

# 5 Tips for More Productive Work Days



Staying focused in a world of distractions can be very difficult. However, every successful business leader will tell you that building their business required more than stamina and willpower. You must develop skills to beat everyday distractions. For some people, that means putting on headphones. Others arrive before anyone at the office. If you find yourself taking hours to complete a task that should take half the time then try a few of these tricks to get your work done more efficiently.

## Set Up Your Day in a Planner

Set up your day in a planner before your day starts. Make a note of the most important tasks that have to get done that day. Start with those tasks. Cross tasks off as you complete your work.

Some people use a written planner and others use Google Calendar. Use whichever tool allows you to visualize your day.

## Do the Most Difficult Things First

It's natural to postpone our most difficult tasks. After all, who wants to get the tedious work done that we dread?

There are benefits to finishing your most difficult tasks first. Completing the work you dread immediately will put a more positive spin on your day. Therefore, you will feel more motivated throughout your work day.

# Take Breaks Throughout the Day

When we have a full plate of work, it can be difficult to take breaks. We may feel like we should work non-stop throughout the day. However, breaks can help renew our energy to continue work more efficiently. It can also help to get away from a problem you are trying to solve for a few minutes and possibly come back to it with a new perspective or energy.

# Work Out First Thing in the Morning

Do you rely on coffee every morning? How would you feel if you did not need morning coffee to get you through the work day? Exercising in the morning can build natural energy to leave you more alert, focused, and fight fatigue. Start working out in the morning to feel more energized as you work through the day.

## Other Benefits of Working Out in the Morning

- Increased Metabolism
- Improved Mood
- Leaves Time for Other Priorities

# Avoid Multitasking

Multitasking can be our work's worst enemy. We think we are getting more done but typically our work is getting done less efficiently while taking longer. Focus on one task at a time for higher quality work.

Try incorporating one of these efficiency tips into your day. You may find yourself working fewer hours.

---

# How-To Develop Great Customer Service Skills



The quality of a company's customer service can determine the fate of a business. After all, loyal customers can be your most reliable form of revenue. You often receive more return business and improved relationships with your customers. Your customers can be both internal to your company, or external. Some positions within the company serve other departments so they would be your customers as well and anyone who buys what your company sells.

There are some universal qualities that create great customer service. Make sure your employees are equipped to perform these duties.

## **Patience:**

It is easy to get frustrated with customers. After all, at some point, you might feel like you are answering the same question 100 times per day. However, patience is fundamental to providing high quality customer service. Stay patient. The experience is new to your customer.

## **Attentiveness:**

When you are attentive, you could gather valuable customer feedback. For example, if you receive repetitive complaints about not being able to configure the settings on your device or program, that could lead to a product improvements that makes that process much easier and intuitive. That would solve your customer's complaints and hopefully lead to a better product.

## **Knowledge of the Product:**

Your customer service representatives must have a deep knowledge of how the product works. That way, they will be prepared to answer your customers questions.

Your customer service representatives do not need to know how to build the product from scratch but they do need to have a functional perspective of the products. Consider providing your employees with free samples and company discounts so they have experience with the products.

## **Ability to Handle Surprises:**

Sometimes the customer support career is going to throw you a curveball. You might not have come across the customer's problem before.

When this occurs, your employee may need to send the customer to someone with more knowledge in that area. Make sure they know who to send customers to in specific situations.

## **Time Management Skills:**

Your customer was probably excited about their purchase and wants the product functioning as quickly as possible. Do not waste time on the phone and try to get directly to their issue.

Sometimes, your employee will not be able to solve their problem. Teach them to recognize when they cannot solve a problem and what to do in those situations. Great customer service is efficient.

Superior customer service should be a priority for your business. If you spend the time training your employees and gathering valuable customer feedback than you could see an increase in revenue and the reputation of your company.

---

# The Difference Between a Bad Manager, Good Manager, and Great Manager



As a recruiter, I have seen many different types of management practices and the effects on the teams they lead. The type of manager can often determine the company's retention rate as management practices have a direct correlation with employee satisfaction. There are three types of management: a bad manager, good manager, and great manager.

