

HOW TO BOOST PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

**MODULE 2:
HABITS AND PRIORITIES**

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Module one summary

Congratulations on completing module one. You now have greater clarity and awareness about where you are, where you are going, your priorities, and your high payoff activities. These all play an important part in boosting your productivity and effectiveness. We will look to continue building your momentum by looking at the areas that need consistency. In this module, I will begin by focusing on ourselves and exploring our habits and routines followed by identifying our priorities.

Habits & Routines

Giving your life structure.

Habits and Routines are essential principles to boost our productivity and effectiveness success. The things we do unconsciously and repeatedly are what help to define us. In essence, habits and routines are our behaviours. The reason the right habits and routines are important is that they make our life **easier** because they provide us with **structure while reducing the decisions** we need to make. The things that stand between us and our goals are often our behaviours.

Researchers from Duke University have shown that over 40% of what we do is determined not by decisions but by habits. This suggests that we can change a huge part of our lives just by eliminating bad habits that don't serve us and instead, creating ones that do. People who fully understand the power of habits have been able to find wonderful new ways to change their lives for the better, with improved structure and certainty, that has eliminated stress and enhanced productivity.

Shape your identity

Before we specifically get into your habits and routines we need to take a step sideways in this process. I want to start by looking at your identity, that is who you are. Because your identity plays an important part in who you need to be to achieve your goals. While our habits and routines are made up of **the things we do regularly** our identity includes our traits, behaviours, beliefs, values, attitudes, aspirations and personal characteristics.

“Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement.”

James Clear

Our identity plays a part in shaping the type of person we want to be, and maybe need to be, to achieve what we need and want. These identity character traits define who we are and as a result, they can bring greater congruency and certainty to our lives. If you're going to change your results you will probably need to be clear who you are or have a look at who you need to become. And that starts by identifying your character traits and behaviours.

There will be some traits that currently support you and those that are not supporting you as much as they can in helping achieve what you need. Some traits and behaviours will be considered good and some may not be so good. Part of what stands between us achieving our goals or not can be these characteristics, traits, and behaviour. Who we are today more than likely has developed over time. It may not have been something we have ever stopped to think about or thought about the impact that this is having on us. Who we are, which I will call your identity, says a lot about you. It's now time to think about defining who you want to be or who you need to be. The traits can range from the things we do and don't do and even the things that we believe and don't believe. For example, our positive traits may be described as being reliable, ambitious, positive, determined, or resourceful. On the other hand: negative traits can include such traits as pessimistic, impatient, selfishness or disrespectful.

Then there are our behaviours, such as:

- I am 5 minutes early rather than 5 minutes late.
- I am organised and plan my day.
- I set daily goals.
- I am always smiling when I meet someone.
- I always use people's names.
- I get 7- 8 hours of sleep every night
- I exercise 5 days a week

Or you could be the type of person who:

- Is always running late
- Feels they are not good enough
- Is easily distracted
- Lacks focus.
- Never pay bills on time
- Always have a muffin with my mid-morning coffee

Ultimately, your traits and behaviours matter because they can help you become the type of person you need to be, and in turn that will contribute to you more easily achieving your desired outcomes in your life and business.

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act but a habit.”
Aristotle

Let me ask if you are the type of person you want to be or if there are changes you should make, want to make or need to consider making?

This first exercise is a time for you to check in and reflect on what are the traits and behaviours you have that define who you are right now? Then you can also consider if there are any new or additional traits and behaviours that you will need so you can move forward more quickly?

<p>1. Define the traits that you currently display that make you who you are. <i>These will include both when you are in your business or work environment and in your private life. List as many as you need to, however, there should be at least five. The options are not limited to this list of examples.</i></p>	
<p>Example of positive character traits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable • Honest • Loyal • Loving • Kind • Ambitious • Faithful • Persistent • Determined • Optimistic • Resourceful • Proactive • Organised 	<p>Example of character traits that don't serve us.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dishonest • Mean • Impatient • Angry • Rude • Selfish • Pessimistic • Grumpy • Malicious • Pessimistic • Unkind • Disrespectful • Unforgiving
<p>Answer: List the 3 to 5 key traits you currently regularly display that you are <u>proud</u> of and that you feel describe who you are.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 	

2. List the behaviours you are proud of.

Behaviours can be expressed like this:

- I am 5 minutes early rather than 5 minutes late, so I am always punctual.
- I am organised and plan my day.
- I set daily goals.
- I am always smiling when I meet someone.
- I like using people's names.
- I only use language that supports me.
- I always see the cup half full
- I always say please and thank you.
- I am proactive and not reactive.
- I am a loving person.
- I take responsibility for all my actions.
- I do not make excuses.
- I always like planning ahead.
- I am always looking for continuous improvement in who I am.

This is only a list of examples, and your options are not limited to these.

Answer: The 5 key behaviours you currently display that you are proud of.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Awareness

Changing or replacing habits begins by having an increased awareness and then staying aware. After all, we have been performing some habits for so long we are doing them unconsciously. A habit is essentially a behaviour we perform without giving it a second thought. If we want to change any behaviour, we need to start with an awareness of what it is and acknowledgment that it exists.

Once we know what the behaviour is, in this case, a certain habit, we can decide if it serves us or not. In acknowledging the habits that no longer serve us we can then decide to remove or change them. The best way to remove a habit that is not serving us is to decide if we want to **eliminate it or replace it**. To eliminate it we can decide to stop performing it or we can go about replacing it. The best way to replace that habit is to first identify it and its trigger and find the new habit or behaviour we want to replace it with.

