Hey, everyone,

Now that you've clarified your purpose, vision, and goals, the next step is to talk about how to get more done in a shorter period of time—without burning yourself out. To that end, this week we're going to cover three very important tools or skills: batching/scheduling, delegation, and automation.

Batching refers to grouping similar tasks together, like doing intense work during times of the day when your mental energy is high, doing all of your "in town" errands at once so that you make one trip instead of four, or checking email only at certain times of the day instead of responding to them as they come in.

Batching has been one of the single most important tools for increasing my productivity. Here's how I put it into practice.

First, I group different types of work together. For example, I batch meetings and focus periods together within a day or week. Instead of having a meeting at 9:30, 12:30, and 2 p.m., I do all of them in a single block of time, between 3 and 4:30 p.m., for example, and use the first several hours of the day for work that requires uninterrupted focus. If you are breaking up your day every few hours with meetings or phone calls, it will be very difficult to get a lot of work done. It's a lot easier to get distracted and thrown off track, and most of us need transition periods before and after meetings to really sink into a more attentive mental state.

Another example ... when I was producing the content for this course, I did all of the recording of the videos in two full days of shooting, rather than doing multiple shorter periods. This way I reduced travel and preparation time, and it made fitting the shoots into my busy schedule a lot easier.

Second, I batch checking and responding to social media accounts and email together. Let's face it —social media and email are like kryptonite for productivity. This is especially true now that smartphones, tablets, and computer operating systems are set up to notify us whenever something happens in one of these accounts. But have we ever stopped to ask whether this is a good idea? Do we really need to be notified immediately when someone responds to a Facebook post we wrote or a Tweet we sent out? Is it absolutely essential that we are notified when a colleague or patient sends us an email?

Certainly in some lines of work, the answer is yes. If you're an ER doc on call, you need to keep your phone or pager close to you and be immediately notified when you're needed. But for the rest of us, this simply isn't necessary, and it's a huge distraction and time and energy suck.

I have two suggestions here. The first is to turn off notifications on all of your devices, with the exception of phone and text messages and appointment reminders on your calendar. If someone really needs to reach you, and it's important, they will likely have your phone number and can either call or text. Otherwise, it can almost certainly wait.

The second is to only check your social media and email accounts at specific periods throughout the day. When and how frequently these periods occur will depend on the specific nature of your practice and work with patients and clients, but in general, I'd suggest checking no more than three times a day. I recommend scheduling these periods directly into your calendar, just as you would schedule an appointment. Then you only open the applications or browser tabs you use to check email and social media accounts during these periods and resist the temptation to check them at any other time.

This can be really hard at first, especially if you're conditioned to checking these accounts throughout the day. Social media and email are addictive. Studies have shown that notifications for emails and social media trigger the same dopamine response that occurs with drugs, food, and sex. Dopamine causes you to want, desire, seek out, and search, and it increases goal-directed behavior. Checking email and social media provides an almost instant gratification of this seeking behavior, which probably explains why the average person checks looks at their phone more than 150 times a day!

Turning off notifications will definitely make this easier, because you won't be reminded so often. This can also be daunting for some people, because of the fear of missing out on something important. But I've talked to CEOs and founders of billion-dollar companies and venture capital funds that have managed to get by without notifications, so I know that you can too!

One thing you may want to do is set up an autoresponder in your email account, or at least a custom signature, that tells people you are only checking email a few times a day and asks them to text or call you if it's important or an emergency. While I've never felt the need to do this, I know that it helps some people to feel a little more comfortable with batching their email and not checking it throughout the day.

Before we move on to delegation, here are a couple tips on scheduling.

Meetings should be limited to twenty to thirty minutes. I rarely schedule meetings longer than thirty minutes; in the vast majority of cases, that is all the time that is required. I know others limit to fifteen minutes, but I found that was often too short, so twenty minutes is the default for me.

I suggest only accepting meetings that directly contribute to the realization of your purpose and vision. I'll often get requests from various people who want to have a conversation or grab a cup of coffee or talk to me about a program or product they are promoting or any number of things. In a world where I had unlimited time, I might be inclined to accept some of these requests. But in the real world, there are only so many hours in the day. Aside from my work obligations, I also have my commitment to my family, my own health, time for leisure and rest, etc. There just isn't enough time to fit it all in, so I will only say yes to the meetings/conversations that directly contribute to my vision and goals.

Finally, I suggest that you schedule everything that is important to you into your calendar. I schedule meditation periods, exercise, time with Sylvie, dates with my wife Elanne, play, and anything else that I care about so that they have as much visual importance as my scheduled work

commitments. Initially you might feel resistant to having so many things on your schedule, but at least give it a try. I have found that the structure is not confining, but liberating. Instead of spending time and energy trying to decide what I should do next, I simply follow the plan I've laid out for myself—and since I have spent time creating this plan in accordance with my vision and goals, I can be confident that if I follow it I will get where I want to go.

