

Productivity Secrets for Online Entrepreneurs and Virtual Assistants

How to Get More Done & Make More Money



Brought to you by:

Virtual Assistance Industry Expert Denise Griffitts

Your Virtual Assistant: <http://VirtualAssistantIndustry.com>

Virtual Assistance University: <http://VirtualAssistanceUniversity.com>

Denise Griffitts.com: <http://DeniseGriffitts.com>

Internet Mastery Marketing Blog: <http://InternetMasteryBlog.com>

Contents:

1. Introduction	Page 3
2. The 80/20 Rule	Page 4
3. The Power of “To-Do” Lists	Page 6
4. Batching Tasks for Speed and Efficiency	Page 8
5. Outsourcing and Delegating	Page 10
6. Make Yourself Uncomfortable	Page 12
7. Urgent vs. Important	Page 14
8. Downloading Your Brain	Page 16
9. Technology and the “To-Do” List	Page 18
10. Check Marks the Spot: The Magic of Checklists	Page 20
11. Breaking Down/Chunking Icky Tasks	Page 22
12. Conclusion	Page 24

Introduction

“Time is money.” That three word sentence sums up the life of the work-at-home entrepreneur. When your staff consists of only you and your dog, you realize quickly that passing the buck isn't an option. Instead, you must quickly learn to sort through the multitude of tasks facing you each day and narrow down to only the key revenue-generating activities, while letting the majority of the “noise” fade away.

It's a fact that you and every other entrepreneur in existence have one thing in common – a 24 hour day. However, what you DO with those 24 hours can be the single difference between having a profitable business or having to take on a side job waiting tables at Chili's to make the mortgage.

In this special report, I'll review several ways you can increase your productivity by narrowing down and focusing on the tasks that are going to move you towards your biggest money-making goals. You'll learn how to prioritize your daily tasks, how to group them for greater efficiency, and how to keep on top of all the various projects you have going, so you don't drop any critical elements.

Though you may already feel pressed for time (and the thought of reading this report seems like just another of countless things to do), I encourage you to take a break from your crazy schedule, sit down and read through this entire report. The time you invest will be paid back in greater efficiency – and therefore profit.

The 80/20 Rule

What if I told you that you could take your daily To Do list, and **eliminate** over half the items on there, with no negative impact on your bottom line? You'd probably think I'm nuts, but the truth is, most of us spend most of our time on irrelevant tasks that have little or nothing to do with the attainment of our most important goals.

The information that I'm about to share with you was life-altering to me, so I hope that you don't skim this section thinking it's not appropriate to your business (it is) or that it's too complex (it isn't).

There is an economic principle called the 80/20 Rule, or Pareto Principle, that means that 80 percent of the value of any group comes from only 20 percent of the members of this group.

Let me explain a bit better. The 80/20 Rule basically means that 80% of the effects of anything in your life will come from 20% of the causes.

The 80/20 Rule has been applied to sales forces, wealth distribution, test scores, etc. Heck, it can be applied to parenting, marriage, health and exercise. It's true in... well 80% of your life, I'd imagine.

When applied to your "To Do" list, it means that 80 percent of the value of your daily list comes from only 20 percent of the items on it. In other words, if you have 10 items on your list, you could focus on only two tasks and get the vast majority of success just from those two activities – while ignoring the other 8 items entirely.

So, by now you're probably ready to go after your "To-Do" list, cutting out those low-payoff items. Before you get out the hatchet, read this short list of suggestions so that you cut the right ones out, and focus on the high-reward tasks:

1. **Know what your goals are.**

You can't choose your biggest payoff tasks if you don't know what your goals are. Thoughtful planning is critical so you know what you're trying to accomplish and how to rank your items accordingly.

2. **Write it all down.**

Write every task down, from the largest to the seemingly least important. If you're finding yourself getting sidetracked during the day, it may be because you've failed to write critical activities on your list. Before you can rank your items, you need a complete view of your work world.

3. **Evaluate.**

With your goals in mind, ask yourself, “What are the top three activities I can complete today that will move me closer to those goals?” Put an asterisk next to those tasks, and start the day there. If you complete any of the other items, it’ll be a bonus.