We can stop a habit at any time just by making that decision and having the discipline and awareness to follow through. This seems like a simple solution however the execution is not always easy. That is why we need awareness. It is always why replacing rather than eliminating can be easier. It will also be helpful if you are clear about why you want to replace or eliminate a habit. Why is it important to you? The how is not as meaningful unless your why is strong enough.

What are the habits you perform that do not serve you that may need to be **eliminated or replaced**? What are the habits that you need to introduce that will contribute to making you more productive and effective? I have realised that it is the cumulative effect of all the tiny things we do that together provide the results we need. For me, my habits include a regular exercise routine, when I start my day, a gratitude journal in the evening and even the time I eat my evening meal. The right habits play an essential role in achieving what we want. Don't expect that it will just be one thing that makes all the difference. It's like wanting to have a tidy work desk. If we tidy the desk it's clean, what we need to do is introduce tidy habits into our behaviour, which will mean we have a clean desk all the time? This can take practice and persistence. Maybe there are behaviours that are not serving you in key areas of your life and business? If you say one thing but your actions don't produce

the results you want your actions are your truth. So there may be a disconnect. Is it time to make some changes? In this next exercise, we look at your habits, tasks, actions, or patterns that you perform repeatedly, regularly, and consistently.

List the habits and tasks you currently perform that support you and contribute to achieving your goals. They will generally include habits at three levels: Physically, Mentally, and even Emotionally. For this exercise include personal and business-related habits at each of these three levels.

Examples of habits:

- You might engage in daily regular exercise.
- Get seven to eight hours of sleep each night.
- The time you go to bed to get adequate rest.
- You might say please and thank you all the time.
- You may choose to read for 15 minutes in the evening to wind down.
- You may complete a gratitude journal at the end of each day.
- It could be spending quality time with family and loved ones each evening.

What are the current habits you perform that help you in your personal life and business life?

3. What are the <u>personal habits</u> you have that serve you? They are any tasks, actions, or patterns that you perform repeatedly, regularly, and consistently.
Answer: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Example of business-related habits:

- You might create a daily to-do list of 3 things
- The time you start and finish work. The way you drive to go to work.
- You might clear your desk before you go home in the evening.
- Proactively set goals with timeframes attached.
- You might decide, for efficiency purposes, all your external appointments are conducted on one or two specific days each week. You might further group these by location.

4. What are the <u>business-related habits</u> you have that serve you? That is any tasks, actions, or patterns that you perform repeatedly, regularly, and consistently.
Answer: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

An important insight is that the key to forming habits is repetition, not perfection. Its important to look to keep practising the things you want over and over again.

Adjustments

What current habits do you need to no longer perform, potentially replace or eliminate because they no longer serve who you are?

For example, it might be going to bed too late. Getting up too late or too early. It may be a muffin with your morning coffee. Watching the evening news. It could be always finding excuses and not taking responsibility. It might be finishing early on a Friday or starting late on a Monday. What are they for you?

5. Which of your current personal habits do not serve you and that you may need to consider replacing or eliminating?

Answer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Replacing or Eliminate

To eliminate these habits, we can decide to stop performing them or we can go about replacing them. The best way to replace a habit is to first identify it and then its trigger and find the new habit or behaviour to replace them with.

I mentioned above that we can stop a habit at any time by making the decision and having the discipline and awareness to follow through. Now is the time to look at why you want to replace or eliminate the habits that don't serve you.

6. List the reasons why it would be in your best interest to replace or eliminate the above habits in question 5.

Answer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

New habits

Consider the regular habits you need to introduce into your personal or business life that would make you more productive and effective?

It might be you are not doing any exercise and would like to introduce twenty minutes of exercise three times a week. You may want to change from always being on your phone, to not looking at your phone and social media before 8 am or after 7 pm. It could be the time you go to bed or the time you get up, each day. It could be the amount of sleep you get. It might include creating a daily to-do list at work. Keep an open mind and you can always add to this list as you work through the program.

7. Consider the habits that you don't currently perform that would serve you if you introduced them into your life.

Consider at least one habit for the morning and one for the evening. These could be as simple as a daily exercise routine, scheduling some personal focus time each day and being on time for appointments. It may include prioritising your daily activities or reading for a certain amount of time each day.

Answer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

I know that it is the cumulative effect of all the small things we do that together will provide better results and outcomes.

For me, my habits include regular exercise, reading and the time I go to bed. At work, it's a daily to-do list, scheduling time to work on key projects and the ritual I have of watching a short video series each morning when I sit at my desk to start my day.

The role of habits in the outcomes we desire is essential in achieving what we want because habits make our life easier because we know we just do them. As mentioned previously it will not just be one habit or behaviour that makes all the difference. If we want a tidy desk what we need to do is introduce tidy desk habits which will mean we have a clean desk all the time? As part of the identity of who we need to be, we might need to be better organised for that to occur.

Review the behaviours that are not serving you in key areas of your life and business. Remember if you say one thing however your actions don't support what you say then **your actions become your truth**. Is it now time to consider making a few changes?

The impact of rewards

Most of us have a combination of good habits that serve us and habits that no longer serve us. The aim is to replace the habits that don't serve us with ones that do. It's great that habits, both good and bad, are all learnt behaviours. That means that if we can learn them, we can unlearn them or at least in some cases look to replace the habits that don't serve us. The value of having certain habits and routines that serve us is that they **provide us with structure and certainty** and structure and certainty just make our life easier.

It is true that some habits give us immediate gratification that may result in a bad future outcome. That could be a muffin with our morning coffee just tastes great. That one muffin makes no difference today, but over time this habit will add kilos in the wrong places. Immediate rewards from that sugar hit now, however with a long term cost to our health and well being.

