



15 Secrets Successful People Know About Time Management

The Productivity Habits of 7 Billionaires, 13 Olympic Athletes, 29 Straight-A Students, and 239 Entrepreneurs

Kevin Kruse
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Rating

8 10 Applicability
7 Innovation
8 Style

Focus

Leadership & Management
Strategy
Sales & Marketing
Finance
Human Resources
IT, Production & Logistics
Career & Self-Development
Small Business
Economics & Politics
Industries
Global Business
Concepts & Trends

Take-Aways

- Highly successful people view time as their most valuable asset.
- A tightly scheduled calendar relieves stress and increases intellectual focus.
- Identifying your most important goal will help you prioritize your tasks.
- Many of the world's wealthiest entrepreneurs carry notebooks so they can jot down their ideas immediately.
- Brief daily huddles can replace long meetings, reduce emails and unite your team.
- The 80/20 principle holds that 20% of the work generates 80% of the results.
- Delegating as many tasks as possible frees your time for your highest-return goals.
- Many entrepreneurs assign themes to days of the week, such as "focus days" or "buffer days."
- High achievers deal with incoming short-term tasks instantly to avoid extra work and clutter.
- Renewing your physical and mental energy with sleep and relaxation improves your productivity.

Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this summary, you will learn: 1) How top achievers use their time as an asset, 2) How to shed distractions so you can focus your energy on your personal priorities and goals, and 3) How rest and recreation can help you succeed.

Review

Kevin Kruse – *New York Times* best-selling author, *Forbes* contributor and *Inc.* 500 award-winning entrepreneur – combines his skills as a CEO and a journalist to search for common bonds of success by surveying people of great accomplishment. In surprisingly personal replies, billionaires, entrepreneurs and Olympians stress that they make the most of every minute, at work and at play. High achievers follow a fundamental mind-set. They regard time as an asset more valuable than money and they spend every minute wisely. They focus on their top goals. They strip clutter from their workplace and reject time-consuming commitments. Even hands-on entrepreneurs delegate most tasks. In this guide brimming with verbatim insights, top achievers emphasize the need for rest, exercise and even fun – maybe that’s why Kruse included some intriguing apps. *getAbstract* recommends his practical advice to anyone who wants to become more efficient and more successful.

Summary

“Highly successful people don’t think about time much at all. Instead, they think about values, priorities and consistent habits.”

“If you aren’t busy working on your own goals, you’ll be working to achieve somebody else’s goals.”

Fifteen Top Time-Management Tips

In a series of revealing interviews, seven billionaires, 13 Olympians, 29 star students and 239 entrepreneurs explained their 15 most useful time-management secrets:

1. “Time Is Your Most Valuable and Scarcest Resource”

As a CEO irked by constant interruptions, author Kevin Kruse posted a large sign reading, “1440.” He discovered that viewing his day as 1,440 minutes of potential success helped him focus on essential tasks. His employees began emulating his 1,440-minute mind-set, thus increasing productivity throughout his company. Kruse’s interviews and surveys with top achievers confirm that they share this point of view. They recognize time as their most valuable asset. The loss of money, even the failure of a business, still leaves future opportunities to regain ground, but lost time is irreplaceable.

2. “Identify Your Most Important Task” and Do It First

Successful people focus on their top priority, long-term goals and identify meaningful, specific short-term goals they must accomplish first. Breaking short-term goals down into measurable steps guides high achievers to their “most important tasks” (MIT). They concentrate on completing all or part of their MITs before they go on to other activities.

Savvy CEOs confirm the scientific theory that the brain functions at its fullest capacity during the first two hours each morning. Airbnb founder Nathan Blecharczyk makes use of this burst of energy to concentrate on his main priorities. Getting off to an early start each day gives you a work period of relative peace before daily problems arise to distract you from your MIT.

3. “Work from Your Calendar, Not a To-Do List”

A to-do list can become a monster. Vanquishing one problem only creates many more to add to the list. Research indicates that most list-makers never complete 41% of their

“Items on a to-do list can sit there forever, constantly getting bumped by things that seem urgent in the moment.”

“Highly successful people don’t have a to-do list, but they do have a very well-kept calendar.”

“When people talk about ‘time management,’ what they really want is to get more stuff done with less stress.”

“Successful people take immediate action on almost every item they encounter. They know that to be efficient, they want to expend the least possible amount of time and mental energy processing things.”

planned jobs. Daily lists tend to randomize the order of importance among your tasks, thus muddling your focus. Most successful CEOs rely on strictly scheduled calendars. Sticking to a schedule allows time for you to focus first on your MITs. Deciding what tasks deserve calendar space or blocks of time keeps you from wasting time. Entrepreneurs report that tightly organized calendars reduce stress.

Power players make their calendars work hard and play hard by reserving time for solo concentration, for one-on-one communication and for team input. They also set aside specific chunks of time for relaxation. Briana Scurry, goalkeeper for two gold medal-winning soccer teams, consistently took days off from training to rest and regain perspective. Highly successful people set aside time to care for their health and their personal lives, families and communities.