4. **Track your success.**

At the end of the week, review your daily lists. Have you made significant progress towards your goals? Which tasks turned out to be the most important? Which did you think were important but proved to be less critical?

5. **Keep refining.**

Use your weekly reviews to inform your decisions going forward. If you notice that you often rank your social media efforts as critical, but they don't seem to be impacting your progress towards your goals, resist putting those as starred items on your daily list. Conversely, if you notice a pattern in your highest impact activities, keep those high on your list.

Not all “To-Do” items are created equal. If you consistently evaluate your activities according to your most important goals, you'll soon know which tasks to keep high on the “To-Do” list – and which can be eliminated completely.

The Power of “To-Do” Lists

One of my favorite book titles is, “[Write It Down, Make It Happen](#)” by Henriette M. Klauser, Ph.D. The premise of the book is simple: By writing down your goals and desires, you are much more likely to make those dreams a reality.

How much more likely? Research shows that people who write down their goals are about twice as likely to achieve them as those who do not. And if you count those who write down their goals but don't quite meet them, they still get a lot closer than they would have if they hadn't written them down in the first place. Therefore, you can see the strong case for committing to your goals in writing.

This research is true in long-term goals like building your dream house or traveling the world – but what does all of this have to do with daily “To-Do” lists? Well, what is a “To-Do” list but a list of goals for the day? That means by writing your daily goals list on paper, you're more than twice as likely to make significant process towards checking those items off than if you just flew by the seat of your pants. Here are some tips to help you create do-able, effective “To-Do” lists:

- 1. Make it reasonable.**

We're all too familiar with the endless “To-Do” list, the one with dozens of items, more than you could accomplish in a week, let alone a day. While writing every single thing you have to do down on a list may make you feel like you're getting your life under control, it's actually counterproductive. Not only will critical tasks get lost in the muddle, you can become overwhelmed with the sheer volume of things you have to accomplish. It may be more attractive to just take a nap!

- 2. Make it specific.**

One of the biggest problems with “To-Do” lists is that people write down projects versus tasks. Anything that goes on your list should be something you can actually accomplish, such as “Call Joe about product release plans,” instead of “Finalize product release.” If you write down projects instead of tasks, you can't ever cross them off – they just sit on your list and migrate from one day to the next which is obviously very frustrating. On the other hand, basic Psychology teaches that rewards make us want to do an activity more – so every time we check off an item on our list; it motivates us to do more. You can only do that if the items are small enough to check off. However...

- 3. Make it important.**

I've been tempted to write down things on my list just so I can cross them off. And while this gives me a little momentary boost, it doesn't do much to move you closer to your goals. So before something makes it onto your list, ask yourself if it's critical to the completion of your goals. If not, don't even write it

down. (Trust me; you will remember to “eat lunch” even if you don’t have it on your daily list!)

When used correctly, “To-Do” lists are powerful tools that can help you to accomplish more in less time. By “respecting the list” and following these three tips, you’ll have a daily “To-Do” list that will harness your energy and help you blast closer toward your biggest goals.

Batching Tasks for Speed and Efficiency

Pull out your new and improved “To-Do” list. Look it over and I bet you'll see some commonalities and patterns. You might find there are types of tasks that are all performed similarly.

How are they similar? Maybe you complete these tasks while you're in the same mindset or while using the same equipment. They might be tasks that are call-related, tasks that need to be done in the same software on the computer, tasks that require extended thinking, etc.

By grouping these tasks together, you can save transition time between activities – and, of course, get more done in less time. These are the types of tasks that are perfect for batching:

- **Tasks that occur or can be scheduled in the same physical location.**
By grouping tasks in the same environment together, you save time moving back and forth. For instance, if you're meeting a client downtown, arrange several other meetings in the same general area.

Other ideas: Mailing/shipping at the post office, doctor's appointments, running errands, even daily tasks in your house (when you're in the kitchen cooking breakfast, put away the dishes in the dishwasher, too).

- **Tasks that occur or can be scheduled in the same location virtually.**
When using certain websites or software online, you'll begin to see commonalities where you can batch tasks. Setting up specialized software can be a time-eater. If you are sending emails, log in to your account and write and send a bunch at once. For instance, why not write a week's worth of blog posts in your Word Processor and then copy and paste them all into your blog at once? Alternatively, you can write them in WordPress, add your images and tags and schedule them to automatically post on a future date. You can do the same thing with article marketing. Write a series of 5 articles and then submit them all at once. Or perhaps your video creation. If you've got the software open to create one video, you might as well create several at the same time.