Some habits don't give us immediate gratification or rewards but provide a benefit long-term. For example, our one exercise session does not in isolation make a difference to our health however after a sustained period of exercise you will notice a difference. This is an example of a habit that focuses on a long-term reward with no visible or immediate gratification.

Most of us want habits to give immediate rewards; however, sometimes, we need to identify the **ultimate reward** and find other ways to provide immediate gratification. You may need to focus on the immediate gratification of the exercise routine from the endorphin hit you will get and how great that makes you feel now That short term reward with a greater focus on a long term health benefit. Identifying the reward you want that serves you in the long term will provide a better outcome.

8. Create a list of potential rewards that delight you and that serve you.

They can be physical, mental or emotional, They can be big or small. Be as creative as you want. They must serve you and serve your identity.

These might include:

- Dinner with your partner
- Seeking happiness
- A weekend away
- A hi-5 or pat on the back (recognition)
- Finish working at 2 pm on a Friday
- A new outfit
- Exuberance
- A live show
- A fun activity
- A place to visit

- Participating in or viewing a sporting event
 - Flowers or a gift for my partner
- Be creative and brainstorm

Answer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

9. What rewards do you want to avoid?

- A muffin
- A glass of wine when I get home every night
- Sweet foods
- Looking at social media during work time
- Watching the news

Answer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

10. To help keep you motivated and focused connect a reward to each of your positive habits you listed in question 4 above

Examples are:

- Brush my teeth = Good hygiene – So I won't have to go to the dentist or have a tooth extracted.
- Daily exercise = good health or weight control or something to do with your partner
- A daily list of 3 priorities = Time saving so I can leave at 2 pm on a Friday
- X number of sales a week = Dinner with my partner
- Difficult client call = A Hi 5
- 8 hours sleep = I feel sensational.
- Two hours of focus time, 5 days a week means I can start at 10 am on a Thursday.

Habit

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Reward

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

11. Of the habits you list in question 5, that you say no longer serve you, can you identify if there are rewards linked to these habits?

Are there any underlying reasons for these habits you can identify?

Habit

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Reward

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Triggers

To assist your habit to be on autopilot most habits are linked to a trigger. A trigger is a thing or event that sets the habit in motion.

Let me give you an example that applies to me: When I sit down at my desk in the morning to start my day (that's my trigger) I then watch a brief 2 or 3 minutes morning video series

that sets my day on the way. I sit down, then I watch. When I sit I am now on autopilot for what I do next?

When I finish viewing the video, I then create my daily list of the 2 or 3 things I want to complete that day. The most effective way to form a habit is to link it to a trigger or event.

As a result, as time goes on, the habits will just seem to happen, that's the autopilot. Habits happen best when they are linked to triggers. And as mentioned earlier, habits can also benefit when also linked to the right reward.

Habits need a trigger to put them on autopilot and rewards to make sure they are worth it and you keep doing them.

For me, the reward of me watching the video is the positive mindset I put myself into and the reward of creating my list of daily 2 or 3 is that I know I will get my stuff done every day and I start my day in control of myself and of my day. So link the habit you want to a trigger to get it going and find a reward to know that it's worthwhile for you.

“Change might not be fast, and it isn't always easy. But with time and effort, almost any habit can be reshaped.”

A variety of factors can influence our habits: From the trigger to perform them and the reward to confirm why we perform them. In my case watching my morning video series.

Those triggers or rewards can be related to either: [people, environment, thoughts, or experiences](#). In this case, watching the video is linked to sitting at my desk, which is the trigger (the experience) that provides the positive mindset – my thoughts, as the reward. When you look into it, you will find most of our habits are linked to triggers and rewards.

So now I want you to [identify those triggers](#) that relate to your existing habits, be they good or bad. Identifying triggers will also help you to more quickly eliminate or replace the habits that are no longer serving you. Think about what is it that [when “A” happens I will always just do “B”](#).

Habits are an integral part of both our work and private lives. Therefore, having habits that serve us, will positively impact our entire lives positively. [Given that the right habits serve us, why not consciously consider having better habits?](#)

Let us move to identify the triggers linked to our habits in questions 3 and 4.

I encourage you to keep noticing the habits you have in your life both positive habits and ones that don't serve you. Because we will deal with them too.

It's now time to identify your habit triggers.

- It might be when I have coffee, (Trigger) I buy a muffin (Habit).
- When my phone vibrates (trigger) I always check it (Habit).
- When I am bored (Trigger) or feel under pressure and I eat (Habit).
- When I have a lot to do and feel under pressure (Trigger) I look for a reason not to do it. (Habit)
- As soon as I get home (Trigger) I like to have a glass of wine (Habit)
- While the family eats dinner (Trigger) I watch the news (Habit) every night

Some triggers may be harder to identify than others. It takes some awareness.

Here are some more examples:

- Finish your workday (Trigger) and tidy your desk (Habit) and then go home.
- Brush my teeth (Trigger) then go to bed (Habit)

- Go to bed 30 min earlier (Trigger) to get up 30 min earlier to schedule some exercise (Habit)
- To start my day, I sit at my work desk (Trigger) and view my morning video. (Habit)
- View the video (Trigger) and review my daily to-do list. (Habit)
- Make an appointment to see a client (Trigger) and write it in the diary. (Habit)
- Finish my work week (Trigger) and review my week's accomplishments. (Habit)

12. What triggers can you identify for your current habits in questions 3 & 4?	
Answers from Q 3 & 4:	Triggers:
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Options for change.

