

**The Essential  
Guide to  
Productivity  
Hacks for  
Entrepreneurs**

**Applied Workplace**

# Before Work

---

Setting yourself up for a productive day starts long before you arrive at work. Here's what you can do before 9am rolls round.

## Eat a good breakfast

This tip is nothing ground-breaking – but breakfast really is the most important meal of the day. Skip it and your brain won't have the fuel it needs to be at its most alert.

**The ideal breakfast should include foods from each of the food groups** and contain wholesome foods that are metabolised slowly, preventing blood sugar fluctuations. Porridge, wholemeal or granary bread and wholegrain cereals, are all good options in combination with a source of protein.

## Head to the Gym

Did you know that 30 minutes of exercise in the morning can make you a genius? Ok, that's a slight exaggeration, but it does have numerous benefits for productivity.

**Studies** suggest that our physical regimen is directly linked to our brain power, with the benefits of regular workouts including enhanced mood, improved focus, faster learning and enhanced creativity.

## Pick Three Wins for the Day

All good days start out with a clear focus. While you're waiting for your coffee to brew, pick three things that need to happen for you to feel the day was a success. By setting yourself a clear number of manageable goals, you make it easier to prioritise.

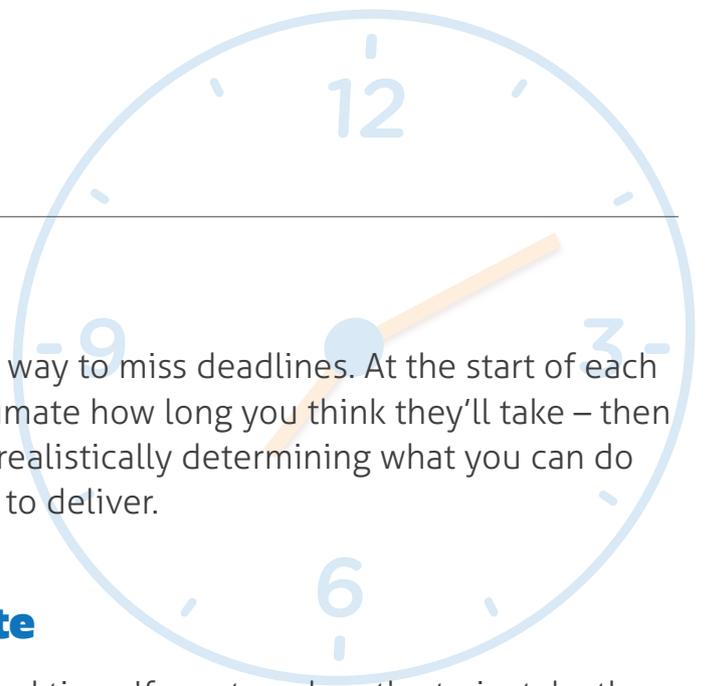
## Quote:

*Hello Design CEO, David Lai, sets himself up for success in the morning (source: [Financial Post](#))*

“

I try to get up early, which is hard for me, as I'm not really a morning person. The first thing I'll do is go for a bike ride, and that really helps me clear my head, relieve some stress, and think about challenges I'm currently facing. It's important to start each day fresh and energized with the right frame of mind if you're going to be productive.

”



## Schedule Your Day Realistically

Simply having a long list of to-dos is a sure fire way to miss deadlines. At the start of each day, choose your most important tasks and estimate how long you think they'll take – then add 33% more time to be on the safe side. By realistically determining what you can do each day, you avoid over-promising and failing to deliver.

## Make the Most of Your Commute

Your commute to work doesn't have to be wasted time. If you travel on the train, take the opportunity to do some uninterrupted reading or check through your emails. If you travel by car, the journey can be a great time to catch up on industry podcasts.

### Quote:

*Co-founder of Doc Popcorn, Rob Israel, thinks of two inspiring words for the day (source: [Business Insider](#))*

