



## ***Done...Again: Ten New Ways to Make Better Use of Your Time***

### Executive Summary

#### Introduction

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Getting more done in less time is the way of the modern world. This presents a particular problem for most professionals because we achieved our success by working longer and harder than those around us. Now, we have to shift toward working better and faster to meet the compressed timelines our clients and colleagues expect.

This program focuses on five areas in which we can deliver better results faster: communication, capture, productivity, energy and workflow. Each segment presents two recommended behaviors to incorporate into the workday to help us make better use of our time. See which ones can help you.

#### Better Communication

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Good communication occurs when the information necessary to advance an effort is transmitted from one person to another. The modern professional world leverages several communication channels to accomplish this task. Choosing the right channel for each message maximizes the effectiveness of our communication.

##### ***1. Choosing the Right Vehicle***

Matching the message to the correct channel results in the most effective and efficient communication possible. Using a vehicle analogy, here's a list of common channels used in the business world:

- *Rolls Royce:* A face-to-face meeting or videoconference is always the best way to communicate. The exchange is quicker and more complete.
- *Porsche:* Talking by phone or via voicemail is the second best way to communicate. It's fast and effective when face-to-face is not possible.



- *Peterbilt*: Email is the workhorse of today’s business world. It’s very flexible in terms of time and content, but it’s slower than a live conversation.
- *John Deere*: Texting and chatting are slow and laborious. Text conversations are the least effective way to communicate.

Determining which method to use for a particular message requires matching the need to the method:

Need	Meet	Call	Email	Text
Collaboration/Creative Discussion	X	X		
Dissemination or Delegation	X	X	X	
Historical Record			X	~
Short Question/Answer	~	X	X	X

~ Denotes Marginal Value

## 2. We Are Them

Matching the method to the need is the first step in better communication. The second step requires crafting a clear and concise message. Placing ourselves into the recipient’s shoes and focusing on the content is the most effective way to accomplish that goal.

<b>Audience</b>	Who is the Recipient?
	What do They Know/Not Know?
	What do They Need to Know?
<b>Content</b>	Communicate All Details
	Update Periodically and as Necessary
	Connect, Track and Remember



Better communication occurs when the message is clearly transmitted between the people involved. Taking a moment to confirm the right channel for communication and to craft a complete message will reduce unnecessary requests for clarification.

## Better Capture

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We now consume thirty-four gigabytes of information each day. Maybe that’s why our attention spans have dropped 35% since 2004—down to eight seconds!

We are overwhelmed with information. We need to get a better handle on how to capture the important information during the daily deluge. The following suggestions will help.

### **1. Maximizing Odd-Lot Time**

There are short moments in the day where little to nothing gets done. We can leverage those odd-lot periods to increase productivity. The following table lists common odd-lot time snippets and how to make them more effective.

<b>Odd-Lot Moment</b>	<b>Possible Capture Activity</b>
<b>Meetings that Start Late</b>	Core Dump: Head to Paper
<b>Commuting</b>	Professional Reading/Listening
<b>Personal Appointments (Doctors, Dentists, Etc.)</b>	Review Materials for Next Meeting
<b>Picking Up Kids/Spouses</b>	Make Calls
<b>Traveling – Gates, Pre-Flight, Etc.</b>	Outline or Brainstorm

Imagine how many little things could get done if those odd-lot snippets were maximized every day!

### **2. Slice n’ Dice Information**

Making and maintaining lists is the best way to maintain order during a hectic day. As Belle Beth Cooper said about lists, “We pack all the madness and ambiguity of life into a structured form of writing.” Lists focus our attention; they provide spatial separation; they quiet our minds.



Many types of lists exist. Here are a few to consider using:

- *Project Lists.* These track tasks per project.
- *MIT List.* This is the Most Important Today list, a sub-set of the full list that highlights the one or two things that must get done today.
- *Breadcrumb List.* This list captures the ideas and thoughts on a particular effort prior to being pulled away on another project. It allows us to get back up to speed much more quickly when we return to the work.
- *Associated List.* This is a matrix-style that links particular to-dos and goals to specific events or people.

