

MASTER YOUR MINDSET AUDIO SERIES 2
TRANSCRIPTIONS

MP3 AUDIO #2

The Sprint Technique

MASTER
YOUR
MINDSET



Audio Series by Yaro Starak

The Sprint Technique

Hello, this is Yaro Starak and welcome to another brand new mindset audio. Today the topic is sprints or sprinting, which is a productivity technique, the third one in what I call my three primary productivity techniques, going with the 80/20 rule and the theory of constraints.

This sprinting one really is something I recommend you listen to after you've already gone through the 80/20 rule from my original 10-part Master the Mindset audio series, and the more recently-produced Theory of Constraints Master Your Mindset audio, which would come along with this one you're listening to now.

I'll explain how the sprint concept fits in with those other two concepts later in the audio, but first let's talk about what exactly a sprint is. A sprint is a decision to complete a set of tasks within a short period of time, focusing only on those tasks. It's very deadline-driven. In fact, I believe the main reason why sprinting works so well is because of two important ideas:

1. You give yourself a deadline, and
2. You shut off all other information or distractions – anything that makes you think about anything else. Your entire mind is just focusing on completing the sprint activities by the deadline.

It originally comes from the world of software engineering and development, where you'll find that developers will look to complete sprints towards the completion of what's called an epic. An epic is just a collection of sprints. It's a bigger goal. It's something that can't be done within a short time period, but it might be a feature that you kind of look at as the end concept. It's kind of like looking at a big goal and breaking it down into little goals, where the sprints are the little goals. You can kind of see how this ties into the theory of constraints already, if you've just listened to that audio.

What happens with sprinting is it's about coming up with something that you can do in a set period of time and really execute that in that period of time. Again, it's about focus. It's always deadline-driven and it's usually short bursts. That's what I really like about sprinting, because I like the feeling of completion. The feeling of completion is one of the most powerful motivation forces in what I do, and I think it's really important for every person.

In fact, I think one of the most satisfying things in life is the successful completion in meeting a goal, and what's great about sprinting is it allows you to chunk down every single goal into small little goals, which means you get to experience that feeling of completion on a daily basis, basically.

For example, today my sprint tasks are quite simple. I have to complete three Master Your Mindset audios. I've done one already, this is the second one, and I'll do another one later

today, and then my sprint task for today is done and I can tick the box. I can move like I'm moving forward and my goal has been met.

Of course, these audios are only one component of a set of audios, and then that set of audios is only one component of a product, and then that product has a whole bunch of other things that need to be done. You might say the creation of the product is the epic. It's the big goal that I'm aiming for, and all these little tasks of the sprints will go toward completing that goal.

It's a very powerful technique because it allows you to create that focus, but I wasn't always aware of it. I want to tell you a story of how I came across the concept of the sprint, because I think it's important to illustrate that you might not be aware that it's available to you until you're actually shown the differences between general working towards projects and completing tasks on a day-by-day basis, to focusing on a sprint methodology. There are some subtle but significant differences.

My story goes like this. I was part of a software team to create a program called Cranky Ads. It was a start-up company that I had with two partners named Walter Haas and Mick Real. If you've read my blog or followed my work in the years 2011-2012 period, you would have heard me write a lot about Cranky Ads, as it was my main project at the time.

I wasn't the developer for that. It was a software start-up, so I wasn't capable of creating the actual product. Walter was the main developer and Mick was the main designer, so Walter did most of the coding work and Mick did some of the design work to go with the code.

Because of the way we developed this start-up, we had a big vision of what our product would eventually do, but as we learned, there were only a certain amount of things we could realistically accomplish. In fact, one of the most frustrating parts of the journey was needing to constantly scale back our objectives.

This is where sprinting became a really powerful tool, because we had a big-picture goal which we had to shrink down and then shrink down some more, then shrink down some more, and it became very much a lean product development process. In fact, I have another audio for you all about that lean process, and that's what we went through with this software company. We had to break it down so that our epic became a lot smaller. It wasn't quite as epic, so our goal was smaller.

That was a good start, but we still hadn't really applied the sprinting technique. Everyone was doing a little bit of everything. Walter was doing all the programming, but we'd all do things like attending events. We'd all meet together and have regular discussions about what we want the product to do in the future and what we're doing now. We'd all kind of work with contractors and deal with emails and speak to our community and interact with the people who were starting to use our software, and kind of as a group decide things.

