

A Summary

Perfect Time-Based Productivity



*A Unique Way to Protect
Your Peace of Mind as
Time Demands Increase*

FRANCIS WADE

From Francis Wade

Hi - I hope you enjoy this summary of the contents of my book, Perfect Time-Based Productivity. It's intended to give you a quick idea of what's the book is about with a summary of each chapter.

Call it a "Cliff Notes" version if you will.

The most important thing that's missing from this version are the all-important forms which are needed to complete a self-evaluation. These can be downloaded at <http://goo.gl/Ohe9ju>.

Even with all the forms in hand, this summary isn't intended to be a replacement. I have deliberately left out all the references to over 250 citations which give the book its platform, as I want this summary to be an easy read.

If you want to purchase the book, make sure to visit my book's website to take note of the freebies currently being offered — <http://perfect.mytimedesign.com>. Then, click over to Amazon.com to purchase the book from the site, or go directly to <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00PY5X52Q>.

The paperback book has just over 400 pages, inclusive of the text, references, index and lab notes. The Kindle version is also offered at the Amazon site, and the audiobook is currently being produced. As you may imagine, they differ in some ways due to the limits of current technology.

Thanks for downloading this summary and I hope you enjoy it!

Regards

Francis Wade

January, 2015

A 2 page summary from the product description page at Amazon.com

More demands on your time - that's just a fact of modern life. How do you stay ahead of the rising expectation that you should be able to meet all your obligations, even though you are doing the job of more than one person, dealing with an onslaught of information and slowly realizing that 24-7 technology only makes things worse? In the face of these increasing pressures, what do you need to do to maintain your peace of mind?

This book is primarily written for productive professionals who have already found a way to achieve positive results. They aren't clueless - time has been an important concern and they have been able to manage their affairs well enough to get through school, hold a job, keep a family and enjoy material benefits. However, they share a concern: how can they be successful in the future, given the hot pace of change they see around them every day? Doing more of the same seems an unlikely answer. So does the conventional wisdom around time management and the popular reliance on one-size-fits-all solutions.

While the book has lots of specific, practical suggestions for new behaviors, at its heart is a four step approach that preserves the advances that you, as a productive professional, have already made in your career:

Step 1> Evaluate your current skills against best-in-class standards, discovering strengths and improvement opportunities.

Step 2> Set realistic targets for new behaviors in line with your goals and commitments.

Step 3> Create a plan from these new targets that allow you enough time to succeed, taking small steps.

Step 4> Set up a habit change support environment.

Perfect Time-Based Productivity covers a broad range of ideas based on recent research and case studies in a number of fields, including psychology, management, brain science and engineering:

Part One - The new ideas you need to pull together in order to shift from trying to manage time (which is impossible) to managing time demands - the individual, internal commitments you make the complete actions in the future. Once these ideas are understood, you can see that all professionals manipulate time demands in similar ways, subject to the limits of human capacity. There is, in fact, a common process we

all use, although it's implemented in very different ways from one person to the next, because we are almost entirely self-taught.

Part Two - Using a number of forms provided in the book (and available for download) you perform an evaluation of your core skills: Capturing, Emptying, Tossing, Acting Now, Storing, Listing and Scheduling. Each evaluation is the precursor to creating a mini-improvement plan built on small steps. Ultimately, you create a single a master plan that outlines the journey you will take once the book is finished to improve your habits, practices and rituals at a pace that preserves your peace of mind.

Part Three - You'll learn about other advanced skills and perspectives needed to be effective in today's world. For example, Flowing - your capacity to stay in the flow state defined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi - is described as an important skill to master given the modern pressure to multi-task unproductively with electronic gadgets. Also, you'll learn why corporations are struggling with time-based productivity: they don't push for the right tools for employees and have allowed individual effectiveness to become a matter of chance, versus policy.

The book closes with a number of links for already productive professionals such as project managers, time advisers, Type A businesspeople or personal improvement fans. Several hundred academic papers were consulted in the writing of this book and the References provide a useful guide to the tapestry of ideas this book is based on.

A Summary of Perfect Time-Based Productivity

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FAQ

You probably already know a thing or two about time management. In this chapter, you may ask yourself what makes this book any different from anything else you may have read, viewed, listened to or experienced. Is it all just a repeat of what you already know and do? Is there practical value to be derived? Why should you trust this author over others? What is the source of these ideas? Why should I even need to be reading a book like this one? How can this book promise perfection?

Each of these questions is answered in this chapter, emphasizing the fact that this book uses the latest research from multiple disciplines in a tapestry of ideas that have never been assembled in this way before.

Introduction

Reading this book will leave walking away with more than ideas, but also with a plan for improving your time-based productivity skills.

You'll discover that most people pick up a book like this expecting that they'll be told what to do. In *Perfect Time-Based Productivity*, you will instead start with what you currently do each and every day. On that basis, you'll examine a number of options for behavior changes that you'll select based on your needs. Your selections will make up a personal improvement plan that will help you achieve more of whatever you want out of life. My role will be to guide you through the process, providing you with a deeper understanding of the choices you have and their consequences.

Part One - Setting the Stage

Chapter 1: The Big Picture

You live and work in a very different time and space than your parents once did. The volume of work you must manage daily has dramatically increased, as have the expectations of people around you including your boss, your spouse, your family, friends and acquaintances. There are more people clamoring for your attention and engagement, and new technology, which was supposed to help, has only made things more hectic by overloading you with information, 24-7 access and social networking. Now, information travels with you in a way that it never has before in mankind's history.

To keep up, you multitask in the hope that doing so will help you catch up. While driving, on the toilet, lying in bed on a sick day, in meetings, while talking with your kids... you furiously try to get ahead by engaging in habits that you sense are not the best... but you see yourself has having no choice but to cut a few corners in order to be more productive. You are caught in a snowstorm and if you don't keep moving, you'll die.

You experience some of the following symptoms:

- Email Inboxes full of unprocessed email.
- Feelings of guilt at not being able to catch up.
- Becoming overweight.
- Scrambling to find information due to lack of organization.
- Cutting back on necessary sleep.
- Waking up in the middle of the night remembering something that you forgot.
- Running from one fire to the next.
- Watching as important commitments fall through the cracks.
- Seeing your reputation fall as you miss deadlines.
- Arriving late for appointments.
- Procrastinating.
- Taking time and attention away from loved ones to work.

These are all symptoms you'd like to get rid of, and while they seem to be multiplying they aren't easy to solve. The solutions appear to be confusing especially when you learn (as many have) that time management does not exist. That is, time is the kind of phenomena that cannot be managed.

Furthermore, you have a healthy skepticism about the solutions that promise to double your productivity or save you two hours each day. The books, podcasts, articles and training you have seen don't seem to match your circumstances.

It seems silly to chase after the latest top-ten-list of tips in hope of lasting improvement - after all, there are five new lists published every day on the Internet. Also, following the habits, practices and rituals employed by a guru seems to be the very opposite of what you need - a personalized solution that fits your specific needs.

