10 Incredible TED Talks About Time Management You Should Watch Right Now

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Just like millions of other people, I'm hooked on TED Talks. They're innovative, informative and engaging, but these talks are also intentionally short enough to be consumed when you feel like you only have a couple of minutes in the day. You will learn something new or be reminded of a topic that's essential that you haven't thought about for a while. TED Talks help to expand your mind to think other thoughts that you may regularly think about. Think something new, hear someone new and change how you relate to the world.

Speaking of time, there are also plenty of TED Talks that can help you step-up your time-management game, or at least change your perspective on this essential skill. The following ten talks that you should watch right now when you have a couple of minutes to spare.

1. Laura Vanderkam: "How to gain control of your free time."

168 hours. That's how many hours there are in a week. That's a lot of time when you view it this way, explains time-management expert Laura Vanderkam during her TEDWomen 2016 presentation.

“If you are working a full-time job, so 40 hours a week, sleeping eight hours a night, so 56 hours a week – that leaves 72 hours for other things,” explains Vanderkam. Even if “you’re working 50 hours a week, maybe the main job and a side hustle,” there’s still free time – 62 hours available. What about putting in 60 hours? “Well, that leaves 52 hours for other things.”

So, why do we keep saying that we don’t have time? Well, according to her research, it comes down to priorities. As one small business owner and mother of six explained it, “Listen, Laura, everything I do, every minute I spend, is my choice.” And instead of saying, “I don’t have time to do x, y or z,” say, “I don’t do x, y or z because it’s not a priority.”

To make this a reality, you need to determine your priorities in life and add them to your calendar. Ideally, this should be done every week, like on a Friday afternoon. As for everything else? Get creative. For example, if you commute to work, use that time to read, listen to a podcast, or clean out your inbox.

2. David Pogue: “10 top time-saving tech tips.”

I think we can all agree technology is often a blessing and a curse. For example, it allows teams to collaborate and communicate with each other, and there is a wide range of productivity-scheduling apps that can help you create a daily routine, develop healthy habits and keep you focused. At the same time, technology can be distracting. In fact, according to RescueTime, on average, we spend three hours and 15 minutes on our phones. However, for top users, daily screen time exceeds four and a half hours.

In this short TED Talk, just over five minutes, tech columnist David Pogue shares tips for saving time on the technology that

we use daily. Some of these shortcuts may only shave off milliseconds. But, when put together, these ten keyboard shortcuts and hidden functionalities of your equipment will certainly add-up in saving you time.

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3. Tim Urban: “Inside the mind of the master procrastinator.”

The struggle against procrastination is real, and it’s time management’s greatest foe. But, why do we do this to ourselves? Well, that was a question Tim Urban, founder of the site Wait But Why, wanted to answer.

To better understand his own behavior, Tim went to an MRI Lab. His goal was to study the differences between the minds of a procrastinator and non-procrastinator.

“Both brains have a rational decision-maker in them,” Urban explains. But, “the procrastinator’s brain also has an instant gratification monkey.” That means even if you planned to productive, “the monkey doesn’t like that plan” and will take the wheel. As a result, you end up doing things that are either fun or easy – especially when there aren’t deadlines.

But, what if you do set realistic deadlines? Well, as that deadline approaches, the Panic Monsters creeps-in. Because this bad boy terrifies the Grafirication Monkey, it can force you to stay on track. On the flip side, it can also cause unnecessary pressure. For instance, you have a project to complete in 2-weeks and only can crank it out when there is a couple of days left.

What can we do about this? Tim suggests thinking harder about what we’re procrastinating on. If it’s something that’s pushing you closer to your goals or dreams, then make a move today and not tomorrow.

4. David Grady: “How to save the world (or at least yourself) from bad meetings.”

Meetings. They’re a necessary evil. On the one hand, they improve collaboration, engagements and creativity. They’re also essential for resolving problems and keeping everyone in the loop. But, they can also be ineffective, unproductive and vast wastes of time.

David Grady offers a simple solution from his 2013 TED Talk.

“First of all, the next time you get a meeting invitation that doesn’t have a lot of information on it at all, click the tentative button!” Don’t worry. You aren’t going to offend anyone. You just don’t want to automatically accept this time request until you’re 100 percent positive that it’s necessary. How can we determine this? By making sure that there’s an agenda so that you know what the objective is.

