

Summary of «15 Secrets Successful People Know About Time Management» by Kevin Kruse

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Learn the 15 secrets of highly successful people and how you can use their secrets to boost your productivity, feel less stressed, and leave work on time each day.



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Introduction

What if you had the time to do everything? How can you schedule your day so that you have that extra hour to work out, cook a healthy dinner, or spend time with your family? Well, after interviewing 7 billionaires, 13 Olympic athletes, 29 straight-A students, and 234 entrepreneurs, Kevin Kruse has discovered the 15 secrets of highly successful people. Find out how successful people organize their calendar, why to-do lists are counter-productive, how to cure procrastination, how to run 5-10 minute meetings, how to reduce stress and leave work by 5:00 p.m. without feeling guilty. Through these 15 secrets, you can learn how to increase your productivity and stop feeling stressed and overwhelmed.

Time Management Skills

Do you ever wish that you had more time in your day? Perhaps you wish you had that extra hour or so to get in a good workout, cook that healthy dinner, or clean up the house. Or perhaps you find yourself wondering how successful people have the time to get it all done: how CEOs have the time to run a company *and* work on their own projects, or how that mommy blogger has the time to raise her kids, schedule date nights, *and* keep the house immaculate. Well, Kevin Kruse lets you in on a secret for how he's accomplished it all. Just like you, he has 1,440 minutes in his day. We all have the same amount of minutes, it's simply up to you to use those minutes wisely.

Time is the most valuable and scarcest resource. By acknowledging this concept, you can begin to count down the minutes from the moment you wake up. Kruse reminds himself of this by taping a "1,400" poster to his office door. But why minutes and not seconds or hours? Well, there are plenty of tasks that only take a minute or two, like knocking out a few push-ups and sit-ups, starting a load of laundry, or even just watering that office plant in the corner. Most importantly, "We can never get time back again. Unlike money, it is irreplaceable. Once it's gone, it's gone for good."

Once you recognize how valuable your time is, it's important to identify your most important tasks, or as Kruse calls them, your MITs. Based on research conducted by Therese Macan, a professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, the two most important keys to successful time management are priorities and mechanics. In other words, you must know what to focus on and how you are going to get it done.

Take Olympic gold medalist, Brianna Scurry, the starting goalkeeper for the United States Women's Soccer Team. She used this MIT concept when preparing for the Olympics, she states "About six months before an Olympics, I would relate all the decisions I made to the ultimate vision of winning gold. The simple question I would ask several times a day was 'Will

this activity help me perform better and therefore help us win gold?” Or even Randy Gage, a New York Times bestselling author, says, “I always start with the most important thing on my priority list. If you didn’t spend your week working on the most important thing, it was a week wasted.” So how can you determine your most important tasks?

Take some time to identify your big goals, then determine the steps that are going to help you achieve them. If you are working at a company that you wish to do well at, or even grow with, then some questions you might ask yourself are “What will I be evaluated on during my annual performance review? What does my boss care most about? How is my bonus determined? What would be the one thing that could get me promoted?” You should also keep in mind that your MITs will differ each month, week, or even each day and each person’s MIT will look different.

For instance, A salesperson’s MIT might be cold calling to hit a sales target. A senior software executive’s MIT might be recruiting a new programmer that can develop a new app. A student’s MIT might be to find a tutor to proofread their English paper. A stay-at-home parent’s MIT might be to book a beach house for the summer to prepare for the family’s favorite annual vacation. No matter your job, identify your MITs, figure out the steps to accomplish those tasks, and prioritize those steps first thing in the morning before the daily distractions get to you.

Your To-Do List is Where Important Tasks Go To Die

Creating a to-do list is a daily ritual for many people, they list out the tasks they need to get done that day and satisfyingly cross them off their list as they get completed. But how many of those tasks never get crossed off? Research suggests that 41% of to-do list items never get completed, but why is that? Well, think about it, as you go about your day, which tasks do you go to first? Typically, it's the smaller, easier tasks that you attempt first simply so you can accomplish something despite its lack of importance. At the end of the day, you have left those important pain-staking tasks for last that should have probably been completed first.

