



101 TIPS FOR:  
**IMPROVING  
PRODUCTIVITY**

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**101 Tips For...**

# **Improving Productivity**

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1. **Create a written weekly plan in addition to your daily plan.** An important key to getting more done is having a weekly plan that enables you to distribute your activities and workload rationally.
  - Planning one week at a time gives you a greater sense of control because you're utilizing the concept of pacing. Rather than a mere 24 hours, a weekly plan allows you to focus on a more manageable period of time.
  
2. **Prioritize the items on your daily plan.** Without prioritization, we put off the biggest and most difficult tasks. The easy things can be done quickly, and by checking a lot of them off the list, we feel a sense of accomplishment. Prioritizing each item on your daily list forces you to complete the most important tasks -- even if they're the most difficult ones.
  
3. **Use a single time management system.** Each different time management system has something valuable to offer. However,
  - balancing multiple systems is not a good use of your time -- which defeats the whole purpose. The system that you use is less important than the fact that you use a single system and that you use it consistently. Select a system you're willing to commit to for at least the next year.
  
4. **The expensive time management system is not always the best one.** The price of a time management system is not an indication of how easy it is to use or even of its overall value. Rather, price is usually related to how attractive the system is in terms of trendy technology and buzzwords. Put substance above style when choosing your system.
  
5. **Find a simple time management system.** Keep it as simple as possible. You don't want a system that requires an unwieldy number of forms and cross-referencing. The system should free up time for you, not consume it.
  
6. **Be cautious about high-tech time management systems.** Often, the best time management systems are those that you fill out with a pencil and put into a 3-ring binder. Cutting edge technology can detract from, rather than enhance, a time management system. If you have to log onto your computer to access the system, ultimately, will you use it? Make technology your servant, not your master.

7. **Accept that you're not perfect.** Striving for perfection eats away at your time, energy, and happiness. For a perfectionist, nothing is ever good enough; not because they are committed to success, but because they are afraid of inadequacy. Free yourself from impossible standards.
8. **Reach for excellence, not perfection.** There is a difference between having the high standards of excellence and being a perfectionist. Perfectionism is a neurotic obsession with details. Excellence is a commitment to high standards that means dedicating the extra time and energy invested to a task or product, making it noticeably better to the end-user.
9. **Focus only on products and projects that create value.** Thomas Edison who once said, "I don't want to invent anything that nobody wants to buy." Time or energy that doesn't create value is wasted. By keeping the end goal of value in mind, you can ensure that your time and energy is always well spent.
10. **The end-user defines value.** Sometimes our definition of "value" doesn't match the definition of those we serve. If that's the case, then we haven't actually created anything of value. We must always involve the customer in defining quality, even when that "customer" is our boss, a coworker, or an employee.
11. **Develop discipline.** We know what needs to be done, but it just doesn't get done. Why? Because we're lacking the discipline. Discipline is doing what needs to be done, rather than what is easy to do. It is the ability to delay immediate gratification in order to obtain long-term gratification.
12. **Convert downtime to development time.** Before you leave the house, equip yourself to make the most of your "downtime," such as waiting in line at the store. Carry a small note pad so you can jot down ideas. Keep a good book, magazine, or other reading material in your briefcase. Purchase educational audio cassettes or CDs so you can learn while you drive.

**13.** **Remember the number 29, 220.** 29,220 is the number of days you will have lived if you reach the age of 80. Write it on a post-it and put it in front of your desk. Time is a scarce resource, even for those who live a long life.

**14.** **Pay attention to your health.** We need to judiciously guard our health if we want to experience maximum happiness. When you don't feel well physically, it's much harder to enjoy life. All the time in the world means nothing if you can't spend it pursuing fulfilling activities.

**15.** **Cure yourself of "Super Person Syndrome".** Does this statement sound familiar -- "If It's going to get done right, I'm the one that has to do it." If so, you're suffering from Super Person Syndrome. We can't do it all ourselves. Trying to do it all yourself will severely limit how much you can accomplish, both personally and organizationally.