4. To Overcome Procrastination, “Beat Your Future Self”

Most people say procrastination is why they choose easier tasks first or believe they will perform better later, but don’t measure up. Instead of delaying, try these “procrastination busters”:

- **Do now what you promise you’ll do later** – Defeating procrastination means doing what you should do right this minute instead of trusting some future version of yourself “to do the right thing” later. If you say you’ll diet, exercise or do that irksome job in five minutes, do it now. Have a salad before you order ice cream, jog before you collapse on the couch and proofread that report before you watch videos. People think they’ll be better later, but they probably won’t. To succeed, be better now.
- **For motivation, imagine your results** – Whether finishing a task will give you pleasure or failing to get it done will cause you pain, imagine the outcome of your actions.
- **Share the burden** – Being responsible to someone else who shares your goal, like a fellow jogger, creates an emotional commitment. Enlist an “accountability partner.”
- **Grab the carrot; avoid the stick** – The promise of a future reward lures some people, but often the fear of punishment works better. Devising a personal non-completion penalty in the form of a charitable contribution can turn your lack into a community gain.
- **Behave like the person you hope to become** – Adopt the behaviors of your ideal self to anchor your values and make a firmer commitment to them. Even going through the motions will help you achieve your personal best.
- **Embrace the imperfect** – The desire for perfection may intimidate you into inaction. Acknowledging imperfect work is a first step to easing the stress that keeps you from starting at all. “Settle for good enough;” you can always improve your output later.

5. “There Will Always Be More to Do”

Successful people accept their limitations. From a mountain of tasks, they choose their daily priorities, try to achieve them and leave the rest at the office for another day. While work may be never-ending, they know they must set reasonable boundaries. Overcoming the onus of constant responsibility will help you lead a normal life and care for yourself and your family without guilt.

6. “Always Carry a Notebook”

Some of the world’s most famous billionaires, including Sir Richard Branson, attribute their success to keeping a notebook handy. Jotting down stray thoughts, meeting notes and great ideas creates indelible impressions, both on paper and in your mind. Research shows the brain uses several intertwined functions to process handwritten information. This results in more active, accurate recall than typing. Once you capture your ideas, notes or lessons on

“The act of taking notes by hand involves active listening, cognitive processing and finally recall...People who take notes with a laptop tend to just robotically record spoken words, without doing the mental work to process it.”

“Cognitive capacity declines throughout the day; you must build in frequent mental breaks to recharge and maintain productivity.”

“If you send less email, you’ll also receive less email.”

“Every yes will be a no to something else when the time comes. Understanding that there is always an opportunity cost will make you hesitate and really be careful about what you are agreeing to put on your calendar.”

paper, transfer them to a computer for permanent future reference. Date your notebooks so you can refer back to them.

7. “Control Your Inbox”

A survey by the McKinsey Global Institute indicates that office workers spend up to one-third of their days reading and replying to emails. Be aware that “email is a great way for other people to put their priorities into your life.” Use the “321-Zero” system to keep email in its place: Three times a day, spend 21 minutes reviewing your messages. Your goal is an inbox with no new mail.

This arbitrary time limit will force you to reply with clear, succinct answers. Act on each email when you open it. Decide if you should work on it immediately, enter it on your calendar for later action, delegate it or file it. Frugal use of the Copy and Forward commands help you avoid snowballing responses that clog your inbox. Clever use of the subject line can alert the recipient as to whether your email requires urgent action or a later response or is simply an FYI note.

8. “Schedule and Attend Meetings as a Last Resort”

Eliminating formal meetings can save everyone wasted time. Don’t set up or go to meetings unless “all other forms of communication won’t work.” Many entrepreneurs use a brief daily huddle as a more efficient, informative and unifying way to get their team moving. The late Steve Jobs famously avoided meetings by substituting a short, eminently escapable stroll. Billionaire entrepreneur Mark Cuban advises, “Never do meetings unless someone is writing a check.”

9. “Say No to Everything that Doesn’t Support Your Immediate Goals”

Business magnate Warren Buffett advises that, “very successful people say no to almost everything.” They realize that each commitment of their time may result in the loss of other opportunities. They protect their most valuable asset, time, from any request that doesn’t further their long-term priorities.

10. Follow the “Powerful Pareto Principle”

The Pareto principle holds that 20% of your effort accounts for 80% of your results. Aspiring billionaires apply this economic principle to identify the most efficient ways to deploy their exceptional skills or to complete important tasks. Use this principle to identify the 20% of your activities that will provide 80% of the reward for your efforts.

11. Focus on “Your Unique Strengths and Passions”

As part of a productivity experiment, a Harvard research team asked employees to analyze the chores they do on based on three questions: Could they drop the task entirely as unnecessary? Could they delegate it to a competent subordinate? If they had to do the task, could they examine it to develop a more efficient solution? By following this program, each employee saved an average of “six hours of desk work and two hours of meeting time each week.”