Let's explore for a moment the habits that you have listed in question 5 as the ones that don't serve you. I want you to look at the options of either changing or replacing that habit.

I say change or replace because sometimes it is easier to change or replace a habit than to stop it. Here are the options:

Option 1 - Yes we can **stop some habits**. If it's not serving you and you want to stop then decide to stop it. Simple - Well done if you can. It may take some time to eliminate it but if you decide then just decide. It may also take some of your willpower. Defining the reason why you want to stop may be a very helpful step in this option.

Option 2 - Maybe we need to **replace the habit**. So let me give you an example. If someone listed that they like to check their social media before they start their workday and that habit does not serve them because of the time it takes then let's consider how they can replace checking social media? Maybe when you pick up the phone you look at your diary or calendar rather than social media. Habit Replaced

Option 3 - You might want to **change the trigger**. That is , in this example, the thing that causes you to check social media. The question is can you deal with the habit by dealing with the cause? (the trigger) Can you eliminate or block the trigger? Eliminating may be a challenge because it may require to much willpower. Blocking may require you to change the trigger or change your response to the trigger. If the trigger to checking social media is that you pick up your phone when you get notifications, then to change the trigger maybe turn off all or some of the notifications.

Option 4 - Is to **change the habit**. Sometimes the trigger might be the challenge and you are happy with the trigger but not the habit that it leads to. So change the habit. If you want to. If the habit doesn't serve you. If you like to check your phone because it gives you the current time, (and when you pick up your phone you check social media) maybe start wearing a watch instead to check the time. What may be other options you can do?

What is not serving you and what can you do about it?

13. For the habits in question 5 that do not serve you consider which option applies?	
Do you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop the habit • Change the habit • Replace the habit • Change the trigger 	
See answers listed Q5.	What should you do?

The role of business habits.

You can now see that Business habits and routines are vitally important in our lives. Many great achievers and superstars all share one common trait – they all have good habits. These habits are so important they need to be linked to our goals, outcomes, and objectives. They are our rewards. We are more likely to succeed in business when we have great habits to support our objectives. These positive habits and behaviours will assist us in achieving what we want far more easily than if we leave things to chance.

“Choose your habits well. Habits I probably the most powerful tool in your brain’s toolbox.”
Ray Dalio

In module one, we identified clear strategic objectives. We even linked high payoff activities to those objectives in the stage one implementation exercise. Habits and routines play a vital part in achieving those objectives. We need to identify the habits and routines that will contribute to achieving the outcomes desired. Identifying the objective was the first part of the process. The next step is connecting them to habits and routines that will deliver the outcomes required. This exercise is part of creating a process for achieving them. Get the habits

and routines right, and the outcomes will take care of themselves.

It could be that you need habits and routines that ensure you start your day by allocating time to plan your workday rather than just letting it unfold and potentially allowing the day to control you and thus always being a reactive person.

Our business outcomes are a lagging measure of us performing the right business habits and routines. *Knowing what you want to achieve, and then performing the activities (habits) needed to do and achieve them, is the formula for successful in business.* These habits will be the basis of the system that will make a difference and drive the results you are after. If we want to improve or change any of your results then you need to look at who you need to be (your identity) to perform and follow through on the habits and routines that will contribute to you achieving all your business objectives.

14. For the habits and routines that you regularly perform as part of what you do at work, as outlined in question 4, describe the reward or benefit that each brings to you?	
It might be the time you start or finish work or your attitude to certain situations. What are things or tasks you do regularly?	
Question 4 habits & routines:	Answer:
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

List the habits and routines that you have performed at work in the last two weeks that have not served you. Describe the benefit that would come if you changed them?

It might be you always finding an excuse not to complete tasks you have been avoiding. It might include time spent on non-HPA or tasks that could be done by someone else. It could be that you let other people distract you too easily.

15. What are the habits that do not serve you at work and why should you change them.
Answer: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

What habits do you need to start performing at work?

16. What habits & routines do you need to start performing and implementing at work and why?
Answer: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Look at each of your strategic objectives in Module 1 Question 2 and for each objective identify the habits and routines that need to be performed for each, that will contribute to being able to successfully accomplish them. Consider all the things that will help you achieve your outcomes?

Examples:

- The objective might be to make time for regular planning. The habit is to schedule time, say each fortnight, for planning-related activities.
- The objective might be to increase new clients. The habit might be to schedule time each week for referral-based marketing activities.
- The objective might be to get more of the important things done each day. The habit might be allocated time at the start of each day to identify three key objectives you need to complete that day.
- The objective might be to finish at 2 pm on Fridays. The habit might be to start 30 minutes earlier each day.

17. What are the habits & routines you need to perform for each of your business objectives in module 1 question 2?
Answer: Objective 1 Objective 2 Objective 3 Objective 4 Objective 5 Objective 6

The impact of habits

Habits and routines are an essential part of our entire lives. It is far better for us when they are serving us. The right habits create a lifestyle to be lived with certainty and simplicity and thus reduce the need for willpower and self-control alone. We should never stop looking to make improvements. We need to change the habits and routines that are not serving us and introduce ones that will have a positive impact and contribute to you achieving our desired outcomes. It never ceases to amaze me how the right habits and routines have created more certainty in my life. From the time I start my day, knowing what I will get done each day, to reviewing my day and my week. Most of us function and perform far better, and when we have a greater level of certainty and structure. The foundation of this is having the right habits and routines. What are the right habits and routines that you need?

18. What are the one or two important realisations you have had regarding your personal habits and routines that if you changed could have the most impact on your life?

