

7 Ways to Work Less Hours



Be more efficient and effective

BE THE change

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Whether you are in a well-established business with a team around you, an entrepreneur just starting out, or looking to grow your business, what's the one thing everyone has in common?

There are just 24 hours in a day.

Tempting as it may seem to work around the clock to get your To-Do List ticked off; work weekends to catch up on your admin; and just keep going, even when your brain can take no more... you are doing more harm than good.

Chances are, your productivity is way below where it could be, and you're missing out on quality time with family and friends and time for hobbies.

There may be occasions when you have no choice other than to work extra hours. But eventually you will find yourself heading for mental and physical burnout. The human brain simply cannot cope with constant overload, and working your fingers to the bone, as they used to say, gets you nowhere in the long run.

Do you find yourself going back over a piece of work you've already finished – or so you thought – correcting mistakes?

Do you keep putting something off, no matter how high priority it should be?

Or are you simply not getting through the huge list of tasks still outstanding from last week... or the week before... or...?

Well, you are not alone.

Sadly, so many of us are working long hours, way more than we should, because we are actually being less efficient when we are at work than we could be.



*So how do
you become
more
efficient
and
effective?*

It's not about working longer hours or working harder. It comes down to working smarter.

Having learned some great methods of time saving and efficient working practices during my professional career, I now get to share these with other businesses, so they can achieve the absolute best results.

Here, I am going to talk through my seven ways to work less hours.

You'll learn how to make the most of your time and work more efficiently... all just by making some small, everyday changes.

1. Focus on the Most Profitable Product or Service

Do you know which of your products or services make you the most profit? If not, this is the first analysis you should undertake.

Then start to prioritise the remaining products or services accordingly.

This results in your time being more effectively spent and marketing the right area of your offering.

You leave no confusion as to where your priorities should be.

And you'll be attracting your 'ideal client' almost by default.

TEAM

time

2. Build a Team

Asking for help is a difficult concept for some. But finding the right help will reap the rewards in no time at all.

It gives you the opportunity to assess, and work to, your own strengths and passions.

And never fear, you don't have to be in a position to employ people to build a team.

Having a team of outsourced freelancers, or sub-contractors, is the way many businesses choose to operate so that they're only paying for the hours they need.

You are the visionary for your business, the leader. If you are working 60 hours a week, with half of them on tasks which aren't your specialisation, then where does the headspace come from to look at your business with clarity and strategically plan developments?

- **Admin tasks** - do you really need to be responsible for reading and answering every email and phone call? Typing up every quote and invoice yourself? Do you really need to book all your appointments? Do the bookkeeping? I'm pretty sure the answer will be no to most, if not all of these.
- **Keep a list of every task** you do that is valued below your personal hourly charging out rate. You'll soon have a long list of jobs you could delegate.
- **Too many contracts** coming in – collaboration with other companies or individuals in the same field of work can be a life saver. You can ask them to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) if you wish and 'white-label' the work under your company name. No one need ever know they weren't part of your company.
- **Specialisation** out of your personal area – if you find your business needs a specialisation you personally don't have, then bring in the specialists. Let them cover that area of work for you.
- **Brainstorming** developments and 'issues' - 'two heads are better than one'... this is so very true. Being in business can be an extremely lonely place. If you don't have a team you can brainstorm ideas and issues with, then find a couple of business owners who you can trust to have your company's best interests at heart. Or, of course, a business coach or mentor. Working together will likely create more ideas, opportunities, and help build a business around your vision, goals, and values.



3. Systemisation

Systemising your business, by putting processes and standards in place, will ensure the most efficient and effective working practices and the highest quality output consistently.

Who will benefit:

- **Your team**, if you have one - systemisation has been proven to aid staff retention as clear requirements are laid out from day one. If you outsource tasks to freelancers or sub-contractors having a system that they can follow and slot into will make their induction and training so much smoother.
- **Ongoing performance** monitoring and measurement, staff training.
- Any **external audit** or accreditation bodies would also benefit from systemised approach, as they will have clear standards to measure your business against.
- A **systemised business** is consistent and delivers a clear message for your customers as they know what quality of service they will receive every time they order from you.
- **YOU**. You will benefit hugely because you know how your business operates on every level and as it grows, you can be confident to bring others onboard.

If you are currently in the process of systemisation, or it is in your plans, remember to make the most of any existing staff. By sharing your plans with them, it may become apparent that they could document the system that they are already using. This could save you hours.

Also, in utilising their skills and knowledge of current processes for testing and feedback, you will also gain their buy-in, so implementing change will be more effective.

Systems can be recorded in a company handbook or created on video through screen recording. And, once you have documented systems, then it is easy to automate those systems.



4. Automation

With the rapid increase and availability of technology, we are in the position that many business processes can be automated. The benefits include:

- Reduction in human error
- Increased productivity
- Saving in man hours required

Automate repeat processes.
Once they are set, you can sit back,
so to speak, and watch
them work for you!

Examples of automation:

- Setting rules for Inbox filing and responses
- Integration across platforms e.g. Zoom meetings set up and synched to your calendar
- Automated job progression, from quote, through client acceptance, work completion, to invoice - all at the touch of a button.
- Automated mailings - appointment reminders, order confirmations, email marketing, credit control.

Many business owners find automation overwhelming. It certainly doesn't have to be.

