression of weakness, it's a way of keeping my brain on track. Whenever my brain wants to drift away and check some social media site, I tell myself that I'm on one task for a set amount of time. It helps!

**ACTING ON TIME MANAGEMENT**

Set up an account at Toggl (<http://www.toggl.com>). Turn it on the next time you're writing an article, recording an email, or putting a video together – anything that you're counting on to deliver results for your business.

Turn the timer on and give this task your undivided attention. It won't just make you faster, it will increase your focus over time.

If it takes you 18 minutes to write a 500 word article, track it and try to cut it down to 15 or 10 minutes. From there try to cut it to seven minutes. If you keep your thoughts organized, have a decent understanding of the topic and stay focused, this IS a reachable goal.

Once you're setting the habit of tracking your productive time...

**START LOOKING AT THE TIME THAT YOU AREN'T DOING WORK TOWARDS YOUR MAIN GOAL IN LIFE.**

Classic examples would be watching TV, checking e-mails, surfing the internet, spending time with friends, talking on the phone, playing games and so on. Sleeping should not be included, unless it's the length of time that you OVER-sleep.

I'm not telling you that you need to cut down fun from your day. But if you spend a lot of time working in front of a computer, you often don't realise how much time you waste! So take a look at how your time is blocked off, take a look at the time that you've spent and really ask yourself whether it fits your level of commitment.

## HOW OUTSOURCING HELPS LIGHTEN THE LOAD

### THIS IS AGONY!

Let's face it, you're not superhuman. Everybody has their own strengths and weaknesses, and unless you're an incredibly experienced marketer, chances are that you're going to run into something that you aren't very good at.

In situations where you're playing against natural skills, or you have to learn something new, time can be a brutal factor. No matter what level you're on or how many zeros are in your bank account, you could always use more time.

There's a limit to how many hours you can work a week before you start to get sick physically, break down mentally, or go into serious emotional hysterics. And trust me, you probably don't want to actually work that hard.

That's where outsourcing can help. It's a good idea to use other people's time and energy improving your business. Even if you've only got a few dollars to spare, you can remove some of your major headaches and roadblocks by hiring help.

## THERE'S A SERIOUS DIVIDEND WHEN IT COMES TO USING OTHER PEOPLE'S TIME.

And you'll find people are much more willing to trade a little money for a lot of time than the other way around. Take advantage of that. Once you're mentally queued up and making serious improvements in your productivity, start charting and tracking your results.

Think about the things that are critical to your business, but aren't making you money directly.

When you see yourself lag behind the average amount of time that takes to do certain tasks, visit websites like Fiverr.com and oDesk. Start looking for smart, capable people to help you in specialized tasks - this can be a bit of a pain at first.

First of all, there is a bit of a challenge in finding the right people. If shopping at a very low price range, you can easily run into people who are using your vital

project as a training experiment. And unfortunately, it's easy to run into people who are incredibly literal and try to "lawyer" their way out of doing a good job.

Your temporary employees aren't the only problem. You've got to spend a little bit of time looking at yourself in the mirror. No two people are alike, and it's not fair to demand that an employee do a project exactly the way you would do it without very detailed instructions.

#### **YOU CAN'T BE A CONTROL FREAK ON A BIG SCALE PROJECT.**

Remember that your goal should always be meeting the expectations of your customers, and not necessarily satisfying the vision that's in your mind.

You're going to be blown away by how much faster your work becomes, and how much easier it is to log into your computer and see the important jobs already finished! It's important to remember that you need to set up a reliable system for profit before you leverage too much of your income in outsourcing, though.

## CHALLENGE YOUR INSTINCTS WITH THESE COUNTER-INTUITIVE IDEAS

It's so easy to get locked into the idea of "conventional wisdom". The problem is that while there are plenty of truisms that become popular for good reason, there are just as many rubbish ideas that get spread around because they're catchy or simple.