**16.** **Mistakes are okay, to a point.** It's okay to make the same mistake as long as you're trying something new. At the same time, there is a reasonable limit to how many times you make the same mistakes before the cost of the lesson becomes too high. Strike a balance between trying new things and learning from past experience.

**17.** **If you're going to succeed, you can't fear failure.** People who win big are those who are also willing to fail big. Try and you may not succeed, but never try and you'll never succeed. Accept that failure and success are not mutually exclusive.

**18.** **Don't fear success.** Psychologists have found that fear of success is as crippling as a fear of failure. Some people fear the increased expectations that they have to live up to when they're successful, so they self-sabotage. It's true that the tough thing about being successful is that people expect you to remain successful. But look at it this way, it is better to be a has-been than a never-was.

**19.** **Be selective about the meetings you attend.** When asked to attend a meeting, ask yourself a simple question: Do I need to be there? If you can't identify tangible benefits, either for you or those in attendance, you don't need to attend. Explain to the person who expects you to attend why it would not be in their best interest for you to do so.

**20.** **Employ alternatives to physically attending meetings.** You can appoint a delegate who would either benefit or contribute more than you could by their attendance. Alternatively (or additionally), offer your input in advance. You could also draft a memo or email to forward to the attendees.

**21.** **Control interruptions, don't let them control you.** An interruption is an intrusion by an outside force into our planned existence. More often than not, it isn't the size of the interruptions that keep us from being productive, it is the frequency and duration. If you don't learn to control the interruptions that occur each day, the interruptions will control you.

**22.** **Telephone calls are an interruption you can control.** We've got to learn how to control the telephone if we're going to get control of interruptions. After you've exchanged pleasantries, ask the question, "What can I do for you?" Quickly identify the reason for the call, and the appropriate response that you should take.

**23.** **Deal with paperwork by remembering to TASK.** We can't control the inflow of paperwork that reaches our desk each day, but we can control our response to it. That's where TASK comes in. Each letter stands for one of four possible responses to correspondence.

T = Toss: When in doubt, throw it out.

A = Act: Take immediate action, or schedule the appropriate response for later.

S = Send: Is there someone you should pass the information along to?

K = Keep: Make sure you have a well-organized filing system for documents you need to keep.

**24.** **Consciously and thoughtfully choose how to spend your time.** A lot of us are living our lives on autopilot. We are not consciously choosing how to spend each moment of each day. Try using the acronym WIN, which stands for "what's important now?" If we are able to identify the best use of our time, or what's important now, we'll find our time invested rather than simply spent.

**25.** **Use what you know – every last bit of it.** If you feel you're not reaching your full potential, chances are the problem is not a lack of information, but rather a lack of application. The distance between excellence and mediocrity is the distance between what you know and what you do with what you know. It's the difference between common knowledge and consistent application.

**26.** **Switch gears from firefighter to architect.** An architect is one who designs the future. A fire fighter responds to crisis. One is in control; the other feels controlled. Live your life proactively rather than reactively.

**27.** **Paint a mental picture of what you want your life to be.** It isn't enough to know what you're trying to avoid in life; you must be clear about what you're trying to achieve. Our view of the future determines the things that we do each day. In addition to being focused on the present, we must know what we want our future to look like if we're going to make good decisions in the course of our daily lives.

**28.** **Pinpoint the sense of purpose in your life.** Washington Irving once wrote, "Great minds have purposes. Others have wishes." What is your compelling purpose in life? That is arguably the most important question you will ever answer. Without a purpose, there is no "why" for what it is that you do.

**29.** **Identify your core principles.** Principles are the rules we use for managing our lives. The code we live by determines the character we develop and the consequences we enjoy or regret. It is important that we identify those principles that will create the success we desire and consciously practice them.

**30.** **Accept self-responsibility.** The principle of self-responsibility means accepting responsibility for your own life -- for creating the circumstances you desire and for responding appropriately to the circumstances you can't control. There is a tendency to place the blame for failure on the circumstances rather than accepting personal responsibility. We must either control the circumstances in our life or control how we respond to them.

**31.** **Be your own PIC.** One of the terms used in aviation is "PIC," which stands for "pilot in command." If there are two people in the cockpit, it's critically important to know who is in charge. Very often, when we develop our long-range plans, we do them "OIC," others in command. Each of us needs to be our own PIC. Input from others is important, but it should never replace our own dreams and desires.

