

CHAD HOWSE



HOW TO GET SHIT DONE

A MAN'S GUIDE TO PRODUCTIVITY

There are days when I wake up and attack my tasks as if they were a plate of pasta and I hadn't eaten in weeks. Other times I mosey on into my day, check my email when I shouldn't be checking email and looking at the Facebook or one of those other time wasters when I should be working.

What I've found is that there are days when I'm supremely motivated, and days when I lack motivation, where I can't seem to get started, what doesn't have to change, however, is the work I get done.

Days are won, not experienced.

The act of winning something dictates that you must face some form of tribulation. Where art is concerned – and I use the term art in a way that befits any action done in the pursuit of ambition – the struggle is to focus on the creation of your vision with the enemy being the internal Resistance that does all it can to keep you from bringing to fruition what you've decided you're put here to do.

Motivation cannot be what we depend on. Quotes on web sites cannot feed our ambition. Our habits must be formed in such a way that what we accomplish seems as though it comes from an incredibly motivated individual, but really it's just someone who habitually does what they need to do every day. We cannot rely on a *feeling* to help us create something great. Feelings come and go and we cannot control them. We must rely on habits.

How to stay motivated isn't the question. How to get shit done, is.

HOW TO GET SHIT DONE

Getting shit done has been a battle I've faced and continue to face for quite some time. I have one of those wandering brains. A thought leads to an action, but then another thought comes in and without much thinking I've partaken in yet another action. My days, if I'm not disciplined, can be a series of little things done on a multitude of projects rather than completion of *any one thing*.

It's identifying the non-essential tasks that were taking away from the essential tasks that I first had to do.

When you clarify what you should *not* be doing, you can liberate yourself to focus only on what you *should* be doing. And this act of identifying enables you to draw a firm line in the sand, opening you up to accomplish far more than you have up to this date. What makes this even better, is it's pretty easy to identify the non-essential, you just have to sit down and get'r done.

THE NON-ESSENTIAL.

The non-essential are those things that take time and energy away from the tasks and decisions that make you better, and more importantly, help you accomplish what you're setting out to accomplish.

Example: Steve Jobs' dress code.

Jobs was notorious for wearing what was basically a uniform every day. He discovered that you only have so much "decision making power" in the run of a day. That is, decisions take energy. Every single decision that you make breaks down at your daily resolve. The more decisions you make, the less energy you have to make decisions as the day runs on.

What's more is that the more useless decisions you give your brain power to, the less energy you're going to have to be able to make the RIGHT decision for the IMPORTANT decisions you must make to be at your best and to accomplish what you MUST accomplish.

What clothes to wear, for him, was simply a decision not worth making. Instead of having to decide what to wear every day, Jobs chose to wear the same thing and spend his energy focusing on things that actually matter.

Getting shit done isn't sexy. It's daily repetition. It's creating the habits that will lead to stuff getting done. Not only is it not sexy, it's completely the opposite. It's boring, bland, it lacks that color and creativity that so many feel art must have. Yet the greatest artists in the world and the greatest artists of history ruthlessly and relentlessly worked on their craft everyday, without exception.

Da Vinci discovered that in order to truly understand how to paint or sculpt something, you must understand its anatomy and physiology, it's mechanics, it's structure. It's only when you know structure that you can break it.

Too many set out to accomplish a grand goal in one audacious bound. But audacious plans can only be won when daily, persistent action is taken. Success isn't won in a night, nor a week. It's only after years of *daily* work that you become good enough to warrant the success you crave.

Understanding this, that persistence, but not just over a year or two of decent work on a daily basis, but hard work everyday, is the root to success will allow you to accept it as fact and open you to new possibilities. Those who expect success to come in a given time and not as the result of an amount of consistent work relegate themselves to a life lived wishing things were different and waiting for them to be so.

When you *know* that you must get shit done daily, you at least open yourself up to the notion that getting shit done isn't dependent on emotions, but consistency.

It doesn't matter how you feel, it only matters what you do.

THE ONE THING

I used to set out every day to knock out a long list of tasks that had to be completed. None of them would get completed. Some would get worked on and chipped away at, but full completion was rare. What changed was my focus. Rather than having a long list of things that needed to get done, I reduced it to one.

One thing. There must be one single thing in your day that needs to be finished above all others. By reducing your task list to a single thing you remove the possibility to "reasonably" distract yourself from your priority. When you have a long list, you can distract yourself by doing work that you need to do. The problem is that as you congratulate yourself on doing something and "working" long hours, your time is spent more often than not on things that aren't essential.