The majority of our time was still going to our core functions. I was still the main CEO-type role. I was doing the marketing and I was also going out there and connecting with potential investors and things like that. Walter was still doing programming and Mick was still doing design. Those were our main functions, but we kind of overlapped in a lot of places. We didn't really notice that that was a problem until it was pointed out to us.

We ended up having a meeting with a friend of mine named Andy. Andy is also a developer and he's a guy who's owned his own company, so he knows what it's like to run a software company. He sat down with us and he said, "Why aren't you guys doing short sprints to complete features? Get them out the door so you can much more quickly move to an end product that will generate cash flow and allow you to then do all those things you want to do and expand your company."

"Sprinting will allow you to, most importantly, have Walter focus on one objective, Mick focus on one objective, and Yaro focus on one objective, so that you get more done and have this sense of completion." He was recommending weekly sprints, maybe two weekly sprints, up to at the most monthly as a time frame for a sprint.

The important thing he said to us was, "Give yourself a goal. This is the feature you want to develop within this one- to two-week timeframe. That's your sprint goal. That's your deadline. But the important part of executing this goal is making sure that the person who's most responsible for this feature to be developed – in this case, Walter as the programmer – can spend all of his time on that task. He needs to not be distracted by anything else. He needs to sit in his cave and code for whatever amount of time is needed during that week or two to get that feature done."

The other people were then there to service Walter, either in Mick's case giving design work to augment and complete the new feature, and in my case to defend those two guys against any work that they shouldn't be doing.

What happened as a result of that decision was I then went and took over all the roles of going to events, networking, meeting with potential investors, dealing with the emails, and everything else but the core development of features, which Walter then focused 100% of his energy and mind on, and Mick as well focused 100% on the tasks he had relating to those feature developments.

This was a really vital change because it allowed us to maximize the development of new features and get things out the door quickly. It combined a deadline with a sense of focus and purpose in concentrated bursts of activity towards one single goal that we really didn't have prior to changing our methodology to sprinting.

What Andy showed us was that this was a way we could really get results quickly. Even if we didn't reach the outcome we wanted, it allowed us to reach a point where we could say, "Well,

at least the feature is there. At least our product has been created. Now the only variable is whether people want it.” It allows us to get out the door to the market to have something that people can actually use, and that’s the most important thing. We were getting bogged down with all the steps before getting the product out the door, so we made the change to sprinting.

I really appreciated that change in mindset and it made me start thinking, “Can this be applied to blogging, and can this be applied to information selling on the internet as well?” because sprinting as a technique is just about being productive with how you use your time, and eliminating distractions and giving yourself very focused deadlines.

I started to reflect on different other time periods in my life when I’ve been very productive, and I noticed there were a couple of other examples that, while I wouldn’t have called it sprinting at the time, I actually was sprinting.

One of the best examples I can give you was when I wrote The Blog Profits Blueprint, the free report you very likely have already downloaded if you joined my newsletter before you downloaded this audio. That’s a 50-ish-page document that I wrote in three weeks, and then added some pictures to and edited in another week afterwards, so it took about a month to complete the document.

When I did that, I had been wasting a lot of time with another product the previous year. It was an ebook that I talked about in the theory of constraints audio. At this point I’d switched over to, “I’m going to release a course,” and that program was Blog Mastermind. As part of getting ready to release that program I had to write the Blueprint, because that was the main resource I wanted to give away for free to get people onto my list and prepare them for the potential to join my course.

I knew what I wanted in The Blog Profits Blueprint because I had already spent two years building a blog, so I wrote down the chapter headlines and I said to myself, “I need to get this done within a month so I can free myself up to then focus on the actual launch of the product.” In order to do that, I conducted a month-long sprint. I didn’t realize it was a sprint, but it had all the characteristics of a sprint.

I said, “Every day I have to write at least 1,000 words, and nothing else matters until those 1,000 words are written.” Because of that, I wrote the words in the morning. I’d go straight down to a café after I had breakfast and a shower, and I’d sit in the café and write a minimum of 1,000 words of that report. Often I’d go as far as 2,000 words.

Depending on the day, I would also potentially go back at night time and write another 1,000 to 2,000 words, although it didn’t happen every day. The main goal was to get that 1,000 words done first, and that was at the exclusion of everything else in my life. There were no friends, there was no socializing, there was no sitting on the couch watching TV, there was not even exercise. There was just food, sleep, write the report, tick those boxes, and then there’s time

for other things, but if that hasn't been done, then there isn't. You don't think about anything else.