Chapter 2 - Who Do You Think You Are?

You may be surprised to learn a few things in this chapter that reflect the most recent research in human behavior as it relates to personal productivity.

The first is that while time management doesn't exist, we humans do have deep concerns about fulfilling our commitments... which is why we create what are called "time demands." A time demand is an "internal, individual commitment to complete an action in the future." It's a form of what psychologists call *prospective memory* - our ability to remember to do tasks in the future (rather than our memory of the past which is known as *retrospective memory*.)

A time demand is discrete psychological object we create in order to help us reach goals, hit targets and fulfill critical intentions. Each one is a small promise we make to ourselves.

When do we learn to create them? Research from child development experts shows that we first come to understand the concept of time between the ages of eight to ten, and start creating time demands in our adolescence. At that point, we start fashioning habits, practices and rituals that together make up a rudimentary "time demand management system." (For the rest of the book, the phrase "time demand management" will be shortened to "time management" for the sake of brevity.)

By the time we enter college, the research is clear - we already have a functioning system in place that has an immediate effect on our Grade Point Average (GPA.) During our college years, we continue to make small improvements until we graduate, at which point something strange and surprising appears to take place.

Up until this point, however, the vast majority of young adults have been entirely self-taught - these skills simply aren't taught in the vast majority of grade, primary and prep schools around the world, according to researchers like Jeremy Burrus of the Educational Testing Service (the company that administers the SAT exam.) As a Harvard Professor puts it: "At the Harvard Business School, the philosophy has long been to eschew formal training in time management, instead overloading students purposely to force them to learn for themselves... how to become better time managers."

This approach of leaving students to "learn for themselves" appears to permeate the education system in the United States and other countries, even though there's evidence showing that those who are unable to teach themselves these skill often struggle. Perhaps it's no mistake - they show up in disproportionately high numbers in disadvantaged populations, continuing a cycle of low performance across generations.

The "something strange and surprising" that I mentioned before is that upon graduation, students' time management skills appear to regress. Professor Dezhi Wu, a computer scientist from the University of Southern Utah, compared the way students, faculty and administrators manage their time. Her groundbreaking research showed that students out-performed faculty and administrators in key skills, indicating that, perhaps, when the pressure to perform is finally lifted, recent graduates relax and allow their skills to deteriorate.

It's what happens when we are left on our own to develop key skills that are so important to our success. The ongoing paucity of academic research in time-based productivity at all levels does not help.

To add to the problem, most people can't recall putting together a time management system in their teens, a fact I have verified while training hundreds of participants. Also, most professionals around the world have never picked up a book or taken a course on time-based productivity, even though they complain about the symptoms of weak skills frequently.

Their lack of knowledge places them at a significant disadvantage later in life as they make their way as professionals. In addition to the rapidly changing times described in Chapter 1, they are faced with the demands and expectations of an adult. In an increasingly stressful world in which 40% are asked to do the job of two people, they are hampered: they have no idea where to start, remaining painfully unaware of the fact that they once put together a complex system to manage their time demands in their teens and, with the right awareness, *can do so again*.

As such, when confronted by the need to upgrade their method by a sudden change such as a promotion at work, the arrival of a child in their family or the need to take care of an ailing parent, they flounder, and many suffer.

This may be important for you to know for two reasons. One is that you may be under the gun right now, in the need for immediate relief from the symptoms shared in Chapter 1. In this book you'll create a plan that will point you in the right direction.

Alternately, you may not have a pressing need, and just be curious. I'll try to convince you that you may just be in the calm before a storm. In Chapter 1 we saw that life is changing fast, and we are creating more time demands than ever before. If you aren't under the gun now, it's a good idea to act as if there are a bump in information, expectations and commitments about to arrive in your life sometime soon. In this sense, your curiosity about this book's ideas is well-placed, and not arbitrary. Use the current calm to prepare yourself with the capacity to undertake an upgrade when the time is ripe... or just before.

The power of the approach taken in this book lies in the fact that it starts with a self-evaluation of your current behaviors - the same ones that you put in place during your adolescence. They have operated together as a system in the background of every single accomplishment you have made in life. By dragging it all into the foreground, you'll be examining it for gaping holes, even as you set new targets - and imagining a new system that meets your needs in the near future. This new combination of habits, practices and rituals won't come quickly or easily - it will involve changing behaviors that you have perfected over many years.

Therefore, the plan you create must cover several months... even years. It also must be fully supported by your environment in ways that are unique to you - if you have ever tried to lose weight or quit a habit like smoking you may understand the challenge we humans have in changing ingrained behaviors. Without help, we often fail.

When properly constructed, your plan should feel like an adult, second phase, rather than a complete re-start. After all, it builds on your demonstrated capacity to create a workable time management system - the big difference is that you now have an adult, professional mind to help.

Chapter 3 - How to Set New Improvement Milestones

In order to be successful as an adult in performing what is, essentially, an upgrade to the system you have in place, you must position yourself as both the learner and the teacher. It's best to use the latest thinking in learning research and take a heutagogical approach - one that's geared for adult learners who are self-directed. This varies greatly from what's called the pedagogical approach, which is the term that refers to the way children learn, and are taught.

In time management, you are far better off taking the former approach because, as an adult, you not only have a time management system in place, but you already know a thing or two about being productive. Also, the fact that the system you created as a teen was led more by intuition than best practice means that your system is unlikely to be like anyone else'. Your unique methods mean that your starting point is different.

Furthermore, as an adult you have a life in which your goals, psychological preferences and affinity for technology combine to make your landscape idiosyncratic. The end product of your upgrade might not look like anyone else' - just look at the way you use (or don't use) a calendar, ToDo list and/or smartphone. Your habits probably aren't close to those of anyone else you know.

Given your unique starting point, and your individual destination, it's likely that the plan to close the gap will also be unique. Therefore, the best person to create it is not an outsider, but you. As the trainer and the trainee, the coach and the coachee, the teacher and the learner, you need to develop an ability to explicitly think in all these roles - it's the only way to be successful. No-one can do them for you.

Once again, bear in mind that you have played these roles before - in your teens - although you probably can't recall taking specific steps. Now, you'll repeat the trick, but this time around I'll make things easier by showing you a process to follow in upcoming, where you'll consciously make the specific upgrades that match your needs.

To be effective, you will need a number of small steps to follow. I'll provide them in the form of rubrics and competency matrices - simple learning tools translate big changes into baby steps. You'll use them to set up your own plan of learning. Then I'll show you how to coach yourself to meet your new targets.

Chapter 4 - What's Happening Behind the Scenes of Your System?

Earlier, I defined a time demand as a psychological object - "an internal, individual commitment to complete an action in the future." As human beings, we happen to relate to them in unique ways that grants them curious, magical properties. All in all, our goal is to keep them alive and in view, as they are the strongest link we have between our tasks and our commitments; but only when we cannot take a single, immediate action to complete a goal. As such, for functioning adults, they are inescapable, albeit mental, tokens.

