GROVE AVE PRESENTS

MASTERING PRODUCTIVITY

20 Principles to Help You Achieve More Through Proven Systems & Lasting Habits

WELTON CHANG

For Meredith

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About the Author

Welton Chang is Grove Ave's resident productivity guru. When not thinking about how to get the most out of life, he is a psychology PhD student at the University of Pennsylvania. From 2005-2014, he served as an officer in the U.S. Army and at the Department of Defense. He received a B.A. from Dartmouth College, an M.A. from Georgetown University, and an M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania. In his spare time, he writes op-eds, blogs on Buys With Friends, manages several properties on the East Coast, loses money day-trading in the stock market, scopes out ventures to invest in, and starts investment clubs with his family and friends. He splits his time between Philadelphia and Washington, DC with his wife Meredith and two cats, Percy and Portia. Follow him on Twitter: @weltonchang

Introduction

Hi, my name is Welton Chang. I'm working on a psychology PhD in Philadelphia, the home of Rocky and cheesesteaks. In a past life, I served as an Army officer and worked at the Defense Department. Philly, the Army, the Pentagon: these places and institutions represent the epitome of hard work and getting stuff done. Along the way, while working in Iraq and battling the bureaucracy in Washington, I picked up a few principles to supercharge my own productivity. I want to pass along these principles to you because boosting productivity is something we need to do these days just to survive.

One thing that has stuck with me all these years is the adage "hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard." Just look at Tom Brady, one of the winningest quarterbacks of all time. Did you know he was drafted in the sixth round after 198 other football players? Brady's discipline and focus is the stuff of legend. Also consider JK Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series. At one point in her life she was divorced, unemployed, and living in poverty. Today she is one of the wealthiest women in the world and a philanthropist who hasn't forgotten her roots. Brady and Rowling could have easily given up or played down to the expectations everyone had for them. But not only did they ignore the critics and naysayers: they thrived.

Not very many people are naturally endowed with superhuman gifts. For the rest of us, we have to make do with

what we have. I'm not suggesting that by reading this book you'll suddenly win a Super Bowl or write a best-selling book. Far from it. But you can excel with what you have, by working hard and by following some of the principles I detail in the following pages. I'm not saying that positive thoughts and optimism don't matter - they do, but they are no panacea for your productivity problems. At the end of the day, hard work is what sees us through. And trust me - following through on some of these principles is going to require tough work. It's going to be a challenge, no doubt about it.

I think you'll find many of these tactics and techniques helpful. No one becomes incredibly productive overnight. Learning to be productive requires experience, experimentation, and most of all putting around yourself the structure necessary for success. By passing along the things I've learned, I hope it'll shorten your own experimental timeline. Heed these principles and they will help you supercharge your productivity.

Stay hungry,
Welton

Changing Your Everyday Behavior

Principle 1: Proper planning and organization sets the table for productivity

Have you ever heard the phrase "work smarter, not harder"? Keep that phrase in mind while you're reading this e-book. There's a place for brute force approaches to productivity, but you generally can't sustain that for long. In order to become more productive, you have to make a greater return for your attention, labor, and effort investments.

So don't just dive blindly in an attempt to boost your productivity. Having a good plan is essential to being productive. Preparation is the key to success in many domains. Becoming more productive is no different. Preparing for each day, each project, and each endeavor in a disciplined fashion will help you set the conditions for being more productive and ultimately for being successful. Planning means getting all the materials you need to succeed in place before you need them. It means anticipating problems in advance so that when you encounter them you'll have a fix in mind or in place right away.

Organization, whether it be the file structure on your

computer or the way you maintain written notes, means being able to call on the things and knowledge you need in a timely manner. I can't tell you how many times I've gotten frantic emails or calls from colleagues who misplaced a file or can't remember something and need to be reminded. Keeping yourself organized and having a system prevents these kinds of pseudo-emergencies from cropping up.

First, I use backwards planning to make sure I have enough time to accomplish what I need to accomplish. This is a technique I picked up in the Army. Start with the deadline and work incrementally from there, putting in reasonable time estimates for the critical things you need to get done as you move towards your goal. If you can't make the work fit within the deadline, then you know that the deadline isn't reasonable and that you have to adjust it. You do this before you have to push the deadline at the last minute.

Second, I schedule my entire day. Some people are obligated to do this because that is what their workplace demands. But for many knowledge workers and the millions of freelance workers out there, your day is your day. How much work you get done is entirely dependent on you and your willpower. So, what better way of getting yourself up to the task than to put all of the "first down" markers on the field before you

have to reach them? Scheduling your entire day also means that you'll have some motivation to hit all of those interior deadlines. This ultimately makes the wider task and bigger deadlines seem less dreadful and insurmountable.

Third, using lists and Gantt charts are some of the easier ways to get and stay organized. There are lots of tools out there, but probably none better and more useful than a set of index cards. Generally, I write down tasks that I don't immediately finish and need to tackle later on a card (it gets filled up during the day) and as I get through them, I'll satisfyingly cross the item off my list. For longer term tracking, I use Google Keep for my lists, tracking the things I need to get done, categorized by project. It works well across platforms (it has an iOS app version and web-accessible interface) and I like that it is no-frill and barebones. I'm able to use the Keep app to categorize project-related checklists (I upload pictures for easy project identification) and it keeps track of the project tasks I've finished. I've used Evernote in the past, but ultimately it felt a bit too clunky for me to use, especially if I simply wanted to pull up a list and cross off an item. I still do keep scanned documents there, but for me, Google Keep works better than Evernote.

Before starting a big project, I'll sketch out the broad

outlines of it, to either socialize the ideas with team-mates or to keep myself on track. Want to write a novel? Or learn to dunk a basketball? It is much harder to accomplish these things if you don't plan and prepare. Gantt charts help you keep all of your lines of effort in order and on time.

One other trick I've learned is to prepare for the following work-day by laying out all of my clothes, preparing my backpacks, and preparing my food and coffee for the following day the night before. I'm sure many others do this too. I also keep two backpacks and a suitcase permanently packed, one for classwork, one for the gym, and one for traveling. This saves me a lot of time in case last minute travel comes up and gets me out the door sooner on a regular basis.

A few other tricks I've learned in terms of preparing for a day involve food. I enjoy snacking throughout the day and also grabbing the occasional coffee. Like everyone else I can't resist the offer of a brownie from a colleague or if everyone is headed out to Starbucks for a mid-afternoon pick me up. But this takes time, breaks the flow of concentration, and can get in the way of getting stuff done. You will eventually pay for it with time at the end of the day—when everyone else is headed out the door, you'll be stuck there mulling

over your poor life choices.

To get around this but still have the ability to snack, I prepare a few GoStak bottles worth of snacks that I buy in bulk (roasted cashews, roasted chickpeas, granola, pumpkin seeds) and grab the bottles on the way out the door. I usually pack three of these per week, on Sunday night. This way I always have a ready supply of snacks in my bag. The bottles are pretty much airtight and keep the snacks fresh, in case I find myself carrying them around for a while. The other thing I do (well actually, my lovely wife does) is use the crockpot to cook multiple meals like beef stew that will keep for multiple nights. This is usually good for a few nights worth of dinners and really cuts down on meal prep time during the week when time is really precious. Having some good Tupperware containers (get the glass ones, they hold up better in the dishwasher and are more easily microwaved) is the real key to making the multiple dinners work.

The final trick that I use to make sure I'm well prepared for the day and week is to review what I need to do the following day. While I tell myself that I should do this the night before, it inevitably ends up being in the morning. Part of my morning routine involves taking my allergy meds, listening to the "Flash News" update and weather on the Amazon Echo, and check-

ing my calendar to make sure I don't miss anything. I use the Sortd Chrome plug-in for Gmail. Sortd allows me to prioritize tasks by funneling emails into priority lists (lots of my taskings come through email) and ensure that I don't forget I didn't manage to finish the night before.

In terms of my daily routine, I try to keep things are routine as possible, to save my mental bandwidth for tougher and more meaningful challenges. I personally love my cheap Hamilton Beach coffee maker, because the back detaches and can be filled directly in the sink, unlike other models. Saves me time pouring water and I never have a spill to clean up. I also wear pretty much the same thing each day -- khakis, slacks, and solid, dark colored collared or regular shirts. I really love Outlier clothing and Merrell boots because they are versatile, can be worn multiple days without washing, and don't look out of place in a meeting room or when traveling. When I wore a suit to work every day for nearly five years, I had five suits on rotation, one for each day of the week. I also had about twenty pre-arranged shirt-tie combinations. I really like Banana Republic's no wrinkle shirts. Ironing is one chore I don't mind not doing. Wearing the same thing to work is a cognitive offloading trick that many people use. Not having to worry these small choices makes life easier. Guess who else does this? Presi-

dent Obama and Mark Zuckerberg.

PRINCIPLE 1 SUMMARY

- Use backwards planning to ensure you can get stuff done on time.
- Use schedules, lists, and Gantt charts to keep yourself organized and disciplined.
- During particularly busy weeks, prep snacks and dinners to cut down on meal prep time.
- Check tomorrow's schedule the night before to ensure you're properly prioritized.
- Prepare for each day consistently to reduce your morning cognitive load.

Principle 2: Set daily goals and split up larger tasks into micro-tasks

This principle works hand-in-hand with proper planning. I usually assign myself one daily goal related to a core work priority. For example: "write five pages of my dissertation prospectus" or "design experiment for investigating probabilistic posturing." Staying on task has been as simple as making sure I keep that one goal in mind. By setting a key goal for each day, I know what I need to focus on, and even more importantly, I know what I can ignore.

Knowing what and how to prioritize is critical to ensuring that your daily goal gets done. Many of us suffer from the "tyranny of the e-mail inbox." But you really do have to stop and ask yourself why you're beholden to some small box inside a small screen. Instead of letting the tiny inbox tell me what to do, I choose to let the small stuff that comes across the desk during the day fall off in the interest of accomplishing the core task. If it is really that important -- someone will call you. That urgent, time-sensitive thing is probably not urgent and time-sensitive to you. If you never accomplish the tasks that keep your life going, and that

keep you marching towards your goals, no one is going to accomplish it for you. Do this for long enough and pretty soon you'll be very far away from where you wanted to be. Ultimately, this means prioritizing yourself over the demands (which are sometimes unreasonable) of others.

Have you ever heard the saying, "if you don't know where you're going, any way will get you there?" I firmly believe that. I also firmly believe that people who get derailed and sidetracked when they are working forget their goals. Keep that daily goal in firm focus and you won't go wrong. You'll be able to look back on 365 days of work at the end of the year and say: I accomplished 365 goals. Lots of people don't accomplish that much in their LIFETIME.