If there's one thing that I want this course to drive home, let it be this: once you've enacted these ideas, it's going to take a little time for you to perfect your process for yourself.

Here are some "weird" ideas that you can try on.

## PLAYING VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES?

The number of aliens you kill may directly contribute to an improvement in your brain. This may not sound like a typical scientific discovery, but it has come from some of the world's finest neuroscience laboratories. In fact, it is the genuine outcome of studies on how action video games can improve your attention, mental control and visual skills.

We're talking here about fast-moving titles such as Halo, Call of Duty and Grand Theft Auto, which demand quick reflexes and instant decision-making.

They're often portrayed as the most trashy, vapid and empty-headed forms of digital entertainment, but it looks as if they may be particularly good at sharpening your mental skills.

Violent video games have been found to cause small, reliable but temporary increases in aggressive thoughts and behaviour in the lab – as have other forms of violent media, including films and the news.

But in terms of real-world violence, "delinquent peers, depression and an abusive family environment account for actual violent incidents, while exposure to media violence seems to have only a minor and usually insignificant effect."

## WANT THE STUFF YOU LIKE

Sounds weird, right? If we want something, we probably like it, right? Not always.

Experiments by the University of Michigan's Kent Berridge and colleagues show that this isn't always the case. Wanting and liking are based on separate brain circuits and can be controlled independently.

To demonstrate this, Berridge used a method called "taste reactivity", in effect, recording the faces pulled when animals are given different kinds of food. Give an adult human something sweet and they'll lick their lips. This might sound obvious, but when you take it to the next level in terms of detail and rigour you start to get a powerful system for telling how much an animal likes a particular type of food.

Taste reactivity involves defining the reactions precisely – for example, lip-licking would be defined as "a mild rhythmic smacking, slight protrusions of the tongue, a relaxed expression accompanied sometimes by a slight upturn of the corners of the mouth" – and then looking for this same expression in other species.

A baby human can't tell you they like the taste like an adult can, but you can see the same expression. A chimpanzee will do the same with a sweet taste. A rat won't do exactly the same thing, but they do something similar. By carefully observing and coding the facial expressions that accompany nice and nasty tastes, you can tell what an animal is enjoying and what they aren't.

So, what do we have in common with the chimps? Some of our own wants and cravings are driven by force of habit or chemical withdrawal, and not our unique tastes.

Spend a week or so without sugar, for example, and you'll see an explosion of more subtle flavors!

So now you know what do when you find yourself chomping your way through yet another packet of chips over the holiday period. Watch your face and see if you are licking your lips.

If you are, perhaps your liking circuits are fully engaged and you'll be happy with what you've eaten when you're finished. If there's no lip-licking then perhaps your wanting circuits are in control and you need to exercise some self-restraint. Perhaps after the next mouthful, though.

### DON'T THINK OF AN ELEPHANT!

At the beginning of Nicole Kidman's 2008 film *Australia*, the audience is shown a warning. "Exercise caution when watching this film," it says, "as it may contain images or voices of deceased persons." The notice, perplexing for most viewers, was for the benefit of Aboriginal Australians, who may have a taboo against naming or encountering representations of the dead.

The taboo has spiritual roots relating to not disturbing spirits of the departed but anthropologist Katie Glaskin describes how the naming taboo "serves to make people 'acutely aware' of the person whose name is being avoided". As a form of remembering through non-remembrance, it is a psychological mirror image of more familiar traditions where creating and cherishing a representation of the deceased is considered necessary for healthy mourning.

This underlines the fact that mourning can take place in a radically different way, based on a thoroughly different understanding of death, highlighting how any claims to a universal "psychology of grief" pale in the face of human diversity.

How does this transfer to your own brainpower? Well, the ideas that you try hardest to block out can pop up where you want them the least. Don't try to "block" negative emotions. Just try to give a little "judo throw" that shifts them somewhere more productive.

