3 Questions That Will Change Your Mindset From Busy to Strategic



With these simple shifts in perception, you can leave ‘frantic’ behind and make real progress on goals.

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Just about every time I ask someone how they are doing, they reply with something akin to, “Busy, but good.” There’s so much that demands our attention, from ads to scrolling through social media to work calls to family activities. While I realize everyone is fractionally or wholly overcommitted, with me being no exception, at some point I began noticing that at the end of some days, I would sum up with, “I have no idea

where the day went" or "I didn't get anything on my list done" or "I feel like I made no progress." This trend got me wondering about ways to better define progress. Even if it's small, such progress, I thought, has to be focused, and of a sort that actually pushes me – not just a series of ticks on an ever-growing list. To produce this new mindset, I asked myself three questions, and the result has been a huge difference in how I spend time and what I'm able to accomplish. Now, instead of hearing myself ask, "Where did the time go?" I get asked "Where do you find the time for everything you do?"

1. Does a task affect my future or my "right now"?

So many items that filled up my list, I found, simply *didn't* affect the future. They might be tasks that pushed paper back and forth, or were a step in a larger process only. They didn't achieve much and would likely have to be redone anyway, but I was letting them take up a majority of my time. So, I began asking, "Does the time I spend on this task move me into the future and help me get where I'm going, or does it keep me in the same place I am presently?" If it's something that keeps me in the same place, it's in one of two buckets: it has to be done or doesn't have to be done. If the former, maybe as a part of my job or because it's something my boss is asking for, I get it done quickly and effectively and move on. If it's something that doesn't really have to be done, I delete it. Perhaps it's a meeting that was optional; I'll then ask whether I will be adding value or getting value? If neither, I don't attend – protecting that time for projects that help me create the future I'm working on.

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2. *How much* does it affect my future?

Some projects should take less time based on how much they affect the days and weeks to come. One major lightbulb moment came during a particular project; I needed to determine the best platform for hosting my courses for Invinciblesparkle.com. I needed something that was cost effective, but allowed my students to get the content they needed with convenience, and with an easy checkout process. I spent hours checking out blogs and reading about the best services and how they integrated with emails, along with other topics. I finally just picked one of the big providers and signed up. What I realized when I got into it was that I really just needed a good option for *right now*. As my business needs changed, I realized, it would be easy to simply move content somewhere else – there was no need to spend hours researching a forever solution. Too much focus was placed on the task itself – specifically the word "best" – and not how that task affected the future. In time, the need may be for a totally different solution, and I could have used some of those lost hours for something else.

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3. Is this task producing or consuming?

I can't tell you how many times I've opened up an app, then ten, twenty or thirty minutes later thought, "What did I open this for?" The reason is that I switched from *producing* to *consuming* – started reading and interacting and forgot what I went in to do. In time, I started thinking about all the hours in a day spent on that consumption – devoted to social media, television, online shopping…you name it – and I was *floored*.

Once I absorbed that hard truth, I was better able to switch to *producing* time and/or adapt consumption time for the better. In the case of the latter, for example, while I watch my favorite tv shows, I might also work on website edits or other tasks that don’t require silence.

The answers to these three questions helped me take control of my time, focus my energy and make better strides towards my goals. They will allow you to focus on what drives you forward, and the result will be not just a feeling of “busy”, but “accomplished”.

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