Is it the habits and routines you have or don't have? Is it developing new habits and routines or changing those already in place? Is it what you could be doing instead of something else? What is it for you?

Answer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Stage 2 - Implementation exercise.

Add a habit to your routine.

Here is a simple exercise for you to implement. For the next five days what I want you to do is add one-morning habit and one evening habit into your day. This exercise is about adding a task that will enhance your life or even your business experience. The habit could be reflective of who you are as a person, or who you need to be. Remembering the more often you do these habits the less time it will take to think about doing them, Because they are becoming habits that will become automatic over time.

As a reminder, habits are the things or tasks you do consistently and regularly that help to improve your day and build structure into it. These could include regular exercise, some meditation, some reading time, journaling, listening to a podcast, quality family time, family breakfast, personal reflection time, gratitude journal, or the time you go to bed or the time you get up each day.

Think about what will enhance your morning and your evenings?

Think about one important business habit that you could look to add in future to your routine that will have the greatest impact long term on achieving your outcomes and goals?

Personal

The morning habit I will add to my day is:

The evening habit I will add to my day is:

Business

The morning habit I will add to my business day is:

The afternoon habit I will add to my business day is:

Look to add these to your routine for the next 5 days.

As part of that process at the start of each day, ask yourself:

- How did I go yesterday?
- What did I learn?
- What worked really well?

Priorities

Doing the important.

Prioritise knowing what's important

You will now understand that one of the habits I have learned that has had the most significant impact on me is knowing the two, three, or four most important things I must complete each day. This has helped me to make enormous progress and be more productive and effective.

The key is focusing on important tasks. You will learn that not everything that needs our attention is important. We can often get distracted or drawn to the urgent. The urgent may not actually be all our doing. I have realised that understanding how to deal with someone else's urgent has made an immense difference.

The question is, how can we prioritise what we need to do? We all have so many things that come up daily. Some can take our attention away from what we need to be doing. I have learnt the benefits of prioritising and how to do it.

The tasks we need to be focusing the majority of our time on should be the important ones. Important relates to those tasks that help us achieve our strategic objectives, our vision and include our High Payoff Activities. It makes sense that we are clear on what our strategic objectives are and the HPA connected to them. You may want to review the implementation exercise in module one if you need additional clarity about these.

How to identify your priorities

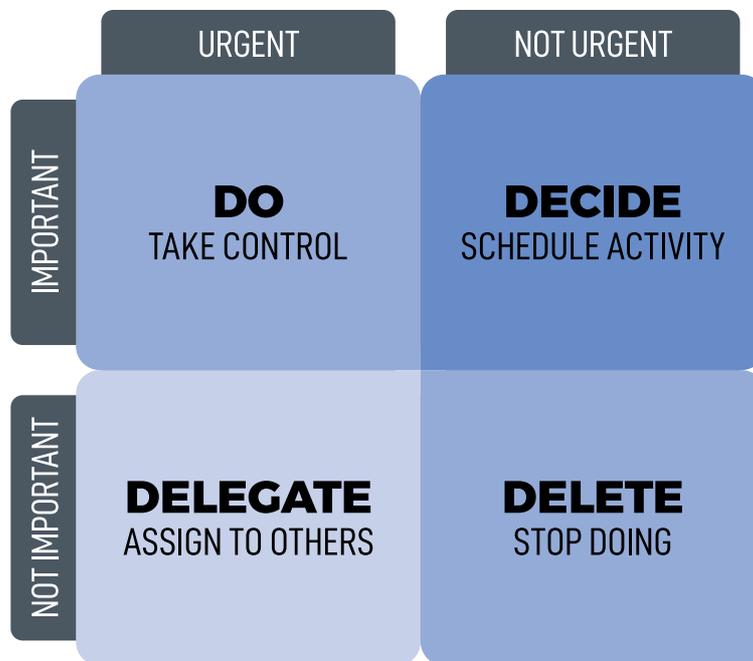
Each task we have on our capture list (or to-do list) can fit into one of several different categories. To begin identifying our priorities, we need to regularly, ask ourselves these key questions.

- If I could only complete one important thing today what, would it be?
- After that, what would be the next most important task?
- What's the next task after that, I can do that will move me closer to achieving my strategic objectives?
- What can I do that will remove stress?
- When I look back on my day, what is it I need to complete today that would make today productive?

Once we have identified the most important tasks we will need to add in our dose of planning, manage our disciplines, and create focus. These will help us to learn how to avoid procrastination and manage distractions and be able to be more focused on the important tasks. We don't want to always be busy, we need to aim to be productive. This adjustment in our thinking will contribute to helping us more easily achieve our goals and objectives. I am not saying that we should only work on important tasks; I am saying focusing on achieving this in 80% or more of our time will positively impact our productivity and effectiveness.

How should tasks be categorised?

THE EISENHOWER MATRIX



This is a model of the Eisenhower matrix. It will provide you with a visual guide.

1. Doing the urgent

Urgent and important tasks generally come about when we have not adequately planned our time. They could also be associated with someone else's goals, and priorities when they have not adequately planned their time and they then expect you to fit into their time frames. That means they expect you to fix their lack of planning. We need to learn how to manage these situations, and take control of our time, while at the same time dealing with other people's expectations. A lack of planning on their part should not always create urgency for us. I do also accept some tasks are time-sensitive and from time to time these may need our immediate attention because of the consequences they carry. However, if you plan your time and activities well you will be scheduling what you need to do in advance, which over time will result in very few things, within your control, escalating to urgency due to their lack of our planning. What we need to do is learn how to manage other people's urgency and expectations and sometimes learn to say No. We do not want to spend the majority of our time dealing with things that are prominently urgent and

important. We need to learn to be proactive when we can and take control rather than be forced to be constantly reactive. I will cover this in more detail a little further on.