Other ideas: Keyword research, uploading videos to Amazon S3, uploading blog posts, conducting interviews on Skype, submitting articles to article directories. Batch these tasks much as you would batch your chores when you are running around town in order to save time and gas.

- **Tasks that are repetitive.**
If you were washing clothes, would you throw one sock into the washer, add

detergent, turn it on, and let it go through the cycle, then take it out and add the next sock? No way! You'd do a whole load at once to save time, energy, water, and detergent. You can do the same thing with your business-related repetitive tasks. Doing research, creating a tracking sheet, and sending e-mails to potential Joint Venture (JV) partners can easily be batched at each stage of the process.

Other ideas: Entering receipts into your accounting software program, paying bills, sending out requests for information, updating your blog security and plugins.

- **Tasks that have the same goal.**

Performing all your marketing activities during a set time period keeps your brain in the right spot – you don't have to switch speeds from thinking about advertising and publicity to editing to bookkeeping.

Other ideas: Brainstorming new product ideas, writing articles for submission, finding affiliate products to promote.

One caveat: You want to perform **high-value tasks**, not just ones you can get done quickly. There is a huge difference between being effective and being busy. Activities that can be batched – especially repetitive tasks – often fall into the “busy” category. They're things we can churn out quickly, that make us feel like we've made good progress, and that we can cross off our list. But at the end of the day, we can find we spent our time efficiently, but not particularly effectively. That's why it's critical to evaluate what's on your list before you even begin to find ways to complete your actions more efficiently.

Outsourcing and Delegating

Once you've figured out the high-value items on your "To-Do" list, you may be wondering how you're going to do all of those other tasks that you haven't listed as critical, but that are still important to the maintenance of your business.

Here's the short answer: **You** don't. **Someone else** does!

Oprah doesn't film her own show (heck, she doesn't even choose her own clothes!). Tony Hsieh doesn't answer the phones at Zappos.com. And Jay Leno doesn't write all his own jokes. These powerhouses know the secret to their success is to focus on what they do best – the things only THEY can do – and pass the rest onto someone else. BTW, I highly recommend picking up Tony Hsieh's book "[Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion, and Purpose](#)."

Before you hand your company passwords and your Rolodex over to your 16-year-old son and head out the door for that long-desired Tahitian vacation, let's review some of the basics of delegating and outsourcing.

First, what's the difference? "Delegating" typically refers to handing tasks off to someone else in your organization, while "outsourcing" generally means you've contracted someone outside your company (a [Virtual Assistant](#)) to handle specific tasks. You might delegate responding to e-mail to your assistant, while you outsource the janitorial services to a private firm. The distinction isn't a big one, but it's important because the cost structure is different. If someone's already part of your organization, they can take on additional tasks without having to be compensated for each and every one. But if you're outsourcing, passing more activities to another, outside party will mean you're paying more.

As a work-at-home entrepreneur, you're likely flying solo, so you'll be doing more outsourcing than delegating. (You'll be hiring contractors rather than hiring employees who work for your company.) But the same principles still apply.

Here are five questions to ask before you pass a task on to someone else:

1. **Does it really need to be done?**

What would happen if NO ONE did this particular task? Would it impact your business's credibility, profit, or customer service? If you can't answer "Yes" to at least one of those categories, then you might want to think about crossing this one off the master list and letting it go undone.

2. **Can someone else do it as well as or better than you can?**

If so, then this is not your core competency, and you should pass the activity on

to someone else. Let other people do their thing while you do yours. You want to work to your highest creative and technical level. So does your assistant or team. Everybody has their strengths and when these strengths and talents are pooled, amazing things can happen.

3. **Will you ever have to do this again?**

If this activity is a one-time deal (installing software, creating an RSS feed, registering a product with Clickbank.com), there's no value in you working your way up the learning curve. Let someone else do it for you.