There is lots of help out there.



We briefly mentioned outsourcing above. Particularly as a business first begins to grow, outsourcing can be a fantastic solution rather than directly employing people.

Advantages:

- You get to utilise skilled resources, so can rely upon the highest quality and standards of work being done, dedicated to your specific requirements, and so completed more efficiently.
- You only pay for it as and when you need it. This is a cost efficiency opposed to employing someone and paying not only their salary but the on-costs as well (NI, pension contribution, holiday and sick pay, etc).
- Allows you to focus on core business activities, areas in which you, and any staff, are most effective.
- Using the same freelancer or sub-contractor regularly means they understand your needs and can provide more in-depth and knowledgeable support for your business as and when required.
- Allows your business to be more flexible and as the third-party is the 'expert' in their own field, they will be up to date with compliance, developments, and new processes and technology.



6. The Pomodoro Technique

BE MORE PRODUCTIVE WITH LESS HOURS

PLANNING – FORWARD, REVERSE, 30/60/90-DAY, WHICHEVER METHOD WORKS BEST FOR YOU – IS ONE TASK YOU SIMPLY SHOULD NOT AVOID.

Let's concentrate on getting the work done here though, rather than thinking about long term planning.

The biggest waste of your time is continually looking over your To Do List and feeling overwhelmed, rather than feeling motivated, by it. Chances are, you won't even make a start if this is how you feel. And it is likely to continue growing, the more you put it off.

So, break down the list; plan out each step; allocate time according to the highest priority. This will keep you on track towards your end goal and vision.

There's nothing worse than starting the day not having a clue where to start. So always plan and prepare for the following day before finishing up. Even with unexpected requests coming in throughout the day, you can refer back to the plan whenever you need to.



Speaking of unexpected requests – distractions!

Shorter stints of dedicated focus on specific tasks will be more effective without those constant disruptions and distractions – emails, phone calls, social media – switch your notifications off... if even for a short time.

Believe it or not, it is a physical impossibility to multi-task, and it can take up to 15 minutes to get back on track with the one task you were trying to complete if you veer off course. So, don't put yourself to the test!

As more of us are spending long days in front of screens, phones, and all sorts of devices, it is more crucial than ever that we take breaks during the working day. Despite the fear of losing time by stepping away, it is a known fact that you will be more productive and energised when you return.

The 'Pomodoro Technique' is one of the most effective time management methods and can be used to break your tasks and day into workable sections.

Based on the Italian word for tomato (as the old fashioned cooking timers used in the survey to test the methods were tomato shaped) it involves setting a timer to break your day down to short sections, usually 25 minutes. Following a short break, returning to the task for a further 25 minutes was proven in the study to create sufficient energy and renewed focus to complete the task more efficiently.

Try it and see how you get on!

(There's even an app you can use on your desktop to let you know when your 25 mins are up!)

7. Stop Being a Perfectionist

Done is better than perfect

So, we mentioned above that sometimes the best thing you can do is actually make a start on your tasks. Even if it's just to get your list written down and planned. Well, in a similar vein, if you're not careful, trying to be the ultimate perfectionist could leave you spending more time tweaking and updating than actually 'creating.'

You may not like the sound of this, but sometimes the fact that you are trying to perfect a task is a sign you're avoiding doing something else? Have you looked at your list and seen that the next thing is that one thing you really don't want to do?

That's not to say it's acceptable to get something out there which is littered with mistakes left, right, and centre. Who would be happy leaving a job half done in that sense? But does it really have to be 100% perfect, or is it better to just get it done? Version one is always better than version none!

What Now?

Just remember, time is the most valuable asset we all have, whether it's relating to business or your personal life... so make the most of it!

The last thing anyone should be doing is spending evenings and weekends on tasks within their business that they don't enjoy doing and could be outsourcing to someone else.

You went into business to have the lifestyle you dreamed of. And that certainly wasn't doing admin when you should be with your family and friends or enjoying yourself on the golf course!

Here at Virtual Hand we are able to take a wide range of tasks off a business owners To Do List. We are experts at what we do, and we get to know your business, so we do it your way. In short, we slot seamlessly into your team.

If you are in need of any assistance with anything in this document, or if you feel now may be the right time to look at outsourcing, let's have a chat and see where we can help you out.

GET
started

Hi I'm Michelle

I help busy business owners, consultants and entrepreneurs to gain 10 hours a week to use either for their business or for their personal life. It is your time to use, don't waste it.

Me and my team are here so do get in touch:



www.virtualhand.co.uk



michelle@virtualhand.co.uk



07789 174792 / 01924 658282

Here at Virtual Hand we will enable you to get back to doing those things you love, bring you joy and what you fully intended to do in your business, fully confident that your business is in safe hands. We encourage you to list all the things you do in your business and then divide them into the areas that feed your passion and feed your bank balance against the others that don't. What elements would you give to someone else to do (an employee in the future, perhaps).

That's our starting point.



What others say!

Michelle is a life saver!

Michelle is efficient, helpful and very professional.

Michelle is a godsend in the life of a busy trainer.

Michelle is a valuable source of ideas.

Michelle has just saved me hours!

Michelle is professional, experienced and a pleasure to work with.

I'm thankful for the coaching, admin assistance and friendship.

Working with Michelle is a joy.

Michelle is professional, reliable and very enthusiastic about her work.