Breaking up a larger task into a smaller tasks, in the form of a list or an outline, is also a really useful tool. Would you make your grocery list by writing "buy groceries"? No, you'd want to write out the specific things you need. So why would you approach life less diligently than you'd approach a grocery list? You'll never finish writing your dissertation, novel, or finishing the big project if you put it on your to do list as, "write dissertation" or "work on project." Those big ticket items are more like overarching goals. If you were planning to work on a project, you might break it into smaller

subtasks such as "create project schedule," or "determine delegation plan," or "outline project presentation." Each item on your task list should be actionable and specific -- start each item with a verb such as "write" or "study" or "buy."

Another way to break a larger task up into smaller ones is outlining. Yes, this is a skill you learned in middle school, but that doesn't make it any less effective or easy to pull off. Outlining forces you to make your thoughts explicit, exposing them to the harsh light of reality. In your mind, a task might seem deceptively easy. Once you start writing down the skeleton of what you need to actually get something done, the veneer of ease and simplicity starts to get stripped away. I like outlining using logic as my guide: what follows from what came before it? If my bigger task is, "write dissertation" and I break that up into "write chapters 1-10", those sub-tasks are not informative AT ALL. Those sub-tasks will just sit there, like a fallow field. But if I write, "write introduction that describes how the science of judgment and decision making came to be" and then break up that larger task into smaller ones such as "discuss the fathers of the field, Herb Simon, Ward Edwards", "discuss the main competing frameworks between analytic and intuitive judgment", that level of detail lends itself to being tackled. Vague, abstract tasks on your list will just sit

there and pile up, never to be accomplished, making you feel worse and worse.

Another added benefit of breaking up a larger task into smaller ones? It makes the larger task seem more conquerable -- like taking small steps up the side of a huge mountain. Each small step, taken on its own, seems doable, while trying to summit the peak can seem incredibly daunting. For example, if you want to write an e-book in 30 days, plotting and planning in detail makes a seemingly impossible task doable. Use this psychological trick to your advantage! Breaking up a larger task into smaller tasks also gives you a sense of micro-accomplishment as you cross things off your list. Don't discount the motivating power of these small victories. In my mind, having any victories in a day means that it was a good day.

I'll leave you with this: "one foot in front of the other." That's a saying I picked up from my Army days. That was something I repeated to myself all the time. Repeating this mantra helped carry me through the last mile of a forced march at 0500 in the Arizona desert carrying a 45 lb pack. At the time I weighed around about 100 lbs soaking wet, so that huge a portion of my body weight. But I made it in under three hours. I still sometimes say this mantra to myself when I face a particularly daunting task. When you're really strug-

gling, tell yourself you'll get through. One step, one page, one assignment, one memo -- remind yourself that you will get there eventually. And you will. Believe it. Believe in yourself.

PRINCIPLE 2 SUMMARY

- Set a daily goal for yourself and keep it in focus at all times.
- Break a larger task up into smaller tasks.
- When breaking up larger tasks into smaller ones, ensure they are actionable and specific items, vague and abstract tasks never get done.

Principle 3: Stay in shape efficiently

Why is working out so important and what does it have to do with being productive? Did you know that being fit is a great cognitive enhancer? Not only will you feel better if you exercise, but you'll also think better. Being in shape increases your work output rate and makes you more efficient at getting around -- which means, you guessed it, being more productive!

So what do I do at the gym? I really like this Men's Journal routine which is formed around the idea that all effortful human movement falls in three categories: pushing, pulling, and extending your hips. I do all eight of those movements every other day. It is simple:

1. pull ups
2. dips
3. decline bench crunches
4. dumbbell bench press
5. weighted lunges
6. dumbbell shoulder press
7. kettlebell swings
8. seated rows (usually done on a universal machine)

I generally do 4 sets of 10 for exercises 3 through 8. For pull ups, I normally do 10 sets of 10 pull ups for a total of 100 pullups, and for dips I do 4 sets of 20 dips each. Why the focus on pull ups? Doing them involves activating the muscles in most of your upper body, arms, back, and triceps, at the same time. And you can build in core-focused reps by doing leg raises after your pull ups are complete. Many people consider pull ups the most essential and complete exercise out there. Pull ups can also be done anywhere! When I was on active duty, I kept a door pull up bar in the trunk of my car. I even took one with me on my first deployment to Iraq. Whenever I was feeling tired, I'd go and knock out ten pull ups. After that, I wasn't tired any more.

It usually takes me 30-45 minutes to get through this circuit. And the faster I get it done, the more cardio I am able to simultaneously work in, as each exercise leaves me breathing hard.

When I run, I generally look for scenic spots and inspiration. I generally run for 30-40 minutes at a moderate pace (usually keeping my heartrate around 160bpm). Running is also a great time to gather your thoughts and generate new ideas. If I'm feeling hungry for knowledge, I'll fire up a podcast like Tim Ferriss or Hardcore History. If I'm feeling like zoning out,

I'll listen to music. Running has been shown to keep people young and you don't even need to do a lot of it: new research suggests that you only need to run five or six miles a week to reap the health benefits. The best part about running? It is completely free and requires very little equipment. A solid pair of running shoes and some earbuds for your smartphone will do!

Other people I know turn their commutes into their exercise time, either running or biking to work. It was even purported that before the Anacostia River was closed off to recreational traffic, people used to paddle and kayak to the Pentagon. Now that's a great use of time -- you beat the traffic AND got your daily work out in.

Now I know what you're thinking. But you're already in shape! It's easy to stay in shape if you're in shape already. I wasn't always in shape. Actually, the way my high school friends remember it, I was the chubby short kid who ran slowly and didn't make it past freshman year of track while everyone else ran cross-country or played varsity football. One day after senior year of high school and after breaking my wrist, I got tired of feeling sluggish and out of shape. I started walking around the neighborhood for 15 minutes a day. I gradually increased that to 30 minutes a day and then I started to jog a bit. If you're not in shape,

take an incremental approach to getting there, just like I discussed in Principle 2. If you can run to the end of the block one day, try making it to two blocks the next day. And so on and so forth. If you want to do more reading about tips for getting started down the journey to getting in shape, Reddit has one of the best beginner's guides out there, absolutely free for anyone to look at. There are lots of tips in there for starting small and going from there. The bottom line: you have to find what works for you. And then do it. Ruthlessly and efficiently. Efficiency is essential to pro-ductivity and productivity is essential to success!

PRINCIPLE 3 SUMMARY

- Stay in shape because it helps you think.
- Be efficient with your exercise routine.
- Get started–start somewhere and stick with it!

Principle 4: Eating intelligently by smartly designing your meals

To be at our most productive, we have to eat right. While this is a good general rule to follow, it is much easier written than done. Eating right requires knowledge about what to put into our bodies, the effort to acquire or make these meals, the desire to consume the meals, and the time to put the food into our bodies.

Choosing the right foods isn't just about "dieting", a word which most of us associate with restricting the kinds and amounts of foods we put into our bodies. While that may be the popular interpretation of the word, a more accurate use of the word would be ingesting the appropriate kinds of foods. There are more diet systems out there than we can count on our fingers and the number of people who claim to have good diet advice probably exceeds the number of stars in the universe. We highly recommend Dr. Michael Greger and Michael Pollan, both of whom emphasize healthy and natural foods.

For example, Pollan countenances Americans to

follow his pithy "Food Rules" for eating right. His 64 rules can be distilled down even further into seven rules which he summarized for WebMD in 2009:

1. Don't eat anything your great grandmother wouldn't recognize as food. "When you pick up that box of portable yogurt tubes, or eat something with 15 ingredients you can't pronounce, ask yourself, "What are those things doing there?"
2. Don't eat anything with more than five ingredients, or ingredients you can't pronounce.
3. Stay out of the middle of the supermarket; shop on the perimeter of the store. Real food tends to be on the outer edge of the store near the loading docks, where it can be replaced with fresh foods when it goes bad.
4. Don't eat anything that won't eventually rot. "There are exceptions -- honey -- but as a rule, things like Twinkies that never go bad aren't food."
5. It is not just what you eat but how you eat. "Always leave the table a little hungry." "Many cultures have rules that you stop eating before you are full. In Japan, they say eat until you are four-fifths full. Islamic culture has a similar rule, and in German culture they say, 'Tie off the sack before it's full.'"
6. Families traditionally ate together, around a table and not a TV, at regular meal times. It's a good tradition. Enjoy meals with the people you love. "Re-

member when eating between meals felt wrong?"

7. Don't buy food where you buy your gasoline. In the U.S., 20% of food is eaten in the car.

Learning about what counts as healthy food and internalizing this knowledge makes it easier to sustain healthy eating.

Armed with the right knowledge, the next step is to develop a system for acquiring the raw ingredients and turning them into food. Luckily, the rise of grocery delivery services makes it incredibly convenient (not necessarily easy, there's a key difference here) to schedule food delivery. FreshDirect, Peapod, Amazon Fresh, and Instacart are probably all options available to you. Peapod and FreshDirect (I've used both services in different cities and found Peapod to be better in Washington DC and FreshDirect better in Philadelphia) both offer memberships and discounts on regular deliveries. Meal kit delivery services such as Blue Apron, HelloFresh, and Marley Spoon are also good options for healthier cooking, although beware that some of the meals that come from these prepared kits are not all that healthy.

One trick that has helped me squeeze more time out of the day is cooking multiple meals at the same time. With Blue Apron, this has meant ordering the "fam-

ily" size meals and storing the extra food in appropriately sized Tupperware containers. Investing in a set of Tupperware containers is extremely helpful since running out of containers is extremely inconvenient. Tupperware is extremely portable and durable, making it an essential tool for bringing your fantastically healthy and tasty meal to work.

Other methods for "stretching" healthy meals include crock pot cooking, once a month cooking (aka freezer cooking), and making large batches of stir fry. Since you're going to be cooking and have done all of the prep work to get utensils out and must clean up afterwards, you might as well make multiple meals. Where people go wrong with this method is in cooking meals that they do not enjoy eating, leading to food sitting in the freezer or fridge for an extended period of time and ultimately to waste. Along with the knowledge for eating right, you also have to get the self-knowledge to know what kinds of food you enjoy.

Finally, remember to schedule time during the day to eat your food. Lots of people who are incredibly busy wind up forgetting to eat. Food gives you the energy to be productive and being hungry is no way to go through life. Schedule time for yourself or make sure you eat with a friend. It'll ensure that you are staying healthy and fueling yourself appropriately.

PRINCIPLE 4 SUMMARY

- Build the knowledge for how to eat right, as well as the self-knowledge for what you like to eat
- Cook more than one meal at a time and store it in Tupperware
- Ensure you set aside time during the day to eat!