This is just one of the many problems with writing out to-do lists. Not only do they allow you to work on the urgent tasks over the important ones, but they also create unnecessary stress. As you walk out of work each day without completing everything on your list, you might go home bearing the burden of all those uncompleted tasks. Instead, you should create a calendar and use time slots, or time blocks, to schedule out your day. Highly successful people don't keep to-do lists, instead, they keep a well-maintained, highly-organized calendar.

Jordan Harbinger, the co-founder of The Art of Charm, says to "Use a calendar and schedule your entire day into 15-minute blocks. It sounds like a pain, but this will set you up in the 95th percentile as far as organization goes. If it's not on the calendar, it doesn't get done. If it's on the calendar, it gets done no matter what. Use this not just for appointments, but workouts, calls, email blocks, etc." The trick is to assign a block of time for everything that is a true priority.

Once you organize your to-do list into a calendar, you might find some of those tasks have been on your list for as long as six months. If getting those tasks done is truly important, then put them on your calendar. If it doesn't make it on your calendar, then those tasks were never a priority anyway.

You should also prepare for your calendar to change and be flexible. For instance, if you typically complete your workout at 10:00 a.m. but you have a flight to catch one day, schedule your workout for earlier in the day. You can still get everything accomplished despite changes in your schedule.

The Procrastination Cure

We've all been there. You promise yourself that you'll wake up earlier tomorrow and begin that workout routine that you've been putting off. You have a deadline coming up, but you decide to scroll through Facebook or Instagram instead of working on that project. You want to read that book that everyone's been discussing, but you instead binge on Netflix shows or engage in a conversation with your friend. We all feel the effects of procrastination, but why do we continue to put ourselves through this unproductive cycle? Some people think they are just lazy, but according to Kruse, procrastination is not about laziness.

Procrastination is simply the habit of putting off important, less pleasurable tasks by doing easier, more pleasurable ones. This is why you find yourself scrolling through social media, texting your friends, eating food, or watching Netflix to avoid doing those less pleasurable tasks. It's not laziness, it's a lack of motivation. So how can you find the motivation? Imagine yourself in the future. Focus on the pain your procrastination will cause your future self. For instance, if you have a paper due at the end of the month, imagine how your future self will feel the night before if you still haven't started! The pain of writing a paper the night before will be overwhelmingly great, fixate on that feeling and you will be more likely to begin writing it much sooner. In other words, procrastination can be overcome by finding a way to connect to your future self, now.

Once you begin to anticipate how you will self-sabotage in the future, you can come up with a solution to defeat your future self. But there's more than just curing your procrastination, you must also recognize how everything will never be done. As Andy Grove states, "There is always more to be done, more that should be done, always more that can be done." However, highly successful know what they value, so they leave work at 5 p.m. every day. They prioritize family time, exercise, and giving back, so they schedule their time accordingly and stick with it. In fact, did you know George W. Bush read 95 books during his time in office? The leader of the

free world found the time to do something he enjoyed, so if the president can prioritize reading, you can prioritize the things you enjoy too.

Keep a Notebook and Implement the 321-Zero System

Where are you when you have some of your best ideas? Are you sitting at your desk or in a position to immediately bring your idea to life? Or are you more likely to be walking down the street, sitting on a plane, or completing a workout? For most of us, it's the latter. This is why Kruse takes a page from Richard Branson's book and advises that you should always have a notebook handy. Not only will you be more likely to remember your idea, but writing them down also solidifies them in your mind.

Richard Branson admits that he wouldn't have been able to build Virgin without a notebook, so he takes one wherever he goes. In fact, he takes his notebook keeping abilities so seriously that he once had to use his passport on a plane to write down an idea he was brewing. But Branson isn't the only person who swears by notebook keeping; many other greats like Thomas Edison, George Lucas, and John Rockefeller all had notebooks where they kept all their great ideas. The danger of not writing down your idea could mean losing it forever, and when wanting a successful life, that risk is simply too great a loss. In an interview with Greek shipping magnate, Aristotle Onassis, he stated "Always carry a notebook. Write everything down...That is a million-dollar lesson they don't teach you in business school!"

