FIVE STEPS TO INCREASE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY

ORGANISATION & TIME MANAGEMENT

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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With individuals and organisations working, home schooling and managing their social action projects remotely due to the spread of COVID-19, we are navigating a new normal that may not lend itself to productivity.

So, we've put together five simple tips for creating a productive work and headspace at home. 2019 Legacy Award recipient Gabby Tan has also included her personal advice to help you achieve your goals.

1.   SET ACHIEVABLE GOALS
2.   CREATE A ROUTINE
3.   TAKE A BREAK
4.   CREATE A WORKSPACE
5.   STAY CONNECTED

1. SET ACHIEVABLE GOALS_

Start by setting yourself some realistic and achievable goals. If you're overly ambitious or set yourself too many, you'll inevitably never achieve them, which is demotivating and leads to unproductivity.

Instead, focus on SMART goals, which are: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound

Write a list! Break down bigger tasks into bite-sized aims for each day so they don't seem too overwhelming. Writing down these achievable daily goals on a to-do list so you can check them off will also give you a sense of progress and fulfilment

There are loads of free project management apps out there, such as Trello, which enables you to categorise and manage your to do list.

Gabby Tan
2019 Legacy Award Recipient
Read her story

GABBY TAN, 2019 LEGACY AWARD RECIPIENT

Make a realistic to-do list - In the morning I really like to categorise all my tasks in order of urgency and importance and then set myself a realistic list to tackle for the day. It helps me stay on top of things and focus on one task at a time.

2. CREATE A ROUTINE_

Get into a routine that works for you, where you wake up, work or study, and have breaks at roughly the same time every day. Your body clock will gradually adjust to the new routine through regulating your sleeping and eating patterns, and make you feel more productive.

Discover when you are most productive (are you a morning person or a night owl?) and build your schedule around your peak productivity periods.

Don't forget to include things like exercising and socialising into your weekly plan too – without downtime, you'll see your motivation drop. If possible, factor in roughly 30 minutes of exercise each day. Even if it's just a brisk walk around the block before you sit down at your desk.

If you use your phone or computer a lot in the evenings, make sure you put them away at least 30 minutes before you go to bed. The blue light from these devices tricks your brain into thinking it's still daytime, making it harder to fall asleep.

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> Give yourself something to look forward to everyday - whether it's baking, your favourite movie, a new book, or an early night, I always try to plan something fun at the end of a day that helps me relax and take my mind off work.

3. TAKE A BREAK_

This comes back to creating a routine. You need to give yourself time to relax throughout the day as taking breaks will help you stay happy and healthy and avoid burning out.

Taking breaks doesn't mean checking Instagram 20 times a day. By 'break' we mean take yourself away from your computer and do something totally unrelated.

Go for a walk, do some exercise, have a cup of tea or a chat with a friend. Whatever it takes to help you switch off. Hopefully you'll come back feeling refreshed and motivated to get stuck back in.

You might think that working solidly for five hours is a great achievement but it's almost impossible to work productively for that long, particularly if you make it a daily habit. Quality over quantity!.

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> Be kind to yourself – we are all navigating new normal throughout these unprecedented times so try not to be too hard on yourself if you're not feeling as efficient as you'd like to be. Listen to your body when you need rest and practice self-care as much as you can.

4. CREATE A WORKSPACE_

Shut off any distractions. Whether that's music, the TV, other people in your home, or your phone. You may want to disable your social media accounts, turn off push notifications or work with your phone in another room.

Be honest with yourself when thinking about what kind of worker you are. For example, some people are more productive when listening to tunes, whereas others find loud noises a distraction and can really get in the way of their ability to focus.

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> When I work, I use an application called "Self-Control" to block sites like YouTube and Facebook on my laptop for set amounts of time and keep my phone outside my room which definitely helps me stay away from my biggest sources of distractions.

If you can, set up a dedicated workspace so you have a clear division between your personal and work life. This includes a comfortable desk and chair (try not to work in bed!). Investing in a mouse, a desk chair, or even a desk plant can increase productivity.

Establishing clear 'office' hours and locations for yourself ensures you switch off at the end of each day. Having these boundaries also send a clear message to other members of your household that you're working.

Don't work in your pyjamas! Simply getting dressed and moving from your bedroom to your workspace will increase productivity. It will psychologically get you in the right mind set and makes sure you're ready for those spontaneous video chats.

5. STAY CONNECTED_

Communication is essential for anyone working remotely and keeps us motivated. Using a variety of channels to discuss both your professional and personal life prevents you feeling isolated.

Read our top tips on 10 Ways to Stay Mentally Healthy Whilst Physically Distancing.

Schedule in time to connect with other people to give you a sense of community. Face to face calls on Zoom for example, can make you feel less alone.

Remember, everyone works differently. Be honest with yourself about what's getting you the best results and run with it – good luck!

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I define my workspaces and times as best as I can so I sit and work at my desk for my scheduled work time and then don't go back my desk for the rest of the day once I'm done. Fighting the urge to curl up in bed while answering emails is definitely more of a challenge nowadays but so important to maintain a good working environment!

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We're proud to be the only charity set up in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, and her belief that young people have the power to change the world. It's a big mission but there are two things within it that we focus our charity's efforts on – young people and change.

Throughout all our programmes and initiatives, 'change' for and by young people is central. We celebrate this by recognising young change makers with a Diana Award, the most prestigious accolade a young person can receive for their social action or humanitarian work.

We hope you found this resource useful and wish you all the best in your social action journey. If you would like to help us create more resources and recognise even more young people with a Diana Award, you can make a donation by visiting https://diana-award.org.uk/donate/

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