In some ways, we see them as *physical objects* that can be moved around from one place to another, such as from our minds onto a scrap of paper to a ToDo list to a calendar.

In other ways, we view them as *biological objects*, with a birthday that marks their point of creation in time and an expiry date when they vanish following their completion or deletion.

As psychological objects time demands, they are quite difficult to describe so in this book, we'll focus on using two models. For the most part, we'll be using a Simple Model based on seeing them as physical objects. Infrequently, we'll mention an Advanced Model that's based on biological objects.

The field of time-based productivity has suffered from not having time demands as a single point of focus. Instead, it's left learners struggling to deal with "stuff" that appears to come at them from every angle each day via an increasing number of channels e.g. email, voicemail, memos, status updates, texts, etc. The fact is, the system you put together in your teens, and the one that you'll be assembling as a result of this book, are for one thing: successfully manipulating time demands in order to fulfill our commitments.

What is the process that people use to manipulate time demands?

Most people have a habit of storing time demands in their prospective memory banks (as defined before.) In neurological terms, it's not clear where in the brain this occurs - the research points to a number of areas that are tapped in a network-like fashion that gets turned on when data needs to be recalled.

In evolutionary terms, however, we are failing to keep up with the sure of time demands our mind creates. Apparently, our prospective memories are no match for the part of our mind that creates time demands, and as a result, those who only use memory experience a handicap. We just don't have what it takes to remember all the time demands they create.

In fact, perhaps in response to our failures as a species, recently there's been an upsurge in psychological research in this area as noted by eminent psychologist Peter Gollwitzer. However, while scientists continue their studies in better memory, many working professionals have given up, and turned away from memory. They use invented processes, devices and tools to manage time demands, which makes perfect sense, given the well-documented research showing that prospective memory peaks in our 20's and 30's before starting a steady decline.

In the evaluation you'll do using the forms I'll introduce in Part 2, you'll be discovering your current methods for managing time demands, including the processes you have been using and the technology you engage. As we go deeper into these processes we'll draw heavily from best practices from around the world.

Chapter 5 - Introducing 3 Definitions and 11 Fundamentals

Michael Hammer and the reengineering revolution that took place in the 1990's may seem to have little to do with time management. That is, until it's understood that what we're really managing as working professional is not time, but time demands.

Reengineering, and it's less radical cousin - business process improvement - is all about improving the methods for moving objects through a company in ways that cut unit costs, reduce waste, improve cycle times and boost customer satisfaction.

In our model of "time demand management" we also use a process that starts with the creation of a time demand, in which our goal is to manipulate these psychological objects so that our commitments are realized. To assist in this goal, we need to use the Simple Model, thinking of time demands as physical objects, which means that we can certainly reengineer the process we use every day to manage them.

Unfortunately, Hammer's revolution came too late for psychologists studying time management at around the same time. They used the term "process," combined with the notion that time could not just be managed, but *controlled*, to take the field down a path, that in retrospect, was unhelpful. Only recently have a few researchers applied a much-needed correction, but it's meant that most of the research done in time management by psychologists hasn't provided much practical benefit to working professionals. Instead, it's been left to authors such as David Allen to fill the gap for learners - without the help of very much research.

In this chapter you'll find a model for the way we human beings currently manage time demands, described as a process, informed by research from several fields. However, as you'll see, the fact that time management isn't taught means that each of has applied the basic model in very different ways, with vastly different results. Here's an outline of the process, based on the view of a time demand as a physical object (a la the Simple Model.)

The process begins shortly after a time demand is created.

Step 1. All time demands are acted on the same, first fundamental, Capturing.

Capturing - the initial act of saving or recording a potential or actual time demand in memory, on paper or in some digital or analog format. (Chapter 6)

Step 2. Emptying - at some point after a time demand is created, we engage in the act of removing it from a Capture Point. (Chapter 8) When we do so, we simultaneously act on the time demand in one of only five ways:

2a. Tossing - revoking a time demand, which is the same as deciding not to do it at all. (Chapter 9)

2b. Acting Now - the act of completing the time demand while Emptying. (Chapter 10)

2c. Storing - converting some piece of information in a time demand for later use at an unknown time. (Chapter 11)

2d. Listing - placing a time demand on a list. (Chapter 13)

2e. Scheduling - adding a time demand to a calendar / schedule. (Chapter 14)

When the act of Emptying has been completed, then it's safe to switch over to executing time demands. In this new mode, we are either doing what I call "Flowing" or "Habiting." That is, we are executing a task in the flow state, with our full attention, or we are using an already ingrained habit. (Neither Flowing nor Habiting are fundamentals, but powerful skills in Part Three.)

Capturing, Emptying, Tossing, Acting Now, Storing, Scheduling and Listing are known as the 7 Essential Fundamentals. There are also 4 Advanced Fundamentals, which are activities we undertake to influence the 7 Fundamentals directly. Therefore, they have an indirect effect on time demands:

Switching - the act of completing one time demand, and choosing to start another. (Chapter 17)

Interrupting - the act of being reminded to end a time demand immediately in order to start a new one. (Chapter 17)

Reviewing - proactively checking your system to identify where there are broken processes or a backlog of time demands. (Chapter 18)

Warning - getting advanced warning from your time management system that something is about to break. (Chapter 18)

During the past 8 years of research I have discovered that together, these 11 fundamentals cover the entire range of activities that we humans use to manage time demands. There are some real limits to what we can do with them, because of our psychology, how our brains work, the physics of time and the way processes work. These aspects of our humanity are inescapable and so is the way we manage time demands.

By the end of this book you'll have an in-depth understanding of these limits, the consequences of having a particular level of skill in a given fundamental, plus the power of doing a self-evaluation. Remember, our goal is to build a feasible plan for improving your skills - most of it will be made up of self-directed changes in these 11 fundamentals.