So keep a notebook with you and write your notes down by hand. Taking notes by hand is much more effective than taking notes on a laptop, tablet, or smartphone. Psychologists Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer conducted three separate experiments with 327 undergraduates. In one study, students watched a TED talk, took notes, and were tested on it thirty minutes later. In the end, laptop note-takers and written note-takers scored evenly on factual questions; however, those that wrote their notes scored significantly better on conceptual questions.

The seventh secret to success is through using the 321-zero system when dealing with your emails. How much time do you spend each day reading,

writing, and sending emails a day? Well, according to a survey completed by the McKinsey Global Institute, workers spend an average of 2.5 hours a day working on emails. This equates to 33% of a forty-hour work week! Even worse, we are constantly connected to our emails through laptops, tablets, and smartphones which can ding at any time of day whether you're working out at the gym or eating dinner with your family. Luckily, Kruse has mastered the secret of saving time by implementing the 321-zero system.

Schedule only three times a day (morning, noon, and night) to process through your email. Set the timer to 21 minutes and try to get your inbox to zero in that time. Make it a game! While 21 minutes certainly won't get your email to zero for most people, setting the timer will keep you focused and ensure that your responses are direct and short. You'll also be less tempted to click on those enticing links that will distract you from the task at hand. Other tips include unsubscribing from newsletters that threaten to distract you at all hours of the day, turning your email notifications off, and keeping your emails short. Really short. Don't worry about being rude through a brief email, being brief is a sign of respect for the other person's time as well as your own. Some movements suggest limiting your emails to just five sentences or less. You can always add additional resources to your email for clarification and further explanations.

Say No to Meetings

How many times do you leave a meeting thinking “Well that was a waste of time.” It happens and many places of work tend to fall into this trap of scheduling meetings for the sake of touching base and scheduling a meeting! This practice is a hindrance to productivity and research even suggests that more than half of employees find meetings to be complete time-wasters. For instance, research presented by Atlassian suggests that employees attend an average of 62 meetings per month, with half of those considered “wasted time.” Additionally, a survey conducted by Microsoft among 38,000 employees in 200 countries, suggested that people spend 5.6 hours each week in meetings. 69 percent of participants considered the meetings to be “not productive.” So why are meetings such a waste of time? Well, Kruse offers two reasons for this phenomenon.

First, meeting participants tend to spend time on non-pressing or insignificant issues. Second, extroverts typically dominate meetings, making others less likely to participate. As a result, many meetings fail to offer up the most valuable information. To avoid unproductive meetings, CEOs are coming up with new ways to make meetings both valuable and productive. For instance, Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo!, schedules meetings based on increments of five or ten minutes. Because of this schedule, she’s able to have up to 72 meetings in a single week! If she was forced to use the standard 30-minute schedule, she would never be able to get as much done.

Additionally, Kruse suggests that if you must have meetings, then you should have meetings standing up. That’s right, don’t sit down. Sitting is the new smoking, sitting for too long is not only hazardous to our health, but it also leads to longer meetings. Take a walk with someone, anything to get the blood flowing, but don’t sit down. Researchers at Washington University found that meetings in which participants stand up result in better collaboration, less attachment to ideas, higher levels of engagement, and more effective problem-solving. Some successful people who have imple-

mented long walking meetings include Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, Richard Branson, and Jack Dorsey.

When Kruse interviewed billionaire, Mark Cuban, his best productivity advice was “never take meetings unless someone is writing a check.” Kruse recognizes that “meetings are notorious time killers. They start late, have the wrong people in them, meander in their topics and run long. You should get out of meetings whenever you can, hold fewer of them yourself, and if you do run a meeting, keep it short.” Remember that time is money, so in addition to keeping meetings to a minimum, you should also learn how and when to say ‘no.’