How we capture and keep our lists is also important. They must be available whenever and wherever needed. Notepads work, as do composition books. Some people like whiteboards. And, of course, there's always an app for that!

Coupling a prepared and available list with an identified set of time snippets helps us better track and accomplish all that needs doing. The result is a greater sense of command and accomplishment.

## Better Work Product

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Top quality work product is the price of admission in this profession. Making that happen day after day, however, occurs only if we're employing techniques that maintain a high level of attention and focus. Consider if any of these suggestions will help you maintain that level of performance.

### **1. Micro-Breaks**

The mind is a product of the brain. The brain is an organ. Like all organs, the brain needs rest and nutrition to perform at optimal levels. Why, then, do we persist in trying to work longer and harder?! Doing so only results in what's called decision fatigue. Our ability to make good decisions suffers from fatigue just like all other biological functions.

Combating decision fatigue is easy – take short breaks throughout the day. They can be as short as thirty seconds of slow deep breathes with closed eyes. The stress and built-up energy dissipates, allowing us to focus again. The more short breaks taken during the day, the more focused we are during periods of work effort. More focus means better work product. It's that simple.



## **2. Mini-Monk Mode**

Our days are littered with interruptions and distractions. Contrarily, we get our best work done when we're focused. So, every interruption inflicts a cost on our productivity. The more interruptions we experience, the higher the cost inflicted.

Manage interruptions by establishing certain work behaviors that minimize them. Here are three to choose from:

- *Silent Times.* Schedule certain periods of the day for focused work. Close the door and work on one or two items for a short while – say, an hour. Don't respond to email or answer phone calls. Work on what needs doing. If someone knocks and comes in, politely ask if you can come to their workspace as soon as you're finished with the task at hand.
- *Quiet Zones.* Establish a quiet zone in the workspace. For example, place a chair slightly behind the office door so that when sitting there, passers-by can't see you.
- *Question Blocks.* Gather together questions for others on a single list. Seek answers to those questions as a batch instead of individually as they arise. Ask others to do the same for you.

Consistently delivering top quality work product results from maintaining good mental energy and a high degree of focus. Combining the above suggestions facilitates that result.

## **Better Energy**

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This program continually focuses on the biological and neurological aspects of productivity. It has discussed global concepts like decision fatigue, but what about individual differences? People are not all the same. We all develop, maintain and expend energy differently. How do we account for those differences to ensure a high level of quantity and quality of work?

### **1. Get in the Groove**

Psychologist Carl Jung popularized the terms introvert and extrovert. Most people misconstrue the meanings of these words, however. His exact quote was, "Each person seems to be *energized* by either the external or internal world" (emphasis added). Jung was



focused on how people develop energy rather than how they expend it, which is the more common notion regarding inward versus outward people.

Here are some helpful definitions:

- *Introverts.* People who draw energy from within. They tend to seek out quieter places to build up their energy stores.
- *Extroverts.* People who draw energy from without. They tend to seek out groups and busy places to build up their energy stores.
- *Ambivert.* People in between a true introvert and a true extrovert.

Jung’s view was that we are all ambiverts – we all fall somewhere along the spectrum between introvert and extrovert. Determining where we each fall on this spectrum takes some introspection. Ask yourself, “Where do I like to go when I’m tired? Do I seek out quiet places or do I seek out crowds?”

With a sense of where we fall along the introvert/extrovert line, we can map energy-building activities that match our personalities. Use this chart to find ways to build energy throughout the day.

More Introverted	More Extroverted
Read Newspaper/Book	Go to Reception/Break Room
Walk Around the Block	Head to Coffee Shop
Catch Up on Social Media	Call Friend/Relative
Go for Run	Go to Gym

## 2. Power Posing

Nourishing the body and mind is how we produce the energy necessary to do the work that needs doing. Here are some foods that facilitate specific occupational goals.

