



*Five things you could do in the
next hour to get more done today*
Geoff McDonald

Let's start...

- ❶ Flick through this document to see what's here.
- ❷ Pick one of the five strategies to read fully.
- ❸ If this will help you get more done in the next hour follow the steps. If not, read another strategy.
- ❹ Start.

Fire-up your motivation

1

To fire-up your motivation complete this a simple exercise. Spend less than 15 minutes writing your response.

1 A great author once wrote...

"I could see myself thirty years on, wearing the same shabby tweed coats with patches on the elbows, potbelly rolling over my Gap khakis from too much beer. I'd have a cigarette cough from too many packs of Pall Malls, thicker glasses, more dandruff, and in my desk drawer, six or seven unfinished manuscripts which I would take out and tinker with from time to time, usually when drunk. If asked what I did in my spare time, I'd tell people I was writing a book – what else does any self-respecting creative-writing teacher do with his or her spare time? And, of course I'd lie to myself, telling myself there was still time, it wasn't too late, there were novelists who didn't get started until they were fifty, hell, even sixty. Probably plenty of them."

Stephen King, *On Writing*, Page 76

2 Almost Certain Future

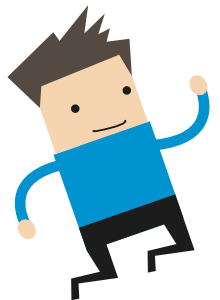
Your Almost Certain Future is the one you will have if you keep going as you are... Write down your answer to this important question:

If I keep going as I am for the next 5 to 10 years, where will I end up?

3 Is this what you really want?

Each day over the next week, re-read your Almost Certain Future and ponder this:

Is this what I really want?



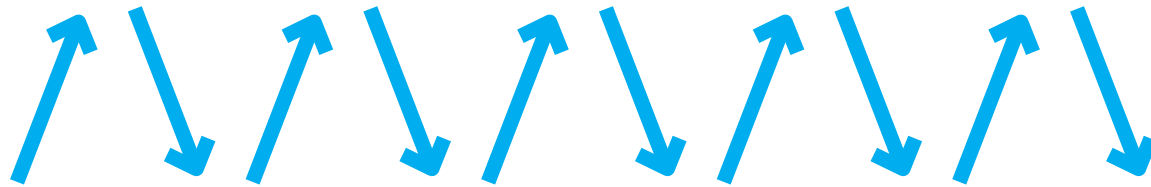
Build a laser-like focus

2

Build a laser-like focus by doing only one task or project for the next hour.

Multi-Tasking doesn't work!

Multi-tasking doesn't work because strictly speaking, the brain can't multi-task. It can only focus on one thing at a time. What really happens is the brain switches very quickly back and forth between tasks. This is a very inefficient and energy hungry way to get things done. It might seem like you are moving faster and that's simply because you're working at a really fast pace. Multi-tasking makes you lousy at everything. Every time we switch we run a higher risk of making a mistake. Plus, it stresses you more. Even worse, you're training yourself to be continually distracted. We travel further and faster with less effort if we focus on one thing. Be mindful instead.



Multi-tasking



Mindfulness



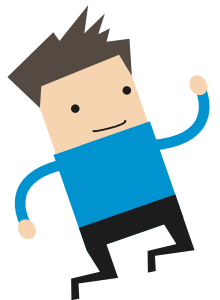
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1 Tasks

Catch yourself when you try to do two tasks at once and stop it. Your mantra this week is: ***one thing at a time.***

2 Projects

The second level of multi-tasking occurs when we're constantly switching from one project to the next. Instead, batch your work into bigger blocks of time and focus. E.g. Schedule an entire day on one project.



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Use a proven productivity system

3

Complete two sets of the Pomodoro Method in the next hour to boost your focus, your energy and your results.

The Pomodoro Method

- 1 Choose a task to work on.
- 2 Set a timer for 25 minutes (use your smart device).
- 3 Work on that one task until the timer rings. **Crucial:** No distractions, no toilet breaks, no coffee breaks, etc. **Also:** Unless this is the task you have chosen - no emails, no Facebook, no phone calls, etc.
- 4 When the bell rings, set it for a 5 minute break. This means change your activity - get out of your chair and move. Coffee?
- 5 Repeat for 4 cycles (2 hours). Then take a 30 minute break.
- 6 Record how many blocks you get done per day and per week.