A CEO who regularly delegates to trustworthy employees gains more energy and productivity and suffers less stress. Outsourcing easier chores frees up your time and mental energy to concentrate on meaningful goals and high return projects. *Youility* author Jay Baer advises trying to delegate “at least 15% of what you’re doing.” However, some successful people refuse to delegate certain “grounding” tasks. For example, Mark Cuban likes to wash his own laundry.

“People who actively look for things to delegate report higher levels of productivity, happiness and energy.”

“If you don’t have an admin, you are an admin.”

“The single most important thing when it comes to time and productivity isn’t a tactic or a trick – it’s a shift in mind-set.”

12. “Batch Your Work with Recurring Themes”

Innovative entrepreneurs assign themes to their office days so their employees can concentrate on one specific type of work. Scheduled weekly and monthly themes can include “meeting” days for one-on-one discussions, team gatherings or group training seminars. Other themes include “focus days” to concentrate on certain crucial tasks and “buffer days” for catching up. Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz sticks to a “No Meeting Wednesdays” theme. Devoting a staff’s entire day to one kind of work encourages collective concentration that spurs productivity.

13. If You Can Do a Task in “Less Than Five Minute, Do It Immediately”

Top achievers seek immediate return on their time. To expedite incoming work, they enforce a “touch it once” principle:

- **Handle email immediately** – Delegate as much of it as you can. Complete instantly anything you can handle in just a few minutes. If you can’t resolve an email request quickly, add it to your calendar.
- **Update your calendar as needed** – Move time-consuming tasks from email to your calendar as a reminder to act on them as soon as possible. Create weekly time blocks to deal with routine tasks, such as paying bills.
- **Constantly clear clutter** – Be mindful of time wasted searching for mislaid items. Maintain order in your surroundings. A messy environment can cause stress.

14. Routinely Use Early Mornings to “Strengthen Your Mind, Body and Spirit”

Most entrepreneurs embrace a morning routine to re-energize physically and mentally. They recharge with plenty of water, healthy food and exercise. Busy CEOs invigorate their minds with reading or meditation. Uber-achiever Arnold Schwarzenegger rises at dawn to read several newspapers, do a cardiovascular workout, and eat a breakfast of fruit and oatmeal.

15. “Productivity Is About Energy and Focus, Not Time”

Hard workers make room in their schedules for relaxation. Spending more time on work doesn’t guarantee more or better results. Maintaining maximum energy levels and working in short spurts aids productivity. The brain’s capacity to process data efficiently falters during the day, dropping from full energy to fatigue about every 90 minutes. Frequent breaks for water, nutritious snacks and light exercise rejuvenate the mind and encourage greater productivity. Billionaire Mohammed Dewji – the CEO of Tanzania-based MeTL Group – relies on a midday workout to renew his energy and focus.

Take enough down time to build the energy you need to perform. Olympic athletes depend on sleep to revitalize their bodies. Shannon Miller, seven-time Olympic medalist in gymnastics, enjoys brief power naps. Consistently healthful food, fun, rest and recreation renew your physical stamina and mental focus. This fosters greater productivity and enhances your life at play and at work. Successful people build the energy and focus to make each minute count.

About the Author

Kevin Kruse is a *New York Times* best-selling author, frequent *Forbes* contributor, consultant and *Inc.* 500 award-winner. He founded several multimillion-dollar companies and conducts presentations on productivity at conferences worldwide.

Highly successful people know what they value in life. Yes, work, but also what else they value. There is no right answer, but for many, values include: family time, exercise, giving back. Kevin Kruse is the author of the bestselling book *15 Secrets Successful People Know About Time Management* and the ready-to-print infographic: *15 Things Ultra Productive People Do Differently*. Originally published on Forbes. Tweet. *15 Secrets Successful People Know About Time Management* The Productivity Habits of 7 Billionaires, 13 Olympic Athletes, 29 Straight-A Students, and 239 Entrepreneurs KEVIN KRUSE New York Times Bestselling Author First Edition THE KRUSE GROUP Philadelphia What if a few new habits could increase your productivity by 5x or even 10x? Based on survey research and interviews with billionaires, Olympic athletes, straight-A students, and over 200 entrepreneurs—including Mark Cuban, Kevin Harrington, James Altucher, John Lee Dumas, Grant Cardone, and Lewis Howes—New York Times bestselling author, Kevin Kruse, answers the question: What are the secrets to extreme productivity? More than that, the secrets that they reveal are easy to implement, and highly effective. The secrets are: Time is Your Most Valuable And Scarcest Resource. Identify Your Most Important Task (MIT) and Work On It Each Day Before Doing Anything Else. Work From Your Calendar, Not a To Do List. Email Is A Great Way For Other People to Put Their Priorities In Your Life; Control Your Inbox. Schedule And Attend Meetings As A Last Resort, When All Other Forms of Communication Won't Work. Say No To Everything That Doesn't Support Your Immediate Goals. Eighty Percent Of Outcomes Are Generated By Twenty Percent Of Activities. Focus Your Time Only On Things That Utilize Your Unique Strengths And Passions. Batch Your Work With Recurring Themes For Different Days Of The Week.