SECTION TWO

Getting Better Over Time

Principle 5: Understand yourself to find your motivation

Have you ever found yourself struggling with some assignment or task? Have you struggled to figure out why? Do you procrastinate a lot? Even after you tell yourself you'll get something done, do you wind up wasting your time reorganizing your DVD collection or cleaning your apartment (or on Facebook)?

Dan Pink's book *Drive*, about intrinsic motivation, summarizes the last fifty years or so of psychological research into motivation. In it, Pink focuses on three principles that keep people motivated (beyond money and extrinsic factors):

- *Autonomy* - being able to set your own priorities and path
- *Mastery* - working on a task where you can get demonstrably better at it over time
- *Purpose* - doing something for more than just yourself or monetary gain

Finding a job or creating one (why do some people always think they have to work for someone else?)

that gives you the freedom to explore, where you feel like you're making progress each day, and which serves a greater good, is a really great way to super-charge your productivity. Why? Because you'll WANT to be productive. That drive will come from inside you.

Did you ever just sit down and unexpectedly spend hours or days on a task or assignment? Did you get up from the computer wondering where the hours went, but feeling satisfied and refreshed? Where did that internal energy come from? And how can we, if we can, recapture that seemingly boundless internal energy? The research shows that it likely came from these intrinsic factors, such as seeking fulfillment or accomplishing some larger societal goal. Restoring our natural sense of exploration and wonder in dis-covering is essential to helping us push the productiv-ity boundary through the intrinsic motivation that lies in each of us. Replicating those factors is the best way to get you and keep you at your productivity peak.

Extrinsic motivation, like a new car or a pair of new shoes or some kind of award at work or a big raise, can only keep you happy for so long. Eventually those external rewards wear off. Have you ever bought something, like a new jacket or a new gadget, think-ing that it would make you really really happy, only to discover later on that you don't even notice this thing

anymore? You got used to it and the novelty doesn't excite you -- you don't notice the gadget's neat features anymore, they're just sort of there now. You've become habituated to this new thing, which is a common occurrence that happens with every material thing! You can't just keep trying to fuel your work with these artificial aids, ultimately you have to find that inner drive to keep you going.

This is not to say that extrinsic rewards aren't useful or effective in the short term. Lots of people will use small rewards, an effective strategy as long as the net effect is positive. For instance, you might promise yourself a movie rental or an episode of an HBO show when you finish the chapter or complete studying for the exam. With something nice to look forward to, you could be motivated to finish what you need to do. Just be aware that these kinds of reward systems tend to get blunted in the long-run and you will require bigger and bigger rewards to get the same effect. Not too many of us can afford to promise ourselves a Tesla as long as we complete an important project.

The corollary to the intrinsic motivation principle is figuring out what you're good at and doing that. For some people, what they are good at may not be what they think they enjoy. But why do we insist on every-

one doing what they love? Cal Newport calls this the "passion trap," the idea that everyone has to find their passion when things are a tad more complicated than that. Cal highlights how this idea might be making lots of people even more unhappy than they otherwise would be. What the search for passion ignores is that passion and ability go hand in hand with each other-- the better you are at something, the more likely it is that you'll be passionate about it.

Let's say you're a great programmer. Or a great human resources representative. If you can make a great living doing those things, why not continue doing them in order to build up capital for other endeavors? For all of the recent talk about "do what you love," I think that perhaps the conversation has gone a little too far in that direction. Maybe you don't "love" what you do -- but you're good at it and the job provides major societal and personal benefits, or opportunities to develop a new ability. The great thing about this situation is that you can take what you earn at your job and trade it for the time and space to find what you think you could truly love.

Motivation is hard to come by. Being great at something is hard to come by. Don't throw either down the drain and seek to maximize both.

PRINCIPLE 5 SUMMARY

- Be intrinsically motivated -- because those extrinsic factors are fleeting and won't always be there.
- Use self-rewards sparingly, short-term achievement goodies do work, but their effectiveness decreases over time, necessitating more and more self-bribery.
- If you can't figure out what motivates you, do what you're good at, and then trade the time and money saved to find yourself.

Principle 6: Practice and grit make things easier and help you achieve flow

Once you've found that thing that motivates you or that you're at least somewhat good at doing, it is essential to harness that energy and turn it into expertise. You've probably never heard of Anders Ericsson, but he's a researcher who for years has studied how people develop expertise. He is considered the world's foremost expert on experts. You probably have heard of a guy named Malcolm Gladwell though -- he popularized Ericsson's research in the form of the "10,000 hour rule" in his book *Outliers*. The rule refers to how much practice you have to have within a domain to reach truly expert levels of performance.

The great thing about practice is that, most of the time, all it requires is your energy and some time. It doesn't cost you money -- just a little bit of motivation to get your butt off of the couch. If you're not productive at work, you're probably not going to get there by watching television. So do yourself a favor -- turn off the TV or Netflix and set for yourself the goal of practicing at least one hour a day at something. Maybe it's cooking. Maybe it's writing. Maybe it's program-

ming. Maybe it's making PowerPoint presentations or speaking publicly. Maybe you've always wanted to start a blog or a podcast or learn to knit. Whatever it may be, you can get better at it, but you need to put in the work to get there. It isn't just going to appear out of thin air for you. The better you are at something, the more efficient you'll be at it.

People who are able to consistently practice probably have what Angela Duckworth's research finds is the most important factor for success: grittiness. Grit means having the determination to keep going in the face of adversity. Unlike IQ, which is relatively fixed, grit has been shown to be something you can develop over time! It starts with mindfulness and breathing exercises. Just taking a moment to pause when you come to a stressful juncture can be helpful to giving you that small boost to KEEP GOING. Developing your grit will make you better at hard, effortful practice, which will pay significant dividends down the road.

Practice is also essential for achieving what Mihály Csíkszentmihályi calls flow states. Flow, or the feeling of full immersion in a task, is that experience you've had when you hit all your shots in a basketball game or wrote 10 pages of your paper in a single sitting. You're in the zone. You're feeling inspired. You're feeling invincible. When you're firing on all cylinders, you

can handle and get tasks done before you're even really consciously aware of it. But how do we get into that state?

Practice and grittiness lower the barriers for you to get to flow states. The more you practice and the grittier you become, the easier tasks will be for you. What took you a few hours in the past will take half an hour and feel easier and easier. We'll talk more later about how to structure your environment to achieve flow states -- but recognize that it probably takes development of expertise and a base-level of grittiness to get to flow states reliably.

PRINCIPLE 6 SUMMARY

- Practice lowers cognitive task barriers and boosts productivity.
- Keep working at tasks until you're able to reliably achieve flow states.

Principle 7: Track your time use and shift it towards productive things

Time. It is our most valuable resource, yet we often treat it like it is something we can waste. Knowing how you use your time and optimizing time-use is a huge part of maximizing productivity. As Ben Franklin said, "Lost time is never found again."

The first step to fixing a problem about yourself is to recognize that you have one. We spend so much of our time in front of computers now, it's easy to get sucked into the vortex of Facebook, Twitter, Buzzfeed quizzes, and YouTube videos. But can you really know if you're spending too much time on these sites if you don't measure it? I only recently, within the last year, started diligently tracking my internet usage. I use RescueTime, a free Chrome extension, to do it. I tell RescueTime what sites I consider to be "time wasters" and it gives me both a detailed breakdown of time use, how much time I spent on sites I consider "productive" (Google Docs vs. Gmail), and a weekly report.

How do I use my time when I'm online and in front of

a computer?

I used RescueTime to track my internet time use over the span of a month or so. Gmail is still dominant and that's not surprising since many of my collaborators are not local to Philadelphia. However, I've been making a concerted effort to streamline my own communications habits. I'm definitely getting better at checking and responding to email and I'm also spending less time on Facebook (down to about 30 minutes a day).

Another great tool for figuring out your time use is to use your Google Calendar or a planner to block out parts of your day. An analog tool that is also useful and much cheaper than buying a customized notebook is to use a 10x10 grid with each square representing 10 minutes (such as the one here http://waitbutwhy.com/2016/10/100-blocks-day.html). Imagine your day as 100 10-minute blocks of time. That's all you have to spend each day. That means that watching a sports game on TV likely takes 25 blocks. That's ¼ of all of the productive blocks you have a day. In short, be careful with how you use your time! Before you know it, you'll have spent all your blocks. And these are blocks you'll never get back.

What kinds of principles should people follow to manage time? I've found Peter Drucker's five principles of

time management are excellent. They are:

1. know where time goes
2. focus on outward contributions
3. build on strengths
4. concentrate on the few major areas where superior performance will produce outstanding results
5. make effective decisions

While Drucker's principles are directed at managers, they also apply to everyone (since you are the manager of yourself!). Drucker is really telling us about how comparative advantage, or focusing on what you're good at, applies to how we spend our time. Unless you really have to, why spend time on something you're not good at? Why not offload the things like changing the oil on your car to someone else so that you can focus on the things you're good at? If you get rid of the unnecessary things in your life and leverage your strengths, you'll soon find yourself with a lot more time and resources to be productive. Do you really want to spend time on the phone dealing with customer service or scheduling things? Both productivity gurus Ramit Sethi and Tim Ferriss recommend outsourcing these cognitively simple tasks.

Lastly, by focusing on your own outcomes and contributions, you'll have a tangible and measurable bot-

tom line accounting at the end of the day: what did I accomplish with the 17-18 hours I spent awake today? If the answer to that question doesn't make you happy -- you know it's time to make some changes in the ways you spend your time! Being efficient with your time is the greatest, most impactful change you can make. Start now before it's too late!

PRINCIPLE 7 SUMMARY

- Track your time use; if you don't know about problems, you can't fix them.
- To quickly track time use think of your day as 100 blocks of 10 minutes. You have 100 blocks to spend each day.
- Be efficient by optimizing what you spend your time doing.

Principle 8: Self-control doesn't come easy -- set yourself up for success

Self-control. It is one of the important things that separates us from animals. Humans are blessed with this capability. The first step to achieving self-control is to limit your contact with the things that keep you away from your goals and the kind of person you ultimately want to be. If you're on a diet, would you put a chocolate cake on the kitchen table and leave it there, calling to you temptingly like some kind of siren? If you're trying to quit smoking, would you go hang out in a smoky bar or take your breaks at the office smoke pit? The answer to both is no. Achieving and maintaining self-control is hard enough, so why would you sabotage yourself before you've even had a chance to succeed?