4. **How much will it cost you to outsource?**

We often **overestimate** how much we'll have to pay someone else to do the tasks that we can't or don't want to perform. Get an estimate before you write it off as too expensive. You may be pleasantly surprised how quickly and cheaply an "expert" can handle those tasks that are languishing at the bottom of your list.

5. **Do you enjoy it?**

If you don't like doing it, find someone else to take it off your hands, pronto! Life's too short to spend your time on activities you detest. And even more important, your displeasure will show in the end result. Do what makes your heart sing and leave the rest to someone else. Just as a "for instance" I can work competently and capably in Photoshop. But... I really don't enjoy it much so I typically delegate image manipulation or creation tasks to a team member who loves doing that type of work. Problem solved!

Entrepreneurs are do-it-yourself types, and you may be tempted to keep everything under your own control. But by trying to do everything with your own two hands, you're actually stunting your company's growth. Let others help you out, allowing you to concentrate where you add the most value. It's the fastest and best way to grow your business.

Make Yourself Uncomfortable

While I'm all for comfort, there are times when a little discomfort can go a long way towards helping us achieve our goals. Think about working with a personal trainer; his or her goal is to push you outside your usual routine to help you get fit, be stronger, and become healthier. And if it works for your body, it can work for your business, too. In fact, one of the best things you can do as an entrepreneur is to constantly push yourself to do the things that make you the most uncomfortable.

If you review your list of goals – or even your daily “To-Do” list – the item that makes you the most nervous is likely the one that could have the biggest payoff. Contacting a big name in your industry, publishing a post that's more opinionated than your typical “safe” topics, creating a video when you're strictly a written word kind of businessperson, attending a seminar in your area, creating your first infoproduct, saying “yes” to an interview with a big name in your field – all of these are risky because they put you in the position of being rejected. But at the same time, they can have a huge impact on your business. One big action like this can take the place of hundreds of smaller, safer steps.

I know, I know. It's hard to put yourself out there. But there are some things you can do to make sure your risks are calculated ones:

- 1. Calculate the downside.**

Ask yourself, “What's the worst that can happen?” If you're rejected, will you lose your business? Alienate a loved one? Hurt someone? Probably not. Acknowledging the worst case scenario helps you keep the risk in perspective.

- 2. Do your research.**

Preparing yourself for the event can only help you be more successful. Do your research on the new contact you're pitching. Review your script before giving a speech. Know what you're getting into, and how you'll handle any questions or issues that will arise.

- 3. Think positive.**

Expect the best. When you contact a big-name potential partner, expect that they'll want to work with you. When you submit an article or manuscript, assume that it will be accepted. Sure, things go wrong, but don't borrow trouble. If there are problems, you'll find out soon enough.

- 4. Figure out a back-up plan.**

If your number-one Joint Venture (JV) partner turns you down, who are you going to go to next? If you can't book the hotel for your preferred date for your first live seminar, what's your second choice? Having a plan to fall back on will

make you less likely to freak out if your ideal situation doesn't materialize.

5. **Do it again. And again. And again.**

For your business to keep growing, YOU need to keep growing. And that means constantly spreading your wings farther and farther. Sometimes you'll fly and sometimes you'll flop, but if you keep working at it, over time you'll find yourself moving way beyond your old safety zone, operating at a whole new level.

Urgent vs. Important

Do you feel like your day is spent in “firefighter” mode – putting out one emergency blaze after another? You can easily spend eight hours or more at the beck and call of the urgent activities on your list: The phone call that comes right when you're sitting down to do some much-needed strategic planning, the unexpected invitation to contribute to a blog round-up, the desperate plea for a last-minute speaker on an industry teleconference. While these all might be worthy tasks, they're not necessarily related to your high-level goals. And as a result, the time you've set aside for your important activities can be usurped by the tyranny of the urgent.

Time Management Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crisis• Deadline-driven projects, meetings, preparations	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building Expertise• Soft Skills Improvement• Career Planning• Relationship building• Family Vacation
Not Important	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interruptions, some phone calls• Some mail, some reports• Some meetings	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Junk mail• Trivia• Some phone calls• Time wasters

Yes, it's hard to ignore a ringing phone or a full email inbox. But if you want to move your business to the next level quickly, you need to have a system for focusing on the important tasks instead of the urgent ones.