**32.** **Your actions should be consistent with your beliefs.** Philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom and answers the question, "How should we live?" Personal philosophy answers the question, "How should I live?" Cognitive dissonance occurs when there is an incongruity between what we believe and how we act. When setting career goals, be sure that you have aligned yourself with a company whose values are consistent with your own.

**33.** **Avoid the "boa constrictor phenomenon".** Sunday night is the best time to create your weekly plan, as it prevents the "boa constrictor phenomenon," trying to do everything on Monday. Take all of the important things you need to accomplish during the week, and distribute them over the course of the next five days. You are setting yourself up for success by doing only what you feel can rationally be accomplished in one day.

**34.** **Focus on developing skills, not acquiring possessions.** What skills and qualities do you need to develop to become the kind of person that you need to be? We live in a society that places a great deal of emphasis on material possessions. Notice, however, that we are called human beings, not human havings. We spend a lot of time pursuing recognition and possessions. As a result, we never develop the skills and character that truly make us fulfilled.

**35.** **Program yourself to achieve the future you dream of.** Management guru Peter Drucker said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it." Futurists call that "generating alternative futures." In other words, you're not waiting for the future to happen, but instead you're programming the future in advance by consistently doing the things that will move you closer to your desired outcome.

**36.** **Stay flexible so you can take advantage of opportunities as they arise.** Everyone should live their lives with a set a goals and a plan for achieving those goals. However, you must also remain flexible so that you can take advantage of opportunities that evolve during the course of your lifetime. If you find that your plan needs to change, remind yourself that they're not set in concrete. Adjust to explore the opportunities that will undoubtedly come your way.

**37.** **Prioritize according to importance and urgency.** There are two basic dimensions which determine our priority system: urgency and importance. Urgency is the timeframe by which something must be completed. Importance is its value to you or your organization. Classify as urgent anything that must be done by the end of the day. Sometimes urgent means it has to be done immediately, or even sooner, but certainly, for purposes of this explanation, we're going to say something is urgent when it must be done by the end of the working day. I am going to define Important is defined as anything that moves you closer to one of your long-range goals, either personally or professionally.

**38.** **Develop a three-tier prioritization system.** A simple way to label your priorities is to use the terms P-1, P-2, and P-3. A Priority 1 (P-1) is something that is both urgent and important. A P-2 is something that is important, but not urgent. It's goal related, but there is no pressing urgency to complete the task today. A P-3 is something that is neither important nor urgent. It is something you do if you have a chance, but is neither urgent nor consequential to your personal or professional goals.

**39.** **Recognize and reject "pseudo P-1's".** A pseudo P-1 is an item that you don't think is important and urgent, but someone else does. If you accept a pseudo P-1, it could displace a legitimate P-1. Never accept someone else's priority system without questioning them as to the importance of what it is they're asking.

**40.** Calculate your “plannable” working hours by subtracting your “strategic reserve time”. Plannable working hours are the average number of hours each day that are within your control, meaning you can plan how to spend every minute of them. To determine your plannable working hours, subtract “strategic reserve time” from what you consider your normal working hours. For one week, keep a log of how much time you spend dealing with unplanned activities. Divide that number by 5, and subtract the resulting number from your normal working hours. Now you have your “plannable hours,” which is a number that’s much more useful to you in terms of time management.

**41.** Utilize “batching”. Batching is doing similar activities at the same time. When we have to change activities, the brain has to adjust to the change. With batching, on the other hand, we create “psychological momentum,” which makes for more efficient use of your time.

**42.** Battle procrastination with the “prime time” technique. Prime times are those periods of time during the day when you're at your physical and psychological best. The idea is to schedule your toughest tasks during your prime time. That way you're doing the most challenging (and probably least desirable) tasks when you've got the most energy and discipline.

**43.** Tackle your unpleasant tasks like you eat salami. When you buy salami, you don't eat it all at one sitting or you'd get sick. Yet, by the end of the week it's all gone. Why? Because you ate it one slice at a time. Approach unpleasant tasks like salami. Don't sit down and try to plow through them all at once. Instead, slice them up into smaller segments and spread them out over the course of a few days.