2. Decide what to do

These tasks are our essential, and valuable activities. Achieving them will lead to accomplishing our goals and our strategic objectives. These are tasks and activities that we need to focus the majority of our attention on. Many of the tasks that form part of this category are our High Payoff Activities which include important projects. If you did not complete the relevant exercises from module one, now is the time to review them. Clarity around your HPA is a key ingredient to being productive and effective. They help provide us with an understanding of where our focus and attention should be. A key element is that we need to decide and schedule when we will do them. We need to aim to be proactive rather than constantly forced to be reactive. That requires us to plan.

3. Delete

There are some tasks we should not be doing at all. In reality they are not urgent and not important. We need to stop doing these. They take up your time make you feel busy but do not help you to achieve your goals and objectives. Is your aim in business to achieve your goals and objectives? Do we agree the majority of our time needs to be spent on our HPAs? If so what activities are you doing that you should not be doing at all? They are tasks that you are wasting your time on that you should not even be worrying about because they are not really adding value and are not seen as your high payoff activities. They keep you busy however in reality they add little or no value.

4. Delegate

Now there will be some tasks that just need to be done by someone else. Some might call these tasks the low hanging fruit. In some cases, they are the very low per hour jobs, not the high \$200 or \$1000 per hour plus returns we could be aiming to generate. They would be urgent but not important. What tasks are you currently performing that you need to be delegating? An alternative to delegating to someone internally is to look to outsource to an external source? Who should they be delegated to? Delegating is not a matter of what you are capable of doing, it's about creating more time for you to focus your time on activities that serve you better in achieving your strategic objectives. In reality, some of the low hanging fruit tasks are distractions as you do not add sufficient value by you doing them but you do them because you feel they make you busy or it will just be quicker if you do it. Do not look to be busy, strive to be productive.

1. What tasks are you currently performing that you should consider delegating or outsourcing?

This is not a question of other people capabilities at this time, it is a question of identifying the tasks that I do that someone else should be doing for me. To allow me to focus more on my HPA and achieving my strategic objectives. For example are my accounts and booking better done by someone else. Could someone else look after my travel arrangements. What are you approving that you can delegate or create better checks and measure around?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Why do tasks become urgent

There could be four main reasons why tasks become urgent.

1. We have not managed our own time. (Insufficient planning and scheduling)
2. Not managing our priorities.
3. They are unforeseen or unexpected.

4. They may be someone else's urgent.

We will cover how someone else's urgent does not have to be our urgent. We have to learn how to manage the urgent and not let them manage us. If we manage our time and learn to implement planning and scheduling, we will be able to better manage and prioritise our time. This will start with conscious awareness.

Tomorrows priorities

I have found it valuable to know at the end of each day, what tasks I need to do to make tomorrow a productive and effective day. Understanding these tasks at the end of each day has allowed me to start tomorrow with a clear focus and better intent.

2. What do your priorities need to be for tomorrow? <i>The 2, 3 or 4 tasks that if you got done would make tomorrow great. What have you been avoiding and what do you need to be planning ahead for? Remember to consider how these are linked to you HPAs.</i>
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Once we have identified the task we need to do, schedule them into your diary, and allocate the time. Urgent tasks will always appear, and we may need to see these as a potential interruptions. We need to learn to manage interruptions and not let them control us. As we learn to manage our time and our priorities, these urgent and important tasks and interruptions will become less and less our doing. However, if the nature of what we do presents regular unexpected deadlines with little notice, one option is to regularly allocate time for unexpected urgent important and unforeseen activities. This is you being proactive in a reactive environment and managing your time.

Dealing with the urgent

Over time we will eliminate the majority of our urgent and important tasks with conscious planning and scheduling in advance. The tasks that will then be urgent will be unforeseen or belong to other people. We need to learn to deal with these. My experience is that dealing with and managing some will be easier than others. Nonetheless, we need to create a process to manage them and deal with them.

Sometimes we have to politely let other people know what our time frames are. If there are serial offenders, we need to set benchmarks and standards or learn to say "No" politely. Where possible we can practice encouraging them to solve the problem themselves and this will also create lasting benefits. Or at least get them to offer a solution as part of the process. I understand that some activities will need immediate attention. We need to fit these around the important things in our schedule. Some activities we can delegate. Others will have to wait until we are ready or are able. The key is not to let these drive how we manage your time, your priorities, or your business. What do you need to do to gain greater or improve control?

If interruptions are occurring regularly and are controlling you, you need to stop and assess why. Determine if you will do it now or schedule it for a specific time. Control your situation and others' expectations. There may be some things you can even delegate. Your aim is to manage your time so you can focus on the important tasks that are not always urgent and not be continuously controlled by the urgent and important tasks that are not planned that result in you being busy with non-productive activities. We are aiming to be proactive with planning and scheduling of the important and not urgent tasks in 80% or more of our time.

3. Are there tasks that always seem to control your day?

What are they and how can they be managed? Who or what is causing this to happen?

Dealing with someone else's urgent

I mentioned earlier that sometimes urgent and important tasks are someone else's urgent, not always our own; however, sometimes the consequences may impact on us to varying degrees. As a result, we need to either deal with them now or schedule them for another time. However, there can be several ways to handle these. Not all of them have to be dealt with when they arise or in the same way. One thing to do is to capture or record them, (on your to-do list) so we don't forget them so we can finish what we are doing and then schedule them for a specific time. As we all know, not everything that goes on a to-do list gets done. That's why I refer to it as a capture list. A capture list is simply our place to record things so we don't forget them. Don't leave it in your head because that's where we can sometimes forget it or we have so much going on we get overwhelmed.

