

3 life hacks that will make you more productive

In today's hyper-connected world we can feel pressure to be busy all the time, but this inevitably leads to burnout. Besides, it's more important to be smart with your time than try to cram it full of activities.

Whether you call them life hacks or shortcuts, there are three things you can do to save time and be more productive. They enable you to take back control of your days and be more efficient, says career coach Nicole Grainger-Marsh. This allows time for important, bigger-picture thinking, which leads to greater awareness and career fulfilment.

1. **Establish routines.**

Routines can be seen as enemies to creativity, but in reality they're tools that enable it. Establishing routines allows you to eliminate the need to make small decisions every day and opens up time and energy for bigger decisions.

To start setting routines of your own, Grainger-Marsh recommends "identifying those common activities you do every day or week and seeing where you can make them more efficient by bringing in consistency." It might be as simple as wearing the same outfit on the same day each week or maintaining set working hours.

Look for opportunities to build routines into your working pattern as well. "For example, if you're in outbound sales and you have to get your admin done each week, do it on a Friday afternoon, in one go. It will take up less time than spreading it out throughout the week, meaning you'll make more calls and generate more sales!"

2. **Embrace automation.**

Wherever possible, find ways to cut down time spent on tedious tasks by recognising where old systems or processes could be completed more quickly, using technology. "We live in a digital age – why not embrace the opportunities that automation can offer in saving you time and effort?"

Automation could be in the form of using templates for emails or quotes, or

more job-specific tasks. Grainger-Marsh explains, “If, for example, you’re working in a customer-facing role, and you have to respond to customers when they enquire – why not use a template response and an autoresponder?”

Automating steps in your work will reduce the time it takes to do these tasks, and that’s the ultimate goal. “Using automation to alleviate some of the admin-heavy tasks will give you the chance to actually think about and do the things that only you can do.”

3. **Say no.**

Many of us say yes all the time because we worry about letting people down or being thought less of. But we all only have a finite amount of time and energy. “If you say yes to people too much, and to things that aren’t in line with your priorities or values, then you’re filling your time unproductively. It also means that, when an opportunity arises that’s right for you, you can’t take it on.”

Preserve your energy and place value back on your own time. “Identify what’s important versus what’s urgent and set routines to support yourself.” One area where this is crucial is work emails, so set boundaries. “Don’t check and respond to work emails all day, night and weekend. When you do that, you’re creating the expectation that it doesn’t matter when people email you, you’re right there. It’s not productive – it’s being busy for the sake of being busy.”

“Part of the challenge is saying ‘no’ to yourself – to that impulse to be always on.” Grainger-Marsh suggests trying this experiment for a week: “Using your filter and your conscious judgement, don’t reply to emails immediately. Give those you filter out half a day. You may find the issue resolves itself without your time being drained!”

Ultimately, if you make a conscious effort to be more aware of how you’re spending your time, you’ll avoid burnout, be more productive, and probably enjoy your job a whole lot more!