

The Free Productivity Guide Ebook

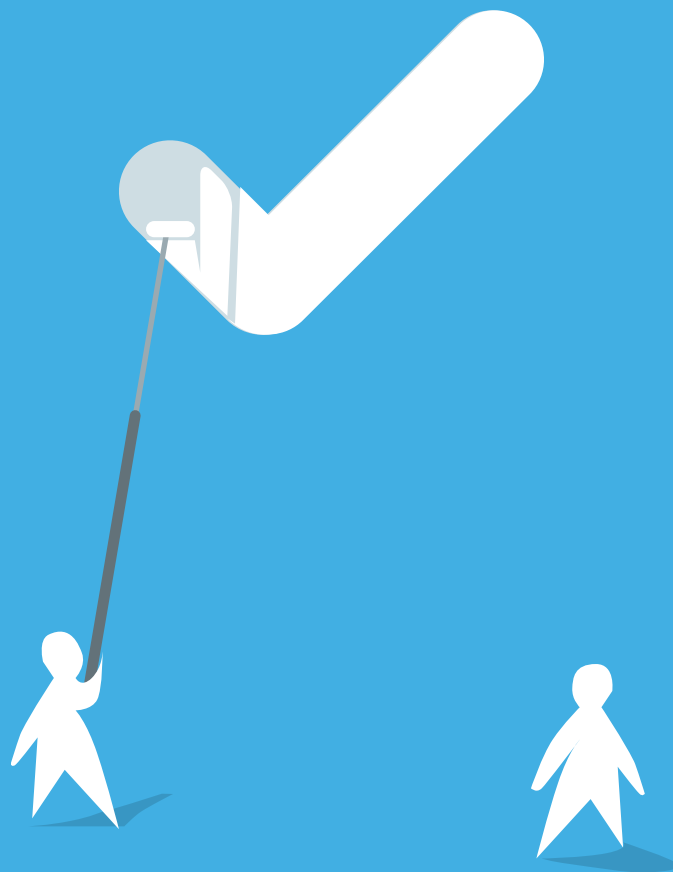
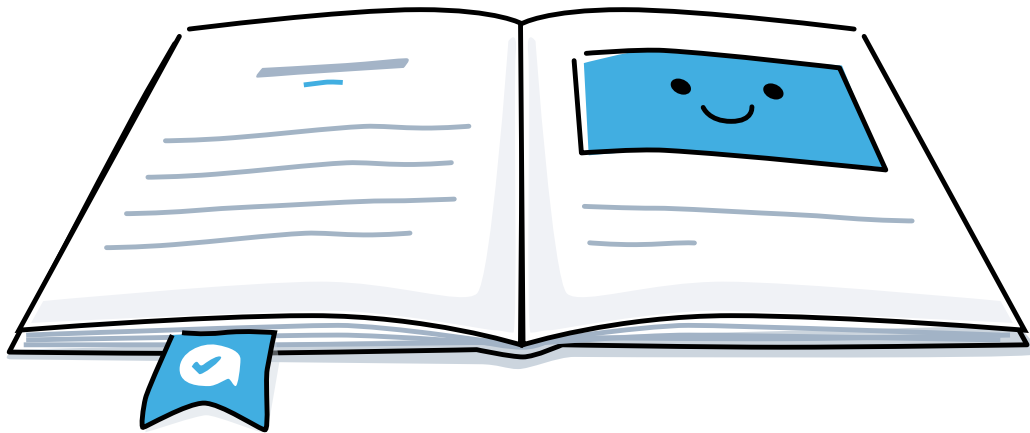


Table of Content

About This Book	2
How to Start a Day Productively	3
The Problem with Productivity and Teamwork	6
Six Productivity Tips That Will Change Your Life	10
How Procrastination Can Become a Productive Activity	13
Angry Productivity: 7 Ways to Kill Your To Do	16
Links & Contacts	22
Special Thanks	22