Limiting exposure to goal obstacles also includes people. People who are constantly negative towards you and your goals or who are actively encouraging you to do things contrary to your self-interest are not the least bit helpful. Like the alcoholic friend who tries to get you to drink even though they know you're in rehab, these are people you need to try to limit your

interaction with if at all possible.

One other major roadblock to productivity is social media and email. Getting yourself away from the time-suck that is your Facebook feed can require a supreme act of self-control. If you can't control yourself from checking Facebook or Twitter every ten seconds, then one easy way of doing this is to hide the apps off of the home screen and nest it in a category you rarely use, several pages in. In my browser, I use Stayfocused, a free chrome extension, to block certain sites (e.g., Reddit, Facebook, and Twitter, those notorious time-suckers) when I really need to get stuff done. You can set some sites as non-blocked, such as Google Docs or Wikipedia, and set the rest of the internet as blocked for a certain period of time. That's what Stayfocused calls the "nuclear option". I have to admit that when I'm really demotivated, I do have to resort to the nuclear option. It works.

I also turned on the "social" and "promotions" tabs on my Gmail, which pushed all of those Twitter ads and fundraising request emails to a box I never have to check I unless I really want to. I'm an "inbox zero" person, so this has helped me reduce the amount of times I check email daily by tenfold. Finally, on days I have to get a lot of work done, I limit my email checking to once every two hours.

Another great way of imposing self-control? Set up an accountability system. Consider getting some trusted friends involved. For example, if you need to get an assignment done and aren't feeling particularly motivated to do so, making it publicly known that you have to do it and that if you don't, you'll impose some kind of self-punishment may give you that motivational boost to get that thing done. On the flipside, you might want to consider giving yourself some kind of positive reinforcement at the end. For example, if you get the assignment done, you'll allow yourself to watch that movie you've been dying to see. The great thing about exercising self-control is that once you've set up your systems and start putting the principles into practice, it gets easier over time. Talk about a great return on investment.

PRINCIPLE 8 SUMMARY
- Don't make self-control harder than it already is; remove temptations whenever possible.
- Self-control gets easier with more and more practice, when it becomes second nature.
- Develop systems for enforcing self-accountability.

Principle 9: Use feedback to adjust and optimize

Becoming more productive is a skill like any other skill. Some people assume that productivity is a matter of natural ability, but in reality, productivity is a set of skills that can be developed by following the principles set out in this guide.

Anders Ericsson, whose work inspired Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000 hour rule, developed the useful concept of deliberate practice. What makes this effortful and difficult practice work is feedback.

Feedback is information on the efficacy of our methods, whether things turned out the way we intended or not. Accurate feedback is often difficult to come by. To help us get better over time, we need to first recognize the kinds of information necessary for improving our own productivity habits. We then need to set up systems for capturing accurate feedback, and finally, we need to set up a system for reviewing and integrating this information back into our behavioral patterns.

What kinds of information are helpful for boosting our productivity? First, information on how we spend our

time (frequency data) is important. Next, information on how much time we spend on each activity (density data) is important. Finally, information on how effective our efforts are in relation to our desired outcomes helps tie together the frequency and density data to what we really care about: achieving our goals.

Our calendars are one good tracking mechanism for collecting, examining, and integrating frequency and density data. Once a month, I review my past month's calendar to look for patterns:

- How much time am I spending on conference calls and meetings?
- How often did I adhere to my writing schedule?
- How often did I go over time in terms of what I had originally budgeted for a specific activity?
- What are the biggest time wasters on my schedule?

Answering these questions on a regular basis helps me adjust my energy and efforts the next month. I also endeavor to integrate information on my Internet usage, which is closely tied to my productivity. I look closely at the feedback reports I get from apps such as RescueTime and Webtime Tracker. RescueTime generates automated weekly reports that tell me how productive I was that week by comparing my time use

to the previous week. These apps compose the core of my data collection system and the data collection doesn't require any additional effort on my part.

An essential part of this system is setting aside time to review this information. It doesn't take a lot of time to accomplish but it is essential to knowing how to adjust your behavior.

So develop a system for review the same way you would set up a system for collecting the data. I use calendar reminders to let me know when it is time to look at the collected data. After all, without analysis, the data just sits there, uninterpreted.

Finally, once I've finished reviewing the information, I use it to inform how I need to change for the upcoming week or month. Did I spent too much time on email last week? Maybe I needed to coordinate a conference or some other task that required a lot of emailing back and forth. Perhaps some of that time could have been better spent coordinating via a videochat or conference call. The information is essential for calibrating our behavior and getting the most out of our precious time.

PRINCIPLE 9 SUMMARY

- Use feedback to ensure that we're learning and adapting over time
- Set up a system to collect & analyze the data
- Ensure that that analysis forms a complete feedback loop so that ultimately our behavior becomes more optimal over time

Set Yourself Up to Be Successful

Principle 10: Streamline your life by automating

To become more productive, sometimes you need to find more time. There's an easy principle to follow to find more time. One thing that the Internet is making easier and easier to cut out of your life is the need to physically go to a store or wait in line. Now that you can order groceries and renew your driver's license online, why go to these places at all? You're only setting yourself up to be inconvenienced. With the proliferation of free shipping and all-inclusive memberships like Amazon Prime, you can easily set yourself up with a system that delivers all of life's essentials to your mailbox.

Cutting out these inefficiencies in your life is something I wrote about in this blog post. Services like Amazon's "Subscribe and Save" and Blue Apron's dinner kit delivery service have revolutionized my life in a good way. I remember when I was growing up, Sundays weren't about football. Sundays were long days spent at Costco when the whole family would go and buy essentials at the store together. Now, those things just get delivered to my front door. My Sundays have been rescued, freeing up time that I can now use productively, like writing this e-book!

Other methods and products I've used to save time include: subscription services such as quip toothbrushes (they deliver a fresh brush-head and toothpaste every three months, automatically), Dollar Shave Club (set your shaving needs on autopilot), and, of course, auto-pay for all credit cards and other accounts. I also stopped drinking coffee and moved to using a product that our company produces called Starter. The less time you spend on these matters the more time you have to spend on the things that really matter.

This principle also relates back to my earlier point about wearing the same or similar clothing each day. I know lots of people, and I'm sure you do too, that spend all day at work surfing clothing sites and following fashion trends. I have a few go-to brands which have consistent sizing, so that when something I own wears out, I can easily put another set on order. For example, I've been wearing Nike Pegasus size 8.5 shoes since 2007, and continue to order new Pegasus shoes as the old ones wear out and new ones are released. I treat my Merrell Moab Ventilators the same way. It is helpful to know these things about the products you rely on, so that you know that whatever sizes you're ordering are going to fit well without having to go to the store to try them on. Ultimately, these automations and productivity hacks save gas, save time,

and allow you to spend your time doing the things you really want to do -- like being productive and accomplishing those life goals!

PRINCIPLE 10 SUMMARY

- Online services such as Amazon Prime and Blue Apron make it easier to cut trips to the store and standing in lines out of your life.
- Use subscription services for items that you'd rather not spend time thinking about.
- Save time by buying from the same brands.

Principle 11: Control and optimize your sensory environment

Where you work matters a lot because your environment helps to dictate how much work you get done. With the proliferation of open work spaces and more and more of our work being accomplished in a solitary way, our environment can be either beneficial or detrimental to the amount of work we get done. Paying careful attention to the kinds of environments that you work best in will help you optimize the conditions that will help you get stuff done.

Did you know that ambient noise helps you be more creative and get work done? One neat tool I use to create ambient noise is Noisli. If I know I'm going to be heading into a long coding session, I will generally turn on the electronic or chill radio stations on Apple Music and put on my Sennheiser headphones. I try to tune my auditory inputs to the task at hand. I generally avoid any music with words in it if I'm trying to write a journal article or code. But I love listening to pop music (I've been a huge pop music fan my whole life) when I'm working on creative stuff like designing PowerPoint presentations. You have to find what

works for you.

Changing up your workplace visual environment is also important. Have you ever wondered why people get work done in coffee shops? Part of it is the afore-mentioned ambient noise factor. The other part is that usually coffee shops are unfamiliar places with unfa-miliar faces. This actually heightens your stress level a bit. Research on stress, a staple of the psychological field for many years, has time and again shown that there is a proximal zone of stress.

Too little stress and you feel bored and likely unmo-tivated to work. Too much stress and you're over-whelmed, unable to think clearly. You wouldn't try to do work at a concert venue, for example. Coffee shops are one place to generate the environment for the proximal zone of stress. Another might be the lo-cal library or a co-working space.

Public places are good for working because other people serve as a built-in accountability mechanism. It is really hard to screw around when there's a lot of other people around. This is particularly true in quiet places like libraries and co-working spaces. We are, ultimately, social animals, and having people around us who are also working hard makes it easier for us to work hard.

One tactic I used as an undergrad and that I have carried into my graduate school years is to work from a different place each day. On Mondays, I usually go into the lab to work, and I rotate among a neighborhood co-working space, my small windowless office in the lab, my home office which has lots of sunshine, and the library. I usually try to find a different place to work in the library. The change of scenery keeps me on my toes and keeps my visual surroundings from going stale. Staying out of the boredom zone can help you boost your productivity! Not only does this help boost productivity but research shows that changing your environment can also lead to better information retention and improved memory.

PRINCIPLE 11 SUMMARY
- Create ambient noise to boost your productivity and creativity.
- Work in a public space to hold yourself account-able-- it is harder to mess around in public
- Change up where you do work to keep yourself from falling into complacency.

Principle 12: Restrict your access and attention to social media and news

Unless social media manager or marketing guru is in your job title, chances are your job or profession doesn't require you to use social media. It pays to keep in mind one thing about platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter: the thousands of engineers who work there devote countless hours to figuring out how to keep you on the platform. Your smartphone and all the apps inside it are specifically designed to take advantage of your human psychology, honed over millions of years through evolutionary pressures. The actual brain chemistry is quite complicated but it all boils down to this: Facebook is designed to make you feel micro-doses of goodness.

While these hits of dopamine might feel good in the short-term, they won't contribute to your long-term success. Your long-term success and big goals are what will make you feel lasting happiness and the memories you form with your friends and family are what will make up the foundational elements of real satisfaction.

Resisting the urge to check social media is hard—sometimes we do get valuable information on it and other times we have something valuable to add to the neverending stream. Others are similarly addicted to news, refreshing sites such as the New York Times, Fox News, and ESPN for the latest on current events. This, too, essentially forms the core behavior around procrastination or an unwillingness to face boredom.

There are some strategies for getting past the insanely smart designs of Facebook's engineers. Apps such as Stayfocusd, Newsfeed Eradicator, and Freedom are ways to overcome the siren's call of social media. But there are creative ways around these apps and thus you something stronger to resist. What you really need is a system for replacing these short dopamine hits. I recommend having both a physical system as well as a software system for doing so.