Here are five tips for keeping your attention in the right spot:

1. Know what “important” is.

You have to have your high-level goals in front of you, literally and figuratively. You must know what you're trying to accomplish this month, this week, today, so you can filter your activities accordingly.

2. Create zones with no distractions.

It's not practical to turn off your phone ringer for 8 hours straight, or to check your email only once a day. But you can set up zones where you limit outside interruptions. Start with a quiet time first thing in the morning for one hour. Get one big item off your “To-Do” list before you check email. If that works well, add another quiet zone in the afternoon, maybe right before you quit work, so you can put your planning together for the following day.

3. Set expectations.

You train people how to treat you and what to expect from you. If you always respond to their emails immediately, they'll grow to expect immediate answers. Slowly wean them from expecting you to be on-call, 24/7. In my business, I

make it quite clear to my new clients that “family time” is sacrosanct in my home, meaning that there is a certain block of time each evening that I will not answer the phone, emails, or even the front door unless there is a true emergency. My clients understand and support this and in fact, many of them are now doing the same!

4. Create systems to support your new habits.

Email in-box filters that shuffle non-critical newsletters and group emails to another filter for later reading will help keep you from getting sidetracked. Removing all non-essential programs and icons from your computer desktop (and from your physical desktop, too!) can keep you focused. Figure out where you're getting derailed and create some boundaries to keep you on task.

5. Remind yourself you can't do everything.

Admitting you can't read every book and newsletter, you can't keep up with every blog, you can't personally correspond with everyone on your mailing list, can go a long way to helping you see your limits. Suddenly, you realize you're only human, and if you can't do everything, you have to be strategic about where you do spend your time.

It can be very uncomfortable to leave things undone, or to choose not to respond to certain invitations or requests. Remind yourself of the big picture, and hold fast to that vision.

Downloading Your Brain: Mindmapping Your “To-Do” List

We are trained early on to think that lists must be linear – one item after another, with cute little check boxes next to each. But what if your brain isn't the linear type? Many people, especially creatives, have trouble thinking in a linear fashion. Forcing themselves to create “To-Do” lists in a traditional manner makes them feel stifled and bored, precisely the wrong mindset in which to do your best thinking.

Fortunately, you're not graded on your “To-Do” list. There is no one “right” way. In fact, some of the most productive people don't use traditional “To-Do” lists at all. They use mindmaps. Mindmapping is a visual way to get information out of your brain and onto a page, which also can create fully functional action “lists.”

The basics for mindmapping are simple. There are computer programs that can assist you (Google “mindmap software” for suggestions) and many people prefer those, but really all you need is a large sheet of blank paper and a pen.

Start with a main idea in the center of the page, and brainstorm all the possible related topics around the edges of the page, with lines connecting each thought to the center. Chains of thoughts will link one idea to the next, and indicate patterns and possible links. The idea is that you're not forcing your thoughts into a pre-set format; you're allowing yourself to get all the information out of your brain before trying to group and organize it.

Mindmaps are also useful for figuring out project timelines. Here's how it would work...