Try this, when someone else's urgent tasks come up, find out when it is really required to be complete, so we do not make it urgent based on our assumptions or what we are told initially. It is possible that the answer or action is actually not really needed right there and then. For some tasks, we may need to advise others what our timeframe is so that we can

**"Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least."
Goethe**

control their expectations. We do not always need to react and drop everything and deal with someone else's urgent and important tasks as soon as it arises. I know that one of the most important traits I have learned is to communicate my timeframe and better control expectations. This happens once I have an understanding of their situation and requirement and I help them to understand my position.

4. What are the alternative methods you currently use or that you could potentially use to deal with someone else's urgent tasks or expectations?

It might be learning to occasionally say "NO". Asking if a different time frame might be possible? Delegating them to someone else? Could it be that you ask the provider of the task to come up with a different solution first? Could you allocate time in your diary to deal with unexpected tasks? What options could they be for you?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Your most important client.

Let me give you a different perspective. What difference would it make if you decided to see the completion of the priorities you set yourself each day as being a promise that you made to your most important client? That being a promise or commitment you make to yourself? Are you the most important client you have? Is that promise, the individual characteristic, that will serve you the most? Rather than continually enduring the frustration and overwhelm of not being able to do what you set out to do. What would change if every day you just decided to keep the promise you make to your most important

client and complete the daily priorities you set out to achieve? How good would that make you feel day after day? What would need to change to allow that to happen?

The Productivity & Effectiveness Process

As you work your way through this program, I would like to confirm the direction we are heading in.

- Module 1 was about being clear on your strategic objectives, goals and high payoff activities
- Module 2 explored creating the habits and routines that enhance what you do and embracing the power of prioritising
- Module 3 will look to manage your focus, attention, and dealing with distractions.
- Module 4 will explore controlling and developing a resilient mind.

The road to optimum productivity and effectiveness will not necessarily be smooth sailing all the time or even a linear process. Not all the traffic lights along the journey will be green at every intersection we come to. We need to learn and accept to consciously control what we can, accept and adjust to certain situations, and be adaptable to others. Our aim is to consistently achieve a better than 80% success rate in what we do. If we can, cumulatively the compound effect of all the changes will have a profound long-term impact.

“Your most important work is always ahead of you, never behind you.”

Stephen Covey

The net effect of prioritising is not to keep doing what you have always done; it is to continually make changes, adjustments, and modifications to increase your productivity and effectiveness. It is going to take persistence and patience over a period of time to achieve. I know you have this because you now have a roadmap to move forward.

Bonus – A practical exercise

Let me share a practical exercise and offer some explanation. Here is what might be a typical list of tasks that confront a day. There is a lot here, but it is not too much. This exercise is to give you an idea of how you might manage this type of situation. In brief, the answer to how you manage your day is with planning and prioritising. If you start your day by sitting at your desk at 8.20 am and you want to finish at 6 pm what's next?

Here is what confronts your day.

1. There is a report that needs doing by 4 pm (2 hours)
2. Client appointment at 4.30 (1 hour)
3. Three clients need calls returning (1 hour)
4. You need to allocate time for some study or training (1 hour)
5. There is going to be an urgent task in the morning you haven't allowed for.
6. Staff or key client needs your help on a problem (30 min)
7. Your to-do list is out of control and needs attention (1 hour)
8. There is a barrage of emails with newsletters and correspondence. (30 min)
9. You have social media marketing activity time that needs to be done. (1 hour)
10. There is a networking webinar you need to attend (1 hour) at 9 am

How will you manage the day? The answer is to begin by focusing on what's important. Some things will be locked in as they are scheduled appointments

The definition of important tasks is those that contribute to your strategic objectives and your vision. That will include your HPA. If you don't know your HPA scheduling will be too difficult or maybe impossible. That's the power of clarity and awareness. In module one, you completed a list of your (HPA) high payoff activities. They are the activities that produce the results in your business. If you haven't done the HPA exercise, now would be a good

time to go back and revisit it. There will be multiple solutions to this exercise but worth your attention.

5. Place the ten tasks in the best order to be productive and effective.
1.
2.
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4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.

Let me share mine and my logic.

1. 8.20 Start the day by spending 10 min prioritising your tasks for the day.
2. 8.30 Peruse your emails to identify what may be important and that may need your attention.
3. 8.45 prepare for networking event. Preparation is the key to everything. Ensure you are clear on the goals you want to achieve. If you don't have any goals attending may be a waste of time.
4. 9. am Networking event. What will make it worth the investment of your time? Don't just turn up, have a clear purpose and outcome. Who are you looking to meet?
5. 10.00 You need to find two hours for the 4 pm report. Ideally, the report would have been done earlier in the week with scheduling, so it doesn't become urgent. However, it now becomes the No 1 task after the networking event. You must find focus time to complete this. Focus time (no interruptions) will give you the potential to complete it with time to spare.
6. 11.50. Time to deal with that interruption. You can control how and when you deal with interruptions by asking if you can deal with it in your time frame. Keep in the back of your mind how can I train people and manage yourself. Is the problem potentially someone else's urgent?
7. 12.00 Staff or client issue needs to be dealt with.
8. 12.30 Return calls and take the action where possible. Deal with as much as you can then and there.
9. 1.30 Social media time. Focus time is required so that you have no interruptions or distractions while you deal with this.
10. 2.30 Address your to-do list. What can you delegate, what can you schedule, or what needs to be deleted? Is there someone else you can train to manage some of these tasks moving forward?
11. 3.30 Is unallocated – What important issues need your attention?
12. 4.00 prepare for 4.30 client meeting. Prior preparation is key.
13. The client's appointment is locked in for 4.30. Have clarity on the outcome you are after? How can you control the duration and outcome of the meeting?
14. 5.30 – 6.00 check your emails and messages (maybe return some calls) and identify what is urgent and add those to tomorrow's activity list. If you have time start scheduling what tomorrow will look like for you.