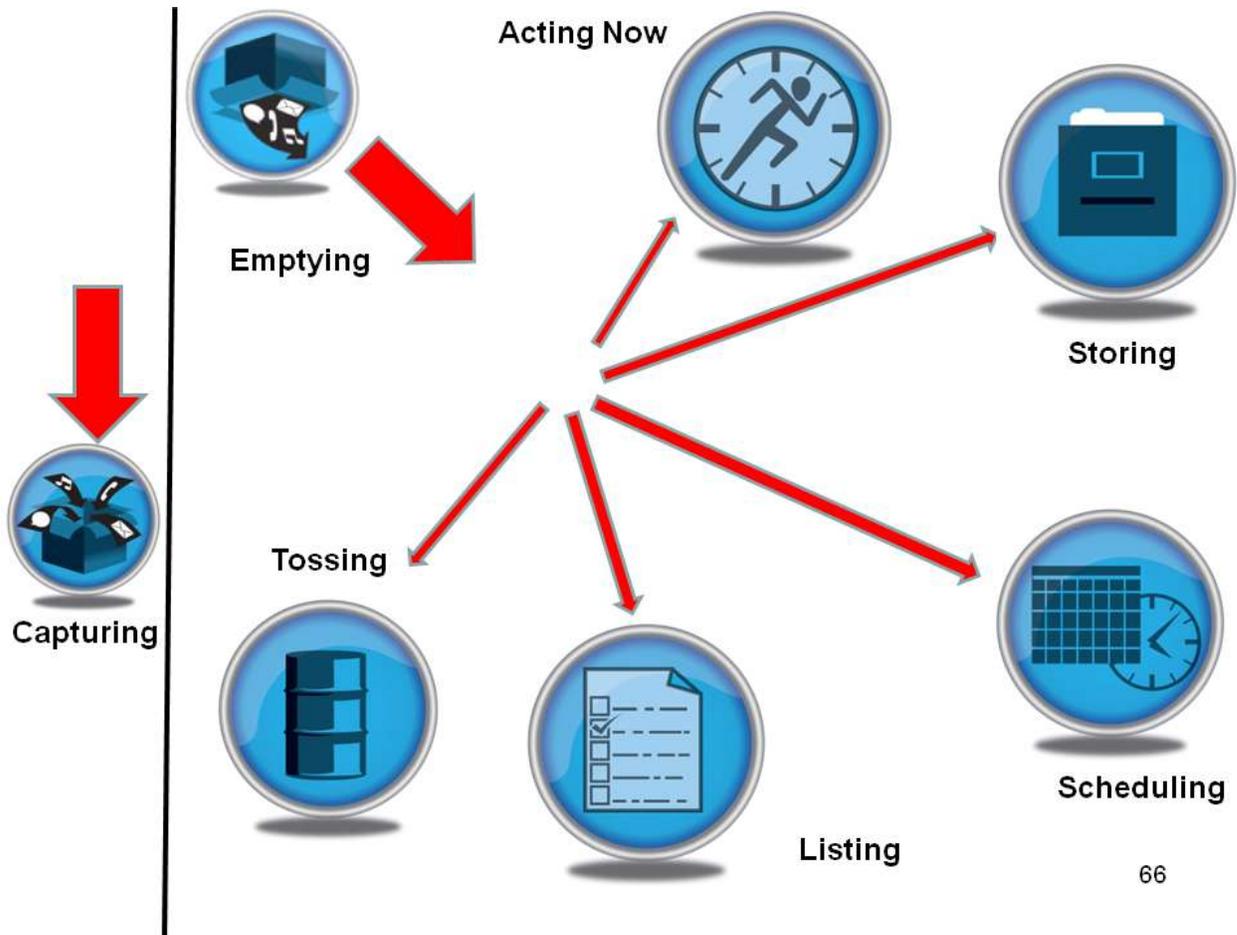
In upcoming chapters, as I suggest different improvements in these skills, I'll ask you to do a simple test and ask: "What impact does this change have on my Peace of Mind?" You can be the only one to decide whether or not a change is the right one for you to make and your plan must reflect your choices.

Now that you have an idea where we are going (towards the creation of a plan) and how we'll get there (via a self-evaluation of the fundamentals), this is a good time to decide what results you want from this entire effort.

Before we proceed, take out your Diary for a moment to write down answers to the following:

- What are the end-results you want from reading this book?
- What are some of the best ways to express the end-result or experience?
- What would people around you notice if you achieved the end-results you want?
- What unwanted aspects of your life would have disappeared?

If you are reading this book with the intention of gaining extra, new knowledge that might come in handy later in life, describe the difference knowing this information might make.



Part Two - Steps to Upgrade Your Time-Based Productivity

Chapter 6 - Capturing - Securing Time Demands for Later Use

Capturing, as defined in this chapter, is the first act we take in the instant after a time demand is created. This chapter offers a full explanation of the fundamental as you learn the difference between manual and automatic capture points e.g. the difference between a written ToDo list and an email Inbox. You learn that the first capture point you ever used was your memory, and that you started using this skill as a young teenager in your attempt to meet your goals.

Over time, your skills have improved as you mastered new ways of capturing that allow you to manage greater numbers of time demands each day.

Capturing Cheat-Sheet

| Behavior | White | Yellow | Orange | Green |
|--|--|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Carry a manual Capture Point at all times | Rarely or never <input type="checkbox"/> | Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> | Often <input type="checkbox"/> | Almost Always <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Use a manual Capture Point instead of memory | Rarely or never <input type="checkbox"/> | Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> | Often <input type="checkbox"/> | Always <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Consolidate automatic Capture Points | | Starting <input type="checkbox"/> | Occasional <input type="checkbox"/> | Sustained <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Maintain a flexible, backup method | | Starting <input type="checkbox"/> | Sometimes in place <input type="checkbox"/> | Always in place <input type="checkbox"/> |




Current Belt

Chapter 7 - How to Complete a Self-Diagnosis

This chapter picks up where the prior one leaves off: describing how you can use a knowledge of a fundamental to do a practical evaluation of your current skills. This activity is one you'll perform in later chapters. You'll be introduced to your first Cheat Sheet on Capturing to score your skills in this fundamental. When you are complete the sheet, you'll have rated yourself as a White, Yellow, Orange or Green Belt using a ranking system borrowed from the martial arts. Here's an example of a reader's complete profile.

Completed Practice Tracking Template

| | White Belt | Yellow Belt | Orange Belt | Green Belt |
|--------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Capturing | ① ✓ ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |
| Emptying | ✓ ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |
| Tossing | ① ② ③ | ✓ ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |
| Acting Now | ① ② ③ | ① ✓ ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |
| Storing | ① ② ③ | ✓ ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |
| Scheduling | ✓ ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |
| Listing | ① ② ③ | ① ✓ ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |
| Interrupting | ① ✓ ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |
| Switching | ① ② ✓ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |
| Warning | ✓ ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |
| Reviewing | ✓ ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ | ① ② ③ |

Key

- ① Just Starting Out
- ② Automatic Behavior
- ③ Practicing for Some Time

In the next step, you'll learn how to set some new targets for yourself, and how to spread them out over time. These new targets will then be converted into a plan for implementing new habits and practices in Capturing.

To help formulate your plan I'll also show you how to use The Practice Tracking Template (shown above) and Component Chart. Their purpose is to make it easy to put together a plan that appears to be doable. We also introduce two characters: Wally White and Greta Green, who typify the behaviors used by White and Green belts respectively. They'll be our guides throughout the next few chapters as we use them to contrast low and high skills respectively.

In the following chapters you'll be repeating the same planning sequence, so the instructions won't be repeated. At the very end of Part Two, we'll take all 7 plans and put them together into a single Master Plan.

It's important to note that my intention is not to tell you, or any of my readers, to gain a Green Belt in all the disciplines. Instead, it's to give you the choice to pick a belt that best suits your needs, however you define them. At the end of your evaluation, you may decide that your current skills are a perfect match for the number of time demands you deal with each day; in the short term, nothing needs to change. These are completely valid conclusions.