“Bad managers tell employees what to do, good managers explain why they need to do it, but great managers involve people in decision making and improvement.”  
- Mark Graban

If you are building your management skills, it is important to become aware of your management habits and work towards becoming a great manager.

## Traits of a Bad Manager

A bad manager tells employees what to do without explaining why. A plan has already been created and the employee simply follows the steps to complete the project. The employee is ultimately a pawn.

When a company is operated by a bad manager, employees rarely have passion behind their work. Why would they? Their entire job is following orders. There is no room for creativity.

For example, a Document Control Manager might be told that they have to

transfer documents into a new system. The system has a learning curve and to the Document Control Manager, it seems like the old system did exactly the same task. A bad manager does not tell the employee why the office is switching programs, just to do it.

## **Traits of a Good Leader**

A good manager gives orders but also explains why they are asking the employees to perform the task.

In terms of the Document Control Manager, the Quality Director would explain why the company is switching to a new program. While the program has a steep learning curve, the Document Control Manager understands that the new system will be helping the company.

## **Traits of a Great Manager**

A great manager is hard to come by. Often, people avoid becoming a great manager because they feel like they are giving up control. In reality, the more you involve your employees with the decisions, the more they will feel dedicated to the company's mission and want to stay with the company long-term. It also greatly improves the employee's engagement in their job and the projects and greatly increases the likelihood of them going the extra mile when needed.

A great manager engages employees with decision making. They seek feedback, new ideas, and involve employees in brainstorming sessions and allow them to have some ownership in their part of the project.

The Quality Director would explain to the Document Control Manager why the company needs to switch systems, such as cost or accessibility for the people involved in creation the documents. The Quality Director would then ask the Document Control Manager to attempt the trial period and provide feedback. If the program does not seem efficient, the Document Control Manager and Quality Director will try to find a new program together.

If you are a manager, take the time to reflect on your work habit. Becoming a great manager can lead to employee happiness, retention, and company growth, not to mention that more engaged and happy employees are more productive and

easier to manage.

---

## **5 Methods to Building Long-Term Relationships with Clients**



If you are a business owner then you probably have experienced the value of return customers. A return customer does not require massive amounts of marketing resources and can also serve as a referral source for more customers. The question is, how do you earn repeat sales with competition?

The following are a few tips to develop ongoing customer relationships:

### **Be A Useful Resource**

Do not hesitate to share information that your client may find useful. The more value you offer, the more likely they will request your services.

Keep in mind why customers are working with you and what services you can provide to help them reach their goals. You can serve as an expert resource of information with a weekly blog on your company's website.

### **Always Meet Your Deadline**

Do you have a friend that is always late? It gets annoying. Eventually, you may

even stop inviting them to events.

If you do not meet deadlines, your clients will be just as annoyed with you as the late friend. You are showing that you do not appreciate their time. Commit to your deadline.

## **Make Them Feel Special**

Business growth can occur quickly. One day, you are posting fliers on bulletin boards wondering if this is all a waste of time.

Ten years later, you realize that every hour in your day is booked. At this point, your clients are probably not getting individual attention UNLESS you have planned for this growth. Your customers will probably switch to the provider who is more attentive to their needs. Make your customer feel special to avoid this problem.

## **Valuable Methods to Make Your Clients Feel Special**

- Make time to meet with your clients in person rather than only over the phone.
- Send your customer a note or discount on their birthday.
- Thank them for their purchase and show appreciation.
- Remember them.
- Make adjustments based on their feedback.

## **Provide Value**

If you provide value to your company then customers are likely to be loyal to your brand. To build brand loyalty, you need to consider what makes your company different.

Why should a customer be loyal to your product or service?

What are you providing that is unique to your niche?



Inc magazine provides a five-step system on providing value to customers.

### **Inc Magazine's Method to Providing Value for Customers**

**Step One:** Understand What Drives Your Customers

**Step Two:** Understand Your Value Proposition

**Step Three:** Identify the Customers and Segments Where You Can Create More Value Relative to Competitors

**Step Four:** Create a Win-Win Price

**Step Five:** Focus Investments on Your Most Valuable Customers

## **Respond to Every Concern**

Communication is key for healthy relationships. A business relationship is not different. Do not ignore your customer's concerns, complaints, or questions. In fact, all customer complaints should be responded to within 24 hours.

