

The Productive Entrepreneur

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Introduction

Success in any aspect of your life is a result of planning out your goals and utilizing your creativity. The entrepreneurial life is a blessing and perfect personal growth opportunity that allows you the flexibility of working your professional life around your personal life instead of having to work your personal life around your professional life, as it often is when you're working for someone else.

Operating and growing as a work-from-home entrepreneur takes some serious self-discipline. While any business run from home poses some challenges, there are unique challenges that face those that are running the bulk of their business online. Taking business online is an easy concept for many people to get started with, but not always seen as regular and devoted business, many online entrepreneurs are trying to 'fit in' their online business in a busy life and not making the complete commitment to the business.

Although the ability to work from home provides a great deal of benefits that effect much more than just your work life, the challenges that come up can make the ideal of working from home an extremely difficult endeavor. Business needs to be taken seriously to succeed. Even if you only have 10 hours a week to work your business, you need to be consistent, plan out your progress, stay focused and remember all the other parts of your life that need attention too!

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Gaining the right kind of knowledge and putting that knowledge into practice will set you up for a happy and productive work life that will wonderfully mesh with your personal life. Read the following tips and advice with a determined mind that will see each idea as an opportunity to try new activities and open the door to a clearer picture of how you can use your time wisely to run an online business from the comfort of your home.

Planning - 15 Tips to Organize Your Business

Being a productive entrepreneur takes a great deal of planning, but don't let this discourage you if planning and organization hasn't been your strong point. Most of the planning gets done occasionally to whenever-you-deem-it-necessary and once you learn some effective methods of planning then it will become a natural task for the operation of your business. The following tips will help in creating goals and implementing strategies to see them realized along with maintaining the motivation to keep yourself on track.

1. Set short-term and long-term goals

Goal setting is effective in every area of your life. Giving yourself a clear picture of what you really want in life - in the immediate future and years down the road - is an excellent way to keep yourself motivated and energized to take action. Start the process by asking yourself:

“What do I really want to do with my life?”

Don't allow limitations of time and money distort your answer. Just assume that there is nothing that can stop you from eventually achieving and having what you truly want.

These goals **do** have to be written down and kept somewhere you can look at the regularly. Put your goals into concise sentences using the “SMART” system as outlined below:

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Here's how to make SMART goals:

S

Specific

State exactly what you want to achieve.
Can you break a larger task down into smaller items?

M

Measurable

Establish clear definitions to help you measure if you're reaching your goal.

A

Action-Oriented

Describe your goals using action verbs, and outline the exact steps you will take to accomplish your goal.

R

Realistic

Give yourself the opportunity to succeed by setting goals you'll actually be able to accomplish. Be sure to consider obstacles you may need to overcome.

T

Time-Bound

Now much time do you have to complete the task? Decide exactly when you'll start and finish your goal.

2. Brainstorm strategies to achieve your goals.

Once you've defined some short-term and long-term goals you'll want a list of possible strategies to achieve the results you're looking for. Create a list of strategy options that encompass various alternatives you could use deliver the results you're looking for. Move beyond your comfort zone and think of any wild idea that comes to mind - you want a large list of ideas to work with. Keep this whole list to refer to in the future, but pick a few ideas from the list to schedule in and add to your To Do list now.

3. Strive for greatness and don't compromise

I'm sure you've heard of many stories about people achieving great success online. Perhaps you've even thought that they had something you didn't or were in a better position to start with than you. Or maybe you even discredited the story as some marketing ploy and their 'rags to riches' story wasn't true at all. While there are a lot of schemers out there, there are also a lot of people that have genuinely focused on a goal and worked hard and smart to achieve it. **You can do it too.**

You can achieve whatever great things you put your mind to. When you're adding value to other people's lives, it's just a matter of making a plan, getting organized and never giving up until you can make your mark in whatever area is meant for you. Don't just settle for affiliate sales (although these sales are a nice bonus) and earning money from the success of others. That's what being an employee is all about and if you're interested in working online than you have already made the decision to be your own boss. Find your niche, explore the opportunities and don't settle for a mediocre business that doesn't have a soul. Don't compromise on your opportunity for greatness!