**44.** Getting started is the hardest part. Take the plunge with the “first page” technique. When asked how he writes so many books, a self-help author replied that he simply sits down with a blank piece of paper and writes the first sentence. The first page technique addresses the fact that the toughest part about getting anything done is getting started. To overcome this challenge, set a specific time the next day to begin a task that you've been putting off. Work on that task as long as you can without stopping. You'll find that once you're into the activity you're well on your way to completing it.

**45.** **Nag yourself.** Next time you find yourself procrastinating, nag yourself with Post-It notes. Write the name of the tasks on several Post-Its and place them the bulletin board next to your desk, the dashboard of your car, and the door that you use to leave your home. The idea is to make sure that those things that we've been putting off are kept at a high level of conscious awareness.

**46.** **Reward yourself.** Tie a tangible reward to the completion of a procrastinated task. Set a deadline, and tell yourself that if you finish the project by the deadline, you will reward yourself with an ice cream cone, a round of golf, or dinner at a nice restaurant. To keep from saying "I didn't finish the project. But what the heck? I'll go get some ice cream anyway," tell someone else about the reward and have them be the one to who gives it to you.

**47.** **Set "do or die" dates.** Do or die dates are deadlines for those things that you've been putting off. If they're not done by a certain date, they simply come off your list. Very often we procrastinate well beyond the point of no return. Whenever you write something down on your running to-do list, include a "do or die" date, which is a commitment that if that item isn't accomplished by a certain date, you'll quit pursuing it.

**48.** **"Wherever you're at, be there."** May of us get caught up in time warping. Time warping is what happens when your body is one place, but your mind is somewhere else. Learn to refocus by consciously asking yourself, "where should my attention be now?"

**49.** **Location, location, location.** If the environment that you're working in is too chaotic to get things done, change environments. Work at home that morning. Go to another office. Lock yourself in the boardroom. Just find a location where you can alleviate the distractions that are keeping you from getting things done.

- 50.** **Schedule an occasional catch-up day.** Schedule one catch-up day every so often. Take a personal day, so that you won't be accountable to anyone at the office. Instead of staying home, go in early before anyone else arrives, unplug your phone, and lock your door. You then spend as much time as necessary getting caught up, plowing through the stacks of paper on your desk, doing those things that you've been putting off. The key to this technique is using it only in rare instances.
- 51.** **Make like a bodybuilder and bomb it.** To overcome perfectionism, try the bodybuilding technique known as "bombing." Loosely, here's how it works: at the end of a workout, body builders put aside technique and form, and just work themselves to complete physical exhaustion. The idea is an intense effort, not good style and form. How does this apply to time management? You can overcome the procrastination that comes with perfectionism by just jumping in and completing a task. Don't worry about making it pretty. It will be plenty easy to go back and clean it up once it's finished.
- 52.** **Don't waste time fretting over small decisions.** Prioritize and ask yourself: What are the important decisions I face? Spend some time on those and spend less time on the trivial and unimportant -- such as which color Post-It notes to buy. This will free up time for the bigger, more important ones.
- 53.** **No more over-analyzing every decision.** Many times, we wait too long to make decisions as we gather information. Gather only as much information as is necessary to avoid risking your desired outcome. It's better to make adjustments after the fact than it is to agonize over finding the perfect solution.
- 54.** **Use "horror floors" to help you make decisions:** A "horror floor" is the worst-case scenario for each decision that you make. Once you know what the worst-case scenario is, ask yourself, "Can I live with this outcome?" If so, you can make that decision confidently, knowing that even if the decision isn't correct, you'll be able to handle it and move on.

**55.** **Pay attention to your gut feeling.** Remember that intuition really does count. Think of the number of times your intuition told you to do something differently than you actually did it. If you're like most people, you'll find that more often, your intuition was right.

**56.** **Be outcome-oriented when weighing your options.** Always identify alternatives that will take you to your desired outcome. Then compare each alternative to the outcome, not to other alternatives. Very often, we choose what we consider the most desirable alternative rather than the alternative that will best help us accomplish our desired outcome.

