

Introduction

To discover the secret to extreme productivity, interviews were conducted of more than 200 ultra-productive people including 7 billionaires, 13 Olympians, 20 straight-A students and more than 200 successful CEOs and entrepreneurs. Asked a simple, open-ended question: "What is your number one secret to productivity?" After analyzing all of their responses, several key themes emerged.

Credit: Kevin Kruse is the author of the bestselling book *15 Secrets Successful People Know About Time Management*
<http://www.packworld.com/trends-and-issues/workforce-issues/things-ultra-productive-people-do-differently>

SECRET #1: They don't use to-do lists.

Throw away your to-do list. Instead, schedule everything on your calendar. It turns out only 41 percent of items on to-do lists are ever actually done according to research by iDoneThis. And all those undone items lead to stress and insomnia because of the Zeigarnik effect—the psychological phenomenon where things weigh on our mind if we don't have a plan to complete them. Highly productive people put everything on their calendar and then work and live from that calendar. "Use a calendar and schedule your entire day into 15-minute blocks. It sounds like a pain, but this will set you up in the 95th percentile," advises the co-founder of The Art of Charm, Jordan Harbinger..

SECRET #2: They focus only on one thing.

Ultra-productive people know their Most Important Task (MIT) and work on it for one to two hours each morning, without interruptions. Tom Ziglar, CEO of Ziglar Inc., put it this way: "Invest the first part of your day working on your number one priority that will help build your business." What task will have the biggest impact on reaching your goal? What accomplishment will get you promoted at work?

SECRET #3: They avoid meetings at all costs

When I asked Mark Cuban to give me his best productivity advice, he quickly responded, "Never take meetings unless someone is writing a check." Meetings are notorious time killers. They start late, have the wrong people in them, meander in their topics and run long. You should get out of meetings whenever you can, hold fewer of them yourself, and if you do run a meeting, keep it short.

Tips for Productivity

SECRET #4: Process email only a few times a day.

Ultra-productive people don't "check" email throughout the day. They don't respond to each vibration or ding to see who has intruded into their inbox. Instead, like everything else, they schedule a time to process their email quickly and efficiently. For some that's only once a day; for me, it's morning, noon and night.

SECRET #5: They theme days of the week.

Highly successful people often theme days of the week to focus on major areas. For decades, I've used "Mondays for Meetings" and make sure I'm doing one-on-one check-ins with each direct report. My Friday afternoons are themed around financials and general administrative items that I want to clean up before the new week starts. I've previously written about Jack Dorsey's work themes, which enable him to run two companies at once (Twitter and Square). Batch your work to maximize your efficiency and effectiveness..

SECRET #6: Practice a consistent morning routine

My single greatest surprise while interviewing more than 200 highly successful people was how many of them wanted to share their morning ritual with me. Hal Elrod, author of *The Miracle Morning*, told me, "While most people focus on 'doing' more to achieve more, *The Miracle Morning* is about focusing on 'becoming' more so that you can start doing less to achieve more." While I heard about a wide variety of habits, most people I interviewed nurtured their body in the morning with water, a healthy breakfast, and light exercise. They nurtured their mind with meditation or prayer, inspirational reading, and journaling..

SECRET #7: Energy is everything

You can't make more minutes in the day, but you can increase your energy which will increase your attention, focus, decision making, and overall productivity. Highly successful people don't skip meals, sleep, or breaks in the pursuit of more, more, more. Instead, they view food as fuel, sleep as recovery and pulse and pause with "work sprints."

THE 15 SURPRISING THINGS ULTRA PRODUCTIVE PEOPLE DO DIFFERENTLY

15 Secrets Successful People Know About Time Management. By John R. Nix, *Time* bestselling author. Kevin Kruse is the only guide based on actual research into thousands of working professionals and on interviews with Mark Cuban and other billionaires, Olympic athletes, straight-A students, and over 200 entrepreneurs.



#1: They focus on minutes.

They use 1,440 minutes in every day. Invest only one of them intentionally.

#2: They set daily priorities.

Identify your most important task (MIT) and work on it for two hours each morning.

#3: They don't use to-do lists.

They use a calendar to do this. Instead, schedule everything on your calendar.

#4: They beat procrastination with time travel.

Your future self can't be fooled. What can you do now to make sure your future self does the right thing?

#5: They make it home for dinner.

There will always be more that can be done. They block your priorities and end the day with a win.

#6: They use a notebook.

Capture everything in your notebook so your mind can stay on task; move to-do's to the calendar.

#7: They only check email three times a day.

Don't let email or social media interrupt your flow; schedule times to read and respond to email.

#8: They avoid meetings at all costs.

Don't hold meetings. If you have to, keep them short and make everybody stand up.

#9: They say "no" to almost everything.

Every "no" is actually a "yes" to something else. Say no to everything outside of your goal areas.

#10: They follow the 80/20 rule.

80% of outcomes come from only 20% of activities. Identify the 20% and ignore the rest.

#11: They delegate or outsource almost everything.

Identify your unique ability, utilize it, and outsource everything else.

#12: They have work themes for days of the week.

Create a set day of the week schedule to focus on major areas each your tasks during the day.

#13: They teach things only once.

If something will take less than 10 minutes to complete, do it immediately.

#14: They have a consistent morning ritual.

Wake up every day and give yourself 60 minutes for mental, physical and spiritual health.

#15: They don't think about time; they focus on energy.

Maximize your energy to maximize productivity. Focus on sleep, diet, exercise and short breaks throughout the day.

Grab your book at www.15TimeSecrets.com.

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Page 1 of 2.

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