And scheduling things that you care about doesn't mean there isn't room for spontaneity and flexibility. Plans sometimes change. The schedule isn't meant to be a prison; it's a guide to keep you focused.

Now let's talk about delegation. The dictionary definition of delegate is to entrust a task or responsibility to another person, typically one less senior than oneself. That's a pretty good starting place for this discussion.

The curse of most business owners is that they often have trouble delegating. By definition, entrepreneurs are people that like to be in control, and to some extent, their insistence on being in control is in large part what allowed them to reach a certain level of success. But at a certain point, this insistence on maintaining control becomes an impediment to future growth and even more success. The entrepreneur becomes the bottleneck.

The inability to delegate is also the main reason that many entrepreneurs burn out or develop health problems. Since they have to be involved in everything that happens, the more their business grows, the more they have to be involved in. While this is possible early on in the business's life, it is completely unsustainable as the complexity and diversity of the business's activities increase.

I experienced this firsthand in my own business. Early on, it was just me and an office manager/ bookkeeper that I initially hired. I was treating patients, managing my private practice, writing blog articles, producing my podcast, creating digital programs, answering customer service emails, ordering inventory for my online store, and a million other tasks. I was working longer and longer hours, and although I loved the work I was doing and the impact it was having, I was already starting to burn out.

It became clear to me that I would need to not only hire more people, but also learn to delegate more and let go of being involved in the minutiae of my business. I had to get out of the weeds, or I simply wouldn't be able to continue.

Here's what I did. Each time I found myself doing a task, I asked myself the question, "Do I really need to be doing this, or could it be done faster, better, or cheaper by someone else?" This goes back to the concept of Unique Ability that we talked about in a previous video. My unique ability is creating content, whether that is a podcast, a blog article, a digital education product, or a training program. It is not customer service, managing projects, managing people, designing websites, or creating systems or procedures. So I committed to delegating everything that didn't fit into my unique ability to someone else.

Of course this takes time and financial resources. If you're just starting out, you won't be able to hire a full team. But the mindset is what's important. If you have this goal from the beginning, you will create the foundation for a "self-managing" or "self-multiplying" business that can grow without your direct involvement in every last detail. You'll be more likely to hire that next contractor or employee sooner, rather than later, which will free up your time to focus on the things that only you can do, and that is produce more revenue for your business.

But delegating isn't always easy. It requires a lot of preparation. When you do things yourself, you can improvise and fly by the seat of your pants. You don't have to write anything down in advance or even really decide what the expected outcome might be. When you delegate, you have to do all those things.

You also have to expect a temporary increase in effort and time as you bring someone new on board and train them. There are definitely times when I've delayed hiring someone or outsourcing a task because it simply seemed easier to do it myself. And if you have an activity that only needs to be done once, that's probably true. But if it's something that is repetitive, it's almost certainly better to invest the time/energy once to hire someone and let them continue to do it over time.

Finally, delegation obviously doesn't mean complete abdication of responsibility. Although I have people that help me with design, development, customer service, project management, human resources, etc., I still need to supervise many of these activities to ensure that they reflect my vision and goals. However, this is made much easier by having an entire company that is organized around my strategic objective and operating principles and employees that are working within their own unique abilities. We'll talk more about this in the full course.

The last tool I want to talk about is automation. Whereas delegation involves handing a task off to another person, automation involves creating a system (usually with technology) that can be set up once and then run without direct input after that.

A good example of automation is an email autoresponder. When someone signs up for my email list at ChrisKresser.com, they will automatically receive a sequence of emails on a pre-determined schedule over the course of about four weeks. The first email is sent out immediately, the next one three days later, the third three days after that, and so on. This happens automatically, without any intervention from me or anyone on my staff. I initially wrote the emails, my designer designed the email template, and my developer programmed the sequence in Mailchimp, my email provider. Now, any time someone subscribes to my list, they receive this series of emails with no extra work on our part. That is automation.

The trick to identifying processes that can be automated is looking for repetition. Anything that happens more than once, or that you do for more than one person, can often be automated. One example might be sending intake documents to patients, which could be done automatically after the patient applies using an online application, rather than sending them individually each time via

email. Others would be deleting junk mail from your inbox, buying staples/products via auto-ship so they just show up when you need them, automating social media sharing of your blog posts and podcast episodes, etc.

Automation is also something we'll talk more about in the full course. For now, I've included some helpful articles that you can read which will get you started.

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