That allowed me to write 25,000 words in one month quite easily. Actually, I wrote 25,000 words in three weeks and edited it over the next week, so I had a complete document done within a month, and that document has actually gone on to become the most important piece of content I've ever produced for my blog and business. You can see how two things happened there. The deadline was applied, and my concentrated focus eliminated everything else in my life just to get this done.

It's important that sprinting is not something you do forever because, as you can see, it's quite restrictive. It forces you to discard a lot of the parts of your life you probably enjoy and want to keep in your life – the socialization, the entertainment, the exercise, all the things that are important for a balanced and harmonious life – but the sprinting period of time allows you to focus, concentrate, and execute.

What I find I do now is go through periods of time where I sprint out product creation or sprint out content creation. In fact, I'm actually doing a sprint right now to create all these audios for the release of my Mindset and Productivity Guide. I want the audios done, I've got the guide done, I've got to get the sales page done, and all this is happening over a period of pretty much two to three weeks, because I need to have it done and ready to go next month as I record this, so I'm doing a month-long sprint, to be accurate, and it works really well.

It's a little bit strange because it's so focused. You really kind of forget about the rest of your life, and your friends wonder where you are, but while you're working on this job you get a lot done. It's very powerful for productivity, which is why I wholeheartedly recommend you integrate the sprint technique whenever you've got to reach some big goals and get some really good work done. That's when sprinting is a really powerful technique you can apply.

To apply the sprinting technique to growing a successful blog, you might pick any aspect of a process to try and execute in order to build your blog. There's so many different things you need to do, from content creation to marketing to releasing a product to building an email list and all those things.

One of the areas where I find a lot of people struggle is obviously audience building. It's probably the part that I've also had the greatest difficulty with as well, which is to always be reaching new people, getting people onto your newsletter, and getting links back to your blog so you get better rankings. It's all about marketing and content creation, those two things linking together.

If we apply the sprint technique to say an example of when you want to do something to grow your traffic, your goal is to create something that other blogs link to, that lots of people will share with each other, that results in people coming to your site and joining your newsletter,

that helps to build your brand and demonstrate your expertise. It just strengthens your platform so when you go out there and create a product and sell it, you can reach a lot of people, and a lot of people already trust you.

One of the great ways to do that is to create a resource of some kind of significance. I already talked about how I created The Blog Profits Blueprint, and that's a free report. That's one example of a significant resource.

Another common resource is what you might call a definitive guide content page on your blog. I've seen a lot of the best bloggers who are teaching blogs – blogs that are run by experts who want to tell you how to market your business with YouTube, or they're search engine optimization experts, or maybe even if we go out of my industry it might be how to fix a sprained ankle, that's quite common, or how to help your child when it comes to bullying at school.

These are topics that are common problems that people need to solve, and there's enough information around those problems that you can come up with a definitive guide resource type page. By that I mean it's a page on your blog that lists a bunch of different resources to answer the different common problems around that one big issue.

If it's bullying at school it might be what to say to your son or your daughter or what to talk to the school about. It might be different psychological techniques you can use to deal with the problem. It might be some practical things, or it might be what to talk about with teachers and with the principal. It might be when to step in and when not to step in. There will be a lot of questions that need to be answered as the parent of a child.

If you had a page on your blog called "The Definitive Guide to Helping Your Child Deal with School Bullying," and on that page you had a bunch of videos and a bunch of articles and maybe some Q&A type resource, that's really a one-stop shop to solve that problem, and that's a good resource. I've seen people create those in different markets.

There's one out there I saw on how to market your business with YouTube. If you go and check out SEOMoz or if you look up Neil Patel, they both have resources. SEOMoz has a Definitive Guide to Search Engine Optimization, and Neil Patel has a Definitive Guide to Content Marketing. These are just a couple of examples local to my industry.

What's great about those things is they naturally attract links and they naturally get shared through word-of-mouth. I just spoke about them to you, so I'm sharing them here. They're just great content marketing pieces. They bring traffic, they build your platform, they connect you with an audience, and you're allowed to demonstrate your expertise with those resources.

To create one, though, is not a small job. It's not a massive job either. It's not necessarily as big as creating a course, but it's more work than creating one blog article. So what you might do is

assign yourself a sprint of a two-week timeframe, and over that two-week period you will complete that one definitive page to answer one big problem that the people in your market face, and you're going to help them solve it with this one page.