To remove the urge to look at my phone, I put it into a Mission Darkness Faraday Cage. No signals penetrate these super tough Mission Darkness bags. I don't do this all the time but if I really want to get something done and have uninterrupted writing time, I go with the physical route.

The other part of my system involves all three of the aforementioned apps as well as Google Alerts. I set

up daily alerts for news stories I'm following, which I get once a day. I also subscribe to news sites such as Just Security and Lawfare which go straight to my updates box in Gmail. That way, I'm not endlessly surfing news sites and I'm restricting my social media to after 10pm at night and for only 20 minutes daily. I've found that I have so much more time to do other things by taking a this approach to social media. have been rescued, freeing up time that I can now use productively, like writing this e-book!

For those of you who're looking to take an even more extreme step, you can try what my buddy Pete did: delete all social media apps from his phone. He found that the native apps were very addictive but the moment he limited social media access to a web browser, he was less likely to spend time browsing. He, too, has freed up a bunch of time as a result.

PRINCIPLE 12 SUMMARY
- Take an extreme approach to cutting out news and social media because they are going to take a similarly extreme approach to keeping you addicted
- Use a combination of physical and software tools to help you resist the urge to use social

Cut Out the Noise and Focus

Principle 13: Be efficient with your communications

Communication is the lifeblood of many knowledge industries. Efficient communications are doubly powerful: people are more likely to read your messages and you'll be less likely to have misunderstandings which require time to fix. One rule of thumb I subscribe to is that before I send an email, I think about whether or not the message that is being delivered will result in more than one response. I try to deliver one message via email, but if I think the message or subject is going to require delivering more than two follow-up emails, I will email to schedule a phone call instead. Similarly, if we're going to have a phone conference, I always demand an agenda or generate one ahead of time, so that we don't wind up just spending a lot of time meandering from one point to another. I also try to limit all phone conferences to 30 minutes and always an hour, max. If a call or meeting lasts longer than that, you haven't properly prepped for it.

Being efficient with email is a huge challenge. But consider this paradox: how many people do you know who complain about getting too many emails? It turns out that these people are likely causing their own email problems. People who generally get a lot

of emails are also the ones who send a lot of emails, which engenders responses that require subsequent email communications. You can spend your entire day writing email and be extremely unproductive as a result. I probably receive 100 non-spammy non-marketing emails a day. Guess what? I try to limit my responses and I try to send only 10 emails a day. It has really helped me cut down on emails, which now only take up about ¼ of my online time per day. It used to be closer to half!

One tip for being more efficient with your communications is to employ the one-touch rule. Don't tackle an email or communication until you're ready to fully commit your attention to it. If you aren't, you'll likely have to explain yourself in greater detail which forces you to re-engage on something you could have crossed off your list the first time around.

PRINCIPLE 13 SUMMARY
- If you don't want to receive a lot of emails, don't send a lot of emails.
- Pick up the phone.

Principle 14: Avoid unnecessary meetings

How many times have you been sitting in a meeting and said to yourself, "this is such a waste of time?" I think one of the worst uses of time are regularly scheduled meetings, which seems to be an unchangeable fact of office life. Regularly scheduled meetings can be unproductive because it assumes that the people in the office have a regular rhythm. But just from observation, we know that offices don't always operate at the same pace -- externally imposed deadlines, seasons, holidays, personal events such as the birth of children and deaths of parents, all of these things are happening all the time to people. Sometimes you need to meet more often -- other times you don't -- and if your office isn't one that calibrates to these demand signals, then avoiding these meetings altogether could boost your productivity.

If at all possible, start trying to extricate yourself from these time commitments that you know you aren't going to get a good return-on-time-invested. Ignore that fear-of-missing-out (FOMO) feeling -- you aren't missing anything. Start by learning which groups of people are most inefficient when it comes to meeting discussions and avoiding them. Figure out which regular

meetings are for informational exchange (which can easily be done on sites like Basecamp, Slack, or email) and which are ones where actual decisions will be made. Finally, before attending the meeting, ask yourself if you'll be contributing anything substantive to the discussion. If the answer is no, consider not going.

I know that skipping meetings all the time, or even most of the time, isn't possible for everyone, but even executives and those with a lot of demands on their time can get themselves out of meetings. For example, Mark Cuban is famous for not going to meetings. Yes, he's a billionaire so he can afford to do this because he's not as reliant on others, but you'd be surprised at how far you can push the envelope on this. Ultimately, how can you know if you don't try? You might be pleasantly surprised at how many unproductive meetings you can avoid.

PRINCIPLE 14 SUMMARY
- Don't go to unnecessary meetings.
- Learn who will waste your time and avoid them.

Principle 15: Do more than one thing at once, but know the limits of multitasking

Another way of maximizing your time is to pair cognitively simple and cognitively taxing activities. For example, you can wipe down your kitchen counters and listen to the latest educational podcast or audiobook you love (I really enjoy listening to the Philosophize This! podcast while doing chores), or eat lunch while chatting with an associate about your latest project or idea, or talk about a new idea while you're running or lifting weights. You're basically engaging both thinking systems, (system 1, automatic and intuitive, and system 2, deliberate and effortful), of your brain simultaneously. This concept is most famously associated with Nobel Prize winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman. Think about Systems 1 and 2 like this: instantaneous and seemingly effortless tasks like adding 2 + 2 engage system 1 processes (see how you knew the answer very quickly), while more laborious and difficult cognitive tasks such as writing an email or an e-book engage system 2 processes.

Now, you would potentially run into problems if you try to engage your system 2 on multiple tasks si-

multaneously. The research on multitasking is pretty unequivocal -- it doesn't work and makes us less efficient. So unless you're really superhuman, you're probably tricking yourself into thinking you are better than the average person when it comes to multitasking. Small interruptions, to answer email, text messages, or look at notifications, can really disrupt your train of thought as well, requiring even more time to put yourself back into the task. So do yourself a favor when you are really trying to get work done -- put all of that stuff on mute!

However, there are some multi-tasking strategies that do work. One is the aforementioned pairing of automatic tasks with effortful tasks. Another is to work on related tasks together, a great suggestion from Entrepreneur magazine. This way you're able to be more cognitively efficient when approaching the tasks that you need to get done. A strategy that is easy to implement and has been proven to work is to cognitively off-load to a list or step-by-step guide like I mentioned in Principle 2, thereby turning what was once a difficult and cognitively taxing task into something less so.

PRINCIPLE 15 SUMMARY

- Pair mindless activity with cognitively taxing activity.
- Don't multitask too much, unless it is a number of activities in which you're already well-practiced.

Principle 16: Know when to take a break, when to walk away, and when to relax

Sometimes you hit a wall, despite all of your efforts to push past it. Sometimes you reach the wall well after you've reached the point of diminishing returns. Too often we work past this point and fail to realize that we're just hitting our heads against a hard surface and not generating useful output. If you're going to all of these lengths to optimize the rest of your life, why wouldn't you also try to reduce the time when you aren't able to be productive, in order to maximize your free and relaxation time? Sometimes good ideas come to us while we're doing these other activities and science shows that sometimes we do have to let ideas marinate. Those shower thoughts can be excellent!

When you're taking a short break (for example, 5-10 minutes for a short walk every other hour) it helps to get out of the environment you were working in. What are some things you can do to recharge?

Go outside and look at nature for a while.
Listen to some music while you're walking around. I

sometimes like to turn on Apple Music's Chill station for something easy-going and familiar. Other times I'll just play something popular on YouTube. Right now that song is apparently Radiohead's Creep.

See if a colleague will join you for a chat.
Stretch! I like to stretch my back and legs.
Do 10 pull-ups and get the blood pumping.
Meditate for ten minutes -- it will help you center yourself and come back refreshed, and over the long term, meditation can improve your focus and manage stress. I like Headspace, which can help you train your mind to meditate effectively in ten minutes a day.

You'll feel so much better afterwards. At night sometimes I'll take a quick shower, which science suggests is a great way to juice your creativity.

For longer breaks, or days off, engaging your mind by going hiking or watching a movie is essential for resetting that motivational clock and restoring your self-control and work energy stores. Personally, I like to go running, listen to music, or watch the Knicks play basketball.

PRINCIPLE 16 SUMMARY

- Take breaks when you need to -- sometimes you need to recharge to tackle tasks.
- Make the most of your recharging opportunities.

Principle 17: Procrastination isn't about fear of work, it is about fear of disappointment

Almost everyone procrastinates. Putting off what we should do today until tomorrow is natural and not necessarily a problem. Until, of course, it is. The problem tends to sneak up on us precisely because of the nature of procrastination. When routinely delaying and deferring what you *should* be doing becomes habitual, that's the beginning of a problem that can only spiral out of control if you don't get ahead of it. What follows is a distillation of good work that I've read on countering procrastinating tendencies.

First, a personal story. I, like everyone else, struggle with procrastination. To this day, I have not overcome my tendencies, but I have developed mitigation strategies to make the effects of it less pronounced. Primarily, I replaced the typical procrastination activities such as cleaning your room, organizing your desk, watching television and movies, with productive activities. I'm lucky though—I enjoy reading about politics to forecast events (one of my side gigs), looking at real estate and modeling cash flow (another side gig), doing reviews of products I've purchased, as well

as writing about personal growth. I understand this is atypical. When I've operated in a professional setting, I've tended to work in organizations where there are true emergencies: if I don't do X someone else will get hurt or worse. That kind of motivation is deeply moving but it is also atypical.

Now that I'm in academia, most deadlines are self-imposed. Even working on a big research project like I am now, the lag between project start and project delivery can be weeks, months or years. This kind of situation is a recipe for procrastination: little urgency, little to no feedback, and it is unclear what kind of impact you'll ultimately make with your efforts. I'm in my third year now and if it wasn't for the development of good work habits, I probably wouldn't have made it this far. I have the utmost respect for people who do research and write. On the surface, a job in the military might seem harder but the psychological battle you need to fight to keep going when you face a mountain of writing is very similar, if not more difficult, than a long ruck march for a lengthy patrol.

Why do we procrastinate? Most researchers point to a few factors: being afraid of failure, being afraid of imperfection, being afraid of getting started because the task seems insurmountable, being afraid of realizing you're maybe not good enough for the task...

starting to get the picture? Procrastination isn't really about the task, it is mostly about fear. Overcoming this fear is essential to beating procrastination. Part of the issue is that we tend to discount our future selves compared to our current selves. What does this actually mean? It means that we don't value our future time as much as we do the time that is right in front of our face, even though time is a non-replaceable resource. If we are comfortable now, sitting in front of the couch, we could situation so much that we never overcome the action threshold. This means we won't get started doing what we need to do because what we need to do is so much more uncomfortable than our current state.

