# 5 Ways to Be More Productive in 2018

This story originally appeared on Bizness Apps

Was one of your resolutions to be more productive this year? If so, how is that coming along? David De Steno writes in *The New York Times* that "by January 8, some 25 percent of resolutions have fallen by the wayside."

While that's not very motivating, we all know there's truth to that statement. This article will help you set goals in order to boost your productivity for real – even if you just do it until the end of the month. These tips will help you develop a disciplined approach to getting work done, whether it's for your day job or your side hustle.

## 1. Take sleep seriously

We live in a culture that encourages convictions like "I'll sleep when I'm dead" and "sleeping is overrated." As a result, it's easy to think that more hours of work equate to more success. This, however, couldn't be further from the truth and in recent years experts have warned about the negative side effects. In fact, research shows that people who are sleep deprived are seven times more likely to experience helplessness. Arianna Huffington cautions that "the myth of burning out as the necessary price for accomplishment and success" is dangerous.

If you are not taking care of your mind and body, you won't be able to reach peak performance (or live a healthy life for that matter). So take sleep seriously and plan it out in your daily calendar just like you would all your other tasks. A healthy seven to nine hours of sleep a night will allow you to be as productive as possible when you are awake.

*Extra tip:* Consistency is the cornerstone of a healthy sleep routine. Pick a bedtime and a wake-up time and stick to them as much as possible.

## 2. Resist the urge to check emails first

Love them or loathe them, emails are here to stay – despite the popularity of instant messaging, texting and social media. In fact, email is the top communications tool at work. Office workers spend 6.3 hours checking emails, with 3.2 hours devoted to work emails and 3.1 hours to personal messages.

While most of us check emails first thing in the morning, productivity experts say that you will find more success if you check emails only after you've accomplished a task. So when you get to your desk, start off the day by completing something on your to-do list and only then read through your (on average 100) emails. This way you don't get sucked into the email vortex right at the start of your day.

## 3. Develop a personal morning routine

How you start your day sets the tone for how you'll do at work. That's why many successful business people have a strict morning routine. Do you usually wake up right before you need to get to the office and scramble to get ready? While you might be on time for work, this does not encourage a productive day.

As *Entrepreneur* states, "Leaders possess success habits that have become routine and tend to wake up early to make time for what's important to them: exercise, meditation, movement, family, hanging out with the dog or even spending time in the garden." Lay out a morning routine that works for you and try

to stick to it – i.e. no five times snoozing!

*Extra tip:* Exercising gets your endorphins going and increases your productivity. You'll be more awake and ready to tackle your day by giving yourself that extra energy boost. Working out can increase your mental clarity for four to 10 hours post-exercise – which is why you will see exercise as part of almost every leader's morning routine.

## 4. Commit to writing things down

It's a cliche, but writing things down will help you be more organized, think more clearly and ultimately boost your productivity. One of the main benefits of writing things down is that you don't forget stuff. Duh! But that's not all. Once you write an idea down, you engage with a different part of your brain. It allows you to actually process the information and, as a result, unload your mental RAM to focus on the task at hand.

Besides writing out your daily tasks, you should also use the "thinking on paper" technique. This method allows you to externalize your thoughts on paper (or computer) and grow them into something real. It's difficult to visualize ideas, move them around and expand on them, all in your brain. When putting pen to paper, you are more easily able to connect ideas in a meaningful way. Richard Branson, the famous mega-entrepreneur, says that one of his best possessions is a standard-sized school notebook. "Anyone who aspires to lead a company must develop a habit of taking notes. I carry a notebook everywhere I go."

## 5. Implement the two-minute rule

If your goal for 2018 is to maximize your time, then implementing the "two-minute rule" is a habit you'll want to adopt now. This rule states that any action that can be

carried out in two minutes or less is completed right away. According to researchers David Maxfield and Justin Hale from the leadership training company VitalSmarts, “it’s a practice that many top employees implement as it allows them to quickly finish small tasks before they pile up and take more mental space than they deserve.”

It’s a straightforward rule for combatting procrastination. The goal is to make it easier for you to get started on the things you should be doing, as most tasks we procrastinate on aren’t actually difficult to do. Not only will it make your to-do list smaller, it will give you a sense of accomplishment. Apply this rule not only at work but also to your personal tasks like taking two minutes to make your bed or clean your dishes immediately after your meal.

## Now it’s your turn

While it might be hard to implement all the above at the same time, even doing just one of these tips will boost your productivity. The first month of 2018 is not over yet, so there’s still time to kick off your new year’s resolution. I myself started with the “two-minute rule” and, let me tell you, it works!

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/307935