**57.** **Collaborate with your employees on an MVP (most valuable and profitable activities) list.** Ask each of the people who report to you to put together a list of what they think are the ten most important things they should be spending at least 60–80% of their time on each day. In the interim, put together what you think their MVP list should look like. Get together, compare lists, and come to an agreement on which activities your employees should be spending most of their time on.

**58.** **Let your employees set their own goals.** Someone once asked me, "How do I set meaningful and realistic goals that my employees really grasp?" My answer to that question would be that you don't set meaningful and realistic goals for employees; they set meaningful and realistic goals for themselves. When involved in the goal setting process, employees often set goals that are higher for themselves than their manager would have set for them. The manager then takes on a role as a coach, guiding and making sure that the employees' goals are realistic and attainable.

**59.** **Keep your own ideas and opinions open to reexamination.** Stubbornness is a major hurdle to effective communication. In order to communicate rather than argue, we must keep our own ideas open for examination. As the saying goes, there are three sides to any disagreement: your side, my side and the correct side.

**60.** **Deal with perception, not just facts.** If you're communicating with someone whose perspective is different from yours, don't speak only in terms of "the facts." Rather, speak in terms of how you perceive those facts. Share your perspective based on your personal experiences. It's very difficult to disagree with someone's perception of a situation or issue.

**61.** **Creativity captures an audience's attention.** Creativity is a new angle on an old subject. When the communicator takes a slightly different view, the listener is confronted with the unexpected. That is what captures their attention. Only once you've gotten their attention can you begin to persuade.

**62.** **Give people a reason to do what you need them to do.** If you ask another human being to do something, you need to give them a reason that makes sense to them. People do things for their reasons, not ours. But we seldom take time to provide an explanation that makes sense to them. If we want people to feel like we trust and respect their intelligence, then we must give them explanations that make sense to them.

**63.** **Consistently give positive feedback to others.** Positive feedback or praise is relatively easy to give if we only remember to do it. Unfortunately, it seems that the longer we know or work with someone, the more likely we are to take them for granted. One of the best ways to improve our interactions with others is to consistently express sincere appreciation for the good things that they do.

**64.** **Separate the performance from the person.** Giving someone negative feedback is never easy – on you or on the person it's directed at. One of the most important skills in any human relations interaction is the ability to separate the person from the problem. That allows you to be tough on the problem and soft on the person. By doing that, we reduce the likelihood the recipient of the criticism will react defensively.

**65.** **Provide others with specific feedback.** To get what you need from people, be specific with the feedback you provide. General feedback is very unhelpful. It doesn't provide enough information to create change or make improvements. Move from generality to specificity.

**66.** **Focus on instruction versus antagonism.** Good corrective feedback is instructive versus antagonistic. When you're instructive, you're explaining to a person how they can improve your interactions instead of just pointing out something you don't like. Any time we create negative feelings or emotions, that's antagonistic.

**67.** **Show others how they will benefit from giving you what you need.** To increase the likelihood that you'll get what you need from someone, begin by getting their attention with a benefit that they or the organization will enjoy if they fulfill your request. For example, in a work setting, you might say to your boss, "I think we could speed up customer service response time dramatically if you would consider upgrading our word processing equipment." Rather than simply asking for what you need, you are communicating to your boss that it's a double win.

**68.** **Define "done" in order to deal with perfectionists.** When you're working with a perfectionist, you may never come to an agreement on an acceptable end result. To deal with that kind of a person, always begin by defining "done" in advance. Come up with a very clear definition of what "finished" looks like.

**69.** **Take the time to explain things clearly.** Ever noticed that the more we try to save time by communicating faster, the more time we actually spend dealing with misunderstandings? We think we're saving time by thinking quickly and instructing the other to listen more carefully, when in reality we're wasting time in the long run because the message will likely come through unclear in our haste. The next time you find yourself saying, "Listen carefully because I'm in a really big hurry," slow down and take more time.