If the event doesn’t have a purpose, politely decline the invite. Or, look for a less time-consuming alternative like a phone call.

5. Chris Bailey: “A more human approach to productivity.”

If you would, please, open up your calendar. Is it jam-packed? That’s not a bad thing. But, how many of those entries are helping you move closer to your goals?

To be honest, this is a quagmire that most of us experience. We’re doing what seems like a million things. As a consequence, we feel strapped for time. In reality, though, we’re just wasting it on things that aren’t all that important in the scheme of things.

In short, we’re busy instead of being productive.

Productivity expert Chris Bailey, between his own experiences and research, says the solution is to set your intentions. During his 2016 speech, Bailey suggests that every morning, you identify the top three things that you want to accomplish for the day. You’re then going to manage your attention, energy and time only on those activities.

6. Andy Puddicombe: “All it takes is 10 mindful minutes.”

When was the last time you truly did nothing? I mean nada. Zilch. I would venture to say it’s probably been forever.

Now, it may seem counterintuitive, but according to mindfulness expert Andy Puddicombe, blocking out ten minutes a day to do nothing should become a priority. After all, mindfulness has the power to increase concentration and productivity. Why? Because mindfulness is a simple and effective way to refresh your mind and keep you in the present.

7. Paolo Cardini: “Forget multitasking; try monotasking.”

Despite what you may believe, multitasking doesn’t work. Our brains just aren’t capable of focusing on multiple things at once. Even if you think that you’re the exception, just consider that research shows a meager 2.5 percent of people possess this skill.

Instead, product designer Paolo Cardini suggests during his presentation to “Find your monotask spot within the multitasking world.” When you monotask, which is simply putting all of your attention to one task at a time, you’ll be

more efficient and productive. The reason? You aren't splitting your attention and experiencing information overload, both of which will slow your down.

Related: Common Workplace Distractions and How You Can Stay Focused Anyway

8. Jason Fried: "Why work doesn't happen at work."

Jason Fried, the co-founder and president of 37signals, conducted a survey to see where people go when they want to get things done. His findings were surprising – it's not in the office.

If you've ever worked in an office, this really shouldn't be all that surprising. It's full of distractions that interrupt you, primarily what Fried calls M&Ms; Managers and Meetings.

To handle these, cut back on the number of meetings that accept or schedule. Remember, meetings should only occur when there's a clear purpose. If you're in a management position, then implement something like "No-talk Thursdays." You may also permit your team members to work wherever they want. And whether you're in charge or not, turn off your gadgets when you don't want to be disrupted.

9. Rory Vaden: "How to multiply your time."

"How is it that we have more tips, tricks, tools, technology, calendars, and checklists than ever before, and yet we still always seem to be behind?" asks Rory Vaden, a Nashville-based leadership consultant.

His answer? "It's because everything you know about time management is wrong."

It’s not uncommon for us; we manage our time by writing lists and then prioritizing these items. To accomplish this, we assign value to them by their urgency and importance. But, Rory states that there is a third element significance.

Instead, you should ask, “What’s the most important thing I can do today that would make tomorrow better?” For example, setting up online bill pay. While it does take a time investment upfront, this will definitely save you time in the long run.

In short, Vaden recommends that you can free up time by asking four questions:

1. Can I eliminate this task?
2. If it can’t be eliminated, can it be automated?
3. Can it be delegated, or can I teach someone else how to do this?
4. Should I do this task now, or can I can it later?

10. David Allen: “Getting in control and creating space.”

Ever since the publication of his bestselling books, *Getting Things Done,* in 2001, David Allen has been a great source for improving personal productivity. During his 2014 TED Talk, however, Allen argues that if you want to achieve something, you need to plan for it. If not, you end up waiting until the last minute. And, that leads to feeling rushed, stressed, and letting less essential activities usurp your priorities.

Related: 11 Secrets to Staying Productive and in Control

Conclusion

Take a break and watch these fantastic TED Talks. As an Entrepreneur, especially during this COVID-19 time – we need

to have a pick-me-up. The isolation is wearing. TED Talk helps fill your mind with something thought-provoking with its engaging style, and it gets your mind out of the stress for a moment or two.

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