Here's what I've found that works for procrastination:

1. Stop blaming yourself and start motivating yourself. You'll never get out of this mental rut if you are routinely negative about your situation. Like a car stuck in neutral, you need to coax your mind into gear.

2. Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. I've heard several former military people describe this as the key to getting through Navy SEAL training or other special forces selection. Too often we seek comfort now, not realizing that that comfort

now is going to cost us comfort in the future. In fact, it will cost us the potential to realize who we could be. That is a near infinite cost: looking back on your life, how disappointed will you be with who you've become? Don't let yourself get to that point.

3. Plan with micro-tasks but stop over-analyzing the situation. You need a concrete plan to move forward but sometimes planning becomes a substitute for action. Don't let that happen. Planning is essential but you can't let that become the only mechanism you have. At some point you need to take action.

4. Get rid of the distractions. In extreme cases, I've found myself using Stayfocusd on my browser and Freedom app on my phone so that I have zero access to social media. I'll even turn off my phone so that I don't get iMessages, my Slack isn't going off 24/7 and my WhatsApp group chats are faded into the background. I used this near total sensory deprivation technique, along with finding places in the library that are open but lack distractions and finished a 20,000 word draft of one of my pre-dissertation papers in six days. Reading rooms are great for this: they are public spaces where you won't be tempted to do random distracting stuff.

5. Just get started. Don't worry about it not making sense or not being good enough. Start writing. Start reading. Start doing. Get the mental ball rolling. At some point what you write will make sense and then you'll have opened the doorway to success.

In short, procrastination is a psychological battle. Arm yourself with strategies for getting beyond it. Your future self will thank you.

PRINCIPLE 17 SUMMARY
- Procrastination is about fear and is primarily psychological.
- Be positive, plan but don't over-plan, and at the end of the day, the most important thing to do is to just get started, no matter how rough or bad you think your output will be.

Principle 18: Be deliberate about your daily schedule

How often do you get to your computer in the morning or pick up your phone only to realize that you've already been derailed from what you planned to do that day? How often are these derailments actually productive?

Being deliberate about your day goes beyond saying no (which we covered in other principles). That's the defensive part of scheduling deliberately. Being smart about your day also requires you to have a good plan for using the time available to you. This is the offensive part of scheduling deliberately. Do this by discovering your best time of day to do work and by aligning activities to your body's natural rhythms.

For most people, the best time of day to do effortful thinking is in the morning. Yet, this is the time that we often waste putting out fake fires and attending to the needs of others. It is important to figure out your "peak" hours and protect them at all costs. Take a sleep quiz (you can find a few online) to figure out when your best time of day to work. Schedule your hardest and most thinking-intensive tasks for those hours. Then, schedule your meetings, conference

calls, and discussion around that time (before and after). Along with being efficient with your workouts, you also should figure out when the best time of day is for working out. Sometimes your other scheduled tasks may dictate your workout time, but it is often better to work out inefficiently than to not work out at all. For many, the best time to work out is in the late afternoon, after 4pm and before dinner.

For example, unless I absolutely have to, I typically protect my mornings from 9AM to 11AM for heavy lifting work–writing and data analysis. I try to answer important emails before this walled off time. If at all possible I schedule my conference calls and meetings after 2pm when I don't have to think as hard and am either a minor or passive participant. Gym time is also important and thus gets a reserved time slot, usually sometime between 5-7pm. If I do need to do work in the evening, I try to do it after my gym time and dinner, to give my brain some time to recharge before tackling another batch of writing. Around 10PM I start my wind down routine, stashing my phone in another room so that I can get between six and seven hours of sleep.

Fit all of these pieces of the jigsaw puzzle together and you can optimize your day for maximum productivity.

PRINCIPLE 18 SUMMARY

- Schedule deliberately to take control of your precious time
- Figure out your body's natural rhythm to figure out the best time to do everything

Principle 19: Surround yourself with other productive people

Jim Rohn, a mentor to Tony Robbins coined the phrase "you're the average of the five people you spend the most time with." While most of us can't be as ruthless as what Jim recommends (we can't simply cut off our spouse, bosses, and co-workers), we can employ his advice in principle. What this means in practice is associating with people who we can learn from, who are willing to give us constructive criticism, and who are going to give us the positive energy to succeed when we need it.

The place where we probably have the most associationistic control is at work. If you find yourself at work routinely surrounded by people who would rather socialize than do required work or who would rather complain endlessly than find solutions to problems, you should probably find another group of people to hang out with. Consider asking for a transfer to another unit or simply restrict the amount of time you spend with these non-productive people.

Finding people that we can learn from and that we

get along with is extremely helpful to our productivity in the long run. Certainly the Red Queen principle (an evolutionary hypothesis which, according to Wikipedia: "proposes that organisms must constantly adapt, evolve, and proliferate not merely to gain reproductive advantage, but also simply to survive while pitted against ever-evolving opposing organisms in an ever-changing environment") applies here—many of the industries where we work are extremely competitive and we have to run just to keep our current position. If we aren't improving, our knowledge and our skills, then we're ultimately falling behind.

Even more important for our long term growth and development is having friends who are willing to give us honest feedback when appropriate. Honest, truthful feedback is hard to deliver but oftentimes, it is exactly what's needed to help us confront reality and recognize that we've gone astray or are off the mark. We need people in our lives who have the courage and strong pre-existing relationship to set us back on course.

Sometimes we just need people in our lives who can inspire us and recognize that a situation isn't as bad as we think it is, or that we're making a mountain out of a molehill. These positive cheerleaders can help us see when we're ready to succeed but don't yet have

the courage to. Leverage their positive energy and encouragement into real action.

PRINCIPLE 19 SUMMARY

- Be deliberate about the people you surround yourself with
- Find people who you can learn from, who are willing to give you constructive criticism and people who will encourage you and inspire you

The "Big" One

Principle 20: Never give up! Work smarter AND harder.

Do you know how long it took me to figure out all of these things? Years. None of these lessons came easy. One thing I hope is that my own experimentation and thinking helps you shorten the time it takes to achieve higher levels of productivity.

Which brings me to my last two and most important points. First, you are going to struggle. Everyone does. You'll find yourself without the necessary discipline to continue, at times. But don't give up. You'll get there. You'll find that slowly, you're able to get more and more done. You'll become attuned to the conditions that will set you up for success. And finally, you'll break through and achieve optimal performance.

Second, as I wrote at the beginning of this e-book, just diving in and brute-forcing your way to success isn't going to get you very far. In my opinion, the phrase should be "work smarter AND harder". Exhortations to work smarter without also pushing people to work harder is providing advice that sells them short of maximum potential. If you implement the aforementioned principles in your daily life, why shouldn't you also apply them to your whole life?

Remember, if you don't know where you're going, any way will get you there. Being strategic about your life goals and what you need to do to get there means applying the fourteen principles in a macro way. Imagine the person you want to be 20 years from now. Do you want to be a millionaire? Do you want to own your own successful business? Do you want to launch a new brand, be a famous novelist, or release a music album? You can't achieve those goals if you aren't deliberate and strategic about achieving them.
So how can you apply these principles at a macro level?

- Pick your goal. Backwards plan from that goal and be single-minded in achieving it. Keep the big picture in mind when you're making your plan.
- Be ruthlessly honest about the steps you need to achieve to get there. Do you want to lose 20 lbs? Know that you'll either have to cut thousands of calories from your diet on a weekly basis to get there or do thousands of calories' worth of exercise. There's simply no other way.
- Consider the opportunity costs. On average we'll live to about 70-80 years old, barring some revolutionary breakthrough in medicine. So you only have so much time to accomplish your goal. All the other time you spend on ir-

relevant tasks is time you won't be spending to get where you really want to go.

I'll leave you with this final story. When I was three and a half years old, I immigrated to the United States. I spoke zero English. When I started pre-Kindergarten the following year, I didn't speak very much with my classmates because I couldn't. My teachers told my parents that I didn't make enough progress that year and would have to be sent to English as a Second Language classes (ESL). I didn't know at the time, but that meant I would be separated from the "regular kids" and have to ride a "short bus" across town to attend ESL. My parents thought I was on a path to failure (I wasn't acclimating to the school environment) and I started to slowly realize that I was "different" and potentially less-able than my classmates. At a young age, it could have been easy for me to give up and settle for mediocrity. Instead, I took it as a challenge (what right do you have to send me to the remedial class!). With the help of an amazing ESL teacher and coaching from my parents, I was able to rejoin my classmates in 1st grade after a year of remedial schooling and made it all the way to the Ivy League. Like being drafted in the sixth round or being rejected by many publishers, we should always remember that we have a choice in the direction of our lives and how we use our time. Take those tough moments and turn

them into motivation. You'll find yourself even more productive, not less, as a result.

PRINCIPLE 20 SUMMARY

- Never give up!
- Life goes on and so will you. Make the most of it!

Epilogue

Epilogue: Eat the Cookie

Every week, you've probably seen or read an article which extols a slew of virtuous behaviors in listicle format. "Ten things successful people do!" or "17 things that are the secret to success." The author's advice is hard to argue with: spend time thinking each day, be curious about new subjects and topics, but don't spend time thinking about things that you can't influence. The article ends with an appeal to the idea of the common man"

"The rich aren't any smarter than us... [t]hey are just more strategic."

Not only is the advice simple, but once revealed, it seems to be obvious common sense. As soon as we see it written down on the page, it seems patently obvious that incurious and perpetually anxious people will be unsuccessful. This happens every time we read one of these success advice articles—what's written on the page just feels so true. We get drawn into the author's worldview, remembering all the small-minded worry-warts we know, while hoping that we aren't them. If we are, we vow to change our detrimental behavior so that we can be successful.

Personal growth is commoditized and distilled down to pithy statements and articles, which we consume with the hope that some of the lessons will stay with us and we'll ultimately end up "better" people.

This kind of advice falls short. Books and articles like this hide three major questions.

First, is the advice actually generalizable? In other words, can we reliably and repeatably achieve success via simple paint-by-numbers schemes? Connecting entertaining anecdotes to scientific studies is a great way to make a chapter come alive but it doesn't necessarily mean that the advice will work under any condition. For example, if I tell you that taking yourself out of a stale office environment will lead to higher levels of productivity, does that mean that by going to Starbucks you'll get that project done? Or, to connect back to the example at the beginning of this article, will spending 30 minutes a day thinking about specific topics like "how do I make more money" lead to you becoming rich, as the article suggests?

