

17 Ways To Get More Work Done (And Be Happy Doing It)

By
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Most everyone has figured out that performance expectations keep going up. To put it bluntly, we face the challenge of doing more in less time. And it's not about to change anytime soon.

In the past, those with lots of experience fared well. But not today. Experience can hold us back, like running against a strong wind. Experience is about what we've done in the past and it has value in a never-changing environment. On the other hand, expertise prepares us for what we must do next so we can face the future with confidence.

The question, then, is how to transition from experience to expertise, from looking backward for answers to looking forward with solutions. Here are 17 ways to do it:

1. Have the right mindset. Experience short-circuits the thinking process. We go from zero to 60 in a split second. We tear into tasks because we've been there before and know what to do. It takes an analytical mindset when entering uncharted territory.

2. Figure out what you need to know. More often than not, problems, misunderstandings, and confusion occur because we didn't ask enough questions—or, more likely *any questions*. We get off on the wrong foot by not knowing what we need to know.

3. Give yourself time. Some say they do their best work in a crisis or at the last minute. It's also easy to deceive ourselves. Where does that leave us when we run out of time? The answer: in trouble and making excuses. And feeling overwhelmed.

4. Work on it and let it sit. The best solutions rarely, if ever, occur on the first attempt, whether it's writing a report or working on a project. The human mind needs "noodling" time to work in the background without pressure. Remember, everything can be improved.

5. Avoid confrontations. It isn't easy, particularly since we seem to possess an "urge to be right," a gyroscope of the mind. When coming into contact with an opposing view, the

mind pushes back to regain its balance. It helps to view it as a signal to take a closer look before having a confrontation.

6. Never assume things will go smoothly. Why do we never get over being surprised when things go wrong? It's as if someone is playing cruel jokes on us or deliberately throwing us curve balls to cause us grief. It's best to be prepared by anticipating what might go wrong.

7. Second-guess yourself. To avoid getting blindsided, ask yourself "what if" questions to foresee possible outcomes. Then, when asked about alternatives, you can say you considered various options and why you chose this one.

8. Learn something new. If you can do your job without thinking about it, you're probably bored *and* underproductive. The human mind gets moving and stays active by coming up with new ideas, making improvements, and solving problems.

9. Go beyond what's expected of you. It's easy to put up a "I've reached my limit" or a "I'm not paid to do that" sign. Everyone feels that way at times. If we do, we can count on dismal days ahead.

10. Be present. It's easy to be at work and not be present. The average employee spends just under eight hours a week on personal stuff, most of it on email and social media. For those 18 to 34, add two hours a week, according to a staffing firm Office Team survey. That's a day a week of not being present.

11. Ask questions. Have you started on a task and get into it only to discover you're on the wrong track? Most of us have—too many times. It occurs when we're too sure of ourselves or reluctant (embarrassed) to ask questions. Asking the right questions is a sign that your thinking about what you're doing.

12. Look for possibilities. Instead of just doing your work each day, take it to another level and interact with it so you get feedback from what you're doing. Ask yourself: Is it clear? Is it complete? Will the recipient understand it? Is it necessary? Will it make the right impression? What have I missed? Should I start over? Is it time for another set of eyes?

13. Take a chance. It's invigorating to try something new. You may have been thinking about it for a long time and it doesn't really make any difference what it is. By taking your mind off all the annoying daily irritations, it can help invigorate your outlook and improve your productivity

14. Have clear goals. Tedium sets in on any job. One day you realize that what was interesting and challenging is now tiring and unpleasant. Perhaps even intolerable. If so, it's "goal think" time. Start by asking what you want to accomplish today, then add

another for the coming month, and so on. When you know where you're going, the tedium fades away.

15. Eliminate confusion. We may not be in a position to control the confusion around us, but we can avoid adding to it. We can make sure our messages are accurate and complete so there's no misunderstanding, our address book and other files are current so we don't need to bother others, meet deadlines so we don't leave others waiting, and so on.

16. Raise your standards. Others respond to us based on how they view us. How do they see you? Someone who get things done, who takes quality seriously and who demands a lot from yourself. Make a conscious decision as to how you want to be perceived.

17. Take on a challenge. Nose around to see what you can find, drop a few hints, and even raise your hand. But be sure it's something you want to sink your teeth into. If it is, you'll have a great time doing it.

Not only will you get your work done, but it will be more than you thought possible, and you'll be happier at the same time. Better yet, your employer and your customers will be happier, too.

As it turns out, happiness doesn't depend on what others do for us, but what we do for ourselves.

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