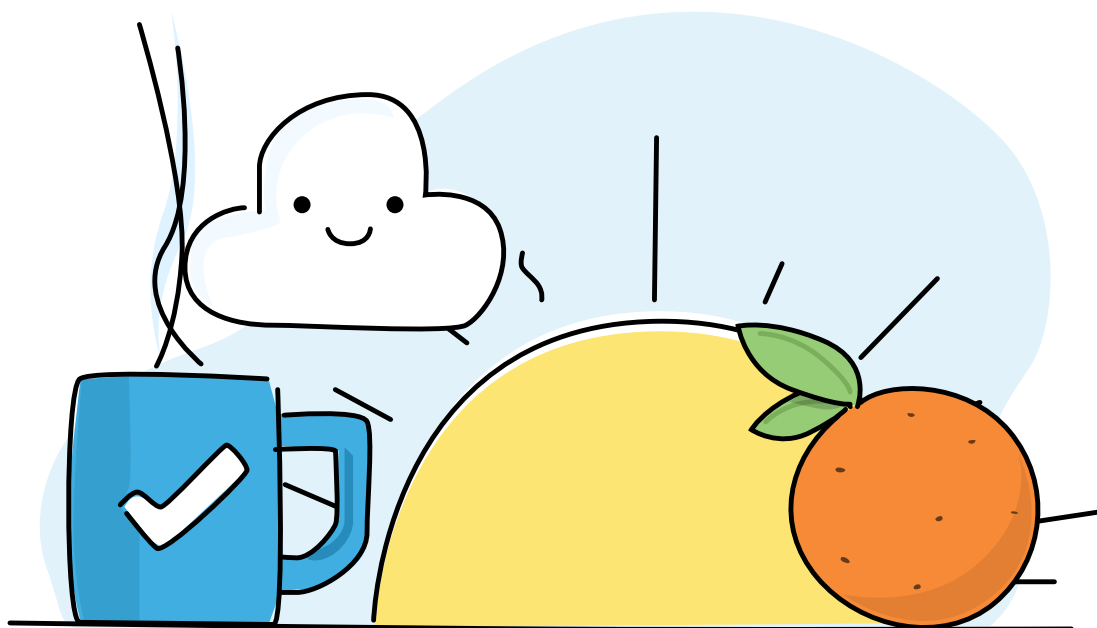


About This Book

This book is a selection of past articles published on the Azendoo Blog. The idea behind this gathering is to collect these great pieces to provide productivity tips & tricks to our community.

Some of these articles were written by Azendoo Team members, such as Frédérique, Grégory and Dan, while the others were written by guest bloggers that also are Azendoo users. We truly hope you enjoy this selection of articles and take something away from it.

Happy reading!



How to Start a Day Productively

By Nick Rojas

Yeah, we've all heard it before. "I'm not a morning person." But what if I told you, you don't have to be? In fact, being a morning person is all about getting up and getting started, which can be difficult with a foggy head or sluggish motor skills.

One of the biggest barriers to completing any task is the simple act of starting. Sometimes, it's difficult to just take the plunge and get started. But you can't drag your feet through life, completing tasks only grudgingly and procrastinating as much as possible. So, before you reach for your smartphone, here's three great tips to get you up in the morning and ready to start your day as productively as possible.

1. Take a moment before you go to sleep to list out your tasks for the next day, and add it to your task management app

If you're anything like me, when you wake up, it takes a little while to clear your head. Some mornings, it's all I can do to remember how to operate my coffee maker. My tasks for the day are floating out in the sky, somewhere very far from my thoughts, until the moment I sit down in my desk chair.

So, to solve this problem, take a moment (and a notebook) to write down your tasks for the next day the night before. Maybe you do it at your desk right before you leave to go home. Maybe you work from home, and you just do it on a notebook before you switch out your light. Or perhaps you use task management apps to keep organize. The point is to create an easily referenced starting point to help you pick up exactly where you left off the day before, with minimal time spent reorienting yourself.

Note how important each task is and any unfinished tasks from the day before as well. I've found that this even helps me think about it: by bringing my tasks and challenges to the forefront of my mind just before I sleep, I often spend time turning the tasks around in my head as I drift off into dreamland. Sometimes I even have great ideas, breakthroughs that I can note down in the handy notebook, right by my bed.

2. Eat a good breakfast

Grrroooooowwwllllll. Oh, was that me? Excuse me! I can't focus when I'm hungry. What did we always say was the most important thing? Yep, breakfast. Eat a good breakfast! Though it's sometimes hard to work up an appetite just after waking up, a breakfast improves focus and cognition, and even helps your mood.