There are many review sites that allow you to collect reviews and respond to customer's complaints, such as Yelp, Facebook, and Google+. Each provide a discussion board for positive and negative experiences. Make sure you are replying to comments.

Return customers can create reliable income for your company. Invest in your relationships to build brand loyalty that ensures that you stay in business.

---

# **5 Rewarding Team Building Exercises for an Evolving Company**



Every business owner strives for a workplace where their team members work together positively. However, building unity within the workplace requires time and effort. Incorporate team building exercises to help employees adjust to an evolving company.

The following are a few fun team building activities for the workplace:

## **Provide a Comfortable Break Room with Snacks and Beverages**

Everyone needs to get away from their desk during the day. A comfortable break room offers your employees a place to rejuvenate or eat lunch. Inevitably, the break room often becomes a gathering place where employees build community.

Creating a comfortable break room takes little effort. Maintain a few snacks, such as granola bars or fresh fruit, as well as coffee and other work appropriate beverages.

## **Sponsor Job Shadowing Opportunities for Employees in a Different Position**

New employees are often attracted to their job position due to the opportunity for growth. Use job shadowing as an opportunity to introduce the employee to the position while meeting others in the department. Job shadowing is easy to manage with little costs. Job shadowing is essential if an employee is considering transitioning to a new position.

### **What to Include in Job Shadow**

1. Participate in Brainstorming Session
2. Attend a Meeting
3. Take Notes During Planning Sessions
4. Variety of Non-Confidential Activities

## **Hold Company-Sponsored Team Building Lunches**

Food always has a way of pulling people together! Get your employees out of the office with a barbeque or restaurant outing. If your meal is outside, you can schedule fun games where employees work together. Sports work well for team building.

## **Sponsor Sporting Event or Team that Employees Can Participate in Together**

Create a sporting team for your company to participate in together. This could be a community softball, basketball, or kickball league.

You could also sponsor a sporting event, such as a half-marathon or 5k. Provide your employees with company t-shirts. The t-shirts not only create unity but great advertising!

## **Encourage Team Members to Volunteer for Charity Together**

The camaraderie that people develop when they volunteer together is powerful. Create a volunteer event with a local charity. The event could be picking up trash, building homes for poor families, or cleaning hiking trails. Volunteering together can create positive memories that unite the company.

# Host Activities for Employee's Families

Company lunches are great but many employees have families that they would love to involve with events. Hold family-friendly events where employees can develop friendships outside of work. The holidays are a great excuse to hold company parties.

## Family-Friendly Events to Host

1. Halloween trick-or-treating at desks in the office and pumpkin carving for the kids.
2. Luncheon the week before Christmas before employees scatter their own ways.
3. Bringing a big screen to the office for family movie night.

Team building exercises can be an investment for your company. When people work well together, they can get more done faster with a positive attitude. It is important to continue team building as your company grows.

---

## Interview Questions to Avoid Asking Infographic



Some interview questions should be avoided to prevent a lawsuit. Know those questions before you meet your first candidate.

## How to Avoid Asking Illegal or Inappropriate Interview Questions

Some interview questions are obviously discriminatory and avoided by all employers. Other questions are more subtle. Learn what questions to recognize and avoid.

This infographic is based on the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) guidelines.

### Birthplace, Ethnicity, or Religion



Avoid questions regarding a candidate's birthplace, religious, or ethnicity.

#### DO ASK:

1. Are you eligible to work in the United States or would you need an employer to sponsor a work visa?
2. What languages are you fluent in?
3. Can you work the days required on the schedule?

#### DONT ASK:

1. What country are you from? Where were you born?
2. What is your native language?
3. What religion do you practice?

### Marital Status, Children, or Sexual Preference



Marital status, children, or sexual preference should not be a concern when hiring.

#### DO ASK:

1. Are you available to work overtime on occasion?
2. What are your long term career goals?
3. Are any of your references or qualifications under a different name?

#### DONT ASK:

1. Do you have or plan to have children?
2. Is this your maiden name?
3. If you go on maternity leave, do you plan on returning to work?