Billionaire Warren Buffet once said, “The difference between successful people and very successful people is that very successful people say ‘no’ to almost everything.” James Altucher colorfully added that “If something is not a ‘hell, YEAH!’ Then it’s a ‘no!’” Not only will you waste less time on someone else’s goal, but you’ll also achieve your goals faster. For instance, Olympic rower Sara Hendershot learned to say no to social engagements and events of the like to keep herself focused on winning that gold medal. As she kept her eye on the prize at the 2012 London Olympics, Sara succeeded in qualifying for finals.

Remember that you only 1,440 minutes in a day, don’t give them away easily.

The Pareto Principle

What if the Pareto Principle could get rid of 80 percent of your work? It might sound too good to be true, but by using the 80/20 rule, you can do just that! The concept comes from the Italian philosopher and economist Vilfredo Federico Damaso Pareto. Born in 1848, legend has it that one day he realized that 20 percent of the pea plants in his garden generated 80 percent of the healthy peapods. So, Pareto began to look into uneven distribution around Italy. He discovered that 80 percent of the land in Italy was owned by just 20 percent of the population. He then investigated different industries and found 80 percent of production typically came from 20 percent of the company. So the 80/20 rule is as follows: 80 percent of the results will come from just 20 percent of the action.

While the rule can't be proven 100 percent of the time, it is certainly seen throughout several business scenarios. For instance, 20 percent of the sales reps generate 80 percent of the sales. 20 percent of customers generate 80 percent of the total profits. 20 percent of the most reported software bugs cause 80 percent of software crashes. And 20 percent of patients account for 80 percent of healthcare spending. You might find that you can apply this principle to personal areas in your life as well. For instance, Kruse says he owns at least five amazing suits, but 80 percent of the time he grabs his black, well-tailored, single-breasted Armani with a powder-blue button-down shirt. Ladies, how many shoes do you own and how often do you grab the same 20 percent? Take a look at your phone. How many apps do you have and how many do you use 80 percent of the time? Probably around 20 percent.

You can use the 80/20 rule to identify which activities drive the greatest results, and focus on those and ignore the rest. To do this you can develop your skills to be exceptional in a few areas, do the most important things exceptionally well, and finally, you can work less, stress less, and enjoy more happiness by figuring out the 20 percent of things that are most important to you. Once you've figured out the tasks that will have the greatest

impact, you should save even more time by asking yourself three simple questions.

Three Harvard questions can save you eight hours a week. By leveraging your skills and delegating tasks, you can become more productive than ever. An experiment published by the Harvard Business Review proved that 41 percent of a worker's time is spent on activities that weren't necessarily satisfying or could be done by someone else. So researchers trained employees to slow down and analyze their tasks. They taught them to recognize if they could:

1. Drop. What could I drop? What can I stop doing entirely?
2. Delegate. What items can I delegate to a subordinate? What can I outsource?
3. Redesign. What can I continue doing, but in a new time-efficient way?

On average, employees who were trained saved six hours of desk work and 2 hours of meeting time each week!

Theme Your Days and Touch It Once

How can you hone your time management skills even more? It seems with all that Kruse has introduced, you should be a master time-manager by now, but there are even more secrets that you can learn. Kruse takes advice from Jack Dorsey, the co-founder of Twitter, who themes his days to get the most done. He believes that highly successful people often theme days of the week to focus on major areas. For instance, having Mondays for meetings and management, and Friday afternoons for cleaning up before the new week starts allows you to use your time more wisely.

For instance, Jack Dorsey uses Monday as an administrative day. So if he does find himself in a meeting or on a business call, once it's complete, he won't ask himself "Now what?" Instead, he'll ask "What day is today?" The answer? Administration. He will then take a look at his calendar and to-do list to see which tasks fall under the administrative category. By creating a framework, you can get back to action more quickly rather than waste time figuring out what you need to do get done. You'll stress less and become more productive if you theme your days and accomplish tasks that fall into that day's category.