Your day is now done. You have accomplished all the important tasks, and you will feel a heightened level of satisfaction. You created a plan with purpose and achieved your outcomes. You have to feel happy about yourself and your achievements. Can you ask for anything more?

Idealistic or not

This is not idealistic it is about being productive and effective by prioritising and planning. After all, we are aiming to increase productivity and effectiveness, not become unproductive and ineffective. It will take patience and persistence, and a conscience plan. Understanding what is important and your HPA is an integral part of the process.

Will every day be like this, maybe yes or maybe not? However, you have the opportunity to control your controllables with conscious prioritising, planning and understanding.

Can you identify what has been missed off the list? For me, there are two things; study and a lunch break. Ideally, the study should be done at the start of the day when you are at your best. Reschedule it as a priority for tomorrow morning. If it's ongoing, then a recurring project appointment needs to be allocated in your diary. Should you do it before your workday starts? Some may choose that as their best option because that is when you are at your best.

You need to make time for lunch. This is an opportunity to reset and refocus. You might have that after your social media session, and it may replace the unallocated time. A mental break is as important as resetting yourself. I know some people choose not to break for lunch; however, I encourage you to take a break. The reset will allow you to be productive rather than the rest of the day being a slog.

What else needs a recurring appointment or scheduling so it does not become urgent and important? Perhaps the client report. The results are likely to be better when completed earlier in the day and not under such tight time pressure.

How to start the day

Always start your day with planning. Identify your important activities and lock a time into your diary for each activity as an appointment with yourself.

Your email checking needs to be rationalised. Don't look at it every 15 min. Teach and inform people how you deal with emails. It may be beneficial to allocate time during the day to deal with interruptions and important phone calls. Have clarity on the aim of the networking event? Have a purpose and an outcome in mind. Think about what will make it worth your investment of time?

This process is about creating structure in your day. Create awareness of the things that prevent you from working on important tasks and make the necessary adjustments. Not everything you do will always be important. Remember, if we can achieve this 80% or more of the time, we will continue to improve and remove some of your stress and frustration that may fill your day.

Client appointments need your full attention, and you need to purposely guide the meeting and make sure you achieve what's required for a structured timeframe without the client feeling as if they have been rushed. Make sure you are adequately prepared and focused. Practice effective ways of bringing a meeting to a close.

Identify what is not important? What's part of your in-basket? Do you need to schedule for tomorrow?

I know there is a lot to take in. However, the aim is to provide a guide as to how you might handle this particular situation. Is this the only way, certainly not? It's about finding what works for you so you are as productive and effective as you can be to reach your potential.

Module Summary

Well done. We have covered a lot of important information on the path to becoming more productive and effective.

Habits and Routines

Habits, routines, and priorities are key ingredients in the process. You are on your way. Keep up the good work.

With this module, you now have a greater awareness of the habits and routines that serve you and those that do not. You have begun to identify the new habits and routines needed to accomplish your key strategic objectives. You will have begun to identify who you want to be when nobody is looking, which will help shape your identity and provide a framework for the decisions you need to make moving forward.

Priorities

You have the tools for identifying what your priorities need to be. We have explored mechanisms to deal with the urgent and a process for managing and starting your day.

As in module one, there will be value in reviewing the content and refining the answers. Keep finding and implementing the important distinctions that have revealed themselves and the ones that will require you to understand their importance better.

Stage 3 - Implementation exercise.

The next 5 days.

From the stage 2 implementation exercise, I trust you have now successfully integrated a morning habit, an evening habit into your personal day. How did you go with your business habits? If you haven't yet started this add it to your schedule for tomorrow.

You should now also be very clear on what your high payoff activities are. Are you spending more time on these activities?

Let us now build on that. For the next 5 days, the next exercise is to implement what you have just learnt.

At the start of each day, decide your top 3 or 4 priorities that need to be completed for that day and schedule time in your diary to do them. The alternative is to decide the night before you leave the office, what the top tasks are you will do tomorrow.

Allow time in your schedule for the other task that may come up. The focus needs to be on your priorities.

Refer to the "How to identify priorities" on page 13 above for some additional guidance.

When someone else urgent tasks come up I also want you to consider what the alternative to dealing with that immediately is. Is their timeframe realistic? Could someone else do it? That is can it be delegated.

As part of that process, when you create your list of priorities at the start of each day ask yourself:

- How did I go yesterday?
- What did I learn?

- Can I do anything better?
- Did I schedule time in my diary to do them?
- Did I give myself enough time to complete each of the priorities?

Remember we need to be making regular and consistent improvements or adjustments.

Good luck. You've got this.

What's coming up?

In our next module, I will address the characteristics of managing [Distractions and Scheduling Time](#) in more detail. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me. I am looking forward to receiving your responses to the questions in this module and chatting during our next session.

Warm Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Bonifacio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each name being significantly larger and more stylized.

Your time matters.

Robert Bonifacio
COACHING

BUSINESS STRATEGIST AND MENTOR

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