### Gender or Age



Ask questions regarding whether the candidate can handle the role but avoid gender or age questions.

#### DO ASK:

1. What can you bring to this role?
2. Are you over the age of 18?
3. Do you have a degree or other qualification related to this role?

#### DONT ASK:

1. We have always had a man/woman perform this role. Do you think you could do it?
2. How much longer do you plan to work before you retire?
3. When did you graduate?

### Location and Lifestyle Choices



What an employee does outside of work should have no bearing on whether they are suitable for the job.

#### DO ASK:

1. Are you able to be at this job by 9 AM?
2. Are you a member of any professional group that is relevant to this role?
3. Do you have any upcoming commitments that will make you miss work?

#### DONT ASK:

1. Where do you live?
2. Are you a member of any club or organization?

---

# Four Causes of an Unproductive Workplace



Have you ever heard a business owner say they want to be less productive? I have not! Most business owners want to save time and money.

However, workplace productivity is not always easy. A healthy workflow requires collaboration for the business owner and team to succeed. Learn how to avoid these common workplace problems to prevent tasks from taking hours to complete.

## Poor Systems Communication

We create new client file or update important documents almost every day. If your coworkers do not receive the same information then important company procedures could be postponed.

Cloud-based file sharing has become one of the most efficient methods to collaborate information within a company. No longer will you have to email documents within your company. Simply create shared folders that can be accessed by the necessary team members.

There are several file sharing systems that could work for your company.

### Dropbox

Dropbox allows you to take your documents, photos, and videos anywhere you go.

Place files in your Dropbox and share quickly with a link.

### **Lastpass**

Lastpass allows you to “organize and create strong passwords”. Login to Lastpass, save a password, and share with essential team members. No longer will you have to ask for credit card information or login information every time you need it!

### **Google Drive**

Google Drive provides file sharing and document creation software. More than 120 million users choose to use Google Drive. Users gain free access to 15 gigabytes of shared storage, which includes Gmail. Files can be shared privately with anyone that has a Gmail Account.

Unfortunately, if the user does not have a Gmail account then the file will have to be made public through a shareable link. Many businesses choose not to use Google Drive since the business owner cannot rely on every team member or client utilizing Gmail.

## **Pointless Meetings**

Have you ever been in a meeting and realized that you really don't need to be there? Most employees have! Verify meetings are operating efficiently to save time, money, and frustration.

### **Tips to Create an Effective Meeting**

- Plan an agenda.
- Make sure you need the meeting.
- Ensure appropriate participation.
- Review work prior to the meeting.

## **Not Collaborating with Remote Employees**

The internet has made hiring remote employees easier and more affordable.



Employers also have access to talent from around the world.

A survey completed by The Global Leadership Summit in London found that 34% of business leaders claim that more than half of their workforce will be remote in 2020. The problem is maintaining collaboration with coworkers.

To create a better collaboration process, maintain weekly meetings through a conference call. Also, watch that your team is uploading and maintaining documents through file sharing software.

## **Unorganized Files**

A subscription to Dropbox and Google Drive is not enough to keep your folders organized. Each team member needs to stay aware of folder placement, file name, and more to avoid losing hours of recreating documents. Manage a simple file sharing system to help maintain a productive workflow.

### **Tips to Organize Your Files**

- Collaborate with team to ensure that everyone is using the same file share software.
- Limit folder creation. Think in hierarchies when you create your folders, such as client names or projects.
  - Don't save anything on your desktop.

Developing a healthy workflow will not occur immediately. Consistent organization and collaboration can lead to an increase in workplace productivity.

---

## **Seven Techniques to Increase**

# Productivity at Work



**If you feel like your day is getting control of you instead of the other way around, these tips may help.**

## Seven Techniques to Increase Productivity at Work

While writing this article on work productivity, I went on Facebook, checked the weather, got some coffee, and called a friend. Distractions can be extremely debilitating to your work performance. However, there are techniques that prevent distractions from adding hours to your work day. Learn how to increase productivity for shorter days and greater work results.

### Track Your Behavior

The first step to increase productivity is to raise awareness of your work distractions. To do so, you must know how much time each task is taking you.

Use an Excel spreadsheet to track an average work day. Note the task, time, and distraction that occurred. At the end of the day, you may know which tasks are more distracting.

