

How Productive Are You?

Do you have a strategy to be more productive? Here are five tips to help you reach that goal.

BY MARK RICHARDSON

Do you know anyone who refers to themselves as a “morning person?” How about someone who says, “I’m a night owl?”

Morning people get out of bed energized and ready to rock, while night owls like to ease into the day or even sleep in as much as they can and get more productive later in the day.

We all have internal rhythms that affect our focus and energy levels. These fluctuations can make us sharper at certain times, and foggier at others. These inner clocks vary greatly from person to person, and are also influenced by age, which is why teenagers are famous for staying up late and sleeping until noon.

When I wrote the book “Control Your Day Before It Controls You: The 7 Steps to Mastering Your Time,” (Advantage Media Group, 2017), I began to study this subject more proactively and personally. I discovered that (for me) writing a book requires a daily commitment to be effective. I found that sitting down between 8:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. was my sweet spot.

If I wrote for more than 90 minutes in one session, I would begin to mentally shut down and my creativity level would begin to drop off. If I tried to write in the afternoon I would get distracted. Not only was the morning most productive for me, but I was also able to truly enjoy the process of writing the book during those hours.

After this experience, I began to drill deeper into my different mindsets and the ideal activities for me at varying times of day. I found that early morning was a reflective or meditative time. I would naturally spend those hours quietly planning or thinking. On the other hand, late afternoon I wanted to do more mundane administrative or reduced thinking activities.



| WHEN | MINDSET | ACTIVITIES | ACTIVITIES | WHERE |
|--------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Early AM | reflective | deep planning | think/exercise | quiet place |
| Mid-morning | creative | design/create | write | office/desk |
| Late morning | produce | presentations/to-do | projects | office/desk |
| Mid-day | interactive | one-on-one/calls | meetings | bounce around |
| Afternoon | wind down | administration | simpler tasks | office/desk |
| Evening | disconnect | catch up | walk/dine | home/trail/bar |
| Late evening | relax | tv/movie | read | home |

This chart represents my internal rhythms and how they can influence my productivity. You can personalize this chart to find out when you are more effective performing certain tasks.

Needless to say, we all don’t have 100 percent freedom to design our day; however, here are five tips that can help make this come to life.

1. Take inventory of your own internal rhythms.
2. Plan your week with the chart (above) in mind.
3. If there is a conflict — meaning you’re doing an activity when it is not ideal — try asking others to do that activity or have that meeting when you are at your best. (You might be surprised that people will tend to accommodate your desire, especially if they know why.)
4. Observe your effectiveness and stress levels. Is it better or worse?

5. Begin to move more medium and long-term interests and goals into the time slots where you are most effective.

You are not going to bat 1,000 percent. But if these methods increase your effectiveness by even 10 percent, you will not only accomplish more but also feel more fulfilled. ■

Mark Richardson is an author, speaker, columnist and business growth strategist. He has written several books on business management including “How Fit Is Your Business?” and “Fit to Grow.” His latest book is “Control Your Day Before It Controls You: The 7 Steps to Mastering Your Time.” All of his books are available on amazon.com. He can be reached at mrichardson@mrichardson.com.

EDITORIAL/DESIGN

Editorial Director Tim Hodson
616.520.2161 • thodson@greatamericanpublish.com

Managing Editor Jasmina Dolce
616.520.2162 • jdolce@greatamericanpublish.com

Retail Editor Abby Kleckler
616.520.2163 • akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com

Digital Content Manager Ana Olvera
616.520.2171 • aolvera@greatamericanpublish.com

Multimedia Designer Amanda Mackey
616.520.2157 • amackey@greatamericanpublish.com

ADVERTISING

Vice President, Group Publisher Bob Bellew
616.520.2164 • bbellew@greatamericanpublish.com

Integrated Media Consultant - East Coast Tiffany O’Kelley
616.520.2172 • tokelley@greatamericanpublish.com

Integrated Media Consultant - West Coast Kim Sammartino
616.520.2173 • ksammartino@greatamericanpublish.com

Classified Advertising Manager Kim Meyers
616.520.2137 • kmeyers@greatamericanpublish.com

Production Assistant Samantha Orsi
616.520.2148 • sorsi@greatamericanpublish.com

STAFF

Corporate Office 616.887.9008

Audience Development Becky Stovall
616.520.2138 • bstovall@greatamericanpublish.com

Business Manager Sally Ostman
616.520.2136 • sostman@greatamericanpublish.com

Creative Director Kristina Howell
616.520.2168 • khowell@greatamericanpublish.com

Custom Content Manager Jess Schmidt
616.520.2141 • jschmidt@greatamericanpublish.com

COO & Director of Custom Media Kimberly Baker
616.520.2135 • kbaker@greatamericanpublish.com

CEO Matt McCallum
mmccallum@greatamericanpublish.com

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