The essential things in your life, the things that we **MUST** complete to inch toward our goal, are always the most difficult things to focus on. It's as if an evil enemy is plotting to take us away from our one thing, our essential tasks, and the only way we can initially win this battle is to remove it by focusing only on a single thing and giving ourselves no other option.

I needed to reduce my to do list to a single thing in order to complete all of the things I needed to complete. From there, once this became habit, I branched out and conquered.

DOWN TIMES AND GOOD TIMES: THE ROUTINE

Habits excuse you from having to rely on motivation. If you can create just a few good habits early on in the day you can win the battle of life. You can create what you want and live how you want.

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO GETTING SHIT DONE

This article is going to be brief. It's going to focus on getting more *writing* done, but the principles can apply across various hobbies of professions.

It's an article written by a serial procrastinator who's had to train himself to be more effective and efficient. Hopefully it will help you do the same.

LAW #1: GET UP EARLY

Working when everyone else is sleeping is the best way to get a better bang for your time. That is, your hours of work *before* everyone else wakes up, especially everyone else in your own home, is – in my experience – about 3x as effective as the hours after.

This *can* work for the hours after they're gone to bed as well, it just depends on when you work best. I woke up earlier today, got a bunch done, but am enjoying a glass of wine right now as well after everyone's gone to bed.

In my own work, though, those early hours in the morning account for a 3 to 1 ratio. That is, if I work from 5am-7am, I get 4-6 hours of 9am-6pm work done.

LAW #2: HAVE A CONTENT STRATEGY

This is something new for me, but it's already done wonders.

Have a singular focus for each week.

Here's how mine works:

Monday: 3, 1,000 or more word articles for Average 2 Alpha.

Tuesday: Newsletters for the week, or up to two weeks ahead to allow for more free time.

Wednesday: Filming/podcast day

Thursday: Big Projects Day

Friday: 7 smaller articles for Facebook, A2A, and CHF

Saturday & Sunday: Big Projects Days

This is a wonderful thing to implement into your routine because you know exactly what you have to do, you do it, and you can prepare for it the night before. It doesn't matter what you do for work, have some kind of strategy to your WEEK, not just to your days.

LAW #3: USE WORK BLOCKS

My goodness this is effective!

Block off time within your day for specific tasks. Our brains function optimally for about 90 minutes – or for a maximum of 90-minutes. Train your ability to focus by starting with 30-minute work blocks and progressing to 90-minute work blocks.

The key is to focus on a single thing and nothing else for the entire work block.

LAW #4: SHUT OFF YOUR PHONE!

Phones are attention-suckers. They take us away from the things that we want to create. They're actually road blocks to productivity, they're not the productivity machines that they're marketed to be at all.

Shut it off and work!

You are your work. This is what you're here to do, and to do it at a high level you need SUPREME focus.

LAW #5: GET AWAY FROM OTHER HUMANS

Team work is good. Solitude is optimal for production.

To actually *produce*, not to think or to come up with ideas or to hear opinions of your work mates, you need to be alone.

Mark Twain used to write from a shed when he and his family would go on vacation. The list of great writers and workers who wrote and worked in solitude is never-ending.

If you want to produce numerous great things, find some alone time.

LAW #6: HAVE A FIRM ENDING TO THE DAY

Don't just work all of the time. We know that by shutting down a work day at the same time every day we give ourselves a deadline that acts to increase productivity.

We also know that we're more creative when we're not constantly worrying about work.

Use a finite and common time to end your work day every day. Waking up earlier will make this not only possible, but much easier.

LAW #7: FORCE YOURSELF TO WORK/WRITE

Depending on motivation is what losers do. Winners rely on their habits. You have to force yourself to work, you have to force yourself to write.

Getting in the habit of waiting for motivation is what losers do. It's a horrible way to live and to work because you rely on the whim of the muse.

You CONTROL the muse. You tell that bastard when to show its face.

Get in the habit of working when you set times to work, and your degree of motivation should be irrelevant. You're a worker, regardless of whether you feel like it or not.

LAW #8: DON'T BE BUSY

Or, never rush.

We're programmed and told that being busy is good. But being busy is useless. Being effective is everything. Be effective, but don't rush.

Don't feel the need to *show* that you're doing something. Have a single thing you work on every day, and chip away at the boulder in front of you.

Work should be methodical, not romantic.

LAW #9: USE STIMULANTS.

Yup. I said it.

Drink coffee, take omega-3's to help you focus, take **alpha brain** to do the same.

Don't take drugs. But structure your diet in a way that will help you create optimal energy.

LAW #10: TRACK EVERYTHING

Track your time. Track your time spent on your computer. Track what you do and what you don't do. Track your breaks. And take breaks!