Need	Chemical	Food
Memory	Caffeine	Black/Green Tea
Mood	Polyphenols	Dark Chocolate



<b>Fuel</b>	Omega-3 Fatty Acids	Fish & Nuts
<b>Attention</b>	Creatine	Nutritional Supplements

Consume any or all of these foods in small doses to facilitate the specific need.

Certain physiological exercises can be performed to keep stress down and energy up.

<b>Five Behaviors that Increase Energy &amp; Focus</b>	
<b>Stretch Periodically</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases Blood Flow</li> <li>• Relaxes Tight Muscles</li> </ul>
<b>Sit Up Straight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drives Focus</li> <li>• Attentional Control</li> </ul>
<b>Sit/Stand/Sit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases Blood Flow</li> <li>• Improves Muscle Tone &amp; Relaxation</li> </ul>
<b>Pencil in Teeth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forces Smile</li> <li>• Drives Sense of Happiness</li> </ul>
<b>Office Yoga</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves Flexibility</li> <li>• Relaxes Tight Muscle</li> </ul>

Coordinate breaks, food and activities throughout the day to stay energized and focused. Only good things will come from it!

## Better Workflow

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Workflow – the process of getting things done – is at the heart of productivity. Better workflow mechanics result in higher productivity. It’s pretty straightforward. Yet little effort is directed toward improving our individual workflow. See if either of the following suggestions can make a difference for you.



## **1. Multi-Tasking's Smarter Siblings**

Multi-tasking is neurologically impossible. Our minds can only do one thing at a time. Sure, we can switch back and forth quickly, but each switch takes a moment of time. Those moments quickly add up to a lot of wasted time.

Instead, why not take advantage of multi-tasking's smarter siblings.

- *Simul-Tasking.* Here's where we can use the odd-lot activities listed in chapter two. Stuck on hold? Dash off a quick email to someone. Waiting for a web conference to start? Draft a Most Important Today list. Waiting is not a "task." Doing something else while waiting is simul-tasking!
- *Serial Tasking.* Consider which activities are repeated regularly. Billing time is a perfect example. What is the workflow used? Can it be improved? Stated differently, since billing time has to get done, what's the most efficient way of doing it – every day?
- *Aggre-Tasking.* Running errands is a perfect example of aggre-tasking. At the office, it might be assembling questions into a list, then seeking out the answers in one block of time. Filing can also be handled this way. Stack it up in a designated spot and deliver it to the correct person once each day.
- *Gather & Escape.* This is actually a stepsibling to multi-tasking. Sometimes, the only way to avoid constant interruption is to gather up what needs doing and escape to a quiet spot. Conference rooms are good, as are empty offices. Keep the escape period relatively short (less than an hour), and then jump back into the fray.

Utilize all of these workflows to maximize the time spent producing results and minimize the time wasted through inefficiency.