**70.** **Avoid “Blue Monday” by not sleeping late on the weekends.** Blue Monday is a feeling that life doesn't really begin until Tuesday. The human body can easily adjust sleep time up to one hour each day. But if, for instance, you get up normally at 6:30 a.m. during the week, and you sleep until 9:00 on Saturday morning, it will take your body about 48 hours to reset its time clock. Instead, get up within one hour of the same time every day, even on the weekends or if you've been up late the night before.

**71.** **Search for the best answer, not the right answer.** Many of us have become so caught up in our search for the right answer that we've missed the point. There's usually more than one right answer. The better approach is to pursue the best answer. That means identifying all of the right answers that we have to choose from and then picking the best one.

**72.** **Remember that time really isn't money.** “Time is money.” How often have you said or heard that? It isn't true: time isn't money. Time is worth much, much more. You can enjoy time without money, but you can't enjoy money without time.

**73.** **The way you spend your working hours truly matters.** The way we spend our working hours is critical for two reasons. First, work can and should be a source of fulfillment. Second, our success at work determines to a large extent how much time and money we have to spend with those people who are most important to us and doing the things that really give us pleasure.

**74.** **Create more time by removing temptation.** Sticking to a schedule takes discipline. One way to improve your level of discipline is to remove temptation. What time-wasters in your life could you eliminate? Are there temptations you need to remove?

**75.** **Treat energy as a scarce and critical resource.** Ambition and a solid plan of action for achieving your goals means nothing if you don't have the energy to follow through. Keeping your energy supply high requires a conscious effort. Remember, that every aspect of your daily life affects your level of energy, from when you wake up in the morning to what you eat for lunch.

**76.** **The time and energy of other people is a crucial resource.** You can't do it all on your own. If you try, you'll burn out and wind up unhappy and unfulfilled. You need the time and energy of other people to accomplish your goals. You must develop the ability to get results with people, learn to aid them in managing their own time and energy.

**77.** **Be both task-oriented and people-oriented.** Successful people are able to balance their relationships with others against their need to produce results. You cannot separate the two. Your potential for seeing results depends on the level of "people skills" you have developed.

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**79.** **Are you being bogged down by monkeys?** Monkeys are born when you delegate unsuccessfully. You give somebody something to do, and within a matter of minutes, they're back in your office asking you how to do it. Don't let people give monkeys back. Support them, coach them, and encourage them, but don't suffer from the illusion that it will be quicker to do it yourself.

**80.** **What will you think about during the last 60 seconds of your life?** No one's last words are "I wish I had spent more time in the office." Turn the seconds into days. How would you live your life if you had only 60 days left? You would live a fuller, richer, and more honest life. Why not live your life that way right now?

**81.** **Think positively.** We now have conclusive scientific evidence that supports the power of positive thinking -- and the effect it has on our success. Positive thinkers look at every situation in its best light. Seeing the good in what seems like a bad situation allows them to see opportunities that negative people miss.

**82.** **Your plan is a road map.** It isn't enough to know where you're going if you don't know how to get there. That's one reason why having a plan is important. Having a plan enables you to evaluate what you do each day and determine whether it would help him achieve the vision you have for your future.

**83.** **Practice makes perfect, and learning how to practice is your responsibility.** Joe Paterno, head football coach at Penn State, puts it best: "The will to win is important, but the will to prepare is vital." We need to actively develop skills for managing our time, energy, and interactions. Unfortunately, these aren't skills they teach us in school. Developing the tools for preparation is every individual's personal responsibility.

**84.** **Application matters more than information.** Success doesn't seem to have much respect for intelligence. We all know brilliant people who are poor and unsuccessful, and vice versa. Success respects those who do more than those who simply know more. Your success comes not from the information, but from the application.

**85.** **Learn a new skill every day.** One skill learned each business day for four weeks will provide you with a powerful arsenal for getting more done. Get a stack of index cards or Post-Its and record your "skill of the day." Keep the notes handy for reviewing -- and utilizing -- daily.

**86.** **Come in an hour early if you need to tack on time to your normal working hours.** If you need to work longer than your normal working hours, add time to the front end of your day rather than the back end. When you stay in the office late at night, you'll be dealing with the interruptions and the phone calls from other people who work late. By coming in an hour earlier each morning, you'll be eliminating most, if not all, of your typical daily interruptions and distractions.