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Don't be busy for busy's sake. Getting outside and running around or working on the yard is a must for productivity. But be real about how you spend your money and how you spend your time.

When you know where it's going you'll know exactly what you can fix.

Now get to work!

5 LESSONS IN PRODUCTIVITY

#1 — BE EARLY TO RISE

Wake up early not because you'll get more work done, but because you don't want to.

Reading about great men you typically find the constant that each of them rise early. They do so, primarily, to gain more working hours to a day. Thus, they accomplish more, earlier.

It's the feeling of working while most are sleeping that's intoxicating. I love it. But there's more to rising early than simply waking up before everyone else so you can accomplish more and lead a more successful life.

There's the act of doing what you don't feel like doing and living a disciplined way of life that will bring you more freedom and will create grit and toughness where there may have not been much of either.

I hate waking up early. I love to sleep in. But when I sleep in I feel like a loser and when I get up early I feel like a winner. The act of doing something you don't like to do every single day without exception is something that very few – if any – of your peers and competitors will be doing.

With this being the beginning of yet another year, decide not to make life easier, but decide that you're going to make yourself tougher.

Decide that the weak man swayed by ads and images, boobs and bums, envy and all of the other things that society wants you to pursue, is done, finished, a relic of the past. Decide that the man you will be in 2016 and from here on out is one of grit, toughness, a throwback to the days of John Wayne and men who were men, no blurred gender lines nor questioning what sex they were.

Do so by becoming tough.

Let that early alarm clock lead the way.

Want to wake up earlier?

Do so in 15-minute increments.

Take your current wake-up time, set your alarm for 15-minutes earlier. Wake up at this time for 3 days. Then drop that time by 15 minutes. Continue this trend until you're at your desired wake up time.

And if you want to wake up with no alarm, do this, but do this 7 days a week. Don't sleep in at all and it will change your natural sleep cycle.

#2 – FOCUS ON THE RIGHT THINGS

The more time you spend on the right things, the faster you will create what you want to create.

We all know that we're in control of our fate and future and whether our goals in every aspect of life go accomplished or not.

If you don't know that fundamental truth, you're a victim. Your life is the result of something or someone else's actions. You have no control. But that's not you.

You know that your future is dependent on your present. That is all.

Then you also understand that your finish life – that end goal, the place in the sun – is pushed back or pulled closer by the amount of focused time you spend on doing the right things.

If you do the right stuff all the time, your big goals are brought closer and closer with each correct action.

If, however, you spend most of your time in waste and sloth, your goals are pushed further and further away with each wrong action.

And yes, laziness is wrong.

It's evil.

It's a fucking sin because it pushes why you're here into oblivion. It takes your potential, the gift you have, the way you can benefit the rest of humanity, and it degrades it.

Focused work. Meaningful learning and practice. Time spent in the moment with people you love.

These things make you better. They allow you to grab the rope that's attached to your future, potential self and the things you're capable of accomplishing, and it allows you to reel them in.

With each moment spent on waste, the rope slips, your grip loosens, and your goals drift further away into the future.

Step 1: identify what strengthens you and brings you closer, but also what degrades you.

Step 2: have the balls to remove those things that pull you away from who you can become, and implement those things that strengthen who you are.

Life is simple.

Spend your time on the right things.

How to Get Shit Done

That's it.

It takes time to understand what those right things are, but most of us know. So get moving. Take action. And pull that potential closer every damn day.

#3 — YOU ARE WHAT YOU GIVE YOUR ATTENTION TO

There are things in our lives that benefit us, that make us tougher, smarter, happier. Our work is one such thing, and it doesn't matter what we do.

If we take pride in it, if we choose to allow it to fulfill us, then it grabs us, fulfills us.

There are a lot of things in our lives that bring us away from who we need to be and what we need to focus on.

I don't watch the news, for example, and I'm thinking about not *reading* it either. There's so much I disagree with in those pages or articles online, policies, things that our leaders are doing, that it sheds a negative light over my day.

Facebook and Twitter are filled with negativity.

They're dominated by people who don't work, who don't hustle, who have enough time to troll and complain, seemingly as a calling.

I'm heavily thinking about shutting down both my twitter account and my personal Facebook account (my business page is clearly about something more than 'look what I'm doing').

So there are things to remove, but what should we focus on?

That's the big question in everyone's life, and there are a few things to consider when determining what warrants your attention.

Using my own life as an example, I write.

That's essentially what I do for a living. Everything else in the business is done by others. I write posts, articles, books that are being worked on, newsletters, programs, sales copy, and so on.