Entrepreneurial coach, Dan Sullivan, suggests theming each week based on three types of days to stay focused and energized. The first type of day is called "focus day" which is reserved for the more important, revenue-growing tasks. The second is called a "buffer day" which is used for answering emails, holding meetings, returning calls, delegating tasks, and completing paperwork. Finally, the last type is called a "free day" in which no work should be done and should be reserved for family time, vacation, and charity work.

Next, you should never touch something until you're ready. For instance, when sorting out emails or papers, the golden rule is to touch it only once. If you need to touch something more than once then you are simply wasting your time. Either take action, file it, or throw it away. How often do you

read an email, close it, and then leave it in your inbox to deal with later? Highly successful people try to “touch it once.” So if something will only take five or ten minutes, then they will deal with it right then and there. Not only does this reduce stress, but it is also more efficient since you won’t have to re-read or evaluate the item again in the future.

For example, Kruse’s sister Debbie recently emailed him, but instead of writing her back, he called her to see if they could talk right away. By immediately taking action, Kruse didn’t waste time re-reading her email and he didn’t forget to contact her by leaving her email in the depths of his inbox. You can apply this “touch it once” rule to more than just your professional life, it becomes great for boosting productivity in your personal life as well.

Stay healthy and Boost Your Energy

The secret to being your most productive, however, isn't simply learning the time-management skills that Kruse has delicately laid out for you. One of the biggest keys to productivity and success is staying healthy. In fact, when conducting interviews for this book, Kruse was surprised at how many billionaires and successful people were eager to share their morning routines with him.

Hal Elrod, the author of *The Miracle Morning*, shared that “While most people focus on ‘doing’ more to achieve more, The Miracle Morning is about focusing on ‘becoming’ more so that you can start doing less, to achieve more.” The majority of people Kruse interviewed shared this sentiment and began their mornings by nurturing their bodies by drinking water in the morning, eating a healthy breakfast, and completing a light exercise. They also nurtured their mind with meditation or prayer, inspirational reading, and journaling. Waking up early and getting a kick-start in your day by drinking water, doing exercise, or reciting incantations can become an essential part of your success.

By dedicating the first hour of your day to a morning routine, you can enhance your mind, body, and soul. Starting your day with a workout is the best way to get your blood flowing and put you in a stronger mindset. For example, New York Times bestselling author, Dan Miller, starts each day with a 30-minute meditation followed by a 45-minute workout while he listens to audio programs. During this “me-time,” he avoids checking his phone or the news and only devotes himself to positive and inspirational experiences.

Another best-selling author and podcast host, Shawn Stevenson, begins his day with an inner bath in which he simply drinks 30 ounces of water to jumpstart his metabolism and flush out waste. Starting your day with drinking water can increase your energy levels which is critical for success and

leads us to our final secret for successful people. By increasing your energy, you can increase your attention, decision making, focus, and productivity.

Francesco Cirillo created the Pomodoro Technique to do just that, reduce distractions, boost productivity, and increase your energy levels. The technique suggests setting a timer for 25 minutes, devote your full attention to that single task for 25 minutes, and then take a five-minute break before repeating that cycle. Author Monica Leonelle used this technique and found that she recharged during her breaks and maintained steady energy throughout her day. Through the Pomodoro and other techniques, Leonelle was able to boost productivity; she went from writing 600 words an hour to 3,500!

The final key to keeping your energy levels up is by eating healthy and participating in physical activity. Kruse simply states that “successful people view food as fuel, sleep as recovery, and work as fun.”

Final Summary

Through much time and research, Kevin Kruse details the 15 secrets of successful people after interviewing hundreds of millionaires, billionaires, and Olympic athletes. By viewing time as their most valuable asset, highly successful people have changed the way they schedule their days to ensure they are completing the most important tasks first and wasting zero time. They have learned how to cure procrastination, say no to tasks that don't benefit them, change the structure of time-wasting meetings, and used various techniques to boost their productivity. By using the fifteen secrets of highly successful people, you can unlock the power of success and become the most productive person you know. Remember, you only have 1,440 minutes a day, so use them wisely.



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