4. Counteract procrastination

Procrastination is one very bad habit. It affects most self-employed people from time-to-time due to the fact that there's not always someone expecting you to produce something. It's fueled by fear, lack of confidence, and disorganization. Putting things off is a sure way to produce an ineffective business. Beat procrastination by building up new habits that make you get tasks done, like scheduling in time to do the things you've put off. Habit

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breaking and making takes about 21 days to take effect, so keep this in mind as you're struggling to stop your learned habit of procrastination and creating a new habit of getting things done.

5. Grow from the accountability effect

Create accountability in your work life by joining or creating a group of like-minded entrepreneurs where you share plans, ideas and goals in weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly meetings. You can also gain this same effect with a one-on-one accountability relationship. This type of set-up creates an inner desire to report back the results of your objectives and gives you that little extra incentive to get your plan in action. Additional benefits of being accountable to others are: gaining inspiration from the insights of others, being in the position to assist others in their business focus, and developing deep and trusting relationships.

6. Use the power of your mind to your benefit

The human mind is an extremely powerful tool in your business and we're not talking about intellect. The sub-conscious mind is your motivator, your dreamer and your source of productivity. It can also be your discouragement, your criticizer, and your source of inactivity. Used properly, the power available in your mind will have an extraordinary effect on your life and your business. Keep your thoughts positive, keep them creative and, most importantly, keep away the damaging and defeating thoughts that are passed on by your environment!

7. Create flexible schedules and adaptable to do lists.

Unless you're the type of person that loves to stick to a specific routine and can adhere to a strict schedule, then you'll really want to cut yourself a bit of slack and create schedules and to do lists that allow for shifting of times, and deferring tasks. Working from home can involve work time getting delayed from the original plan and projects taking longer than anticipated. Just be aware of not letting work always get put on the back burner, which is very easy to do in home office. Working from home does allow for a different approach to planning and scheduling.

When creating a schedule for a day, week, or month in advance (whatever is the best process for you) don't schedule the whole day hour for hour. For example, plan for marketing tasks Monday morning, website maintenance Tuesday afternoon, social media tasks Thursday evening, etc. Whenever you have time for business block it out for the morning, afternoon or evening instead of 9-11am.

8. Use online resources to create a schedule.

It only seems appropriate that your online business should use online resources. This is effective as you can keep focused on what you need to do with a click into a browser instead of switching your focus to paper, another program or another device. This is also great for anybody that happens to use more than one computer or device for their work as you can quickly access your schedule, as long as you've got an internet connection, which is necessary for your business anyway.

Google Calendar is a great option for this. You can sync Google Calendar

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with an iPhone or Android device and set it up to notify you in different ways of upcoming entries in your schedule. Create a strict or casual schedule - whatever you feel is best for you - and if you tend to like the paper approach you can print off your schedule as well. As with most Google products, it's quite customizable to your preferences.

9. Use online resources to create a To Do List.

All the little jobs that you want to do or need to get done should be written down on a list. This list will be comprised of thoughts and ideas that pop into your head, tasks to do to move toward your goals and regular tasks that you need to do in the operation of your business. Using an online program for this has the same benefits as using an online calendar

Trello is a flexible and user-friendly option for organizing your ideas and projects in one area. You can create many boards and different organizations, which is very helpful when you want to start a new project in your business. A board consists of a 3 column listing of "To Do" "Doing" and "Done" (which you can change the names of) and you can add in comments, checklists, due dates, files and customize to your liking in several different ways. You can also share a Board or Organization with other people, so you can collaborate with others on a project and see what's been done, who has done it and what needs to be done. It's also beneficial to share your task list with some that can simply check up on your progress to add that bit of accountability motivation.

10. Make it official and make a business plan

Many home businesses never get the benefit of a well thought out approach to operations and expectations. Although business plans are especially popular for those who are in search of financing, every person that would like to make money with their business should have spent the time creating some type of business plan. You don't need to focus on the financial details as much as a traditional plan would, but you want to create a plan of how your business will operate and what the products and/or services are. A business plan makes you think about various parts of running a business and clarifies its viability in the marketplace. It may also force you to think of a more viable business venture if your original idea does not look as good written down as it did in your head. The Internet is full of great resources to assist you in creating an effective business plan.