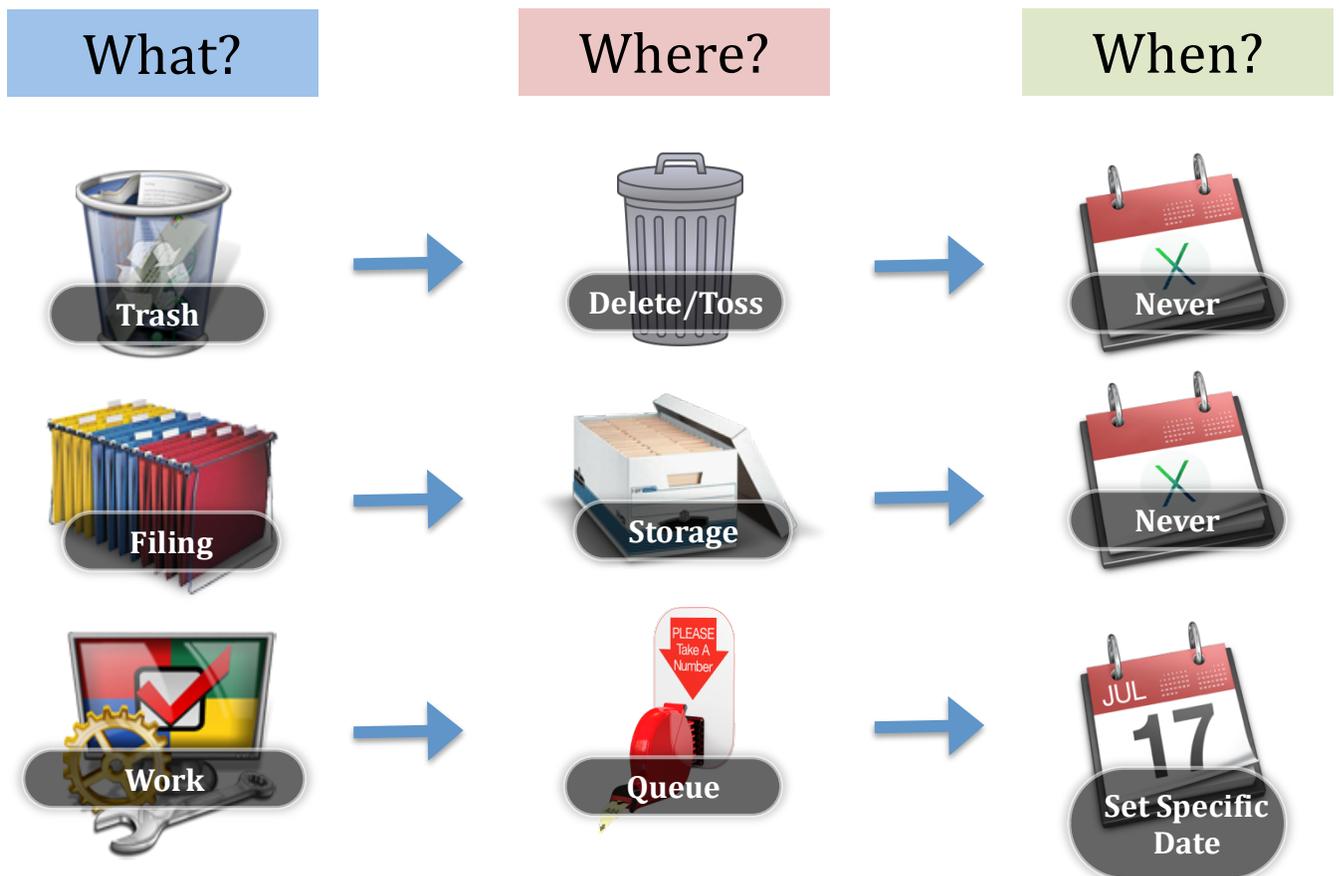
# QuietSpacing®

## 2. Dynamic Sorting & Queuing

All the stuff we receive can be handled by these three questions:

1. What is this?
2. Where does it go?
3. When do I need to think about it again?

To look at it a different way, a professional's workflow can be diagrammed as follows:





Similarly, the “What?” question can only be answered in three ways, which lead to three possible actions:

1. Trash is stuff that requires no additional effort (by anyone) and can be tossed or deleted.
2. Filing is stuff that requires no additional effort (by anyone) but needs to be saved.
3. Work is stuff that requires additional effort by someone sometime so it must be queued up with a reminder date.

*(A brief note: reminders can be set in myriad ways. Items can be moved to a calendar. A separate list or stack can be maintained. Emails can be flagged or starred. No one-size-fits-all solution exists for reminder management, so find the solution most suited to you.)*

Go ahead – try this simple workflow out on a new email message. What is it? Where does it go? When do you need to think about it again?

Optimizing the way we handle the demands for our attention and effort creates efficiencies that can be employed on the hard work that we do each day. Find ways to employ these suggestions to facilitate the efficient flow of daily work.

## Conclusion

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This program focuses on finding “better” ways to get things done. Implementing one or more of the suggestions provided will facilitate greater responsiveness to clients and colleagues while consistently delivering top quality work product.