

5 steps to become wickedly efficient

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1. Plan for the day ahead

Imagine it's 8:45, you're sat at your desk about to start work. Before you start reviewing your emails and getting stuck in. Take five minutes to complete the below:

- Compile a list of all the things you want to achieve by the end of the day
- Then, colour code these tasks:
 - **RED** – important and urgent tasks – complete these first
 - **AMBER** – important but not urgent tasks – complete these second
 - **GREEN** – neither important or urgent tasks – complete these as and when time permits
- Set intra-day deadlines to ensure tasks are completed in a timely manner
- As you complete each task, make sure to tick them off as 'complete'
- Set times for breaks and during these times do personal tasks

Arranging your day and your 'to-do' list helps to ensure that you don't simply put all your energy into things you like at the expense of those tasks which are difficult, boring or administrative in nature.



2. Eliminate distractions

You've made your list, you know what you want to do. But plans can be hard to stick to, particularly when you have distractions.

Firstly what is or is not a distraction:

- Although a distraction from the task at hand, answering a phone call from a client is **not a distraction**
- Surfing the internet **is a distraction**

To eliminate distractions:

- **Don't** constantly monitor emails / text messages. Set a reminder to review them once an hour. If there is an emergency, advise someone to call you.
- **Avoid** needless meetings. Ensure that you only accept meetings where there is a clear agenda or topic to be covered
- Be **honest** with colleagues, advise them that you have deadlines to meet and if necessary move to a different work environment



3. Stop being a firefighter

A well planned and orderly work environment **should never be on fire**. Fires are like issues in a project, they don't suddenly appear, they **should be on your radar** long before they become an issue.

Therefore to stop firefighting:

- **Track tasks** and **establish deadlines** for completing them
- Where deadlines are missed, **understand why** they have been missed and establish realistic deadlines
- Where things go wrong, **establish the root cause and fix these**, not the outcome
- If you manage teams or use 3rd party supplier to deliver a service, have **regular meetings (huddles) to track progress**
- Where possible **keep a log of 'fires'** (issues log) – **set time once a month to establish if a pattern can be established** and then set about resolving the root cause



4. Delegate or outsource tasks

Unfortunately we can't do everything perfectly all the time. Sometimes, we **need to delegate or outsource** a task. Particularly when completing the task will take up too much time or be a distraction from completing more important work

In order to do this effectively, the below must be completed:

1. **Clearly articulate** the task including constraints, boundaries, risks and points of note
2. Articulate the **desired outcome and timeline for completion**
3. Delegate tasks to the right level within your business, **use delegation as learning a opportunity, not a way to punish people**
4. **Step away from the task and only check outcomes.** If a task is not completed in line within point 1, establish what went wrong, was it not explained currently



5. Keep your workspace clean and orderly

At the end of each day the below tasks should be completed:

1. **Review** your 'to-do' list to establish progress made
2. **Understand** why certain **RED** or **AMBER** tasks were not completed and make notes to ensure these are prioritized for the next day
3. **Take pride** in what you have **achieved** during the day
4. **Clean and tidy your workspace** – file papers, or sort for recycling and ensure you've got the tools in place for the next working day



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