### Decorate Your Workspace

You sit at the same spot for the majority of your day. You may get up to go to the bathroom, eat lunch, walk to a meeting but overall, you stay at your desk. A burst of color can make you feel happier and more relaxed.

## **How-To Decorate Your Workspace**

- A plant
- A fun mug
- Family photos
- Decorative bookends
- Your favorite team's memorabilia

## **Get Your Most Dreaded Task Out of the Way First**

Most of us have a task that we dread the most. Complete your least favorite task first. That way, you are not dwelling throughout the day or putting yourself in a “procrastination” mode, and the other work will not seem as daunting.

## **Move Your Body**

Our mental focus is directly related to our physical routine. In other words, if you are exercising your body, you are exercising your mind. Next time you find yourself staring at the wall or dozing off, take a five-minute walk or perform a set of stretches.

### **How Exercise Improves Your Work Performance**

- Improved Concentration
  - Increased Stamina
  - Lower Stress
- Enhanced Creativity
  - Faster Learning

## **Write Down Your Daily Goals**

Improve your work performance by writing down your daily goals with an attainable timeline. Writing down your daily goals can set you up for success every day.

### **Productive Methods to Writing Down Your Goals**

- Each morning take a pen and a piece of paper and write down your 5 top goals. Don't look at the day before, just think about what you want to accomplish most and write them down.
- Remember to write them in the positive present tense and remember to set a deadline for each goal. For example, you could set the goal "complete my report by 2:00 today."
  - Do this for all 5 goals.

Writing down goals will help you come up with new ideas to improve efficiency and new subjects to test.

## Say "No" to Meetings

To save money and valuable time, meetings should only be held when absolutely necessary. Tesla CEO, Elon Musk, runs his famously efficient meetings.

According to Musk, "Meetings are expensive. Assuming the fully-encumbered cost of an engineer can be between \$80-\$100 per hour, having a 10-person meeting can cost a company around \$1000 an hour!

"For \$1000 per hour, that meeting better damn well be worth it.

### How Musk Runs Efficient Meetings

- Require that everyone be prepared
  - Reduce everything to basic facts
  - Keep the long-term vision in sight
- Don't expect more at your meeting than you are doing yourself

## Work in 90 Minute Intervals

Science proves that breaks can increase productivity. This phenomenon is due to the Ultradian Rhythm, or ninety-minute sleep cycle.

Nathaniel Kleitman, "the father of sleep", discovered the Ultradian Rhythm. According to the theory, people's brains are highly active for ninety minutes followed by low activity for twenty minutes. The brain uses more energy than any other organ by 20 percent. After you work really hard, your brain decreases

activity which you perceive as fogginess, tiredness, and haze.  
Set your timer for ninety minutes. After ninety minutes has passed go on a walk  
for twenty minutes to return refreshed.

Successful people work productively! Utilize these seven techniques to increase  
your productivity and build the career of your dreams.

---

# What Hiring Managers Look For in a Great Potential Employee



Hiring managers are looking for more than skills and experience to give you the job. The job market is tough and you must make yourself stand out. Whether you are looking for a career change or an upgrade to your job, you can improve the likelihood that you will get the position with these seven traits.

## Natural Leader

All employers want to see that you have the ability to lead. This proves that you have potential to move up the career ladder. Hiring and training natural leaders can be a long-term investment. Prove that your leadership skills can be developed to make yourself stand out in the company interview.

The following are questions and answers that depict leadership. Determine if this interviewee is you and find a creative way to answering the questions.

# Leadership Interview Questions

**How would you attract someone to listen to you and to follow you?**

Having charisma, being a role model, and connecting with others.

**Describe a situation when you successfully led someone toward the success of a big goal.**

*Answer Tip:* You should always choose a positive situation. Talk about a moment when person you led achieved the goal they wanted. On the top of that, you should be able to demonstrate your leadership qualities and an added value on the examples.

**When have you had a problem with motivation?**

*Sample Answer:* “ I have never had problems with personal motivation. Of course, there are difficult situations in job, especially if one is a leader and carries all the responsibility on their shoulders. But I somehow understand in my head that setbacks are essential steps on the way to final success. This is my personal philosophy.”