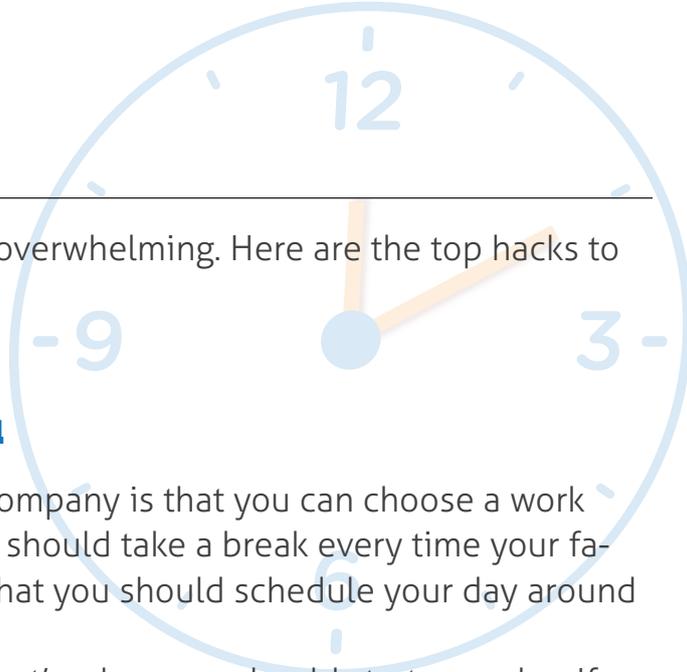
“

In the last minute, I breathe in and out two great words for the day. It could be 'peace and play' or 'calm and strength'... it simply depends on what comes and is needed in the moment. This is an awesome and important start of my day's productivity and creates immediate sanity

”



# At Work



As an entrepreneur, your working week can feel overwhelming. Here are the top hacks to make sure each day is as productive as possible.

## Choose a Schedule that Suits You

One of the best things about owning your own company is that you can choose a work schedule to suit you. This doesn't mean that you should take a break every time your favourite TV programme is on – but it does mean that you should schedule your day around when you feel most productive.

For example, if you're raring to go at 5am, then that's when you should start your day. If you work better in the evenings, then you should start and finish your day later.

## Send All Non-Scheduled Calls to Voicemail

On average, it takes **25 minutes to return to your original task following an interruption** – so, constant phone calls, particularly if they're not important, can majorly affect your productivity. Instead, try sending all non-scheduled calls to voicemail and set aside time at the end of the day to return them. If you're lucky enough to have a personal assistant, you can get them to alert you if there are any genuinely important calls.

## Schedule One Day a Week with No Meetings

If a task requires intense concentration, you often need to set aside a large portion of time to really focus – something which constant meetings makes impossible. Try keeping your schedule free in the middle of each week, so that you have one uninterrupted day of work with no meetings.

### Quote:

*Walking Dead* creator, Robert Kirkman, creates a false sense of urgency to keep his creative juices flowing (source: **Business Insider**)

“

I'll be like, 'I want to write 12 pages today,' but I really only need to write like four or five. But if I try to write 12, I might write six or seven. What that does though, is it gives me a crushing sense of failure at the end of every day. So I'm like, 'Oh my God, I didn't get those 12 pages done. I suck! What is wrong with me?' and the next day I work harder because I have to make up for that unrealistic deadline I didn't make.

”

---

## 5 of the Best Productivity Apps



### EVERNOTE

A handy app that allows you to make notes and to-do lists, set reminders and send yourself articles to read later.



### IFTTT

Standing for 'if this then that', IFTTT allows you to connect your services (such as email and Twitter) so that when something happens on one it triggers an action on another.



### LISTEN

Responds to incoming calls and texts when you're too busy to answer, allowing you to customise your voice and SMS responses – for example, 'in a meeting, I'll call you back!'



### HUMIN

In business, connections are everything. Humin remembers all of the details of how and when you met someone and combines your contacts, dialling and voicemail box to decipher who your most important contacts are.



### MAILBOX

Works in tandem with Mailbox for Mac and is designed to help you organise your emails. Handy features include the ability to 'snooze' an email, which will send it the top of your inbox at a designated time.

## Tackle Your Least Desirable Task First

We all have that one task on our list that we really don't want to do – usually because it's either incredibly dull or incredibly challenging. Make sure you get it out of the way first. If you don't, it'll play on your mind and make you less productive overall.

## Quote:

*Ellevate Network chair, Sallie Krawcheck, starts her day at 4am (source: [LinkedIn](#))*

“

I am never more productive than at 4am. I brew a cup of coffee, I keep the lights pretty low, I sometimes light a fire in the fireplace, and I let my daughter's cat sleep next to my computer. My mind is clear, not yet caught up in the multiple internal conversations that we all conduct with ourselves once we gear up for our first meeting of the day.

”

---

## Stop Multi-Tasking

As an entrepreneur, you probably spend most of your days trying to juggle 20 things at once. Stop. Trying to do multiple tasks prevents you from properly focusing on any of them, which results in each one taking longer than it should.

If you tackle one thing at a time and give it your full attention, you'll work better and faster, retain more information and save time and money.

## Have 30 Minute Meetings

Whoever set an hour as the default meeting length in most calendars has wasted a lot of people's time. Most meetings don't need to be this long – but if people have the expectation that they'll be an hour, they'll subconsciously make sure they fill the time.

30 minute meetings are generally more productive and force people to stay focussed.