11. See each day as a fresh start to your business

Don't let any set-backs from yesterday or any point in the past allow you to judge your effectiveness for today. Only focus on what did work and what has been going well for you so far and leave all the negative stuff behind you. Each day will have a new plan of attack that you use to your advantage in building your business. Frustration and defeating thoughts are BIG productivity stealers and have no place in growth of a business.

12. Create a small routine to get you "in the mood" to work

If you were leaving home to go to work, you would have a transition period of getting ready for work at home and traveling to a location and then settling into your work space. When working within your home, you need to create some type of routine that becomes a sub-consciousness signal for your

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brain to get focused on work. As an example, you might prepare yourself a drink (coffee, tea, smoothie), bring it into your work area, turn on some non-vocal music, then read a book on personal and/or professional development for 15 minutes.

13. Make a Today List

Similar to a To Do List, a Today List is an informal yet intentional way of thinking about what you want to accomplish in your day. Get yourself a pad of sticky notes of whatever size you would like to be able write down daily tasks. You may want to consult a 'master' To Do list or some type of schedule that you have created to be aware of what your overall tasks are. Write down short, to the point notes of what you plan to accomplish in your day then stick this somewhere where you can easily glance at it throughout the day. You can add to this list as the day goes on as you might think of a phone call you need to make or new task that comes up. The most important part of this exercise is the conscience thinking about your day and writing down your intentions as you begin working. This little list should get chucked at the end of the day and don't make any judgments on yourself about whether you did what you had planned to at the beginning of the day or not. Start a new list at the beginning of a new working day. If there are tasks that you want to remember to do that didn't get done from your Today List then just transfer them to your schedule or business To Do List.

14. Do the small but essential tasks first

Attending to email, making phone calls or updating your social media accounts may be possible essentials that need daily attention. They are also things that can be distracting if you are returning to them throughout your working time so that is why it is effective to do these jobs to begin with and possibly to finish off with as well. You will likely have other responsibilities that fit into this category, depending on the type of business you run - think of all those little things you do that take focus away from

other jobs.

15. Don't get caught up on getting everything perfect.

Many precious hours can be wasted on spending too much time perfecting something. Although you want to portray a certain level of professionalism, don't be overly concerned with getting the perfect look, the perfect words or the perfect plan. You can always add something on your To Do list if you're not really satisfied with how it initially worked out. This allows you to at least complete the task at hand and move on to other productive tasks.

Effectiveness: 15 Tips to Getting Results

To be productive you must approach your business with a specific mindset that is relaxed, determined and open. It is most helpful to create processes and delegate when needed and keep focused on the task at hand while avoiding distractions that take that focus away. Being effective at everything you do and with the thinking you do is a major contributor to a productive and prosperous business. Use these following ideas to get the most out of your work day.

16. Keep your desktop free of clutter.

At the end of office time for the day put everything in its place, which can be a combination of drawers shelves, wall files, filing cabinets and any other organizing elements you are utilizing. Clutter in your environment, clutters your mind and can lead to inefficient practices from disorganization. Keep this great little saying in mind: *“Everything has its place and there’s a place for everything. If there’s not a place for it then you don’t need it!”*

17. Create a space to put papers that you need to deal with eventually.

This may be a box (sized slightly larger than standard letter sized paper and 3-4 inches in height) on your desk, a set of stackable organizer inboxes, or a multi-pocket/single pocket wall file (great for freeing up desktop space.) Unless you feel that you need the separation, don’t create one space for work and one for home. Consider this a one-stop drop for anything you can deal with later and schedule a regular time that you attend to these papers. Don’t let it pile too high so that you feel daunted by

the effort to go through it.

