

THE 10 BEST HABITS OF HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE PMS

by David Whitemyer, AIA

I'm a bit of connoisseur of books and articles on productivity tips. Admittedly, I'm obsessed with the topic. From all that I've read on the subject, many of the same suggestions appear in just about every written piece. Here are the ten tips that show up the most.

1. Get Up Early and Plan Your Day

Give yourself about 30 minutes in the morning, when it's calm and quiet, to look ahead and plan your day. Don't wait until you walk into the office and have a million fires piled on your desk. Look over your calendar, your upcoming meetings, and prioritize the day's tasks.

2. Prioritize Your Tasks

Your to-do list will never be completely blank, and you can't do everything in one day. However, you should have a to-do list, you should be using it frequently, and it should be prioritized. At the very least, determine what can't wait, and what can.

3. Expect the Unexpected

The best Project Managers aren't just good at planning and executing, but in calmly and efficiently adjusting plans to changes and surprises. In sounds illogical, but schedule some time for interruptions; meaning, don't fill up every second of the day with high-priority tasks.

4. Have an Agenda for Every Meeting

In my opinion, there's little that's as painful as showing up for a meeting or conference call with no expectation of what's being discussed and what decisions need to be made. Few people enjoy meetings, so make them fast and efficient by having an agenda for every single one.

5. Live by the 80/20 Rule

Also called the Pareto Principle, assume that about 20% of your day's time will return about 80% of the most effective productive returns, so give that 20% intense focus. This rule has been claimed to apply to other aspects of management as well. For example, assume that 80% of a project's problems will arise from 20% of the issues or stakeholders.

6. Document Your Time

How can you assess how well you're spending your time if you're not keeping track of it? At day's end, look over your calendar, your phone logs, and your meeting minutes. Take a few minutes to think about how you've been spending your time. You'll start seeing patterns showing how much of your time is productive, and how much is wasteful.

7. Ignore Your Phone & Email

You've heard this one before. Just because your phone is ringing doesn't mean you have to answer. And as for emails, most of them can wait a few hours or a day. Stay focused on whatever you're doing, and devote blocks of time each for checking emails and returning calls.

8. Stay Away from Social Media

Unless you're in marketing, there's no reason you need to be on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Instagram during the workday. Social media is a major time-waster. Save it for your morning coffee or evening wind-down.

9. Schedule Time for Yourself

You know the saying, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." It can also make Jack incredibly stressed and unproductive. Make sure you're giving yourself some "me" time each day; time to make personal calls, time to take a walk outside, etc.

10. Don't Be Too Hard on Yourself

You're not a miracle worker. You can't complete everything in one day. Things pop up each day that throw wrenches into your plans. Deal with them, but don't let them wear you down. ●

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While software can make some tasks easier, it can make others more difficult. If a project manager is overseeing multiple jobs, and staff frequently works on multiple projects that change week-to-week, updating the weekly resource planning information within a project management software tool requires the PM to open multiple project plans. By comparison, if a firm is using a simple Excel spreadsheet for resource planning, it can all be managed in a single file. This simplicity is attractive to project managers.

It seems that we, as an industry, need to find an easier solution while keeping information centralized. Perhaps all we need is better training on the software programs we currently have, or maybe we need greater ability to customize programs like Vision so it makes sense for each firm using it. The best solution will be one that provides a project manager with all the benefits of automation in a single, straightforward package. ●



Serena Peters, RA, LEED AP BD+C is a licensed architect and project manager with Nutec Group.



David Whitemyer, AIA, is a Contributing Editor at PSMJ Resources, Inc., a licensed architect, and project manager at Brent Johnson Design, a Boston-area firm. He can be reached at dwhitemyer@psmj.com.