The focus, then, must be writing, but it *has to only be writing*. It cannot be attention divided. It cannot consist of multiple things being worked on at one time. The work, to be beneficial to the individual, must be deep and focused. It must be tough, difficult, and extremely challenging, but it cannot be deviated from.

If you have a skill that's a part of your work, that skill must take up your best hours and there can be no distractions that accompany it.

If you write, you cannot also have the internet on. You can't have your phone on. You can't have links tempting you or meetings pulling you away from your craft.

If you're an artist, a metal worker, a blacksmith, a mechanic, a builder, an architect, a garbage man, a soldier, a fighter, the same thing applies.

You have your craft, that thing you need to perfect, to dive into, and you have everything else.

When you're in your craft that is all that matters.

Even more profound is that the depth of your focus transcends time and doesn't allow your brain to focus on the myriad of things we previously mentioned, the negatives that add cynicism to your days.

Whatever it is that you do, do it, and nothing else, for periods of your days, and happiness will be yours.

#4 — FORCE FOCUS

The struggle used to be survival, now it's focus.

We used to wake up, grab our spear, and head out into the wilderness to find dinner.

Along the way we'd encounter beasts far stronger than us. We'd have to constantly be aware both of predators and prey, for if it isn't the bigger, stronger animals that killed us, the lack meat could.

Our days were about a singular thing, not enjoyment or wonderment or meaning, but surviving.

Today we have more options. We can sleep in. We can watch other humans do things on TV. We can go out for a drink, hang with pals, read, work, learn, or we can do *nothing*. *Nothing* is actually an option.

There's no danger lurking, no lion or tiger around the corner. The enemy, today, is options.

I'm assuming you're an ambitious human. You're reading this, you're online looking for something, maybe guidance or a pick-me-up, or a lesson. So you're trying to improve.

Maybe you're here when you should be somewhere else?

The simple act of writing has become more complicated. We have links we can click, articles we can read, butterflies we can chase.

If all we did was focus on a single thing for an extended period of time, and *only* a single thing, we'd become more effective, we'd do better work, we'd serve a greater purpose.

Today, however, rather than following the gritty path of persistence, we jump from job to job, focus to focus, all in an effort to find our purpose, our passion, that thing that strikes a cord in us.

The truth is that passion is something we can *create* simply by wanting to be the best at something and connecting it to a greater purpose than mere self-preservation.

People have created their calling in picking up garbage, in selling, in writing, in using their hands to build something in an assembly line. Without focus, however, we don't give whatever we're doing enough of a chance to grow into something bigger than just a job.

If you want meaning, purpose, money, success, and happiness, try focusing.

Be in One Place

To bring this beyond work, try shutting your phone off when you're with friends or family. Turn the TV off. When you're not working don't have your brain still trying to solve the problems of your work, be present.

You'll find that you stress less and accomplish more.

When you *are* working, shut the internet off for periods of intense focus. Turn your phone off and throw it across the room. Force focus to find productivity.

Or, of course, you can be like everything else and merely be busy.

#5 — BE EFFECTIVE, NOT BUSY

People who are perpetually busy are rarely proportionately successful.

Being busy doesn't mean being effective. Usually it just means being busy.

Our culture praises being busy. We should always be working or *look like we're working*. Whether or not we're doing a great job is almost secondary.

Be different.

Forget about being busy. Figure out a way to be *effective*, and being effective requires purposeful, focused work, and such work depends on energy and clarity.

When I'm *only working*, I burn out. I burn out during the day. I burn out in life. I hit a place in my week where I can't go any further. My brain gets fried. Creativity leaves me.

When, however, I pair intense work sessions lasting no more than 90 minutes, with yard work or training or running, I get *less hours* done, but I get more work done.

What would you rather have, success or the appearance of working?

Appearances take precedence too often. We want to *appear* to be successful, so we buy clothes and cars and homes that we can't afford just to show others how well we're doing. We want to *appear* as though we have a lot on the go, even to *ourselves*, so we're always engaged in something even though that thing may not deserve our attention.

Email shouldn't be a daily activity. Confine it to an hour at the end of the day or a day of the week.

Social media should command *very little* of our attention, yet we have the apps on our phone and the web sites always up on our computers. Post. Comment. Do what you want but at least confine it to a certain time of the day.

DON'T RUSH.

We rush because we want to feel as though we *have to rush* or because we don't get up early enough.

Don't.

Plan your day so as to avoid rushing.

When you don't rush you get a hell of a lot more work done because you're able to focus on one thing and take your time.

While every day determines where you're going to end up in life, each day should not be raced through, but used, extracted, and won.