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4 MINUTES TO READ · 800 WORDS

Enough with the Busywork. Get Productive.

By Christopher Earley

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For me, work comes down to busywork versus productive work. Busywork does not move the needle. Busywork just keeps us standing in place. I believe this type of work has to be eliminated as much as possible. Productive work, on the other hand, advances us forward. Productive work for me directly results in greater job satisfaction, less stress, and more money. Here are some tips to help you cut down on your busywork and actually get things done.

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The 80/20 Rule

This to me is the ultimate productivity game changer. The 80/20 rule states that 80 percent of your results come from 20 percent of the effort. This allows you to do more productive work and less busywork. What is that particular work for you that is truly productive? What are the things you do that generate 80 percent of the results? Identify and focus on those tasks as much as

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delegating. When you do delegate, you have to do it in a very deliberate way. Delegation, when done often and correctly, can provide an incredible boost to your productivity while also lowering stress levels at the same time. Whenever delegating anything, be sure to be clear on the following: how the work should get done, what a successful outcome will look like, and when does the work need to be completed.

Limit Distractions

To me the two primary distractions and impediments to peak productivity are the phone and email. With email, get out of your inbox as much as possible. Email activity to me is classic busywork that is not a productive use of your time (80/20). I am a recovering email addict because I used to check it constantly. I noticed not only that reading and replying to email was making me less productive, but, much more important, it was making me crazy and stressed out. Now, I only check email twice per day and never on weekends. In fact, I am now looking to hire a freelancer to whom I can delegate my inbox entirely. If you know someone good that you use for this purpose, I would love a referral.

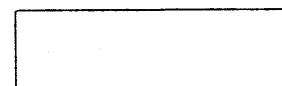
The phone is a major time killer, specifically in the form of unplanned inbound calls. I now only take scheduled inbound calls. If anyone calls and the call is not already scheduled on my calendar, my receptionist simply schedules a callback for the following day. If I call someone and reach their voicemail and want that person to call me back without having to schedule a callback, I instruct the person to say "apples" when they call. If they say "apples" when they call, then my receptionist knows to patch that person directly to me without scheduling a callback. This code word is the exception to the rule of no unscheduled inbound calls.

Scripting

For me, Sunday mornings are a great time to script my week. This ensures that the important,

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This is a fascinating axiom that states that work will expand to fill the time you give it. For example, if you think an opposition to a motion for summary judgment will take three hours, then it will take at least that amount of time to complete. But if, instead, you give that task a two-hour window to complete, then it will likely take two hours. Give this a try and see what you find.

Be Intentional

All of the above ideas are all about being intentional. Productivity does not happen by chance but rather by intention. Think honestly about what you do each day. Are you busy too much and productive too little? Be intentional as much as possible about doing productive work, and equally important, be intentional about doing as little busywork as possible.

I encourage you to consider these ideas to maximize your personal productivity. If you have other productivity ideas, I would love to hear them. Please email me at cearley@chrisclearley.com or call me at 617/338-7400.

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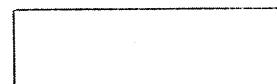
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