## CAN RUNNING AWAY MAKE YOU HAPPIER?

Sometimes it seems unrealistic to block out distractions from your day to day work flow. Your family, your friends, and your coworkers can sometimes seem like a long conga line of distraction. They can bump you off of your schedule with one "urgent" item after another and by the time you look to see where the time's gone, you've missed out on countless opportunities.

But if this seems like a fact of your life, and it might be time to introduce a few new facts.

## THINK ABOUT CREATING A "NO ZONE" IN YOUR HOUSE.

A single room, or single part of a room, where you feel comfortable rejecting any distractions.

In order to do this, you need to get yourself out of the way of ambient distractions. If there's a TV in this room get rid of it, don't bring your cellphone into this room. Close the windows. Only include things that are really critical for your work. Something like a smart phone can be a bit of a monkey's paw - you bring it inside of the no zone with the best of intentions, only to find yourself distracted by some silly Jetpack game.

If you're in doubt, leave it out. Especially if your friends and family think of you as a cellphone junkie.

## PEOPLE WILL TAKE YOU LEAVING YOUR TOYS OUTSIDE AS A SIGN OF SERIOUS COMMITMENT.

Whenever we make any kind of significant changes in our routine, it's natural that we'll run into skepticism, especially if we have had false starts before. Don't be afraid to be very direct and strict when you're establishing your routine. Our friends, like anyone else, will want to test our boundaries. When you set firm boundaries, you guarantee yourself optimal results.

You won't always be able to establish this "no zone" inside your house. Sometimes there really are the deluge of pressing issues that you'll be asked to face up to. Obviously, you'll need to ask yourself whether these are issues you must work around, or whether your relatives could manage without you if they were forced to.

## SO GO OUTSIDE!

In these cases, give yourself privacy at a library, a friend's house, a local restaurant, or anywhere you can guarantee yourself some uninterrupted time. Doing this also has the side effect of training your mind to respect this new space. Sometimes habits are tied to our senses. We're quiet in church, aggressive at work, smooth on a date - humans are really adaptive creatures, and we become what a situation demands of us.

Find a place that you think might work for you, and keep working at it until your brain makes a habit of sticking to your work.

## PRODUCTIVITY OVERLOAD? WAYS YOU CAN COOL DOWN

You're a human being, not a machine. When you get a lot of advice on improving your skills and improving your workflow, it's very easy to go overboard. Especially if it's your first week or two, you can become "over disciplined" and either lower your overall effectiveness, or be so mean to yourself that you get frustrated and drop your plans altogether.

Some of these pieces of advice are reiterations of points that I've touched on before. I'm not touching on them again to bore you, but in my experience these pieces of advice get ignored by people who vastly overestimated their willpower and tell themselves that they'll be twice as productive if they put these tips to the side.

Very few people can actually do this though. Let's take a look.

## DON'T ALLOW YOURSELF TO FEEL GUILTY

Obviously, it's normal to work hard and take pride in the things that you accomplish. And it's easy to let fear of failure push you towards getting goals finished on time. But in the same way that you shouldn't let yourself coast on past successes, you shouldn't let guilt over past failures sink your future.

No matter how emotionally invested you are in your work, you should develop the capacity to take a step back and give an objective look at what you have done. Did you have a reasonable skill level and a reasonable timetable for the goal that you set?

It might be easy to blame yourself for failing, but remember that you have to be a good general as well as a good soldier if you're only answering to yourself.

## BOTTLENECKS AND BOTTLE-OPENERS

You don't wanna allow too much time to complete a project. Unfortunately, human beings have a natural tendency to "pull up at the finish line" and work just

as hard as they meet to to finish a job "on time". Maybe this comes from a childhood of rushing to finish homework at the last minute. I don't know. :)

I do know that allowing too little time can be just as bad. This opens the door to the guilt we just discussed, and it also throws your other tasks out of sequence and delays them.