**87.** **Identify and utilize blocks of time when making your weekly plan.** As you put together your weekly plan, you might notice, for example, that you have two or three hours of unscheduled time Thursday afternoon. That would be a perfect opportunity to tackle a big task that you've been putting off or have been struggling to find time to complete. The bottom line, of course, is that if you're not practicing weekly planning, you'll never find those blocks of time.

88. ■

**Focus on results, not style.** It's easy to confuse style with results. If you're getting the results you want, pay not attention to others who question or criticize your system. In our own lives and in our interactions with others, we should be more concerned with what people do than with how they do it.

89. ■

**Practice strategic anticipation.** Strategic anticipation is an acknowledgment of the fact that we need to have a backup plan in case something goes wrong. Brainstorm possible roadblocks, and determine in advance what you're going if things don't go exactly according to plan. You're adeptness at "thinking ahead" can be measured by how quickly you recover from setbacks.

90. ■

**A control freak can never delegate successfully.** A common obstacle to delegation is that those doing the delegating believe it's their job to control people. Instead of controlling people, focus on controlling the results. As we give up control over people, we actually gain control over what really counts -- and that's the results that people produce.

91. ■

**An alternative to the "I can do it better" syndrome.** If we think we can do it better, we try to do it all ourselves. In reality, sometimes we can do it better. But the key question of delegation is not, "Can I do it better?" but rather, "Can the person that I'm delegating to do it well enough?"

92. ■

**A slight revision to The Golden Rule.** The Golden Rule says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The application of that concept, and hence your relationships with others, can be enhanced by remembering that not everyone likes to be treated exactly the same. You could revise the concept slightly to say, "Do unto others as they would have you do unto them."

**93.** **Ask for what you need.** Often, we don't get what we need because people simply don't know what we need. We expect them to be mind readers. The best approach is to always ask directly (no beating around the bush) for what you need.

**94.** **Stick to a schedule for your essential daily life activities.** Since the human body is naturally cyclic, it benefits from a regular schedule of major life activities, the main ones being eating, sleeping, work, and exercise. Varying those major life activities significantly, plays havoc with your energy level. For optimal energy levels, perform these major life activities within the same hourly range each day, including weekends.

**95.** **Take a daily imagination stretch.** Even if you like what you do for a living, it's important that schedule in time for a daily imagination stretch. Imagination stretches can be anything that stirs up your creativity and encourages you to look at things from a new perspective. You can look at the world through different eyes, if we believe that you can and if you take time each day to let your imagination run free.

**96.** **Don't sweat the little stuff.** You've probably heard that statement made many a time. It may sound trite, but when you integrate that philosophy into your daily life, you reduce a major energy drain: stress. Think of it this way, isn't what you thought of as "big stuff" really little stuff when you looked back on it weeks, months, or years later?

**97.** **Concern is productive; worrying is not.** Learn to recognize the difference between worry and concern. Worry is a negative emotion about a possible event; you are focused solely on how you feel. Concern is focused on action. The million dollar question to controlling worry is this question: "What can I do right now to address this situation?"

**98.** **Always strive to improve yourself so that you never become complacent.** In an unpredictable and rapidly changing world, those who remain the same will be quickly surpassed by those who are getting better. The number one killer of excellence is complacency. You must be positively discontent -- happy with what you've been able to accomplish, but fully aware that there's much more you've yet to do.

**99.** **Part of discipline is doing something you don't want to do.** A surefire way to develop discipline is to commit to, and follow through on, performing a task you dislike. Once each day for the rest of your life, do something tough, challenging, or unpleasant. Do something not because you want to, but because it's good for you and it proves that you can do what needs to be done.

**100.** **Couple discipline with spontaneity.** The key to a balanced life is discipline coupled with spontaneity. Too much or too little of either can be fatal to successful living. If today is indeed our last day on earth, we want to make it the best day that we possibly can. If you can string together enough successful days like today, you will have truly lived a full and rewarding life.

**101.** **Don't forget to have fun!** Every day for the rest of your life, do something just for the pure fun of it. The only thing that we're sure of is today. Don't delay joy!



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