What should this breakfast look like? You want something that won't cause you to crash after an hour, so it's important to have some protein. Eggs, yogurt, and peanut butter are all great sources of protein and healthy fats. If you're going to eat

something sweet, make sure that you also get some protein—peanut butter and jelly on a bagel is a favorite for me.

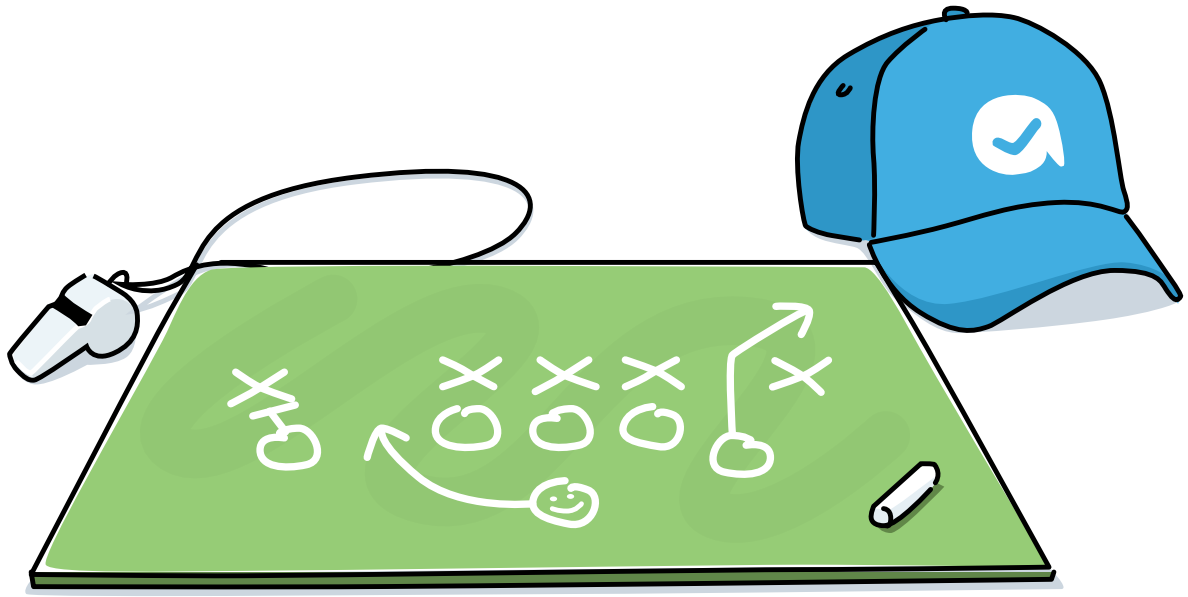
And, of course, there's coffee, but that's no secret, so we won't spend time talking about it.

3. Exercise

So you're organized, you've eating well, what's the final part of the picture? It's long been known that, in a strange, counter-intuitive way, working out actually gives you more energy instead of taking your energy away. Yep: start your day with a short, aerobic exercise routine. I'm talking jumping jacks, pushups, kung-fu kicks, a short job, whatever you need to get the blood flowing! There are plenty of lists of short, effective exercises you can do to start the day available.

Now maybe mornings ain't so bad!

With these three simple steps, you too can begin your day with a burst of energy. Once you're properly awake, it will be easy to carry this productivity throughout the day and accomplish all of your goals. Finally, you can sleep easier, knowing you've accomplished a lot the day before. Sweet dreams!



The Problem with Productivity and Teamwork

By Dan Rock

The majority of people getting sh!t done on a daily basis rely on others to pitch in.

Tackling projects with a team almost always has a better outcome, because as my mother always said, two heads are better than one. But having more than one head doesn't only mean more ideas, it also makes the difference when it comes to being productive. The only problem is getting both heads on the same page and headed in the right direction (sorry for the pun).

The answer is easy enough, but what exactly is the problem?

The only problem with teamwork is the word “team”.

A team is defined as “A group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task, job, or project” by the Business Dictionary.

That complicates things right from the start. There are actually two separate ideas in this definition that need individual solutions.

First, “a group of people...” clearly states that there is more than one person. That means a combination of personalities, habits and experiences. Effective and clear communication is vital when it comes to getting multiple individuals in sync and working together.

