

Get Organised

or why you don't need more hours in a day

Us busy workers are always groaning that we'd love to have more hours in a day – but is that really what we need?

Juggling day-to-day tasks, more in-depth projects and non-urgent jobs that are none-the-less necessary to fulfil long-term aims – not to mention fielding unexpected phone calls, emails and other items that suddenly appear on the “Eek, must do now!” list – can be challenging, to say the least.

Sometimes you can work all day, but not feel that you've got anywhere by the end of it. If only you'd had more time! But do we really need more hours to get everything done – or are there other ways to gain time?

Goal setting

The first step is to set a clear vision. Think about what you want to achieve. Imagine you were driving in a car, before you set off you'd know where you were going, probably have an idea of the best route and how long it might take to get there. If you don't have a clear vision of where you are going, how can you determine the best route to get there and how will you know when you have arrived?

To-do lists

Obvious? Maybe – but they remain one of the best and most simple organisational tools around. And organised time means more efficient time.

Setting goals for each day can ensure that you really make progress. Plus, it's great motivation, as you mark each completed item with a satisfied tick. Your to do lists should tie in with the goals you have set and should be prioritised in terms of importance and urgency. The items that are both important and urgent should be completed first, followed by the items that are important but non-urgent.

To keep motivated pick one task off your list (every day!) that you are dreading, and do it first. When you finish this task it will leave you clear to focus on the remaining tasks without the 'horrible' one hanging over your head. You'll also feel a sense of achievement and this will help push you forward.

Calendars

Many software-based calendars – e.g. Microsoft Outlook, Google Calendar – can help you to not only schedule meetings and events, but also organise other aspects of your time.

Allocate times in the day to tackle tasks on your to-do list and really try to stick with your schedule. Again, this will help you to stay motivated and complete tasks on time.

If you have a task that needs to be completed on a specific day, put it in your calendar on that day, even if you don't allocate a specific time. Your calendar should also list deadlines, commitments and promises you've made, then

the information is always to hand and you are more likely to deliver.

Scheduling your tasks will also help you in retrospect. You'll see how long certain tasks took to complete – and therefore know how much time to allow for them in future.

Don't skip lunch

Think quality, not quantity. Eating boosts your energy levels and helps you to stay focused – and you'll achieve more in half an hour of focused work than in an hour of distracted work. Hence, more time!

Try a short walk, too – it works wonders for your concentration.

Don't be an email slave

If you're really going to get everything done, you should minimise distractions – and email is a big one. You don't need to respond to all emails immediately – why not make that a separate task and answer a load in one go?

Delegate

Sometimes you really have too much to do – in which case, make sure you don't have a premature heart attack and get some help. Use someone reliable who you can trust – there's no point delegating work if you have to do it all over again yourself.

If there's no-one you can delegate to, why not investigate other options, such as virtual assistants? A virtual assistant is a professional support service that operates remotely, acting as an efficient PA. They can take care of various tasks for you, from processing paperwork to carrying out internet research. They are ideal if you don't have the budget or resources to hire extra staff.

Make sure you investigate credentials beforehand – only give your work to trained professionals you can trust.

Focus

If you want to succeed then you need to hone your focussing skills. You need to be able to focus on those tasks that have the highest priority and continue working on them until you bring them to completion. You need to concentrate completely on the task in hand. Trying to do several things at the same time will only lead to you being distracted and less efficient.

Adopt the principle of clear desk – clear head – clear focus!

emperor virtual assistant

clear desk ♦ clear head ♦ clear focus

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