## Creative

Successful companies rely on innovation to get ahead. If you think outside of the box then it is more likely that you can get the job and increase your position in the company. Recruiters are always looking for a potential employee that can bring something new to the table.

When you are speaking with a potential employer, provide examples of when you have used innovation for company development.

## Passionate

Passion almost always trumps high qualifications. Employers are looking for passionate employees who will work the hardest. Even if you do not have the right

qualification, make sure that you show your passion in your interview, resume, and cover letter.

### **How Introverts Can Show Passion During a Job Interview**

Use your superior listening skills to find instances where you can talk about your interests in relation to the job. Better yet, you can come up with ways to steer the conversation toward your interests, such as by asking your interviewer questions. You may also want to state your excitement and interest in the position at the end of each interview. Don't be afraid to show them the passion you have for this opportunity. It may be the thing that puts you first in their mind when deciding who to hire.

## **Fast Decision Making**

Employers look for fast decision makers who create efficiency in the company. According to Forrester, for every hour a product team takes on heads-down work, they spend another 48 minutes waiting for decision makers. That equates to 3.5 hours of "wait time" in an average eight-hour day. If a company cuts wait times in half, it can gain more than \$370,000 annually in productive time across a 25-person team.

Faster decision makers can save the company money. Show that you make smart, efficient decisions to get hired.

## **Commitment**

The success of an organization is often determined by the commitment of their employees. A dedicated, persistent and committed employee will improve the performance of a company. Show that you are dedicated to the company's purpose during your interview.

### **Key Characteristics of a Committed Employee**

- Good Communication
  - Well Organized
  - Enthusiastic

- Positive

## The Will to Win

A great employee consistently improves their work performance. This determination means that they exceed the expectations every day for the company. Employees with the will to win make a lasting impression.

Prepare yourself to make a lasting impression as a committed and responsible employee if you are applying for jobs. Your first impression could determine whether you get the job of your dreams.

---

## How-To Build Great Company Culture



Wouldn't it be great if you weren't constantly forced to train new employees? A great way to maintain your employees is to build a thriving company culture. Doing so, influences your employees to work cohesively as a team, therefore drive productivity and business success.

Creating a great company culture is not easy. However, the benefits from investing in your team can improve the performance of your company and keep employees with you longer.



# Learn from the Past

Your past can be your greatest teacher. If your company struggles with culture, review the mishaps. If they are reoccurring then consider the root of the problem.

Was it a lack of communication or management oversight? On the other hand, consider when you had great company culture. What cultivated the success?

## Create a Culture that Aligns with Your Core Values

This is your business. It is important to find staff that aligns with your values. The first step is to figuring out what is important to you.

### Core Values to Consider

- Teamwork
- Quality
- Innovation
- Customer Service
- Sense of Urgency

## Hire Employees Who Complement You

Identify your strengths and weaknesses, and then fill in the gaps. You should hire for what your company needs. The employee will adapt much better to your office when they feel important. Doing so, will create a more well-rounded team.

## Communicate With Your Team

Communication is key in relationships - even business relationships! Make sure you are communicating with your employees and they are communicating with each other. Important communication should also be in-person, rather than over email, phone, or text.

If your company is struggling with communication then consider the following tips:

- Hold Weekly Meetings

- Offer a Platform, such as Officevibe, for Anonymous Feedback
- Watch Your Body Language - Remember to smile, maintain eye contact, and keep your arms uncrossed.
  - Know When to Listen
  - Keep Your Door Open

## Carefully Evolve Your Culture

Building a great company culture will not happen overnight. First, make sure that you have a clear vision for what you want. Second, introduce those changes to your employees and seek employees with the same values.

## Build Excitement About Your Company

Your employees must believe in your company. To build excitement about your brand, you must show your own excitement!

### How-To Build Brand Excitement

- Hold an Event. For example, celebrating the release of a new product or service.
  - Individually thank employees for a job well-done.
- Create beautiful marketing material - Videos, Facebook Posts, or Guest Blogs.

If you create a culture where people love coming to work then you can expect to see an improvement in company performance, and most important, an improvement of your happiness and the happiness of your employees.