Chapter 8 - Emptying - the Most Difficult Skill of All

Once a time demand has been created and captured, at some point later, we engage in the act of removing it from its point of temporary storage in a Capture Point.

While this may seem conceptually easy, it turns out that removal also involves making a critical decision. What should be done with the time demand so that it doesn't fall through the cracks? Deciding what to do is difficult and most people resist doing this step, putting it off for a "later" time that never seems to come. Emptying represents an opportunity to act courageously and decisively.

When we don't Empty well we experience the Zeigarnik Effect, which describes the nagging influence that incomplete actions have on our minds. At the same time, recent research by Roy Baumeister and Ed Masicampo showed that when we manage time demands well, the Zeigarnik Effect is mitigated, and our unconscious mind stops trying to remind us of what we need to do.

Effective Emptying involves making a decision to engage in one of the five fundamentals: Tossing, Acting Now, Storing, Scheduling or Listing.

Emptying is the key to the Zero Inbox technique championed by Merlin Mann and others, which is currently held up as the best practice for email management. My experience with coachees and trainees reveals that this fundamental is the most difficult to master, as revealed in the statistic that shows that a third of us would rather clean a toilet than go through and handle all our email.

By the end of this chapter, you'll have a plan for improving your Emptying skills, having following the process and used the forms described in the prior chapter.

Chapter 9 - Tossing - Lightening Your Load

Tossing is one of the choices you have when you Empty. Quite simply, it involves revoking a time demand, which is the same as deciding not to do it at all.

Sometimes, it takes courage to decide to say no to something that may have appeared to be a good idea. However, after getting rid of time demands, there's often a feeling of freedom.

By the end of this chapter you'll have an implementation plan for improving your skill at Tossing, following the process laid out before.

Chapter 10 - Acting Now - Gaining Immediate Relief While Avoiding a Dangerous Detour

While you are Emptying, it's likely that you'll see an opportunity to take immediate action. This involves interrupting the act of Emptying in order to pursue the time demand and complete it right away. When done well, the act is completed within a matter of minutes and Emptying resumes.

There's an immediate dopamine rush that comes from pursuing a task and completing it, which excites the brain. This is the reason why we enjoy crossing items off a list, for example.

The danger of Acting Now is that it turns into more than a temporary detour. One mistake is to Act Now, and not return to Emptying within a few minutes so that time demands get let in Capture Points, and become a source of problems.

Another mistake is to Act Now too frequently, interrupting your Emptying and chasing after the hottest, most urgent time demand your mind can conjure.

When these mistakes turn into habits they ruin many people's ability to manage time demands as Capture Points become overfull, masking those that are either important when they arrive, or become urgent because they aren't processed in a timely manner.

Clearly, there's a balance to achieve and in this chapter you'll once again evaluate your skills using the Cheat Sheet and develop a plan of improvement based on your current profile.

Chapter 11 - Storing - a Persistent and Increasing Challenge

Information Overload is a growing problem and oftentimes, effective Emptying involves storing key data required to complete time demands effectively. People who aren't effective at Storing information like passwords, contact information, calendars, social networking messages, customer lists, etc. will always be at a disadvantage, scrambling the right information to use at the right time.

As the technological pipeline opens and more information enters our awareness each day, this skill will become even more important - an unavoidable consequence of living and working as a professional in these fast-evolving times.

Evaluate your skills at Storing in this Chapter and craft an improvement plan.

Chapter 12 - How to Solve the Problem of Doing Stuff "Later"

As the number of time demands we must process and execute each day increases, the pressure to keep them in a safe place where they won't get lost increases. Obviously, using memory as a place of storage is a skill that only works when the number of time demands is low, and we happen to be in our twenties and thirties: both facts have been confirmed by recent research.

Once we realize that personal memory is not a suitable tool for storing time demands, we often evolve better techniques to help us accomplish two objectives:

1. to prevent them from falling through the cracks
2. to increase our capacity to deal with them in greater numbers.

The first shift we make is to start paying attention to all the supplementary information that is created when a time demand is formed.

The formation of a time demand may happen in an instant, but our mind does far more than just define the action that will be taken. As we become more aware of the real world around us, we include further information that helps us to manage it effectively. For example, most people create time demands with an implicit understanding of how important each of them is versus the others.

In other words, a full description of a time demand would also include its likely duration, and the time / date when we believe it should start. For example, a time demand which describes the action - "pick up the milk" - would be supplemented by "after leaving work at 5:00 PM" and "takes about 15 minutes."

Over time, as we gain more experience, we add other attributes depending on our needs. Here are just a few popular options:

- the location in which it will be executed.
- who else needs to be involved.
- the level of urgency.
- its relative importance.

(Adherents of the Urgent/Importance Matrix popularized by President Dwight Eisenhower and Steven Covey, the author, would recognize the last two attributes.)

These attributes are all implicit - that is, they are only stored in our minds. However, they can be made explicit by using this information when we decide to stop using our personal memory and start using a list written on paper or typed in digital form. Most people who decide to supplement their memories, start by using ToDo or task lists.

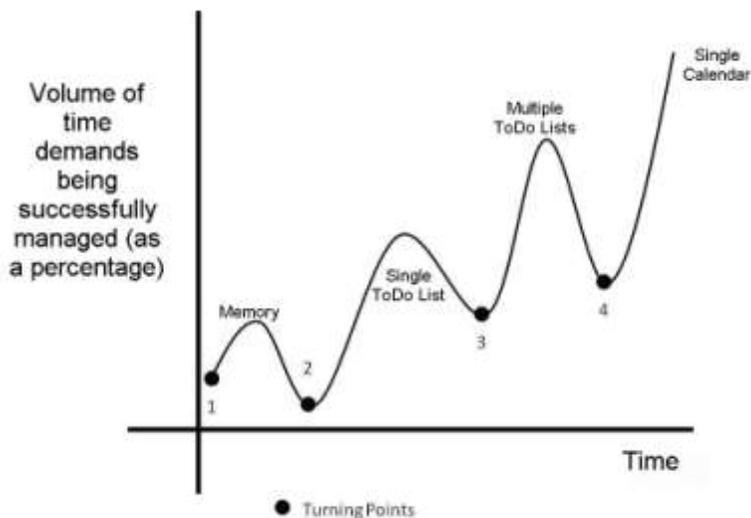
In the beginning, these lists are simple, and unsorted. They represent a vast improvement over the use of memory. In this book we call this shift a Turning Point - a moment when we need to dramatically change our productivity techniques in response to an increase in time demands.

Usually, this new technique works for a while - that is, until there's a further increase in time demands. Then, many professionals start using the attributes attached to each time demand to divide their ToDo lists into shorter, more manageable lists.

Once again, this makes a big difference as it helps us to focus on a much smaller subset of our time demands that's more manageable. Examples include lists of tasks to be done at the office, lists of tasks that are urgent and lists of tasks that can only be done with one's spouse.