## Follow the 'Two Minute Rule'

Time management consultant and best-selling author, **David Allen's, two minute rule** is simple: if you determine that an action could be done in two minutes, you should do it right away, as it will take longer to organise and review it. This can be an effective way to avoid procrastination and prevent a build-up of small to-dos.

# After Work

---

Think what you do after work has no impact on your productivity? Think again. Here's how to make sure your down-time positively impacts your time at the office.

## Schedule Three Non-Work Related Activities a Week

If you want to be at your most productive, downtime is important – otherwise you'll simply burn out. However, when you're running your own company, it can be easy to end up working round the clock. Try scheduling three non-work related activities a week that nothing can interfere with. For example, Monday night could be set-aside for a new hobby, Wednesday night for spending time with family and Friday night for spending time with friends.

## Have 30 Minute Meetings

Sometimes it can be hard to go home and switch off from work. It's all too easy to turn conversations and looming decisions over and over in your head, or to try and solve problems you're worried about at home.

However, sometimes, in order to see a situation clearly or to come up with the most creative ideas, you need to step away. Try to set aside time when you consciously leave your problems at the office – it'll make them much easier to tackle when you revisit them.

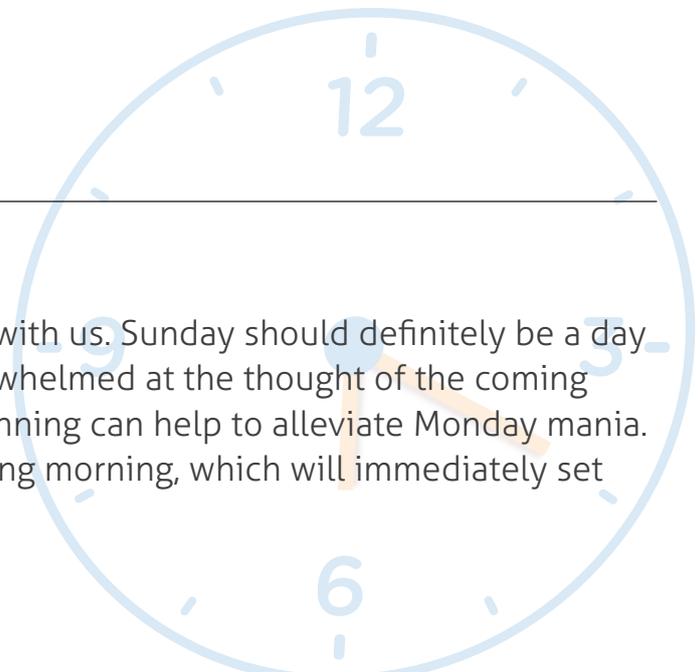
## Quote:

*Jamie Wong, founder and CEO of Vayable, sets aside evenings for sports (source: [Business Insider](#))*

“

“I've discovered that few things are more powerful in personal growth than sports. I block off Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings now for boxing training. Not only is it an amazing workout, but the mental and physical discipline it requires is a great exercise and metaphor for achieving anything outside of my comfort zone... I find that boxing, like many sports, is always a powerful metaphor for life and business, and I am able to draw on its power throughout the week.”

”



## Think About Work on Sunday

This might sound like a horrible idea – but bear with us. Sunday should definitely be a day for relaxing and re-charging, but if you feel overwhelmed at the thought of the coming week, spending half an hour prioritising and planning can help to alleviate Monday mania. As a result, you can dive straight into the following morning, which will immediately set you up for a more productive week.

## Get 8 Hours of Sleep

If you want to be at your most productive, getting eight hours of sleep is mandatory, not optional. For equipment to work at its best you need to take care of it – and your brain is no exception.

In an interview in Harvard Business Review, **Dr. Czeisler, one of the world's leading authorities on human sleep cycles, highlights the importance of a good night's sleep for peak work-performance**, stating that, "If you get at least eight hours of sleep a night, your level of alertness should remain stable throughout the day, but if you have a sleep disorder or get less than that for several days, you start building a sleep deficit that makes it more difficult for the brain to function."

### Quote:

*Founder of GetArtUp, Tricia Rampe, works outside of standard hours (source: **Founder's Grid**)*

“

Don't be a 9-5er. Inspiration flows when it is not forced and often occurs after 2am for me. Getting tasks completed happens during the workday, but being productive with developing the ultimate vision of your company will likely come outside the standard hours.”

As an entrepreneur or small business owner, your working week can feel overwhelming. From shifting priorities to endless to-do-lists, it can be hard to find enough hours in the week. However, whilst there's no one-size-fits-all solution, these productivity hacks can help you to get the most out of every day. And who knows, you could be the next Richard Branson.

”

**Applied Workplace**  
[www.appliedworkplace.co.uk](http://www.appliedworkplace.co.uk)