

# Get More Done – Productivity Hacks

Efficiency

Time is a precious commodity. Each year there seems to be more tasks that need to be completed in our work in schools, in the same amount of time. The start of the year is the ideal time to make sure that we are being as efficient as possible and using our time well. These productivity hacks can help get more done in less time.

## Focus – Multi-tasking is NOT the Answer

Schools are such busy places, we often have many tasks on the go at one time. The ability to multi-task or “juggle many balls in the air” at one time is held in high esteem. However, research indicates that we aren’t actually multi-tasking, we are in fact task switching. We endeavor to progress a number of tasks at the one time by alternating between each of the activities. It takes time and intellectual capacity to constantly work out where we are up to in a particular task and then decide and action what the next step is to progress that task. Wherever possible we should aim to focus on a particular task to complete the task or at least reach a significant stage or milestone.

## Control Your “Spotlight” – manage your attention

It is vital that we are judicious in managing our attention and direct our mental energy. According to Herbert Alexander Simon, a Nobel Prize winning researcher on human decision-making, “A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention”. Through technology we are more connected and have more access to information than ever before. However, this access can be overwhelming and distracting. To achieve more we need to manage our attention and minimize distractions. There are always lots of things we ‘could’ be doing with any time we have available. The challenge is to avoid distraction and focus on the task we ‘should’ be doing.

## Reward Yourself

If there is a particular task that you have been avoiding, set up a ‘carrot’ as a reward for staying focused and completing the task. “Once I have.....then I’ll.....”

My reward is good coffee! At the beginning of the day I often identify the toughest challenge or task for that particular day and only allow myself to have my coffee reward once that task is completed.

## Capture Ideas – Use a Notepad to Brain Dump

Our minds are incredible. Whilst we can be focused and endeavouring to concentrate on our work, our subconscious mind can capture our attention with great ideas and alerts that also need our attention. When something comes to mind that requires your attention, write it down. This allows you to come back to the idea at some later stage and quickly return to the task at hand.

Having a notepad and pen beside my bed, allows me to quickly jot down the thought that wakes me in the middle of the night and return to sleep. I found it impossible to get back to sleep whilst trying to remind myself “Don’t forget to ....tomorrow!”

Writing it down is a brain dump that gives my subconscious permission to go back to sleep. Whilst I confess that I don’t turn a light on whilst scribbling the note and sometimes struggle to read my own handwriting when I wake up, most times I have deciphered the message before the first bell.

## Key points

Productivity hacks help us get more done in less time

Multi-tasking is really task switching and takes time and intellectual capacity to work out what to do

A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention

Avoid distraction and focus on the task you ‘should’ be doing

Use a notepad to capture ideas and quickly return to the task at hand

The hunter who chases two rabbits, catches none.

Confucius

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