For a few professionals, another Turning Point is reached if the number of time demands increases - they are forced to replace the use of multiple lists with a single schedule. That is, they switch to using their calendar as the place to manage the majority of their time demands. It goes from being a useful tool to supplement memory, a ToDo list or multiple lists, to being the primary hub of for most of their time demands.

How Professionals Evolve Their Techniques to Deal with a Rise in Time Demands



My observation of professionals dealing with these Turning Points is reinforced by research of different kinds that reveal the power of using a calendar, particularly for individuals who are time-starved. There's even research by Dr. Key Disjumes that shows the power of performing upgrades from one level of skill to another.

In the next two chapters we'll discuss the delicate balance that must be maintained between Scheduling and Listing, and show why these two skills must be used in tandem for professionals at all levels of skill. You'll decide how to use and combine them when you do your self-evaluation.

Furthermore, I'll help you see if these two skills must be upgraded for you to handle an even greater number of time demands.

Chapter 13 - Listing - a Powerful Technique for All Professionals

In the prior chapter you learned that there is a progression of ways to engage in Listing. To recap, it's defined as the choice to add a time demand to a list when you are engaged in Emptying your Capture Points, plus the methods you use to manage your lists.

As we discovered in the last chapter, there is no perfect technique - there are only choices of how to list based on the volume of time demands you must process. The surprise here is that at the highest levels of skill, in which the maximum number of time demands must be processed, you still must use lists. However, at these levels, lists are used to help you manage your calendar effectively e.g. having an agenda that's used as supplemental information for an upcoming meeting.

Once again, during this chapter, you'll be able to evaluate your skills in this fundamental, and set new targets as part of an improvement plan.

Chapter 14 - Scheduling - Mastering the Complex Skill with Awesome Benefits

This chapter helps you identify whether or not you are currently time-starved, and whether or not you have the appropriate techniques in place. You'll find that there's a quite a bit of research that supports the use of these skills, which is why CEO's, heads of government, Managing Directors, Chairpersons and other high achievers use them.

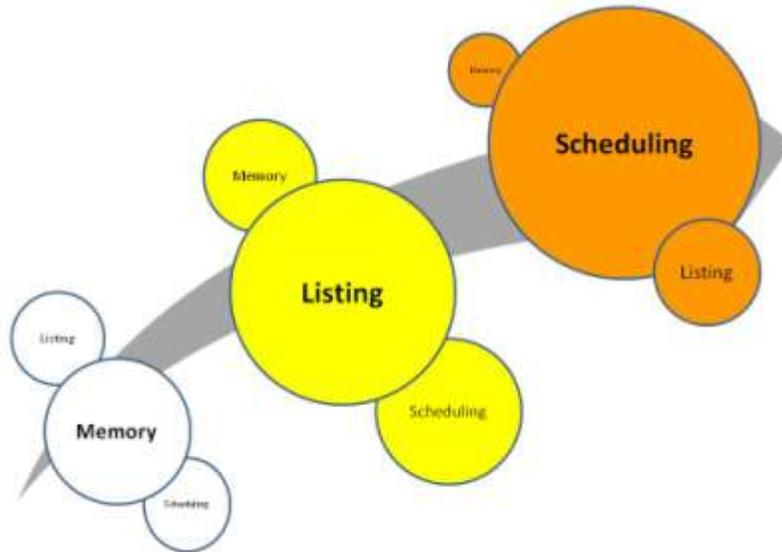
Time-starved individuals (who are often Type A personalities) often find themselves scrambling to fulfill their commitments - they often over-schedule themselves in an effort to accomplish challenging targets.

As you examine what it takes to implement advanced scheduling skills you'll see that they aren't easily learned, and that it's a mistake to underestimate how difficult they are to learn. Also, the tools available to manage a changing schedule are poor which is why many professionals don't attempt the switch, or quickly revert.

But this chapter is more than a description of best-in-class skills - you'll evaluate your current skills on the continuum and once again devise a plan of improvement. Keep in mind that your skills at managing time demands using lists and schedules must evolve in order to keep up with the number of time demands, according to the research.

The diagram below shows how professionals evolve their skills at using memory, lists and schedules in order to keep up with increasing volumes of time demands.

How Skills are Re-Balanced Evolve to Manage Increasing Volumes of Time Demands



Chapter 15 - Putting Your Master Plan Together

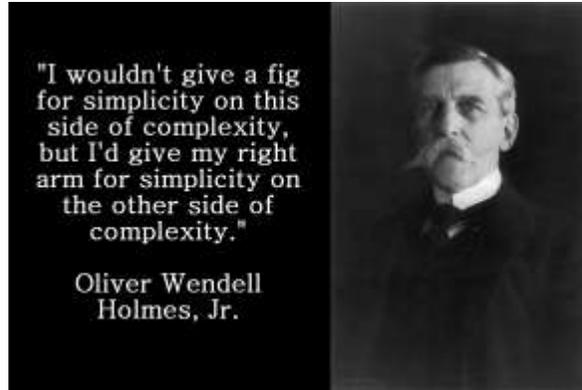
At this point in this book, you should have completed a profile that covers the first 7 fundamentals. Now, you may be able to see the areas of need as you examine your Practice Tracking Template.

Pull together the 7 plans you created via your completed Component Charts - it's time to rationalize them, putting them together into a single Master Plan.

As you do so, bear in mind that you want to end up with a Master plan that's slightly conservative. It's important to avoid the error called the Planning Fallacy, which is simply our tendency to inflate our abilities and make over-optimistic estimates. Instead, be slightly conservative in your planning.

Your end-product should be filled with small steps that seem doable: inspiring, rather than deflating. If you are, at any point, trying to change more than two or three habits at a time, assume that you are creating a possible point of failure.

Also, as I help you along the way, I'll share with you the results of my own data collection - performed in my most recent programs. You'll be able to compare your own profile against that of my average participant, and see where you may be strong or weak -- and perhaps need to make changes. Use this as a guide to the changes you need to make.



Part Three - Advanced Topics

Chapter 16 - Flowing - the Art and Science of High Performance Moments

One of the great gifts of the advanced scheduling skills described in the last chapter is the ability to consciously define and preserve moments of high productivity.

Our best work doesn't need to happen by accident - it can be programmed as long as we have developed the right formula, informed by a combination of recent research and our own idiosyncrasies.

It comes when we are able to give our complete attention to a task without interruptions, so that we can achieve what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "the flow state." It has a number of characteristics and with a well-managed schedule we can create the right environment to achieve it with ease.

The ability to consistently achieve the flow state is a hallmark of the most productive human beings.

Chapter 17 - Interrupting and Switching - Executing the Next Task

This chapter describes the first two Advanced Fundamentals. Unlike the 7 Essential Fundamentals, they aren't about managing time demands directly - but instead have to do with the way we manage ourselves as we execute time demands. Just like the 7 fundamentals described in earlier chapters, they are also self-taught, and currently in widespread use by working adults around the world.