Second, “a full set of complementary skills...” means that all the pieces of the puzzle need to be there to get the job done. It’s all about having access to the right information and being able to easily exchange it with your teammates. Constant knowledge sharing makes or breaks the outcome of a project.

Personally, when I see the word “team” I think of a third underlying notion. A team is also group of individuals who should constantly be striving to improve. In other words, when more than one individual works together, perfection is never possible, so the group needs to try to constantly increase efficiency. That means as teammates, we should always strive to cut the fat and improve our methods.

The Japanese use a one-word philosophy to describe it best; Kaizen. The direct translation means “good change” but its use in management translates as “continuous improvement”. This particular style revolves around improving all functions, and involving all employees (from the CEO to the janitor). By improving standardized activities and communication processes, kaizen aims to eliminate waste and in turn, increase productivity.

The fact is, we can always be more productive, but our outdated methods and reluctance to change get in the way.

How will understanding teamwork make me productive?

Well, everyone has 'their' way of getting organized and sharing information with co-workers. Fortunately (but mainly unfortunately) the tools that we use on a daily basis have become standard. Things like email, mobile apps and to-do lists have proved their importance and are here to stay. But what happens when something better comes along? Electronic mail was invented in 1993 and groups are STILL using it to communicate internally. I'd like to meet someone who still drives a car from the early 90's because "it's the best mobility solution".

Society is constantly evolving and looking for better solutions to everyday problems. So why has electronic communication taken a back seat to today's technological advances? Well, it hasn't... people are just reluctant to try new solutions because they are different and imply a learning curve. Unfortunately, the only way to become more productive is to adopt more efficient methods for the same old tasks, just like Henry Ford and the assembly line.

Fortunately, in this day in age, we have assembly line robots... and awesome applications that keep us headed in the right direction. Not only do Google Maps keep us on track, but social collaboration solutions do too. Social task management tools are gaining ground and proving to be a valuable asset to any team's communication. But how can I become more productive by sharing my tasks with co-workers? Well, task management is just the tip of the iceberg. The only problem is that you have to dive in the water to see just how much awesomeness is hidden underneath.

Everyone uses a to-do list to remember what he or she needs to get done. Whether it's a mobile app, a web service or both, people need help getting organized and on track. Social task management applications take your personal to-do list to another level. Azendoo combines personal task management with intuitive information sharing and easy document access and storage. Now, information organization is handled by the application, and project coordination practically takes care of itself.

How does using a teamwork application increase productivity?

It's all about getting on the same page without the extra effort. I don't want to beat a dead horse, but being productive means being efficient in how we get organized, informed and ultimately get sh!t done as a team. And being efficient should no longer mean using several solutions to get organized and exchange information. We've gotten comfortable juggling iPhone Reminders, Gmail and Dropbox, (just to name a few) when we could be putting a lot less effort into how exchange information.

The idea behind social collaboration is to use one application for everything. Your task manager replaces your to-do list, the real-time message board replaces email, and third party integrations like Evernote, Google Drive and Dropbox take care of document sharing and storage. Plus, Azendoo has a two-tier organization system that takes care of sorting and stocking your information without any extra effort. Not to mention the task management aspect that allows you to manage and assign the tasks that you and your co-workers need to get done.

So, now that we understand the problem (getting multiple people on the same page at the same time) and the answer (adopting new methods to increase efficiency), the only thing left to do is take the plunge. Go get'em tiger, your team will thank you.



Six Productivity Tips That Will Change Your Life

By Jonathan Poston

1. Schedule your day, from start to finish.

That even means waking and getting to sleep at the same time every day. Your body finds an equilibrium in routine, along with an efficiency for doing daily tasks better and faster which means you'll be able to pack more into what was once an unproductive day.

2. Work with a team that syncs with your natural schedule

It's said that the famous philosopher, Rene Descarte, met his end because he accepted a gig tutoring Queen Christina. But the problem wasn't the tutoring, or the Queen, it was meeting on cold early mornings, which threw him off his natural beat of waking later in the day.

Make sure that when you accept a role or responsibility, or pick your team, that everyone is in sync. That means being honest about availability, what work times are best, etc.

3. Keep your inbox at zero

Email has a way of piling up, but the worst part is the waste of time it takes to orient and prioritize our focus every time we sign in.