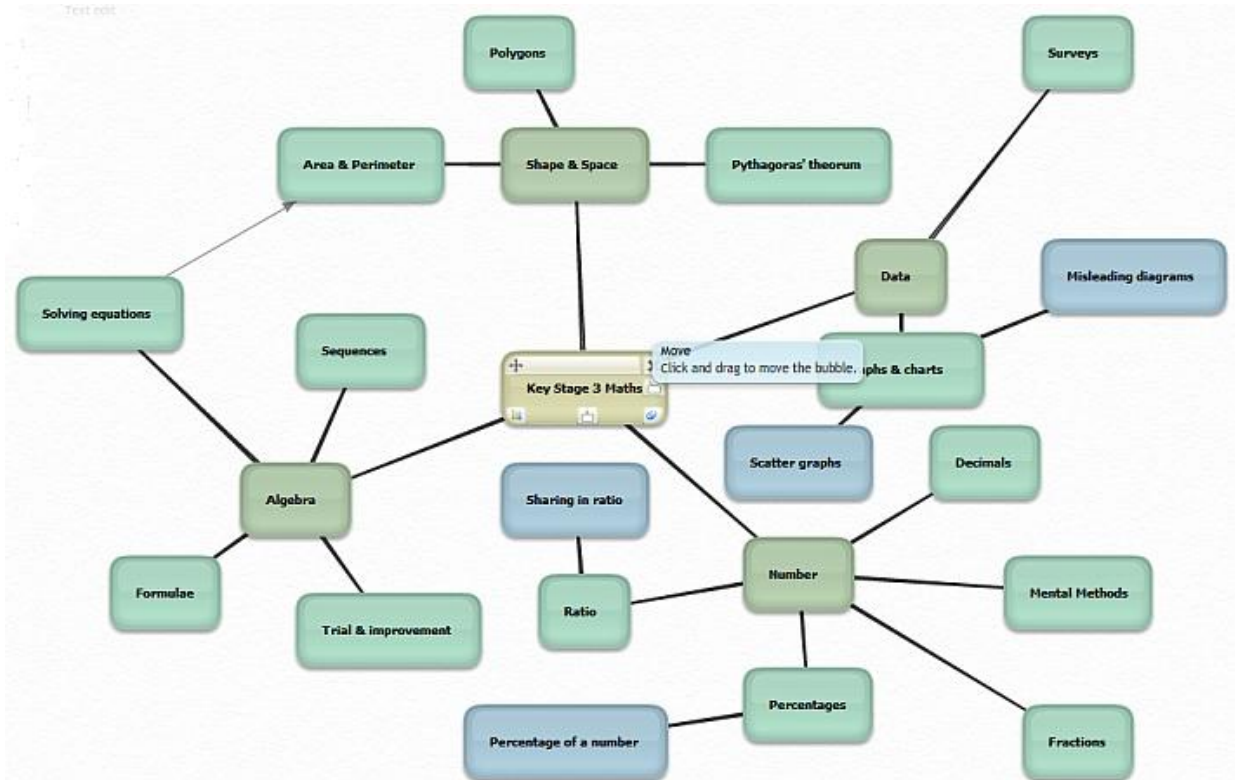
1. Start with the goal in the center
(For instance, “Send new customers the latest autoresponder series.”).
2. Ask yourself, “What would have to happen before I reached that result?”
(“I'd need to load the series into my email system”)
3. Keep asking that same question, over and over.
(“Before that, I'd need to write the series.”).
4. Keep going until you get to the first thing you need to do TODAY to get moving towards completion.
(“I'd need to create a new list in my email system and load the new contacts into it.”).
5. Then add that item to today's list of activities.

Where people fall down when using mindmaps is they never finish. They create the map and think they're done. But you have to actually take that information and add it to a strategy that includes tasks and deadlines. Otherwise, it's like pulling everything out of your closet and spreading it across your bedroom. Your closet is not clean and

organized until you create a plan for the space and put everything according to that plan.

Mindmapping can be a fun and effective way to create sophisticated strategies and project plans. The key is to allow yourself free rein to get everything down on paper, and then go back and instill logical structure around those ideas.

This mindmap was created for free at: <http://www.bubbl.us/index>



Technology and the “To-Do” List

While good ole' paper and pen will create effective “To-Do” lists, there are more technological options available all the time. With all of these fantastic tools available, you might want to check out some of these options for turbo-charging your daily “To-Do’s”:

