

5 productivity hacks for entrepreneurs in 2019

 By [Sacha Matulovich](#)

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It's that time of year where, in between the mad dash to wrap up work before the holidays, many business leaders and decision-makers look back at their organisation's performance over the past 12 months and formulate plans for the year ahead. They may focus on sales performance and service delivery, but internal evaluations also often touch on productivity - ensuring that constant workplace busyness translates into actual accomplishment of goals to support and grow the business.

When it comes to entrepreneurs, productivity is unlikely to be their number-one concern. Securing funding, finding customers and employing the perfect culture-fit employees to serve these customers are greater priorities.



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This said, optimising the use of time is still crucial for entrepreneurs. They are just as susceptible to the damaging effects of inefficiency as any other company. And, with present-but-distracted employees costing South African businesses up to R89bn annually, it's worth looking at what entrepreneurs can do to overcome this obstacle and maximise the time they do have to get more done.

1. Set metrics

It's very difficult to gauge how productive (or not) you're being without goals. In business, it's essential that you know what you've set out to do, and measure performance against that. Key productivity metrics will vary according to the nature of an organisation but could include a set number of sales calls per day or articles written.

A major barrier to productivity for entrepreneurs is trying to get the right things done at the right time. Objective setting helps to order priorities and has the added benefit of helping to continually re-orientate everyone at an organisation. Just ensure your measures include both quantitative and qualitative components for a more balanced assessment of efforts.

2. Make time for Deep Work

The nature of work, and life in general, today, is fundamentally interrupted. Accessibility and “always on” availability are prioritised – even if it reportedly costs us up to two hours of productivity every day – and we see it in the form of open-plan offices and ever-pinging smartwatches.

The world values large amounts of small, low-value data exchanged almost instantly. What has been sacrificed in this paradigm shift is the time for slow, deep and focused thinking to accomplish more significant tasks.

As entrepreneurship requires regular high-stakes problem solving, it's crucial to make space in your workday for extended periods of concentration. It's not easy but Cal Newport's Deep Work provides strategies and practical advice to split time between open-plan accessibility, issue-tackling in smaller teams and distraction-free solitude. One way to achieve the latter is batching, where periods are blocked off and dedicated to grouped tasks with similar requirements.

3. Strategically use smart technology

Although it can be rightly argued that some technology is making us more unfocused and unproductive, adding to our daily stresses, it's also true that today digital technology is key to working smarter, not harder. If used strategically – particularly in terms of its automation and system-integration functionality – it helps minimise friction, streamlining everything from team collaboration to administrative processes, which in turn boosts productivity.



Source: pixabay.com

Of course, there are a multitude of list and organiser apps to manage your daily workload on an individual level. For entrepreneurs with budgetary limitations and endless meetings, though, cloud solutions have flexibility, scalability and cost-effectiveness to complement the growth of your business and improve efficiencies.

For example, in Johannesburg, the average person loses almost six full days a year to commuting but cloud-based video conferencing can eliminate this wasted time on the road by facilitating virtual meetings instead. Overall, the modular, easy-to-integrate nature of cloud services provides consolidated control so that you can work from anywhere via your laptop.

4. Say no

This point relates back to the use of metrics to evaluate performance, but to protect their productivity, entrepreneurs must know their “no.” There is nothing to be gained from throwing all your efforts into a task and ultimately finishing nothing.

Again, a key component of productivity is getting the right things done – and very often that requires a pinpoint focus on your organisational mission. Just like you may require practice building up your attention span to maximise Deep Work sessions, you should practice saying no until you are comfortable.

5. Remember to switch off

Workaholic culture may celebrate 18-hour work days but repeat studies have shown that extended periods of overtime and overwork are actually detrimental to productivity. With so much unshared responsibility on the shoulders of entrepreneurs, though, it's easy to slip into “always working” mode. However, it's essential to avoid this trap, given the potential damage it can do to your health, relationships and, in turn, your output. Life balance and unplugged breaks are essential to replenish body and mind – and your best strategy in this regard is planning. Fit work into the space you have assigned and then switch off for the rest of the day.

Entrepreneurs face a variety of different challenges to more established enterprises and corporates. When trying to grow a business with limited resources – including time – maximising productivity is key.

Fortunately, there are many digital solutions with productivity-enhancing capabilities as well as small changes you can make in terms of personal time management to accomplish your professional goals.

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