Interrupting is the skill of setting up external reminders to stop what we are doing and consider a switch to another activity. It's inspired by what happens in the flow state - we lose track of time. When we do so, we run the risk of missing our next appointment or task. To prevent this from happening, and avoid the problem of unproductive clock-watching, we need to set up external mechanisms to remind us to stop. A reminder might come in the form of an alarm, a secretary's knock or a phone call - whatever is needed to make us stop to consider whether we should continue. Of course, we need not be in the flow state to benefit from this skill.

In this chapter you'll have an opportunity to perform a self evaluation for both Interrupting and Switching. Here's more on Switching.

Switching is the skill of deciding what to do next, and it's a skill used at either the very end of an activity or when we are interrupted. In order to make a wise decision, we must take into account a number of factors all at once. On most days, it's safe to assume that things are always changing, and that a re-evaluation must take into account emerging crises, new information and fresh commitments.

Some authors argue for blind discipline - to follow your schedule no matter what. This might simplify the act of Switching, but it's hardly a realistic tactic for most people.

Use your self-evaluation for Interrupting and Switching to create improvement plans for both Advanced Fundamentals.

Chapter 18 - Reviewing and Warning to Take Care of Your System

Reviewing involves checking over your time management system for faults, emerging issues and new problems. It's a lot like visiting your doctor for a check-up - just to make sure things are working as they ought.

It's a simple concept - and one that many people do without consciously making plans. We'll see that a better understanding yields improved results.

Warning is defined by setting up and managing early signs of trouble. Following the earthquake, tidal wave and nuclear disaster at Fukushima, Japan, the government has put in a system for detecting deep sea earthquakes - a new way to detect whether or not disaster is lurking.

We need a similar way to highlight time management problems before they happen so that we can intervene and prevent disaster from happening.

For example, not looking for time demands in your voicemail for over a week may be a problem that your system could signal to you as an area of attention, perhaps on a dashboard. If this sounds futuristic, it is, but it's not hard to imagine - a few apps have begun to point the way.

By the end of this chapter, you'll complete a quick self-evaluation and carve an implementation plans for these two Advanced Fundamentals.

Chapter 19 - Habiting - A Way to Increase Your Odds of Success

As I mentioned earlier, your time management system is made up of habits, practices and rituals. Implementing your Master Plan is no routine matter, because we humans are so weak at changing long-ingrained habits. You'll have a similar challenge here to those who struggle to quit smoking and lose weight.

In fact, to deepen the distinction we'll use a new term: Habiting. It's defined as the capacity to change a long-ingrained habit or learn a brand new one. The tools we'll use come from recent research, and include reminders, support groups, rewards for accomplishment, accountability partners (such as a boss,) backup mechanisms and more.

This chapter is perhaps the most critical - most people fail in their post-book or post-class plans because they are weak at this skill, without even knowing it, It's safe to assume that you are also weak, and need a lot of support. In effect, you'll learn how to make your plan fool-proof by putting in place excessive and redundant supports.

Chapter 20 - What's the Best Way to React to New Technology and Fresh Thinking?

New technology that promises to improve your productivity will continue to appear for the rest of your adult career. So will brand new ideas or approaches for improving your time-based productivity.

How do you react to them? Should the tools all be purchased and tested, like the new version of the iPhone that appears each year? How do you make sure you don't miss out on an important invention? Also, how do you discern good ideas from bad ones? The number of people suggesting time management tips has exploded - which ones should you chase after?

In this chapter you'll see that pursuing every hot tip and latest gadget isn't feasible. It's far better to follow the lead of the best corporations, who analyze their needs before looking at what vendors have to offer. When you do your Reviewing, you can do the same, for your individual needs, and instead of reacting to new releases, go looking to fill gaps in your system that would make the biggest difference.

Your evaluation and your plan are your best guides, in other words, as they show you where technology might make a difference, rather than an advertisement on television.

Chapter 21 - Creating Your Own Ladders of Improvement

Throughout this book, I have used a systematic process for breaking down world-class behaviors into component parts and small steps. In this chapter, you'll learn how to do this for yourself.

As an example, I'll show how to work with a behavior I defined while writing this book - Habiting.

In this chapter you'll see how I developed the skill of Habiting and how it can be turned into a ladder of skills. You'll learn how to develop your own cheat sheets, and ranking system. It's a higher skill, to be sure, but one that can keep your skills evergreen as you seek out world-class behaviors of all kinds to emulate. You'll become not only be a user of improvement tools, but also a developer.

Chapter 22 - The New Tools We All Need

As a professional who operates in a corporate environment, you must use digital tools to manage large numbers of time demands. Neither memory nor paper-based diaries offer the power, flexibility and safety of the latest devices.

Furthermore, your colleagues, customers and family expect you to be available to them via mobile devices. The number of employees who can opt out of mobile contact is falling.

This all adds up to a requirement to use gadgets, devices, apps, software and cloud storage in your time-based productivity system. Unfortunately, the design of today's devices leaves much to be desired as they aren't based on the 11 Fundamentals, and weren't created with time demands in mind.

For example, the number of calendar apps that are built for time-starved professionals is small - I have never seen one. Most are built to mimic the functionality of an appointment calendar, which falls far short of the needs of someone who uses a calendar as their primary tool for managing time demands, as we discussed in Chapter 13.

In this chapter we look at some of the tools that are needed, but apparently have not been invented. The reason? Developers have not developed a sufficient philosophy around which to design good products. Instead, they start with a trivial understanding of time management problems professionals face, which has led to products that all look alike.

We also look at how we can make our needs known to those who want to successful products and services for time-based productivity.

Chapter 23 - The Ultimate Challenge: Productivity in Your Company

In the prior chapter we looked at the problem of not being able to find the right tools to increase our time-based productivity. This chapter deals with a much bigger problem - the challenge to productivity inherent in working for most companies around the world.

Corporations around the world have failed to appreciate the need for individual productivity, which is why so many of them promulgate environments that prevent employees from doing their best work. For example, many force knowledge workers to come in early, leave late, sneak in on weekends and stay home in order to do their best work. They take these measures because normal working hours are so chaotic and distracting that the flow state (discussed in Chapter 14) is impossible to achieve.

The bigger problem is one of accountability - in most companies, there is no designated "Chief Productivity Officer." This means that decisions that affect employee productivity are made by separate departments with different agendas, which in the end add up to less productivity.

In the end, however, knowledge workers have a professional obligation to manage their time carefully, much in the way that a pharmacist has an obligation to dispense drugs in an ethical manner. Time is perhaps the biggest contribution the typical professional can make to their companies, which places a responsibility on their shoulders that manage their time well.

This means acting against the norm in many situations, by saying "No" to certain projects and tasks, demanding work environments that support the flow state and insisting the smartphone usage policies be implemented. These are just examples of wider issues that companies have not begun to deal with in a concerted way.