Even if there are nine old messages sitting there, most people will read through them over and over until they are filed away or deleted.

To avoid such a time suck, only keep emails in your inbox that you can act immediately upon, otherwise file them in folders, labelled accordingly, like "one month follow up", etc.

Also, reclaim your inbox by using tools, like Azendoo, that replace emails (at least for internal communication).

4. Use specific instructions

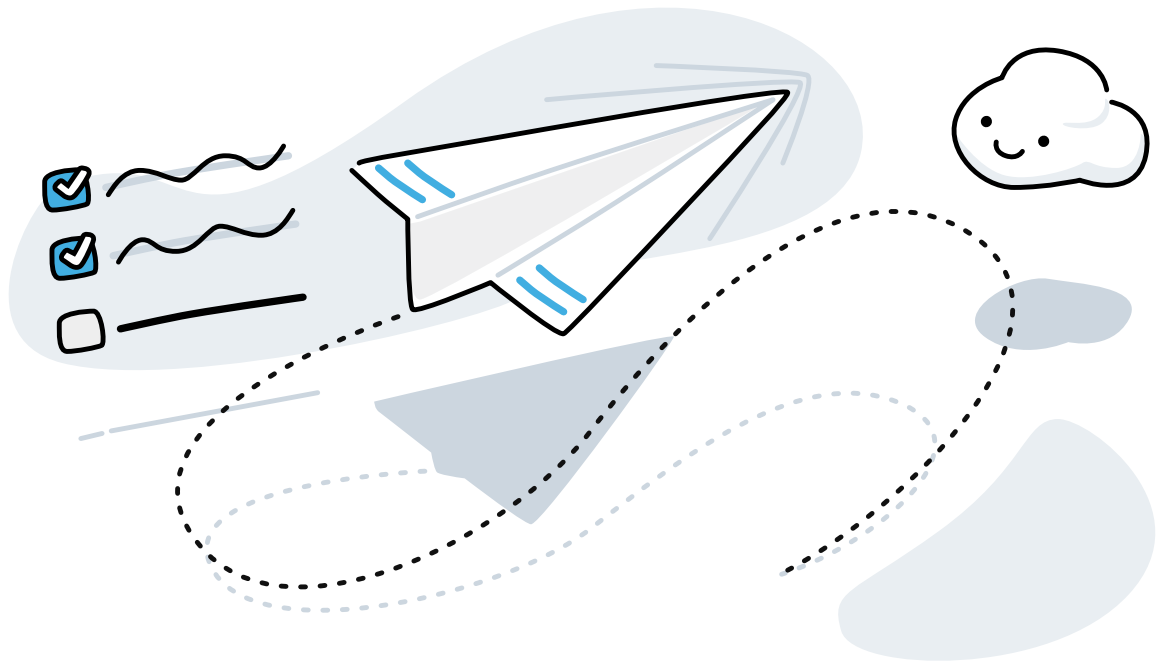
When you need to get something done and it depends on others to help you, be specific in your instructions, and list each item that needs to be done, any particulars, and especially a deadline. Create a format/process for issuing instructions as well, so that part is automated too.

5. Don't fear the phone

We're all so used to IM'ing back and forth, which is good for record keeping and group collaboration, but wake up when it becomes a waste of time. In a project management capacity, I've seen dialogs between developers go on throughout the day, each new post adding a new layer of confusion. Everything could have been solved with a three minute call, then if needed, a typed summary of action taken could have been posted for the record.

6. Avoid meetings without a clear agenda

Why does the world still insist on meetings when there's no reason to gather the forces? It takes time to prepare, end, and process meetings, so don't schedule them just to have a pow-wow, unless there's a clear agenda and punch list for everyone attending.



How Procrastination Can Become a Productive Activity

By Frédérique Castagnac

"The most impressive people I know are all terrible procrastinators. So could it be that procrastination isn't always bad?" – Paul Graham

Why do we Procrastinate?

To be sure we're on the same path here, I'd like to remind what the act of procrastination is about: putting off or delaying an action to a later time. In other words, procrastinating is postponing the important things we have to do and doing more pleasurable things instead.