18. Create systems for your business.

The most efficiently run businesses are made up of a regulated and unique group of tasks that are created once and repeated again and again and again. If you've been in business for any length of time you probably have a few systems in place already, even if you don't realize it. Make the time to write down a step-by-step guide to the mechanics of your business; what you do in your home office that affects your business. This process will not only help you in defining and organizing the tasks you do (or should do) as an entrepreneur, but will also allow you to have someone else keep your business running if you're unavailable for various reasons, which moves us on to the next tip...

19. Outsource business tasks that you don't need to personally do, or don't want to do.

Every entrepreneur has "stuff" to do that isn't part of their skill set and isn't enjoyable to them. Generally, finances don't allow them to pay others for essential business tasks, especially when starting up, yet many people will find that as soon as they offload those unappealing chores they become more efficient at other jobs and their business really starts to flourish. In our multi-communication society, outsourcing business projects is easier than ever and definitely has various benefits to hiring an employee. You can find freelance professionals that are eager to do any project you may have through a variety of avenues. Whether you post a job on one of the many freelance bidding sites (Elance, oDesk, Freelancer, to name a few),

search for a virtual assistant online or through your local resources, or just have a friend or family member complete some work, you can put yourself in a position to achieve more with less time.

20. Pay attention to business tasks during your business time - and do them only during business time.

This may seem like it's an opposite of being productive. After all, with our technology at the level that it is we can have the devices and access to our business 24/7. And why not attend to a few emails or phone calls if time permits during non-business hours? First of all, because those business matters won't really have your full attention if you're out shopping or visiting with friends, and secondly, just as you should give your business your full attention, you should also give the other areas of your life your full attention. This advice may not be for everyone, but perhaps it's just something for you to think about for now.

21. Be devoted to just one project at a time.

Whether it be work or personal and remove all other programs and browsers that aren't related to what you're working on. As well, clear your desk/ working space of anything that is not related to the task at hand.

22. Set boundaries of when you answer emails and telephone calls - and any other form of communication you may be connected to.

Try to keep in mind that these various forms of communication are for your convenience and not for the convenience of others. You can't be as focused and efficient when you're letting distractions always take you away from the task at hand. Schedule in a period of time once or twice a day to

respond to and initiate conversations, whether it be through email, texting, phone calls or any other form of communication with customers, business associates and personal contacts.

23. Use the Pomodoro Technique

This technique was created in the 1980's by Francesco Cirillo, which assists in achieving greater focus and better time management. It's a fairly simple concept of breaking down your work day into blocks of 25 minutes and builds on that main practice to teach more in-depth techniques of blocking out distractions, accurately estimating the length of time to do a task, and other organizational tips. You may not want to be a true 'Pomodoro' follower, but reading the details about this technique will definitely provide you with some insightful ideas to better manage your home business.

24. Schedule closed-door and quiet periods of time.

While it can be good to be accessible to family members if needed, you may need to make at least a couple of 'no interruptions' times in your week. Some tasks just need your full uninterrupted attention and if you can do them without any chance of an interruption, then you will be able to produce much better results. Not everyone will need to use this tactic, but if you find that you're less productive due to minor interruptions then stand-up for yourself and your business and make your family aware of the times you have set aside to complete your high concentration tasks that may also mean a quieter time for everyone in the house.

25. Do productivity checks.

This will be a great new habit to foster that will help to keep you focused and stopping lots of those time-wasting activities. Every hour or two check in with yourself asking “Is this the best use of my time?” Set an alarm to go off, set up Google Calendar to send a notification to your desktop or simply stick a note on the wall in your direct sight with this question on it. Eventually you will get in the habit of asking this question regularly without external prompts and not get into unproductive work to begin with.

26. Don't get lost in multi-tasking

Creating an environment that is extremely efficient involves a sustained time of focused work. It can be difficult to really get focused when, each day, you're switching from one activity to another, just to get things done. Being able to schedule your time so that you complete a months' worth of blog posts in one day or set up some email broadcasts for the next two weeks allows your brain to really get into the one project and produce better work in less time than if you broke up the same kind of job over several days.

27. Always generate a growing sense of optimism.

Expect that good things are going to be plentiful. Have the sense that life will bring good rather than bad outcomes and that when you encounter less than ideal situations you will be able to overcome it. Living your life with an optimistic mindset will allow you to see the possibilities and take advantage of opportunities that come out of hardship.

