



5 Keys To An Effective Day

#1: Prepare Your Mindset

When you think about it, how your day goes (at least what you can control) is related to **what's going on in your mind**. Are you feeling energetic? worried? distracted? happy? bored? agitated? calm? **Don't you accomplish a lot more when you are in a calm, positive state of mind, rather than depressed or anxious?** That's why it is so important to get yourself settled before you get to whatever you are going to do.

Make time for mental preparation that enables you to be at your best. Instead of getting up and rushing to work, allow time (even 5-15 minutes will make a big difference) to read something to inspire and uplift you, help you feel centered and well-grounded. You might like to write your goals for the day, or favorite thoughts. Many people start the day with prayer or meditation.

It's well worth getting up a few minutes earlier to ensure the best quality for your day. Replace rushed and frenzied feelings with calm, constructive thoughts. **Build your day the way you would like it to be**, instead of just reacting to whatever happens. A good mindset is vital to a good day. I believe in you!

#2: Identify Your Top Priorities

Why overwhelm yourself with a long list that can lead to distraction and discouragement? Instead, on a fresh sheet of paper (or three separate notes or 3x5 cards) write down the **top 3 things** you need to do. (You'd be happy to get those three things done, wouldn't you!?) Park the rest in another place: a notebook, planner, computer document, or whatever (a topic for another time). **Give the most weight to what moves you closer to your goals. Remove anything that someone else can or should do.**

Remember Stephen Covey's time quadrants:

1. **Urgent and Important**-must be done!
2. **Important, but not urgent** (often those things that will move you toward your goals, and are too easy to postpone. Better schedule time for those.



3. **Urgent but not important** (often someone else's priority pressuring you).
4. **Not urgent, not important**-eliminate entirely, or save them for your "off" time for fun or relaxation.

Number your top 3 in order of importance and you will have prioritized your work. Focus on the first one until you have finished it or made **significant progress**. (See #4 Focus below). Take a break, then do the same with the second one, and so on. **If you do your top 1, 2 or 3 consider the day a success!**

This approach is much less distracting than looking at a big list, making it easier to stay focused on one thing at a time. We'll talk more about focus in Key #4.

#3: Block Out Time

Waiting until you "have time" to get things done? Worrying about to-do's because you don't know when you can get to them? That's where blocks of time come in. You may need a Reality Check! Are too many things crowding out what's most important? We have to "make time" for the important things. It gives us peace of mind, knowing there is time set aside to do what's needed.

You can use a spreadsheet or go to www.EffectiveDay.com/reality-check. (For complete information, read my article, "**Design Your Day: Optimize Your Time, Energy and Results**" featured in the book *Jump-Start Your Success* with Brian Tracy. You can access it here: <http://www.effectiveday.com/designing-your-day>) Fill in your essentials (like sleep, commuting, work, family, personal routines, etc.) Carve out *prime time (your best energy & environment)* to work on your highest priorities that will carry your life and business forward (such as Focus Time, in Key #4).

Build in extra time as things often take longer than we expect, because sometimes the unexpected happens, and so you won't feel rushed. Build in things you want to do for yourself and others things that refresh you. Even though we don't always follow the plan exactly, a little planning pays off in actually saving time, feeling more relaxed and getting more done.



#4: Focus

One of the top frustrations I hear about is interruptions. But they're not always from other people, are they? Research shows that **we interrupt ourselves most often.** We try to multitask, we get distracted, we think about something other than what we are working on, we think of things we need to do, and on and on.

If we really want to be productive, we need to focus. Multitasking, studies show, actually make things take much longer, as we are shifting our attention back and forth. **We must shut out the world to do high priority work.** Even in an hour or less we can make huge progress plus **reduce those feelings of guilt and stress!**

So ignore email (keep the “dinger” turned off!), let the phone go to voicemail, close the door or go to another room. Keep pen and paper nearby to capture distracting thoughts, and set a timer. Park yourself in that chair and FOCUS for 25 or 50 minutes on the most important thing that will move your life and/or business forward. Take a 5 or 10 minute break (depending on how long you focused) and repeat. Do this as *early* as you can each day and **you will reap great rewards, including peace of mind.**

#5: Don't Let the Email Monster Eat the Heart of Your Day!

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Summary of the 5 Keys to An Effective Day:

1. Prepare your mindset
2. Identify your top priorities
3. Block out time
4. Focus
5. Keep email in its place!

Now enjoy your Effective Day!

Need to get your day under control?

- **Bogged down with piles of paper, email, sticky notes, & stacks of stuff?**
- **Cringe when you think of things falling through the cracks and missed opportunities?**
- **Distracted by clutter, guilt & stress?**

[Inexpensive solution here](#) to **Focus and Gain An Hour A Day—or more!**

<http://www.effectiveday.com/productivity-coaching>