You're going to collect that information and you're going to present in an easy-to-consume format, maybe a little bit different than a stock standard blog page. You might use pictures and graphs and things like that. It will have a table of contents and you'll link to different types of resources as well, content that you've created, maybe some videos on YouTube that you think are really helpful as well, and just package it all to this kind of one-stop-shop page. That's Phase 1 of the sprint tasks.

Phase 2 of the sprint tasks will be telling other people that you've created this page, because obviously just creating the content is a start, but it really works well if you create this amazing piece of content and then tell other people it exists. You're going to need to go and talk to other bloggers in your market, talk to other experts who have followings on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, or LinkedIn – wherever these people have an audience that's similar to what you've just created. Just let them know. It's as simple as writing an email. You could write 100 emails. Give yourself that goal as part of the sprint task.

Your sprint then becomes, "Over two weeks I want to complete the creation of this page and send 100 emails to relevant people who I think should know that it exists." Week 1 might be creation. Week 2 will be finding the 100 people you need to email and then sending those emails. So your sprint over two weeks is to create that resource and get that outcome.

This could actually be one of the most powerful things you can do for the growth of your blog, and it only can happen if you execute it. The beautiful thing about applying a sprint to it is it gives you a deadline. It makes you focus on just completing the actions needed to get that little task done, that sort of mini goal that's part of the big picture of having a successful blog business, and it can make a huge difference.

It's really important that you apply this sprint methodology because it allows you to eliminate anything else you're thinking about at the time, or worrying about or trying to juggle with. It's just, "No, these two weeks are about creating this resource, because I know how important it is for the bottom line of my business. This could effectively double or triple the size of my audience, which down the line could double or triple the amount of money I make, and potentially could mean I no longer need a job as well, or I'd make enough money that I could survive for the next 12 months without having to worry about anything."

That's a big impact on your life, so don't under-estimate the power of committing to a goal like this that's not super-huge, but it could have a super-huge impact. Just apply the sprint technique to actually get it done.

I just gave you the example of creating a one-stop-shop page, and that's just one thing you could apply sprinting to when building a blog. There are so many other types of content you could create for your blog, or different aspects of building the blogging business that you can apply sprinting to.

It might be the creation of a product. It might be the creation of a series of emails you give away to people when they join your newsletter, so a free mini-course, a 5-day email course. It might be something like hiring a really good assistant. You might say, "This week my sprint is about finding and testing and hiring a really good outsourcing person to help me with a certain activity." That's a very powerful benefit, something that could really help your business grow. By sprinting, it allows you to get this done.

I think you can see how the sprinting technique works. It's not too complex. It's a deadline and it's elimination of distractions. When it becomes really powerful is when you combine it with the 80/20 rule and the theory of constraints. I hope you've listened to those two audios already and you know what I'm talking about with those two concepts.

You looked at the 80/20 rule, and what you did with that was you identified what parts of your life and what parts of your business deliver the most value to you and to your business. Then you also see all the other things you do in your life and all the other things you do for your business that don't have a big impact on the satisfaction or the bottom line, so you start to eliminate the things that aren't helping you very much, and you start to focus more time on the things that get you bigger results.

That actually ends up requiring you to work less because you only need to work really, really focused on those things that give you big rewards. With blogging it might be content creation and going out there and connecting with new people, or it might be product creation if you've already built an audience, because you just need to have more products to sell them, or it might just be getting the ball rolling if you haven't done anything yet, and actually getting a blog out there and starting with the process.

Then we applied the theory of constraints. The theory of constraints allowed you to go back and see what's actually stopping you from reaching a goal. The 80/20 rule will show you where your strengths are and where you should spend your time. The theory of constraints will then zero in on problems that you need to solve and what order you need to solve them in.

It will help you go, "Okay, we know what works well. We get an 80/20 result when we release a really powerful free report. Why haven't I got one? I know why, because I haven't come up with the content for it yet, so I need to sit down and dedicate some time to coming up with the chapters and set aside two weeks to a month to actually write this report. I also need the vehicle to distribute it, so I need to go back and look at the constraints and see what is the order of things I need to do to get this report done."

