



# Creating a Productivity System

Productivity is a practice of focusing your time on your highest priorities and ignoring the lowest priorities.

Defining your priorities is the first step.

## Step 1: Define your North Star list

In the section below, list your responsibilities as they are described in your job description. Include responsibilities from your personal life that are currently happening. Don't include items that are currently only a dream ("When I have more time I'd like to learn to sail").

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

## Step 2: Define Your Inputs

In this section, list all of the inputs that create tasks that you need to keep track of and act on. You are only listing the input – not all of the resulting tasks. For example, you will want to list all of your email accounts, but not the actions from each of the emails in your inbox. In order to identify all of the inputs, think about how you get things onto your calendar. How do inputs for your children come in? Household lists? Community or Volunteer projects?

### Work Inputs



### Family Inputs



### Household Inputs



### Community / Volunteer Inputs



### Step 3: Time Bound Activities

Time bound activities are tasks that have to be done on a certain day and time, or by a certain deadline. Typically, these tasks are tracked on a calendar, but for many people, there isn't a system that is reliably capturing all time bound items. For example, you may put a dentist appointment on your calendar, but do you also put a reminder on your calendar on April 15<sup>th</sup> for the tax deadline?

You need to design a system for capturing all of your time bound tasks in a way that will allow you to never miss an important deadline. Take a minute to think about how you will design this system:

- Will you have one system for all time bound tasks, or will you separate work and personal items?
- How do time bound tasks get added to your system?
- Think about times when you've missed a time-bound task. What caused you to miss it? Was it because it was missing from your calendar? Because you didn't have a reminder in advance? Because you let other 'urgent' but less important things take priority? How can you design a system to account for this?
- Does your system account for the prep work as well as the task itself? For example, if you have a presentation coming up, have you captured the time you will need to prepare the presentation as well as the actual presentation itself?
- What are some rules you can create for yourself that would help you better manage time bound activities? For example:
  - Always block 30 minutes before and after an appointment that is in a different location
  - Always block prep time for recurring meetings

#### Step 4: Create your To Do List

Creating a list of everything you need to do is the biggest way you can reduce stress. Your brain will continue to process things that are on your to do list until it feels it has been dealt with. By putting it on a list your brain will let it go and your stress level will go down. When creating your To Do list:

- Refer to your list of Inputs (Step 2)
- Don't edit yourself
- Don't try to solve the items
- Don't get overwhelmed

Over the course of the next week, as new things come up, add them to your list.

#### Step 5: Categorize Your List

All of the tasks that come up in our lives fall into a spectrum from urgent to not urgent and important to not important. Knowing that there are differences among your tasks is important when deciding how much attention to give them.

In addition, tasks fall into one of 5 categories:

1. It can be dealt with quickly
2. It will take time or multiple steps
3. It can be delegated
4. It is not right for now – 'someday/maybe'
5. It is reference material

We are going to create a system for handling tasks within each category. But, before we can do that, we need to assign a category to each of your tasks. Go through your To-Do List and assign a category to each item.

Now you are ready to create your own personalized productivity system! We'll cover that in a separate worksheet.

#### Recommended Resources:

Getting Things Done – David Allen

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Stephen Covey

Organize Tomorrow Today: 8 Ways to Retrain Your Mind to Optimize Performance at Work and in Life – Dr. Jason Selk & Tom Bartow