28. Create your business around your passion

The most successful people have attested to the fact that their passion for their business drove them to be innovative, determined and keep focused on their tasks. Be sure that your business focus is somehow connected to something you're passionate about and you'll find that staying motivated and productive feels much easier.

29. Schedule your more challenging work during your prime time.

Are you a morning person, or does your energy rev up after 6pm? Determine when you are at your peak performance and schedule the more difficult work, or the stuff you are not so keen on doing, during these times. The routine tasks and more enjoyed activities can then be scheduled for the other times of the day.

30. Incorporate a reward system for a job well done.

Although you've got "the big picture" incentive of having an awesome online business for long-term motivation, it's useful to create some short-term incentives to help you get through a challenging undertaking or detailed project. Gear the incentive to your own preference of what you see as a reward.

Balance – 15 Tips to Energize Your Work Life

Use the following tips and advice to create a more well-rounded life.

Working from home affords you the luxury of taking longer breaks, creating a unique home life and fulfilling your desires related to every part of your life while running a successful business. Your life goal should be to have a prosperous life, and although this can mean financial prosperity, it more importantly points to prosperity in all areas of your life that will result in an increase in your enthusiasm for your business. Strive for balance and creating harmony between work and life. The following tips focus on creating balance in your life that will directly influence your business.

31. Always be learning and growing

Always have a book on the go. Reading is a vital component to self-development, which you should be making time for on a regular basis. This is to enrich both your personal development and your professional development. Just making time to fit 15 minutes of reading in will benefit you greatly in all areas of your life, which will directly result in better results in your business.

32. Schedule your time for business matters and don't let it impose on your personal time.

Don't let all the "to dos" get in the way of your personal life. Working from home can end up with some people working all the time, which sort of defeats the purpose of being self-employed. Make that schedule for

business tasks and work within that schedule. There can be the occasional exceptions of course, but when you find that you're not sticking to the flexible schedule that you had created, you either need to re-think your time or be more disciplined in your approach to working time.

33. Don't aim to please everyone.

Be clear on what your motives and intentions are and don't let someone else's opinion sway your informed decision. This relates to people in your personal life and in your business. Whether it's customers that want more time from you or quicker responses, or a spouse that feels your online pursuits are taking up too much time or doesn't understand your passion, don't let the opinions of others change your business process when you know that's what you want. Don't be completely close-minded either. Hear people out and consider their opinion, then stand up for what you feel is right.

34. Share your work schedule with your family.

Posting a print out of your weekly schedule on the fridge, office door or other visible area will let your family members know when you have planned to work and even what kind of work you'll be doing. This helps to avoid someone in your house planning something that requires or requests your involvement during your work hours and allows you to share a bit of your business life with your family.

35. Discuss your business challenges and accomplishments with family and friends.

Have one or two people that you can regularly talk to about what's happening with your business. Especially when you're first starting out, it can be discouraging to feel like you don't have anyone to share the achievements and the frustrations with. Even though you can connect with many other people online in the same situation as you (which you should do) it's much more effective to get to vent and share with someone you already have an established relationship with.

36. Take at least a 15 minute break every 2 hours of work.

When you're mainly focusing on your computer screen, you can get fatigued much more quickly than if you are moving around. After sitting at your computer for 2 hours, get up and get a drink, have a stretch, take a walk, anything that gets you on your feet and not staring at a screen. You'll find yourself more focused and refreshed after a short break.

37. Use the freedom of your work-from-home lifestyle to have breaks that take you outside your house.

If you're working a number of hours in your home business then take breaks where you can possibly do some personal errands or leave the house for an hour or two to take in some physical activity or meet up with someone. Shifting your focus for a longer length of time and creating a day that is filled with a variety of activities provides a greater feeling of satisfaction with your day, as you've been able to give attention to several areas of your life.

38. Take a reading break.

If you haven't made the time in any other part of your day to devote to your personal growth through reading then take a reading break. Find yourself a comfortable spot to lounge in, go outside if possible or just locate yourself in a different spot than where you were working. It's good to get a change of scenery and fit in the always important element of learning.