Now you can combine that with sprinting. You can then go, “Okay, I’ve looked back and I know for me I’m going to make the most money if I release a training course. I know to release a training course I want to do a launch process where I give people some great content that my affiliates can share with people, that can get a lot of attention in my market, and also delivers a lot of value. I show people I know what I know, so they’re going to trust me and like me and benefit from me even if they never buy anything from me.”

Then you’re going to decide, “Okay, a free written report somewhere between 30-50 pages is what I want to do. I need to get that done while my tech people are setting up everything else. They’re setting up the membership site for the course. They’re setting up the sales page for me. My copywriter is writing the sales page and that’s kind of being handled. I need to check in on it now and then, but most of the time it’s being done in the background.

“My job is the creation of this report. So what’s stopping me? I haven’t actually sat down and written consistently for it long enough. What I’m going to do is I’m going to sprint out a report. I’m going to spend the next month dedicating myself to the creation of this report. I’m going to ignore everything else.”

Maybe for that month I’m definitely not going to do Skype or attend networking events. I’m going to cut down on how many friends I see. I’m not going to go out as much. I’m going to stay home, or I’m just going to make sure that every morning before I go to work, or whatever it is, I write 1,000 to 2,000 words for this report. That’s your sprint. You’re going to eliminate everything else and get that done.

That allows you to eliminate the immediate constraint, which allows you to then start executing on the 80/20 outcome that you know will make you the most money, because releasing a course is the most profitable model you can use with a blog. It’s better than advertising and better than affiliate income because it allows you to sell a product and only have a small following of core people who love your work, who buy what you sell, and you can make \$100/month from each person, so you’re going to need a few hundred of them to make great money.

That’s what I did and that’s the formula I’m teaching you. That’s the formula I executed. In fact, that’s my story. I just gave you exactly what I went through when I first released my free report, released my first training product, and first went from making \$5,000 a month to \$15,000 a month. I can tell you the difference between making \$5,000 a month to making \$15,000 a month is significant.

\$5,000 a month allows you to live, \$15,000 a month gives you a lot of options. It’s over \$100,000 a year. It’s more money than you can spend on your expenses. It allows you to start thinking about things like buying property and buying a new car and building assets and growing a business and really expanding your life. That’s what it did for me and that’s what I want this audio series to help you do as well.

You now have the three pieces of the puzzle. You have the 80/20 rule, the theory of constraints, and the sprint technique, which you can apply to what you're doing with your blogging business to start getting real results that actually make a difference to what you're trying to do. That's what the point of this productivity section of the Master Your Mindset audios is all about.

You have the tools and I hope you use them. That's the most important part here. You can have all this knowledge, and I've fallen for this before. I've studied a lot of materials, I've taken courses, I've listened to audios like this, but I haven't gone away and executed it. When I have is when I've done really well.

The beautiful thing about this is you only have to get this right once or twice in your life to make a big difference to how your entire life goes. That one decision I made back in 2007 to write a report and release a product changed the course of my life significantly.

Really, if I look back, it's the creation of my blog that started it all down that path, and without the blog I wouldn't have had the platform to launch the course. But if I didn't do the course and I didn't write The Blog Profits Blueprint, I wouldn't have built the email list I did, I wouldn't have connected with all the great experts and affiliates that promoted my work, and I wouldn't have made the money that allowed me to have this platform to go on to make over a million dollars from my blogging business. That allowed me to own my own house before I turned 30 and have a very stable base to live a successful life. It's nice to know that at 30 years old I didn't have to worry about rent or mortgage again, and that's not something most people can say.

I'm hoping that you can see the value in this. You now have the techniques and the tools to do it. You have to go out there and execute on this. You have to build the business, build the platform, use these productivity techniques, get out there, build your tribe, build your following, then you can release something that people will love. They'll get great value from it and you'll make a lot of money from it as well. That's the perfect combination, and it can be wonderfully simple if you allow these concepts to function in your life in a helpful and productive way.

I'm going to end this audio now. I hope you've enjoyed it and I hope you pair it up with the other two so you have all these concepts together, and I hope you really get something from these.

Of course, go through and study all the other mindset audios and read my Productivity and Mindset Guide as well, because I really do believe that mindset and productivity are the foundation for making money. Everything else is – I won't say it's easy, but it's there to be used anytime you want. It's the mindset that allows you to have the inner strength to execute, and that's the most important thing.

My name is Yaro Starak. Thank you very much for listening to this audio, and I will talk to you again very soon. Bye bye.