Second, what happened to all the people who did exactly as the book suggested, but still failed? These folks don't get a say in what is written in these advice articles, and without their voice, we're likely not getting the full story. And, perhaps the most important

point of all, what's the purpose of all this optimization towards higher levels of productivity?

These are deep questions that anyone who seeks to better themselves must eventually grapple with. Louis Menand offers an interesting perspective on these issues in an article in The New Yorker titled "The Life Biz: How to succeed at work and at home". Menand, in the incisive way that you come to expect from the Pulitzer Prize-winning author, reviews Charles Duhigg's book on improving the self and becoming more productive titled *Smarter, Faster, Better*.

Both Menand and Duhigg are authors that Pete, my Grove Ave co-founder, and I respect enormously. We were excited to dig into the review when the link popped up in our queue.

Menand artfully dissects the recent spate of popular science books dominating bookshelves, exposing the formulaic prose format: chapter after chapter of incredible anecdotes each backed by a generalizable scientific study for things you should seek to emulate.

For Duhigg and others (Dan Pink's *Drive* is one that comes to mind), by applying the research and lessons learned from the fields of psychology and business, one can get a lot better at, well, life. The goal is to

optimize your lifestyle until you are the most efficient machine possible.

This is the worrisome part for Menand—the blurring of workstyle with lifestyle until you achieve cyborg-perfection or the most efficient human being possible.

He writes, "[t]hey try to sum up current thinking in the business world about 'human resources' and transmute it into a manual for self-improvement. People don't read these books to find out how to be better human beings. People read them to figure out how to become the kind of human being the workplace is looking for."

Is that all we are and all we should be? Should personal growth be reduced to a productivity maximizing exercise? Since when did becoming a better human mean becoming more and more like a robot?

While the work of journalists like Duhigg and Pink have merit, we have to admit that we are a bit more philosophically aligned with Menand. Our society tends not to take the Oscar Wilde position on these matters, summed up as "everything in moderation including moderation." Americans tend to think if something is good, then you can never have too much of it. If we can eliminate one bad habit then we should

replace them all. If we know that the roots of intrinsic motivation are to be able to have autonomy, mastery, and work for a higher purpose, then we should all abandon our jobs (consequences be damned!).

Pete and I are more or less in agreement with Menand's overall point that maximizing our lives for productivity to the degree where personal and work life mirror each other (or are so intermixed as to be indistinguishable) might be too much.

"Productivity" in our minds, is something that is achieved at work while what we're trying to do at Grove Ave is to flesh out the idea that success is defined beyond just what happens in the workplace.

Society has become (or perhaps always was) obsessed with seeing work success as directly equal to life success. We think there's more to life.

This isn't to say that we agree with Menand on all of his points. We disagree with his blanket criticism of the entire genre of self-help business books. The fact that they largely relay common sense strategies shouldn't be a knock against them. In fact, many people, in their day-to-day behaviors lack common sense. We're inherently inconsistent beings influenced by emotions rather than rational utility-maximizing homo

economicus. What many of these books do is give us the vocabulary and conceptual frameworks to behave in a more self-aware and composed manner. That's why classics like *How to Win Friends* and *7 Habits* are so timeless. It's not simply about being nice to people to get what you want, but about making your mind aware of the need for empathy, putting yourself in someone's shoes, and striving for win-win scenarios. Not everyone does this or has the awareness to do this no matter how "common sense" it might appear to be to others.

The implication of many of these books and articles about productivity is that without taking these (sometimes rather extreme) steps, we won't ever be successful. We are told by these theorists and popularizers of scientific findings that we should take risks and dream big, yet there is little talk of what happens when we do so and fail. There's no Malcolm Gladwell around the corner that can pick you up off the mat and save you. For the most part, you have to do that yourself. There's also no real talk of what you do when you've largely "succeeded." Once you've optimized your life to the point of it being frictionless and pain-free, what are you going to do with all that extra time? Don't expect these theorists to be able to answer (or want to answer) that question for you.

Another major problem is that we tend to want to reduce important lessons and advice into capsule-sized products, to be packaged up and easily ingested. For example, the personality measure called grit has been hailed by lots of research as being even more important to success than intelligence. There's now a movement afoot to "test" students for grit in public school and to call out schools for "failing" to improve a student's grittiness. As the psychologist and primary grit researcher Angela Duckworth recently decried in an op-ed, when she found out what was happening based on her research:

"I felt queasy. This was not at all my intent, and this is not at all a good idea. Does character matter, and can character be developed? Science and experience unequivocally say yes. Can the practice of giving feedback to students on character be improved? Absolutely. Can scientists and educators work together to cultivate students' character? Without question. Should we turn measures of character intended for research and self-discovery into high-stakes metrics for accountability? In my view, no."

Yes, grit and character are important for success and yes, both can be improved. It doesn't mean that we should test students on these measures to hold schools accountable for character growth. After all,

character, like paths to success, is multidimensional and difficult to measure in real world settings. You can have not only too much of a good thing, you can turn a good thing into the opposite. The world is too complicated for these anodyne solutions to be universally helpful. One-size-fits-all recommendations for building grittiness and becoming more focused generally ignores the real problems people face that impede improvements. How can a test for grit capture the reality of your life, if just getting to school or work is obstacle-filled and difficult?

A related problem is that the advice from popularizers like Duhigg and the Business Insider type articles generally come from the most successful (i.e. wealthy and famous) people. Americans almost fetishize successful people, which Menand points out is something that changes based on where we are in history. Right now, we seem to be in love with risk-taking startup virtues and believe that if we can only emulate these people, we ourselves will become successful, seemingly by spiritual osmosis.

There is actually a conceptual term for only getting your advice from "successful people": in science we call this "selecting on the dependent variable." Basically, you wind up reverse engineering your findings once you know how things turn out.

But in our minds, success might only be an illusion, generated by luck, starting position, or genetics. We tend to laud those who are successful, but ignore those who followed the same path and ended up as failures. We also ignore how privilege and starting positions influence where we end up. It's easy to score a run when you were born on third base.

For every Mark Zuckerberg, there are thousands of failed startup founders. This is a widely acknowledged critique of the strategy theorist and popular business book writer Jim Collins. The core of Collins' approach is to find companies who have outperformed the market and find the common traits that make them successful. Seems simple enough and it also seems perfectly valid to do it this way. But what about the companies that possessed those same traits and still failed? In fact, many of the companies that Collins profiled in the book *Built to Last* have vastly underperformed the market (such as Motorola, IBM, and HP). If all it took for companies to be successful was to follow Collins' advice, then every company should be "built to last" simply after reading his book. If success were formulaic, we'd all have it by now! But we know that's not the case.

Finally, the problem with these narrow definitions of

success is that they are interpersonally dependent, externally defined. Where are the articles about success and internalized happiness borne of being able to spend time with family and friends? We tend to conflate success with character-building, as if becoming rich, famous, and writing a bestseller will suddenly make you a virtuous person who is also fun at parties. But how many successful people are total assholes?

Ultimately, we have two takeaways: first, pursuit of success can quickly devolve into a race to an externally-defined bottom, lacking true personal and internally-defined growth. Second, as Menand exhorts, drawing on an example from Duhigg's previous book, *The Power of Habit*, sometimes it IS okay to eat that cookie (Duhigg tried to eliminate that "bad" habit). Life is too short and could become a meaningless venture if you are focused on pursuing efficiency gains all the time. Efficiency at work is one thing, but taken too far, it can leave you with an empty shell of a life. If you follow the productivity rainbow to the end, you probably won't find a pot of gold waiting for you. The only way you can find that pot of gold is to bring it to yourself.

Summary

The more we reinforce ideas in our mind, the easier it is to recall these ideas. Eventually, new knowledge that previously required a lot of effort to implement becomes quick and intuitive. So let's review the main points we covered in the book!

Changing your everyday behavior

1. Planning properly with schedules, charts, and outlines sets you up to be productive. Preparation ensures discipline and provides the structure for future success.
2. Setting daily goals gives you a endpoint to march to each day. Splitting up larger tasks into micro-tasks lays out the waypoints along the road to your goal. Micro-tasks are also built-in progress meters and provide you with the small victories each day which will fuel you to your larger daily goal.
3. Staying in shape and being systematic about your fitness ensures that your mind is firing on all cylinders. Your mind and the cognitive power you bring to the fight each day is connected to the overall health of your body.
4. Eating right and being systematic about preparing and cooking your meals will help ensure that your mind is properly nourished and ready to be pro-

ductive. Being efficient about food requires prior planning.

Getting better over time

5. Self-knowledge is the key to unlocking your motivation. The more you understand about your desires and what you're passionate about, the more likely you are to find work that is naturally fulfilling.
6. The more you practice, the easier tough tasks become. Being deliberate about practice and working on the skills you know you need to become successful requires a gritty approach. As you learn via practice, things that were once hard become second nature. Also recognize that you can work at something that you're good at, but maybe not passionate about, to create time and space for your passions.
7. Measuring your time use (and misuse) is the first step to identifying ways to make yourself more efficient and to acknowledge problems associated with procrastination and time waste.
8. Regulating your unproductive wants and desires is hard enough -- and unnecessarily harder if those things are constantly staring you in the face. If you're dieting, would you find it helpful to put a chocolate cake on your dining table? Use tools and techniques to make it easier for you to exercise self-control, which will give you the time and space

to get stuff done.

9. Set up a system to collect data about yourself in order to know where your strengths and weaknesses lie. Analyze the collected data regularly to figure out how to optimize your behavior. Feedback is the key to learning.

Set yourself up to be successful

10. There are lots of ways to take the small annoyances out of your life like waiting in long lines at the grocery store where only a single cashier is on duty. Streamline these things away with services like Amazon Prime, Blue Apron, and Dollar Shave Club.

11. Controlling and optimizing your sensory environment can go a long to way helping you get stuff done. Getting into a "flow" state, when you hardly even notice that you're working hard, is easier when there's ambient noise. Changing up your work scenery can make you more productive as well.

12. Social media is designed to keep you hooked. Unless you work in an industry where social media or reading the news is essential, paying attention to these bottomless pits of information will quickly sap your energy. Use a combination of physical and software tools to restrict your access to social media and news.

Cut out the noise and focus

13. Do you ever feel like you spend half your day on email? You might be receiving a lot of email because you send a lot of email! Being more efficient in your communications, by employing multi-modal means (e.g., pick up the phone every once in awhile) means freeing up time to get more stuff done.

14. Meetings can be terribly inefficient. If the meeting doesn't have an agenda that involves you, if no decisions are going to be made, and if you don't have anything to contribute, don't go!

