Achieve more with less time

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Contents

Chapter 1

Maybe read this chapter later

1.1   When you should read this book

Just to give you a few reasons that might apply to you. If any of these apply, this ebook might be helpful to you:

- You have more things to do than you have time for them.

- You plan things which seem fun but when you are doing them all the fun has gone away.

- You only plan but never put your plans into action.

- Somehow, when you finally have time to do stuff, you are distracted or all motivation is gone.

- You read quite a lot about how to get better at getting things done, but nothing seems to really help.

- You tend to start a lot of things but almost never finish them.

- You have a lot of ideas but find it hard to select the stuff really important to you.

1.2 Why I wrote this book

In the first place to remind myself of my findings. Second to help others.

Sidenote: I did not write it to earn money (as might be obvious, because this ebook is available for free). I rather wrote it so that it helps me do other stuff that might earn me money ;)

Chapter 2

The Problem

70 years
850 months
3500 weeks
25000 days

That is about the time you have. There is not much more
and probably less. On the other side there are the things
you want to do or achieve. And no matter how much time
you find (or make) there never seems to be enough time.

Chapter 3

The Solution

Take a step back and look at the relationship between time and work. The available time defines how much work can be achieved in it and vice-versa the planned amount of work defines how much time is needed in order to do it.

If there is a fixed amount of either time or work, the other has to be adjusted in order to 'fit'. So in this day and age, especially if you have a career and a family, your time is pretty much used up stuff you absolutely have to do. And

the rest are small slots of time here and there.

The solution described below is therefor aiming at making the most of the available time for the most positive impact (to you).

3.1 Define your goals

Get rid of work so that only the stuff remains which is really important to you. Define your goals in as few words as needed to make sure you understand them later. Try to note WHY you want to reach a certain goal as well. This is important, because:

- It will motivate you to actually do the work.

- It will reduce the needed time and increase the possibility of reaching the remaining goals.

- The goal is simplied in your head which decreases its 'mental' size. If a goal seems too large it can be demotivating.

See the appendix for tricks on how to filter out stuff and

define your goals. Here is an example list of goals (a simple plain text file format suffices):

```
Renovate bathroom

Take care of the patch

  Plant new vegetables

  Remove old tree

Write a software that organizes my music

Declutter all rooms
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As you can see there can be subgoals but that is about as hierarchical as is probably feasable. Note that no dependencies are present which means although some goals may be 'part' of others you could easily start with any subgoal.

3.2 Choose a goal and think of the next task

As soon as you have some amount of time x available (not earlier!), choose a goal that seems fun (should be, because see above) and think of 'what has to be done next'. This next step should:

- Fit into the available time slot.

- Clearly defined in your head.

Try to think of possible problems and if there seem to be real obstacles, try to think of solutions BEFORE starting. Only proceed with the next step if you are pretty sure you can achieve the step in the time available and have all major obstacles tackled.

This is important because:

- Choosing a step suitable for the time slot increases the possibility of finishing it.

- Thinking of possible obstacles reduces the risk of not finishing the step, which would be demotivating.

- Not thinking of more steps ahead reduces the risk of unnessary planning which includes thinking about irrelevant problems.

- Not planning leaves more time for doing. Because when you are planning, writing ideas, making concepts it might FEEL productive, but you are NOT. Planning creates no sense of accomplishment, although it sometimes is fun. Would you rather have a big plan of something or the real thing?

- You are most productive when you don't think about meta stuff but just do. So as clearer it is what to do, the more you will be in the moment just doing.

3.3   Adjust the work to the time

Now DO it. You know what you want (insert 'awesome' project/goal here). You know what you need to do NOW in order to make real progress. You know you CAN do it. There is nothing holding you back, so DO IT NOW. If somehow you are not motivated, you have to go back to your list of goals or redefine what to do next.

So while doing the step, things will go wrong. There will be hard decisions to make and obstacles will occur you have not thought about before. This leads us to the next item:

3.4   Finish the task at all cost

Since you have a fixed amount of time (in the large and in the small) you MUST scale the work to fit the amount of time available. This may require leaving out stuff, even if it 'would be nice'. This also requires finding solutions to new obstackles FAST.

This is important, because:

- Not finishing will demotivate you and leave the impression of no progress has been made. In contrast finishing will motvate you once directly after and twice when you come back for the next step.

- Leaving stuff out is good because the essentials remain and in the end done good-enough is better than not done at all (or unusable).

Chapter 4

Tricks Appendix

4.1 How to define what you really want

- It may be hard to imagine, but try to imagine you have cancer and the doctors give you at most one year to live. After taking care of your business and your family, what is it you would like to desperately achieve?

- Nice-to-have is not enough to be a worthy goal.

- If in doubt about its purpose, do not do something.

- Keep the list of your goals as long as it is possible to remember. Worthy goals make their way into your consciousness by themselves.

- Get all those crazy ideas out of your head by adding them to a list and leaving it at that. That is your 'ideas' list. Look at it when your list of goals is empty (so basicly never).

4.2 How to overcome the urge for perfectionism

- Nothing will ever be perfect. Look around you for evidence.

- Perfect is subjective and changing all the time.

- Instead of perfectionism it is usefulness you should seek. And only stuff that is implemented can be used at all.

4.3   How to be flexible

- Keep in mind that any detail you might have liked at first but does not really contribute to the usefulness or basic goal can always be added later. It will not be forgotten nor scraped forever, just postponed.

- Nothing is certain anyway so there is no reason to cling onto preset assumptions and plans.

4.4   How to start

- If you have trouble starting reconsider the goal itself. Is it really what you want? Consider the next step: Is it clear what to do? Is there an unconscious fear of things goind wrong or dreadful work to do? Try to find workarounds to obstackles and dreaded work.

- Sometimes it is feasable to get someone else join in and help you. This is great motivation: Each one of you might not be as motivated but together you magically motivate each other.

4.5 How to avoid distractions

- Avoid checking your email. Once a day is enough.

- Avoid the Internet.

- Avoid TV.

- Avoid any kind of news.

- Avoid your phone. Leave it out of reach (and hearing distance) when starting a task.

- Avoid other people when starting a task. The only exception is if they are willing to help you.

4.6 How to have fun

All of this is to make goals come true that you essentially do NOT HAVE to do. So relax if stuff turns out to fail or obstackles are too big or motivation is too low. Give yourself a break. When the house is not on fire and your family is fed and well, there is really not much else you can ask for. Everything on top is a nice addon.

Chapter 5

Bad cat, good cat (Myths & Truths)

- You need to plan everything. You don't.

- Planning is part of doing. It's not.