GET MORE DONE

WITH YOUR TO-DO LIST

Everyone seems to have too much to do and not enough time to do it in! Busy people, busy lives…**How on earth can you use the precious time you do have to power your way through your To-Do list and pump-up your productivity?**

Well – I've learnt how to do this the hard way. You see, I am as bad as the next person with getting distracted! I have hoards of emails to deal with, continual messages coming through via my Facebook feeds, websites to look at, webinars to watch…There is always something more exciting to grab my attention than simply working through my To-Do list!

But in order to manage the workload that comes with running two businesses, a community project, a family and a social life, I have had to become **EXTREMELY** disciplined.

I am going to share with you now how I have learnt to get absolutely masses of stuff done each day by using a To-Do list in a specific way.

Firstly – Create your To-Do list

I often do this the night before so that my brain is clear and relaxed ready for sleep! There is nothing worse that lying awake at night thinking about everything you've got to get done or worrying about forgetting something! I grab a pen and a piece of paper and I start my list.

I write down everything that is in my head that needs doing. This could include:

- **Core Work** (this is the work that you are paid for)
- **Correspondence** (emails, telephone calls)
- **Marketing Activities** (blog writing, email campaign writing, newsletters and so on)
- **New Business Development** (identifying prospects, nurturing people who have enquired etc)
- **Admin** (filing, accounts etc)
- **Social Media (**updates or group chats)
- **Family & Personal Stuff** (eg book dental appointments, buy laces for school shoes!)

Use the space on the next page to write a To-Do list of your own. It shouldn't take more than a minute or two to empty your head of all those jobs that need doing. Sometimes I find it helps to look in the diary to see what's coming up in the next few days and weeks – it can act as a great prompt.

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skills to go

To-Do List for _____(enter day)

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Secondly – Allocate time against each task

Let's assume that you have 10 things on your list to achieve today, and that you have 7 hours available in which to complete everything.

Hold the 7 hours at the back of your mind whilst you work down your To-Do list, task by task, estimating how much time you are prepared to allocate to each task.

Note the subtle difference here; I didn't say estimate how long each task would take, I said estimate how much time you are prepared to allocate to each task.

I estimate in minutes, usually in chunks of 15 or 30 minutes.

See my example below:

To-Do List for Wednesday

Write blog for website	45 mins
Return Emma Jones' call	15 mins
Write email campaign for next webinar series	60 mins
Look at Google Analytics for last week	15 mins
Write proposal for client A	45 mins
Schedule tweets for next week	30 mins
Write outline for new workshop	45 mins
Renew insurance	15 mins
Design new free download for website	60 mins
Answer yesterday's emails	30 mins

At this point I do a quick tot up to check that my time estimates have not taken me way over my available 7 hours.

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Thirdly – Decide a running order

Different people do things differently! Procrastination is a terribly time thief and I sometimes find the best way to tackle a task that I've been avoiding is to do it first & get it out of the way! This is also known as 'eat the frog'!

Essentially you need to decide in which order you will now tackle your To-Do list. Tempting as it may be, I don't suggest you start with clearing your email Inbox. This could distract you or mess up the plan you have now beautifully put together!

Schedule your emails for a time when you might be flagging – after all you don't need to be firing on all cylinders to answer your emails, but you might need to be on top form to speak to a client, write a proposal or design a new product.

Take your To-Do list and create a running order for all those tasks. Decide what you are going to tackle first, second and so on.

Fourthly - Get cracking, with a timer(!)

So now you are ready to start. Remember:

1. Create your To-Do list

2. Allocate time against each task

3. Decide a running order.

This planning should take no longer than 5 minutes in total. This is a 5 minutes of great investment that will save you potentially hours across the day!

Now all you need to do is to crack on with task number 1 on your list. But here is the essential rule: **you MUST use a timer to check that you don't over-run on the task!** This might sound crazy **BUT IT REALLY WORKS**! Setting a timer on your phone (or using a kitchen timer) will keep you focused and aware of what is happening to your time. If you finish before you allocated time is up, great! You can start the next task.

What about if you haven't finished the task when the timer goes? Well – the choice is yours at this point. You can either steal some time from any spare that you have in the day (I call this your buffer…to allow for interruptions or unexpected tasks) or you can complete the task on the following day.

You will be amazed at the way your productivity soars using this technique, and how far less distracted you allow yourself to be. As you use the technique more and more, you will also get better at allocating time to tasks, and to breaking tasks into manageable chunks.

Remember, if you need any help at all, just drop me a line via the website – I am here to help you Miranda@skillstogo.co.uk!

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