



## Stop Being Busy, Start Being Productive

**Being strategic with time requires knowing what you want to accomplish with that time.** Most people overestimate significantly when asked how many hours a week they work due to focusing on how busy they feel and not on actual **accomplishments**. Without **productivity**, it's just **empty work**. Most people use 60% or less of available work time. Take this [quiz](#) to learn how your time management skills stack up.

**The most productive people are goal driven.** Read [Here's Why You Don't Have The Time To Achieve Your Big Goals](#). Great goals allow us to eliminate non-essential work. But when a Leadership IQ survey asked, "My goals for this year will help me maximize my full potential" only 13% strongly agreed. The best goals, [HARD Goals](#), take us outside our comfort zone, require lots of effort and learning and keep us amped up. Test goals by asking what new skills are required to achieve the goal. If new learning is not required, try making goals 30% harder. [Learn why Smart goals can sometimes be dumb.](#)

Without something on which to focus your energy every day, productivity falls off. **Studies show that pausing to reflect** on or visualize goals before acting achieves better results (learn more about the research [here](#)). Break goals into bite-sized chunks and get more accomplished in the moment with the **Cutting in Half exercise**:

- **6 Months:** What do I have to accomplish in 6 months in order to stay on track of that big goal?
- **90 Days:** What do I have to accomplish in the next 90 days to reach that 6 month mark?
- **30 Days:** What do I have to accomplish in the next 30 days to reach that 90 day mark?
- **Today:** What do I need to accomplish today to stay on track of it all and make today a successful day?

**Start every day by asking yourself: What do I need to do today to keep me on track of my big goal and make today a successful day?**

**Green Light work** is goal-oriented work that you love doing, you are great at it, you are uniquely qualified to do it, this is why the organization hired you and it must be done. **Prioritize your day** around **Green Light activities** (lock your door, shut off your phone, email, email alerts and IM to protect Green Light work time). Read [Doing This For 5 Minutes Every Morning Can Make You Nearly Twice As Productive](#). Benchmark leaders (the top .001% of leaders) spend 80-90% of their time on Green Light (value added) work. Average leaders spend less than 30% of their work-related time on Green Light value-added work. Test for Green Light work by asking: How much do you enjoy doing it? How competent are you at it? Does it absolutely have to be done? Are you uniquely qualified to do it? Is this a critical piece of why the organization put you in this job? Read Mark's article [Leaders Name Their Top 6 Time Wasters](#)

**Yellow Light work** you love doing it, you are great at it, you are qualified to do it, this is **not** why the organization hired you, it must be done. "It would be easier if I just did it myself" is a sign you are doing Yellow Light work. **Orange Light work** you tolerate doing it, you are competent at it, you are somewhat qualified to do this work, this is not why the organization hired you, it must be done. **Red Light work** you dislike doing, you are not really competent at it, you are not really qualified to do this work, this is not why the organization hired you, it might not even have to be done.

Use Friday afternoon to strategize against the **Sunday night blues** (learn more [here](#)). Reflect on the week's big accomplishments, write down anything you are stressing about for the following week and come up with a plan. Schedule something fun to look forward to early in the week (e.g. a new place for lunch or a Monday night dinner out). Enjoy the weekend and **stop checking your email** (set aside a 4-hour phone-free time to prove the world won't end if you're unplugged)!

**A Time Analysis** helps identify **wasteful work**. Pick a recent workday and analyze the work you did: was it Green, Yellow, Orange or Red? Take it a step further and **code incoming email** Green, Yellow, Orange or Red. Good time-tracking apps include [RescueTime](#), [Toggl](#), [Everhour](#), [Timely](#) and [Paydirt](#).

**Don't confuse activity with achievement:** Avoid these time wasters: wasteful meetings, dealing with low performers, nagging employees for incomplete work, correcting wrong work, communicating breakdowns, doing it yourself (rather than delegating), repeating directions, mentally resetting from an off-track day.

**Delegating** is a partnership that makes more time for your Green Light work and builds skills in others, developing the team around you. Don't let **ego and doubt** get in the way of delegating. Consider **The 6 P's of Delegation**: **1) Past History**- is there valid reason to doubt your staff's abilities? **2) Priorities**- focus on green light activities, eliminate Red Light work and delegate Yellow and Orange Light work. **3) Particulars**: ensure employees know the "why" of work and what resources and authority they have and follow it up in writing. **4) Positive Attitude**-set people up to believe they can succeed and they will. **5) Praising**- be timely and specific in rewarding good work (this helps encourage repeated behaviors). Timely smaller rewards are more powerful than delayed bigger rewards. **6) Process**- review the process in detail (how did project go, what worked and what didn't work, etc.) so employees can continuously improve their performance (and take Yellow and Orange Light work off your plate forever).

**Train employees to be great delegates** by asking these questions: What specific results are expected? When are the results expected? What are the expected quantities, quality levels, etc.? What decisions am I authorized to make on my own? What money am I authorized to spend on my own? What resources, facilities, staff do I have access to? Who will benefit from this? What's the underlying reason we're doing this? Are there any possible obstacles to this? [Learn how to get more out of your middle performers.](#)

#### **Make Meetings Shorter and More Effective:**

- **A Statement of Achievement** can cut 15 minutes off meetings: *As a result of this meeting, participants will \_\_\_\_\_. We will accomplish this by/through \_\_\_\_\_.* If you can't answer these two questions, cancel the meeting. Once these two objectives have been accomplished, end the meeting.
- **A meeting agenda** gets employees fully on board by clearly identifying: 1) the meeting topic, 2) why this topic is on the agenda, 3) what the meeting hopes to accomplish, 4) how participants should prepare.
- **A Decision Grid** ensures the work gets done. End every meeting by asking participants: What are you personally going to achieve and by when? Use responses to build a decision grid. Follow up in writing.
- **Daily Huddles:** Keep employees focused on their Green Light work by giving them one minute to outline their 'aligned goals' for the day and to state potential roadblocks (solve the roadblocks outside the huddle).

**Summary:** Stop being busy and focus on accomplishments. Outline your goals and then do what you need to do today to reach those goals. Focus on Green Light work, delegate starting with Yellow and Orange Light work and eliminate Red Light work. Track your time. Eliminate meeting time wastes.

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