15. Do more than one thing at a time by pairing effortful tasks, such as listening to an educational podcast, with cognitively simple work, like doing chores. But know and acknowledge the limits of multitasking: you're worse at it than you realize and doing two effortful things simultaneously makes you worse at both things. Cutting down on interruptions such as email notifications helps too.

16. Sometimes you hit a point of diminishing returns and it is better to recharge than to push ahead. Know your limits and know when to come back to a task! Also know that you can't go on forever at the same pace -- being smart about breaks and vacations means being able to be productive for longer

periods of time.

17. Procrastination is often rooted in fear of failure or disappointment. But that chronic fear will translate into a complete lack of results if left unchecked. Beat procrastination by just doing: whether it be reading, writing, running etc. regardless of whether it is good enough. Everyone's first draft is rough, but the key is not to let that hold you back.

18. Design your day around your natural body rhythm. Mornings are usually the best time for work that requires high levels of concentration so protect your mornings at all costs. Afternoons are great for meetings and make sure you have scheduled in time for working out and sleeping.

19. Surround yourself with people who are willing to give you constructive criticism, who you can learn from and who will feed you positive energy when you need it.

The "Big One"

20. Finally, never give up! By following the above principles, you'll be able to both work smarter and harder.

Thank You

Thanks for taking the time to read this e-book! I hope you've enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. In the meantime, please email me at welton.chang@groveave.co with your stories and tips. I love hearing about how other people are increasing their productivity. If you've used any of the principles and gotten positive results, I'd love to hear that too! If you want, head on over to groveave.co for more. You might find them helpful as well! Now, what're you waiting for? Go get productive!

Further Reading and Listening

Did you like what you read here? Want to go deeper into boosting your productivity? Here are some books we've read and recommend.

Motivation & Perseverance

- [Talent Is Overrated: What Really Separates World-Class Performers from Everybody Else by Geoff Colvin](#)
- [Outliers: The Story of Success by Malcolm Gladwell](#)
- [Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance by Angela Duckworth](#)
- [Toughness: Developing True Strength On and Off the Court by Jay Bilas](#)

Learning & Improving

- [Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol Dweck](#)
- [How We Learn: The Surprising Truth About When, Where, and Why It Happens by Ben Carey](#)

Fitness

- [The Four-Hour Body by Tim Ferriss](#)

Efficiency & Productivity

- The Four-Hour Workweek by Tim Ferriss
- Smarter Faster Better: The Secrets of Being Productive in Life and Business by Charles Duhigg
- Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success by Adam Grant
- Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World by Cal Newport

Decision-making & Behavorial Psychology

- Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions by Gary Klein
- Stumbling on Happiness by Dan Gilbert
- The Success Equation: Untangling Skill and Luck in Business, Sports, and Investing

Ideas & Insights

- Seeing What Others Don't: The Remarkable Ways We Gain Insights by Gary Klein
- Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation by Steven Johnson

Life Lessons & Approaches to Living Life

- The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom by Jonathan Haidt
- Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived,

Joyful Life by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans
- How to Win Friends & Influence People by Dale Carnegie
- Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values by Robert Pirsig

Here are some podcasts that we enjoy listening to regularly.

Podcasts

- TED Radio Hour
- The Tim Ferriss Show
- Smart Passive Income by Pat Flynn
- Philosophize This! by Stephen West
- EconTalk by Russ Roberts

Sources

Introduction

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- Rags to riches story of JK Rowling by Rachel Gillett, Business Insider http://www.businessinsider.com/the-rags-to-riches-story-of-jk-rowling-2015-5

Principle 1: Proper planning and organization sets the table for productivity

- More details about backwards planning by Mike Martel, Lifehack http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/successful-backward-planning.html
- Gantt Charts by Mindtools https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_03.htm
- Different Gantt Chart programs http://www.eventmanagerblog.com/tools-gantt-chart/
- Google Keep https://www.google.com/keep/
- People who wear the same thing every day by Drake Baer, Business Insider http://www.businessinsider.com/barack-obama-

mark-zuckerberg-wear-the-same-outfit-2015-4

Principle 2: Set daily goals and split up larger tasks into micro-tasks

- How to write an e-book in 30 days by Ali Luke, Copyblogger
  http://www.copyblogger.com/ebook-in-30-day/

Principle 3: Stay in shape efficiently

- Fit Body Fit Mind by Christopher Hertzog, Arthur F. Kramer, Robert S. Wilson, Ulman Lindenberger, Scientific American
  http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/fit-body-fit-mind/
- Men's Journal Guide: The Only Eight Moves You Need to Be Fit
  http://www.mensjournal.com/expert-advice/the-only-8-moves-you-need-to-be-fit-20140306
- Pull ups-- the best exercise in the World by Milan Stolicny, Six Pack and No Regrets
  http://www.milanstolicny.com/pull-ups-the-best-exercise-in-the-world/
- Get a door pullup bar here:
  http://amzn.to/1Mja6jM
- Run to stay young by Gretchen Reynolds, NY Times
  http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/12/03/run-to-stay-young/?_r=0
- Serial podcast
  https://serialpodcast.org/
- How Many Miles a Week Should I Run? by Gretchen Reynolds, NY Times

- http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/11/27/ask-well-how-many-miles-a-week-should-i-run/
- Reddit beginner guide to getting fit https://www.reddit.com/r/Fitness/wiki/getting_started

Principle 4: Eating intelligently by smartly designing your meals

- Grove Ave Diet Guide https://www.groveave.co/pages/diet
- Michael Pollan Food Rules http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/news/20090323/7-rules-for-eating#1
- Once A Month Cooking https://onceamonthmeals.com

Principle 5: Understand yourself to find your motivation

- The Puzzle of Motivation by Dan Pink, TED http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation?language=en
- Motivate yourself by appealing to your intrinsic motivation by Marelisa Fabrega, Daring to Live Fully http://daringtolivefully.com/intrinsic-motivation
- Buy Experiences Not Things by James Hamblin, The Atlantic http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/10/buy-experiences/381132/
- Change and Habituation by Shahram Heshmat, Psychology Today

https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/science-choice/201412/change-and-habituation
- The Passion Trap by Cal Newport http://calnewport.com/blog/2010/10/16/the-passion-trap-how-the-search-for-your-lifeswork-is-making-your-working-life-miserable/

Principle 6: Practice and grit make things easier and help you achieve flow

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- The Key To Success? Grit by Angela Duckworth, TED https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit?language=en
- You can train yourself to have grit by Jessica Stillman, Inc.com http://www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/you-can-train-yourself-to-have-more-grit.html
- Flow the secret to happiness by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, TED https://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow?language=en

Principle 7: Track your time use and shift it towards productive things

- RescueTime
- https://www.rescuetime.com/

- Time Management for Effective Executives by Peter Drucker http://riversidebusinesscoach.com/2012/02/time-management-for-effective-manager-druckers-the-effective-executive-3/
- 11 Things Every Entrepreneur Must Outsource to Survive by Neil Patel, Inc.com
- http://www.inc.com/neil-patel/11-things-every-entrepreneur-must-outsource-to-survive.html
- How To E-mail Virtual Assistants by Tim Ferriss http://fourhourworkweek.com/category/outsourcing-life/
- How to get your virtual assistant to schedule your doctor's appointments by Ramit Sethi http://www.iwillteachyoutoberich.com/blog/how-to-get-your-virtual-assistant-to-schedule-your-doctors-appointments/

Principle 8: Self-control doesn't come easy — set yourself up for success

- Self-control on Psychology Today https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/self-control
- Stayfocused Chrome Extension https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/stayfocusd/laankejkbhbdhmipfmgcngdelahlfoji?hl=en

Principle 9: Use Feedback to Adjust and Optimize

- RescueTime

https://www.rescuetime.com
- Webtime Tracker
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/web-time-tracker/hfhhlhelfbijnejjdihdfchakekadhbg?hl=en

Principle 10: Streamline your life by automating

- What I don't buy by Welton Chang, Buys with Friends http://www.buyswithfriends.com/what-i-dont-buy/

Principle 11: Control and optimize your sensory environment

- Why Ambient Noise Makes You More Productive (And Three Apps That Do It Right) by Tyler Hayes, FastCoLabs
http://www.fastcolabs.com/3015970/why-ambient-noise-makes-you-more-productive-and-three-apps-that-do-it-right
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- Change up your study space for better retention by Kevin Purdy, Lifehacker
http://lifehacker.com/5631680/change-up-your-study-spaces-for-better-recall

Principle 12: Restrict your access and attention to social media and news

- How Facebook is Designed to Keep You Hooked
http://www.stuff.co.nz/technology/social-networking/90115807/facebook-the-ultimate-trip--and-how-it-keeps-you-hooked
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Principle 13: Be efficient with your communications

- Is Email Evil by Adrienne LaFrance, The Atlantic
http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/11/kill-email-die-email/415419/
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"One-Touch" Rule by Tori Reid, Lifehacker
http://lifehacker.com/stop-leaving-tasks-half-finished-with-the-one-touch-ru-1626933101

Principle 14: Avoid unnecessary meetings

- How to get out of an unnecessary meeting by Jayson Demers, Inc.com
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- 15 Productivity Tips from Legendary Businessmen, Askmen.com
http://www.askmen.com/grooming/inspiration/15_productivity-tips-from-legendary-businessmen.html

Principle 15: Do more than one thing at once, but know the limits of multitasking

- Jim Holt's Review of Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/27/books review/thinking-fast-and-slow-by-daniel-kahneman-book-review.html?_r=0
- Why Multi-Tasking is Killing your Brain by Larry Kim, Inc.com
http://www.inc.com/larry-kim/why-multi-tasking-is-killing-your-brain.html
- 12 Reasons to Stop Multitasking Now! by Amanda MacMillan, Health
http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0,,20707868,00.html
- How to train your brain to multi-task effectively by Nadia Goodman, Entrepreneur

http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/225865
- How to stop to-do lists ruining your life by Hannah Marriot, The Guardian
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Principle 16: Know when to take a break, when to walk away, and when to relax

- Let it marinate, the importance of reflection and closing by Joshua Block
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- Why Do Our Best Ideas Come To Us In the Shower? by Lucas Reilly, MentalFloss
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- Jim Rohn Average of Five People http://www.businessinsider.com/jim-rohn-youre-the-average-of-the-five-people-you-spend-the-most-time-with-2012-7

About Grove Ave

Grove Ave was founded by five friends with a deep passion for learning new things and acquiring new skills. Our backgrounds include branding, digital marketing, finance, military, government, corporate consulting, and startups. We value experimentation and get a kick out of figuring out how to do things the smart way. With Grove Ave, we harness our passions and interests into useful and productive offerings for our customers.

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