Either way, it's not a positive for your time. With enough time & data, you should get a sense of how much time you should allot. If you're constantly coming in behind schedule, you might need to be a little bit less stubborn about your expectations.

### GIVE YOURSELF BREAKS

In the world of fitness, the process of building muscle involves breaking down your muscle with tough exercise... and building it back up with rest.

No matter how hard you work out, your muscles can't grow unless you give them time to rest. Overworking will actually make you weaker! The same principle applies for our business lives. Give yourself time to deeply consider ideas and to forget them, to work hard and actually reflect on what you've done, to plan AND to execute.

### RELAX YOUR EXPECTATIONS

It's bad enough being stressed out about our own choices and decisions. When you start letting ourselves get stressed out about the choices other people make, you've really got to take a step back.

Remember that everybody has a different background and different skills. Hopefully, that's allowed you to make the most of your productive time. Best of all, it's allowed you to put some of these techniques into action - which frankly, everybody is incapable of doing.

But know that everybody can improve. Be patient, and be willing to experiment in your efforts to get the most out of others in the same way that you experiment to get the most out of yourself.

Remember that your long-term goal is to set new habits and adapt yourself so that you can use them for a long time to come. Being too hard on yourself or asking too much of yourself is going to run counter to those goals.

## GOING "BATCHING CRAZY": A LITTLE TIP THAT MAKES YOU WORK FASTER

Between the litany of emails, text messages, twitter posts, thrilling – yet – meaningless forum posts, and TV shows that you run into daily, it's easier to spend the day fighting distractions than actually working to fulfill your needs... not to mention the needs of your customers and clients.

Once you've lost your focus, it's pretty tough to get it back. If you've ever had a day where you were stuck juggling 10 different tasks and didn't get any of them done because you were so overwhelmed, you know how this feels.

## EVERY TIME YOU HAVE TO REFOCUS YOUR ATTENTION, YOU LOWER YOUR ENERGY LEVELS...

And your capacity for creativity. Let this happen too often, and your brain will adapt to it, refusing to let you focus on anything for too long.

Obviously, this can spell disaster for your business.

Even if you don't always have a "spaced out" feeling, constant distraction can keep you from being the killer entrepreneur that I know you want to be. This is where batching can help.

Batching is the art of blocking off a period of time to do one single task as well and as often as possible. During this time, you shield yourself from any of your typical distractions, and promise yourself the world won't end during your 20 minutes or so of focused time.

## THE POMODORO METHOD IS PROBABLY THE MOST POPULAR TECHNIQUE FOR BATCHING THAT TIME.

Make a list of the critical tasks you need to do during your day. Set a timer and devote 25 minutes to each of those tasks. When you're finished, spend 5 minutes stretching and resetting your brain. After you've done 4 of these pomodoros, take a longer, twenty minute break.

If you set up a list of the critical things that you need to do when your business, and order those tasks so that you make incremental progress in each of them daily, you can make small improvements in each critical area of your business.

**START WITH THE KILLERS, THE TASKS THAT YOU'RE REALLY DREADING HAVING TO ADDRESS.**

This way you can end your day on a note of triumph, because no matter how bad things got, you got that one terrible thing done.

This technique will provide you with the added benefit of never having that empty feeling at the end of the day like you "got nothing done". This is a suggestion that almost everybody has heard at least once, but *are you doing it?*

Mentally, it's very easy to allow ourselves to get distracted because those distractions dilute the main job in front of us, they add a little entertainment value to them and make it more bearable.

**BUT SIT DOWN AND FORCE YOURSELF TO DO IT FOR A DAY OR TWO.**

Batching, like almost anything else that you'll do in your business, is all about experimenting.

One of the reasons why it's so important to spend a little time outdoors, even if it's for just 20 or 30 minutes a day, is that it puts you in touch with your body. Too many people have almost no physical awareness of themselves. Part of this is a diet that drowns out subtlety in our palette and our physical reactions to food.