Summary

The work have done in this book is just the start. While you now have a Master Plan, implementation remains the most important and most difficult step. Take steps to reduce the risk of failure by using your newfound skills at Habiting.

The future promises more of the same: more time-stress and a greater percentage of time-starved professionals. There's not likely to be a lot of new tools anytime soon that will enable time-based productivity and your company will remove its impediments to greater productivity slowly, at best. It's wise to prepare yourself for this future and trust the emerging trends, taking your time-based productivity into your own hands.

That's what perfection means - not following a single pattern, but developing the capacity to change your system to fit your life's circumstances so that you can fulfill your grandest intentions.

Your Next Steps

Here you can find an assortment of links to further information related to the content in this book. With a few exceptions, they are free of cost.

As a productive professional / reader, time adviser, researcher, project manager, content creator or training administrator, there are specific resource available for you to action or explore.

References

There are over 250 references cited in this section. Each chapter has links to original sources, including academic papers, books, websites, etc.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all who have made a contribution.

LabNotes

These notes are designed for individuals and researchers with more far-reaching questions on specific topics.

Reviews

This book shows you how to get more done, faster and easier, than ever before. **Brian Tracy** – Author, Unlimited Sales Success

Francis Wade has written a well-researched, practical book that goes beyond time management to help you boost your personal productivity. Perfect Time-Based Productivity offers a step-by-step method for achieving your goals and attaining the next level of success in your life. **Laura Stack**, aka The Productivity Pro® and Author, What to Do When There's Too Much to Do

In Perfect Time-Based Productivity, the author doesn't just deliver winning formula on time-based productivity - he delivers it in a manner that makes it easy to follow and implement. If you're a time-focused person looking to get more out of the hours of the day, then this book is, well, perfect. **Mike Vardy**, Author of The Front Nine and Founder of Productivityist

For people who experience “time famine”, with related experiences of pressure, stress, and anxiety, the author offers an achievable path to increased peace of mind. **Dr. Kathryn Welds**, Organizational Psychologist and Blogger @ Curated Research and Commentary

Perfect Time-Based Productivity stands out from myriad time management books because the author presents a new approach to thinking about and fulfilling time-bound commitments. He offers options tailored to each reader's individual self-assessment and preferences, rather than prescribing one model for people with varying levels of experience in applying productivity practices. **Tony Murphy**, TimeDiagnostics.com

Francis' book isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to getting more done, nor is it simply a choose-what-works-for-you approach. Instead, it's a research-based framework for evaluating and improving the way you manage tasks. The author is a thoroughly likable task physician who explains the research, asks you questions to accurately diagnose your problem, and provides a long-term therapy protocol. This book is my prescription for task overwhelm. It works! **Melanie Wilson**, Ph.D., Psychowith6.com

The author has done a huge service to the productivity field, not to mention the average reader who wants to improve his/her skills. I've never seen such a comprehensive compilation of research on the topic anywhere else, nor such a thorough deconstruction and analysis of the habits and behaviors that contribute to peak personal productivity. If you study the topic as a student, as a researcher, as an expert in the field, this book is a must for your collection. **Maura Thomas**, Author: Personal Productivity Secrets, Founder: RegainYourTime.com

The new ideas presented in the book, many of which are grounded in theory and pragmatism, are badly needed by those in the workforce and elsewhere who are either struggling to better organize themselves in relation to the available time, and/or those who are more capable, but still need the valuable information presented in the book, for them to be even more successful, more productive and, of course more healthy! **Dr. Ivor Livingston**, CEO, StressHealth Solutions International

If you are a professional struggling with challenging time demands, I have some good news for you: the author has written a comprehensive book just for you - busy professional - to bring order and productivity into your life. That way you get the most out of this book. **Timo Kiander**, Productive Superdad

What is refreshing about Francis' well-researched approach is that "perfect" time management isn't about living up to a cultural ideal of the "perfectly productive person" but rather about discovering and embracing the system that is "perfect" for you. **Julie Gray**, Holistic Time Coach

Francis Wade is one of the few productivity experts out there that "gets it"!

He has written a compelling, insightful, and actionable book in "Perfect Time-Based Productivity".

His book provides a unique set of productivity-oriented skills that can be assessed, developed, and customized to meet the unique needs of the individual.

These skills are supported by a very comprehensive list of academic sources, empirical research, thousands of hours of training experience, and helpful anecdotes.

In his book, he also explains why much of the "time management" advice found on so many blogs, quoted in so many books, or taught in so many courses ultimately fails to achieve its desired results.

He is clear that there are no "silver bullets" and that improving these skills is a difficult and at times a frustrating process, but the concepts, ideas, and resources provided in his book provide a framework that individuals can follow as they embark along their own, self-driven, productivity improvement journeys.

Dr. Michael Einstein is a full-time, business technology professional for a large multi-national corporation who is passionate about researching causes and solutions to e-mail overload.

Perfect Time-Based Productivity presents the problems we face through a collection of vignettes. Each person will likely feel a kinship to several of the characters met. Francis Wade intertwines these vignettes with large body of research in the area of time management, and suggestions for implementing best

practice. The "cheat sheets" provide the reader with a blueprint assessing one's current level and charting a course towards a desired future. **Dr. Frank Buck**, President, Frank Buck Consulting, Inc.

I've been a fan of Francis since I first heard him speak in 2011. The reason? He understands that effective time management and productivity aren't the result of following the "Top 10 Time Management Tips" of the day. Perfect Time-Based Productivity is the natural next step in Francis' work. Written for the "knowledge professional" this book will help professionals increase their productivity both now and in the future. Using universal fundamentals, Francis guides readers through an evaluation of their current skills and shows them the steps necessary to make improvements in their time management system. It's important to understand that Francis is talking about fundamentals and skills, not methods.

So the reader gains clarity regarding what changes need to occur. Then they will implement methods best suited to their environment, personality, and strengths. Since each person is acquainted with what techniques do and don't work for them, it is refreshing that the reader isn't being asked to utilize approaches that won't be functional.

Because Francis is asking the reader to change core habits, the productivity gains are maintainable. Furthermore, Francis addresses the need to review the systems periodically. This is crucial in keeping the systems sustainable over time.

In this age of quick fixes that usually don't stand the test of time, the foundations in Perfect Time-Based Productivity will endure because they are based on both research and individuation. Get started immediately on your journey to better productivity! **Janice Russell**, Certified Organizer Coach, Certified Professional Organizer in Chronic

"Many books on time management just focus on a simple process that will supposedly make everything better -- just follow these steps and you change years of ingrained habits! Well, it turns out that people are much more complicated than that.

Francis does something very smart with this book -- he focuses on the core behaviors and lays out a process for working towards those behaviors. His rubrics allow you to see and measure progress as you develop new and crucial time management habits. I haven't seen this kind of thoughtful road map anywhere else." **Julie Dirksen**, Author, Design for How People Learn