

WEEK 1: PLAN

We often hear the phrase, 'Work smarter not harder', but how does this principle apply to everyday life and help us get the results we desire? The answer lies in good time management, organizing and planning how much time is spent on specific activities. It's important to start with an understanding of where your time (minute by minute) actually goes each day. You may be surprised to find that your expectation is different than your reality.



AUDIT YOUR TIME

Where does your time go throughout each day? Track how many minutes you spend on each task to easily identify areas in which you could improve.



Keep a time diary each day for one week to determine how you are spending your time.

- How long does each task/event take?
- Do you have any "black holes" where you are wasting time? (i.e.: surfing the Internet, checking social media sites, texting, etc.)



Identify your optimal productivity time. Optimal productivity time (OPT) is the time of day when you're at your highest mental capacity and energy, meaning you can achieve the best results in the most efficient amount of time. Each person's work rhythm is different. The time diary you are keeping will help you to identify patterns in productivity. Restructuring your work day to align with these patterns will allow you to concentrate your most energy-draining and thought-consuming tasks during your peak productivity times.



SET A SCHEDULE-NOT A DEADLINE

Set yourself up for success by creating a schedule to operate by rather than a deadline to perform by. Choose a goal that is important to you and then create a schedule to consistently make small steps toward that goal.



Be early. Arrange your schedule so that all work is submitted a day or two ahead of time.



Microproductivity. Break large, time-consuming tasks into smaller ones to make organization easier while staying motivated.



Start with the end in mind. Begin each day with a clear idea (or list) of what you want to accomplish THAT DAY. A good habit is to end each workday by writing out a "to-do" list for the next workday to ensure you hit the ground running the next morning.



Review your time audit and identify tasks that took longer than you expected. Are you exceeding the time limits you set for each task? If so, do you have "time-wasters" such as unscheduled breaks, browsing on your phone or mindlessly checking emails? Try to block off sections of time in which you focus solely on the task at hand.



Utilize your calendar. Working backwards, create a schedule of major work items and the time frame in which they need to be accomplished. Mark these project timelines and deadlines on your calendar.



*Remember...no day is the same.