We all have different ways to procrastinate, and most of the time it involves a device (computers, phones, tablets). Whether we surf the web, read articles, try new apps,

watch videos, or chill out at the coffee machine, our goal when we procrastinate is just to do something else!

The first step to turn our procrastination habits into productive ones, is to understand why we procrastinate. Is it because we are lazy? Because we feel unproductive? Because we're not organized? Or is it just because what we have to do is really unpleasant?

Sometimes you often find yourself procrastinate because you have this really tricky task to do and you don't know where to start or how to manage it. So, couldn't it be interesting to find a way to do some productive procrastination?!

My personal procrastination refers to a loss of personal productivity, at some point in my day I don't know how to manage what I have to do, I don't feel creative and ideas won't come up.

But procrastination doesn't mean doing nothing. My advices today won't be about curing procrastination but how to procrastinate well.

So here are 5 tips to productively procrastinate.

You may procrastinate because what you have to do is unpleasant, or you're disorganized, or you feel overwhelmed by the task. Maybe what you need to motivate yourself is to find inspiration to accomplish your task. You need to go look for information that will help you get back on track.

And the Internet is full of information and ideas to help you accomplish your task (of course you'll have to look in the right direction and not loose yourself...). Even if it's not fully relevant information, just the action of looking for it might help you find new ideas to accomplish your task.

A friend once told me: "Creativity is the art of not revealing its source". So if you're feeling down and don't know how to accomplish something go find some inspiration!

Discuss your ideas with friends

Need a break? Can't deal with what you need to do? Why not take few minutes to discuss it with a friend. It's often when you're talking about something that you're solving problems, just by putting words on what you have to do. Talking to a friend who is not working with you can have multiple effects. It can be totally useless... or it can help you find awesome solutions.

I have few close friends who are working in startups like me. And when I feel like procrastinating I chat with some of them about the things I have to do that are bothering me. I ask them for their opinion and advices.

I've found this activity very productive. In fact, discussing about your work problem with people outside of your work can sometimes leads to great new ideas!

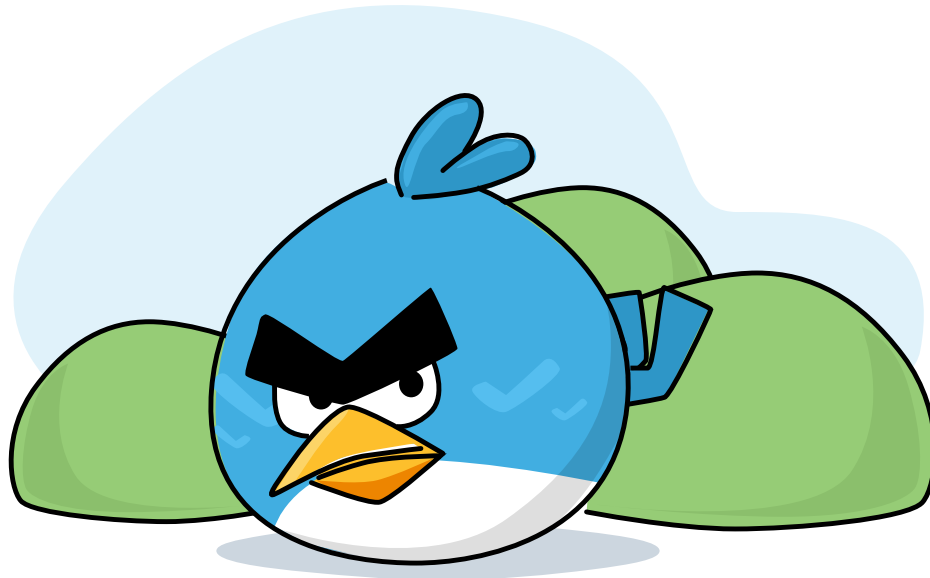
Procrastinate outside the internet

Well, this might not be the most productive activity but the goal is to get some fresh air. If you can't work on a task and keep postponing it, try to take a walk outside instead of staring at the internet. If you don't abuse, procrastinating outside the internet will really do some good to your brain and to your productivity. Just stop staring at screens.

Write down your thoughts

This is the most productive tip to fight my useless procrastination. When I can't work on something I write down stuff. It might be a list of things I want to do, an article, or just writing what I've done so far and what I need to do to complete this task I can't work on. The good thing about writing is that you keep track of it, you can share it, and someday you'll find that piece of essay useful for your work.

