

Hey, everyone,

Earlier this week we talked about why establishing a clear purpose and vision and defining specific goals is an important first step toward increasing your productivity—and getting more satisfaction out of your work.

There are a number of productivity systems out there that can help you to implement this kind of strategy. One that I've found helpful is called Get Things Done, by David Allen. I don't follow the system 100 percent, as it's a little too structured and rigid for me. But I've taken some really useful tidbits from it.

One of them is the concept of doable tasks. As David points out, a lot of us get stuck with productivity and time management is that we put things on our "to do" list that are not actually doable. For example, "eat better today" is not a doable task—it's more of a goal. "Eat nine ounces of protein at breakfast and at least one cup of green vegetables today" is finite, concrete, and doable.

When you only put doable tasks on your to-do list, you're a lot more likely to follow through because you don't have to think about them much before you do them. On the other hand, if you have an item on your to-do list that is not doable, you'll probably procrastinate because you have to think about it further and plan more before actually doing it.

Another useful part of the Get Things Done system is the monthly, weekly, and daily plan. I use a simplified version of this to maximize my own productivity. During the monthly planning session, I reflect on my my vision to determine whether it is still current for me. Assuming it is, I then make a list of the three to five things that I want to accomplish in the next month that would bring me closer to realizing this vision. I also write down what I accomplished during the last month so I have a way of measuring and celebrating progress.

During the weekly session, which I usually do on Monday mornings, I look at my monthly goals and I make a list of the three to five things I can accomplish during the coming week to get me closer to the monthly goals.

Then, at the beginning of each day, I review my weekly list and write out three discrete, doable tasks that I can accomplish during that day that would help me to fulfill my weekly plan.

This may sound like a lot of work, but the monthly session usually only takes about a half hour, the weekly session about fifteen minutes, and the daily session only about five minutes. Yet this small investment in time has paid off enormously in terms of increasing my productivity and my sense of satisfaction at the end of each day, week, and month.

I've included a handout that guides you through this process in the materials for this week. I hope it's as helpful for you as it has been for me!

Before I sign off, I want to mention another book that I've found to be helpful in staying focused and productive. It's called *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*.

The way of the Essentialist isn't really about getting more done in less time, it's about getting only the right things done, and letting the rest go. It's a systematic discipline for discerning what is absolutely essential, then eliminating everything that is not, so we can make the highest possible contribution towards the things that really matter.

There are so many distractions and demands made on us in the modern world, and most people I know feel like they barely have enough time for the basics in their lives, much less time to start new projects and accomplish their goals. But how much of what we do on a daily basis, both personally and professionally, is absolutely necessary? What activities that we are currently spending time on could we either eliminate or cut back on? These are the questions that *Essentialism* will help you to answer.

This book really evaporated any lingering resistance or guilt I felt about saying no to new opportunities that come my way, and it led me to make some changes that freed up more time to spend with my family just resting and having fun. It's listed in the resources section for this week, and I highly recommend reading it.

Okay, that's it for now. See you soon!