39. Use your work break to give attention to the other areas of your life.

The most effective kind of break to take is a break that has you giving attention to some other areas of your life. Using your time wisely in this way will create a more productive life and not just center on a more productive work life. As the points above described more specific things you can do with your essential break, it is important to keep in mind that making your work break a short and sweet time to see family or a lengthy outing to experience various other things is an integral aspect to creating a balanced life that will have a direct result on the productivity in your business.

40. Be nutritionally conscience.

Eating right is essential on so many levels, but you will find you are so much more motivated and productive if you're feeding your body the right kind of fuel. Get educated on what the best diet is for you and eat a variety of foods that are providing your body with the appropriate nutrients that it needs to function at an optimum level. Try to eat with the focus that food is for the proper functioning of your body and not just for your taste buds. Of

course, moderation is the key and having little treats now and then is acceptable, but make the majority of meals and snacks about providing your body the right fuel.

41. Engage in fun and rejuvenating physical activity.

Physical activity is a great energizer and provides your whole body with overall feeling of satisfaction. Although any type of exercise is beneficial, it is an added bonus when you can get some exercise while having fun and possibly spending some quality time with family or friends. A few examples of this type of invigorating exercise is biking, brisk walking, playing sports, skipping, jumping on a trampoline and rock climbing - just to name a few of your options. Even if you just take a regular trip to the gym and give your body a workout, you'll reap the rewards of physical activity. The overall point here is that exercise can and should be integrated into your life and it doesn't have to be some rigorous workout in the gym. There's a whole world of possibilities.

42. Nourish your spiritual side.

You are a spiritual being that needs to regularly nourish that aspect of yourself. If you don't feel drawn to an organized faith or religion, just be connected to the spiritual nourishment of nature. Realize that there is more to life than just what you see and think about and take time every day to become aware of your inner spirit through meditation, communing with nature, or learning about various spiritual aspects of humanity.

43. Make time for face-to-face socialization.

Get connected face-to-face with people in all aspects of your life, whether they be family, friends, business associates or casual acquaintances. Try to make brief encounters and lengthy visits a chance to really connect with someone and not just a passing of time. You never know what may come of a conversation where you are truly in the moment and making the most of your time with someone.

44. Schedule in time to nurture the most important relationships.

Just being around your spouse or your children, or any other vital people in your life, isn't going to be an effective way to value that relationship. You have to spend quality time with the people you love and this is easily left out if you're not aware of the lack of connection you may have. If you find you're not connecting with those special people in your life on an intimate level then schedule in a weekly 'date' where you spend time with one another and get a chance to openly talk.

45. Be an ongoing source of inspiration for others.

Being an encouragement to other people to have great aspirations, be persistent in achieving their goals and be open to new opportunities creates a greater sense of ownership in all you are planning to achieve in your business and personal life. Keep the momentum by reaching out to other people that you know personally and that you connect with through online sources. When you are constantly inspiring others you will be building a habit of determination and success that will lead you to living your life to its fullest potential.

Live the Life of a Successful Online Entrepreneur

Surround yourself with empowering messages and people and avoid negative voices and mediocre minds. All the challenges that are faced by those working their business from home are eventually overcome by getting rid of those ineffective habits and renewing their life with a set of new productive habits that are the building blocks to a successful and well-balanced life. Building an online business is an achievable feat for anyone - you don't need to start off with special skills or have a lot of money in the bank and you don't need to have everything figured out. Learn as you go and be open to change, especially the change that needs to take place in your mind to think and execute plans like a determined entrepreneur.

Take risks and try new things that have the potential to get you in a position of growth and wisdom. Gain knowledge wherever and whenever you can to keep motivated and informed. Planning out various aspects of your business, being effective in your approach and having a life that is balanced in all areas will provide you a clear path to complete life of fulfillment.

Don't count on the success of your business niche, count on the success of you. If you focus the right attention and determined attitude to keep at it and don't get stuck in a rut or a process that doesn't work, then you'll always be able to roll with the punches and keep on keeping on.