But being aware of ourselves doesn't just extend to or physical lives; it extends to our work lives. The more attention you pay to your work - the quality, not just the time - the more you'll see what your own personal optimal working style is.

The Pomodoro method might work best for you. You might be better off working in blocks of 2 to 3 hours. You might do best with something in between.

**BUT WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS TO TRACK YOUR WORK AND HOW YOU FEEL WHEN YOU'RE DOING IT.**

If you don't have the willpower and self awareness to do this, then you might be stuck wondering why you're unproductive, or whether you're unproductive.

Neither is a good option.

Finding out what works for you personally, and giving yourself good habits will allow you to do those beneficial tasks on a regular basis.

## SOME QUICK THOUGHTS ON SHUTTING DOWN INFO DISTRACTIONS

One of the problems you'll have with any plan to increase your total productivity is that you never quite sure what you should focus your attention on. Sure, there's the idea of tracking your time and your statistics, but that seems like more of a way to weed things out. How do you know what goals you should set in the first place?

Information overload can make this problem worse. If you look around online for any particular subject, you'll find information everywhere: print books, PDFs, blog posts, tweets, photographs. You will almost never need this much information to do a job well.

Can you imagine the Indians needing a 500 page manual and a DVD series on how to plant corn?

In fact, you barely have to look for information, because thanks to social media and inbox creep, it often pops up, whether you ask for it or NOT. So, you need to set up a system that lets you filter good information from bad information, so that you can focus on the things that get results.

## FIND A MENTOR

It's a good idea to have someone you can bounce ideas off of before you go fullbore into a specific plan. While there's lots of information available online from many well-meaning people, they don't have a complete knowledge of what your skills are or what you'll need to succeed.

Best of all, if your mentor is any good, he or she will have a limited skillset. That means they're going to keep you focused on areas that they have already proven themselves to have some talent in.

## GIVE OLD IDEAS A FRESH LOOK...

And go on a serious information diet. Instead of buying products that promise to build you some fresh system from scratch, look for guides that will improve a specific part of a plan you're already executing. Chances are, if you've been buying "how to" guides for any significant period of time, you've already stumbled across something that will work if you have the time and the skill set to execute it proper.

### BLOCK OUT DIGITAL NOISE

If you visit your e-mail inbox, only to find 10 or 15 promotional messages greeting you before you have had your morning coffee, it's going to be so much harder to focus on things are important during your day.

Unsubscribe from e-mail lists and newsletters that aren't giving you serious personal value. If you can't bear to do that for some reason, filter your favorite marketers into a single folder in your inbox and check them at the end of the day. That way your attention will be focused on more important things.

### DON'T BE AFRAID TO SCREW UP

There's a psychological reason why people spend so much time overloading themselves with information - they don't trust their own authority, and they aren't sure they have the knowledge to succeed in a given task. The problem is, you never really ARE sure until you get off your rear and make things happen. Start experimenting with ideas, invest your time to get things off the ground and invest your money once you've seen returns.

## CONCLUSION

Well, it looks like we're coming to the end of our time together. But I want to give you a couple of ideas that'll inspire and empower you as we move forward.

Get in touch with your natural cycles of productivity. Most people are at their strongest early in the morning, which is why it's a good idea to get a jump on your day. But given enough time, you'll find out what works for you.

Once you've started to tune yourself physically, you'll have to deal with emotional concerns too. Social pressure from friends and family can be really damaging, especially if we set expectations for ourselves that require you to lower the priority of your work. Give yourself the courage to say "no" – you'll be very surprised how accomodating people can be.

That concludes everything that I have to talk to you about. Did it seem more simple and less mystical than you were expecting? Well, life really can be more simple, elegant and straightforward than a lot of people think it is. With the right mindset and direction in life, anyone can achieve what they look forward to – it's no different for you.

Remember that the sooner you start, the sooner you can succeed. Get moving!