A 30-minute Pomodoro work cycle

In the late 1980s, Italian Francesco Cirillo started to look for ways to be more productive. One day, he pulled out a kitchen timer that just happened to be in the shape of a tomato. He set it for 25 minutes and started working. When the timer rang, he then set it for 5 minutes to take a short break. He then repeated the cycle in sets of four over two hours. Thus the Pomodoro method - that's the Italian word for 'tomato'.

Pomodoro on Wikipedia



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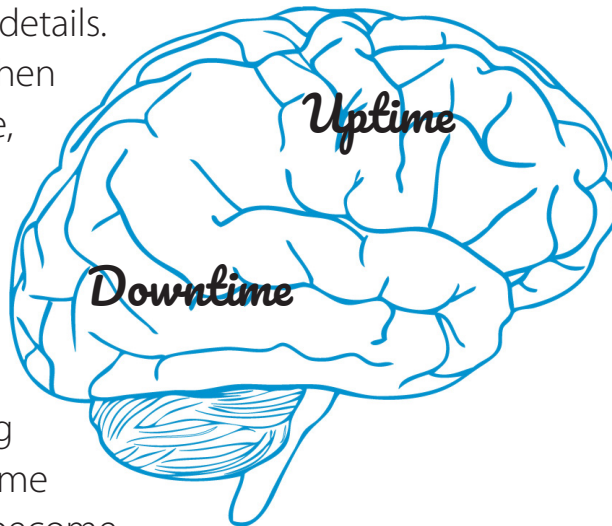
Beat stress with uncommon wisdom

4

If you're stressed or overwhelmed, neuroscience says to take a micro or mini break right now.

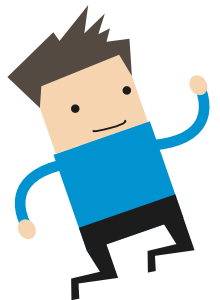
The New Two Sides of the Brain

You might have heard that we have two sides to the brain. Except what you expect might be outdated. The **uptime** brain engages when we're doing task focused work - high concentration on specific details. The **downtime** brain engages when we let our brains wander. Here, our minds start connecting the dots between what's been happening and possible paths for going forward. That's why ideas and solutions pop when we're in the shower or walking the dog. If we spend too much time using the **uptime** brain we can become overwhelmed and worn out. Instead, we perform better when we regularly switch between the two modes. This means if you want to get more done - particularly if you're in a hurry, facing a tight deadline or stressed to the eyeballs - literally, have some **downtime**.



- 1 Micro** Every 30 minutes stand up from your desk and move for at least 60 seconds.
- 2 Mini** Every hour change your activity for at least 5 minutes.
- 3 Made** Schedule breaks into your daily and weekly schedule. Make them happen!
- 4 Major** Whenever you feel it's getting too much take a break - step into nature.

More here: The Neurobiology of Insight
Source: Ori Brafman, *The Chaos Imperative*



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Stop procrastinating right now

5

Procrastination is the voluntary delay of an action despite negative future consequences. It's choosing to feel good now even though we know we'll feel worse later. Apply one of these four strategies to step into action right now.

Start Small

Often we put things off until later because we are overwhelmed - that feeling of 'too much to handle'. To thwart this sabotage, set a really small target. Instead of writing for two hours, write for 15 minutes. Be warned: once you start you just might keep on going.

Future Focus

Visualize yourself in the future at the completion of your goal and immerse yourself in the positive emotions. This shifts your time focus from now to the future and the positive emotions will hopefully over-ride the impulsive decision to procrastinate.

Deliberately Imperfect

Sometimes we procrastinate because we don't think we can do a good enough job. (Translation: a perfect job) To counter this, deliberately aim for less. Create a prototype or minimum viable product instead knowing that you can improve it later.

Not Here!

The simplest technique to overcome it is to adopt the mind-set that any delay will not be considered: 'I don't allow the idea of not practicing to cross my mind.'

Four ways to get even more done...

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Get

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Form a *Done Group* - meet each week to discuss what you did, what worked and to keep each other accountable for your actions and results.

Group

Present

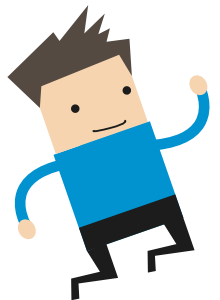
One of the best ways to learn is to teach what you know. Present these ideas to your teams and colleagues. Alternatively, book Geoff to present to your team or organisation.



Geoff McDonald is author of multiple books including *Done* and *Disruptive Leadership*. He runs the *Project Done* program and presents internationally to organisations and at conferences. Email him and tell him your favourite *Done* strategy : geoff@geoffmcdonald.com



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