My mathematics teacher once told me: "I don't need to keep a close eye on you to make sure you're working. I'll figure it out by the amount of rough copy in the trash". "Writing is learning, the more you write, the more you learn."



Angry Productivity: 7 Ways to Kill Your To Do

By Grégory Lefort

A new way to explain productivity, I got the lesson from these little birds!

It all started on the train, playing Angry Birds and thinking about my work. All of a sudden, both merged and what I got out of it was pretty weird, but enlightening. So here's a funny way to look at tasks and being as productive as possible with the tools that you have at hand.



Pigs

Picture them as your emails and your tasks. They are all the little (and big) things that you need to tackle during the day to accomplish your goals.

Some are easy (small pigs), some are tough (helmet pigs) and difficult to rip off, some depend on others. They are spread everywhere and keep coming back at you. Don't deny it, most of your time consists in getting these out of your way. Let's see if these birds can be teach us how to get things done.



Birds

Birds are the many different ways that you go about getting things done. You use “birds” every day as tools that you combine to help you do whatever it is that you need to get done. The only difference is, what bird does what best, and how should you use their strengths to your advantage. So here’s the break down:



Red Birds

Red Birds are what you have to start with and who you rely on at the very minimum. They have no super-powers or fancy tricks, just the plain elbow grease that you use to tackle your to-do list.

You have no tricks to make the job easier, but it’s a good sign that you started your journey towards productivity and want to learn more about how to become a mighty task killer. Get moving, tap into the top of your to-do and start the journey. Be Fierce!

Yellow Birds

Yellow birds are fast and focused. Interesting how you can become more efficient when the pace is right.

Another lesson here: focus on immediate results and try to devote a small bit of your time completing the smallest/easy tasks. Once over, you'll see clearer through your to-do, and get a boost to carry on, just like these speed-birds.



Blue Birds

Blue Birds are all about multitasking. They split at a certain moment in time to be more efficient.

Adopt the same strategy for your tasks: divide and conquer. Dividing tasks them into smaller ones will make them easier to follow and to address. Multitasking, however is a bad idea and results in wasted time. Don't try this.

Black Birds

Mmm. I like these bombing birds. They can clean-up the place but also make the job almost impossible to complete by pushing stuff far far away.

Your to-do list works the same way; Don't think that simply moving all your work to the future will be doing yourself a favor... Tasks will continue to pile up, and your to-do-list will



quickly become a time bomb, eventually exploding in your face.



White Birds

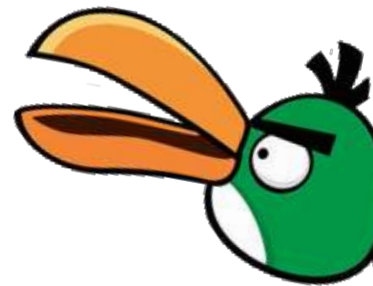
These birds require extremely high accuracy to get the most out of their bombs and follow through.

Think about it: Spot where you want to focus your time (because you won't be able to do it all anyway) and define clear daily objectives. You'll be amazed how much progress you'll make this way. Haven't you noticed that one single (Angry) task can lock your mind and prevent you from dealing with others? Shoot it, and you'll bounce back to high efficiency.

Boomerang Birds

Boomerang Birds are always tricky to use because they need perfect control in order to spin back and help you reach difficult positions.

You know the tasks that you keep delaying because you don't know how to get them done or even where to start from. Take a rocket view of your to-do, get the big picture, and you'll often realize that working on side tasks help you come back and finish other, like a powerful boomerang.





Big Brother Bird

Big Brother Bird can indulge a lot of damage to those silly pigs but only if he's launched in the right place. They're all about momentum.

It's like working on steroids or like throwing multiple birds at once. Admit it, your to-do list is ALWAYS linked to that of other people. Best way to deal with your tasks is to consequently to work as a team. Mixing different skills is almost always the best way to go. Take the teamwork approach, get a decent collaborative task solution, share your to-do list, open your work and BOOM, reap the rewards.

Bottom line? There are many ways you can get things done. Choose the relevant method according to your needs and context, and you'll be just fine.

Now turn off Angry birds and welcome to 3-star productivity!



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