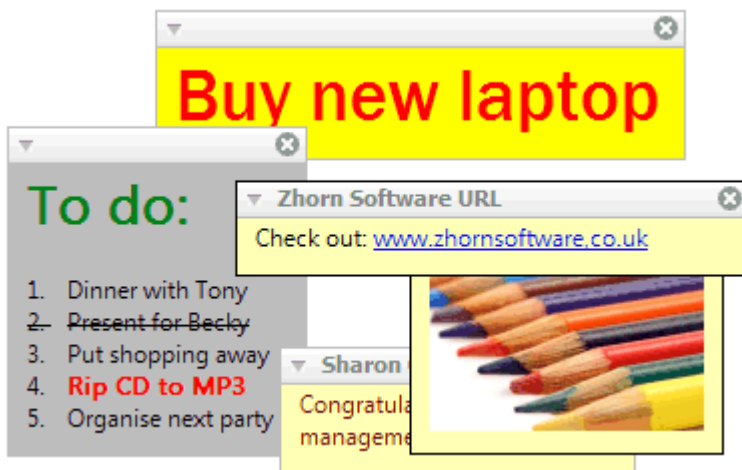
1. **Remember the Milk (rememberthemilk.com).**
With interfaces with Google Calendar and apps for Twitter, the iPhone and the Android, Remember the Milk is like a “To-Do” list on steroids. You can set up reminder messages to be sent to you via IM or email, you can share your tasks with others, and set priorities. Service is free.
2. **Basecamp (basecamp.com).**
Basecamp is on the list of many entrepreneurs' must-have tools. The online service provides task and project tracking, messaging, and file storage for multiple users. Basecamp may be more than you need for a daily “To-Do” list, but check out the free trial. You may fall in love with its capabilities for tracking multiple lists across multiple projects and users. The basic service is \$24 per month, with larger, more robust plans going up to \$149/month. According to parent company 37signals, over 1 million people and small businesses: freelancers, designers, lawyers, publishers, teachers, manufacturers, charities are using Basecamp.
3. **Ta-Da Lists (tadalist.com).**
If you just want basic list capability without a lot of bells and whistles, Ta-Da Lists is for you. You can create multiple lists, share them with others, and download them to your iPhone. Service is free.
4. **Rough Underbelly (roughunderbelly.com).**
This “To-Do” list service has a unique way of tracking priorities. You assign a certain number of points to each task, and your daily score is tallied and tracked over time. There's also a timer function. No collaboration or sharing. Service is free.
5. **Toodledo (toodledo.com).**
Want to assign priorities, tags, and deadlines, set goals, create folders, and collaborate with others? Toodledo may be just the answer for you. A robust list function where you can store all your lists and notes together. Service is free.
6. **Mindomo (mindomo.com).**
If you prefer to create mindmaps before assigning tasks to lists, check out Mindomo. You can create maps, embed notes, and work online and off. The basic

version includes 7 maps and is free; upgrades are available for \$6/month for an individual and \$9/month for a team.

There are literally dozens of tools available to help you track your projects and activities. Don't get blinded by the glitz of the technology, though – the best tool is always the one that is easy to use and available when you need it.

One tool that I use consistently is my desktop yellow stickies. This wonderful little tool keeps my important thoughts on one monitor while I work on another.

<http://www.zhornsoftware.co.uk/stickies/>. This happens to be a free tool, but Google the words “desktop yellow stickies” to find different resources.



For more tools that we use and recommend, please visit my Internet Mastery Marketing Blog here: <http://InternetMasteryBlog.com> and type “Weekly Recommended Resource” in the search box. These same tips can be found on most blogs that I run.

Check Marks the Spot: The Magic of Checklists

What do emergency room physicians, airline pilots, and kindergarten classes all have in common? They all use checklists to make sure they're doing the right things at the right time. While they're not sexy or fashionable, checklists are the backbone of many a successful business. Here are some ways checklists can help entrepreneurs keep their businesses running smoothly and productively:



- **Checklists provide a guideline for outsourcing or delegating.**
Want to outsource slideshow creation to a contractor? Send them the details with your “slideshow creation” checklist, and they'll know exactly what you want them to do, in order.
- **Checklists make it easy to replicate best practices.**
Once you've pinpointed the exact way to create killer sales pages, you can document that and do it over and over again. Brilliance!
- **Checklists save time by eliminating the “what's next?” stage.**
You know when you finish one thing and have to stop and think, “What the heck do I do next?” Well, with a good checklist you won't have to do that anymore. You'll know.
- **Checklists ensure that everyone is on the same page.**
When you're collaborating with partners or assistants, it's easy to lose sight of who's responsible for what, when. Checklists make it easy to assign tasks and remind yourself the proper order of execution.

Not all checklists are created equal, though. Research has shown there are a few key ingredients for making good checklists:

1. **Keep it to one page.** Longer checklists are intimidating and make it easy for people to get lost. Or they'll avoid using the checklist because it's just too darned long.
2. **Be specific.** Especially if you're outsourcing or delegating, you have to leave no room for ambiguity.
3. **Test it out.** Once you've created what you think is a great checklist, give it a go. See if you've left anything out or put too much in. Then refine it and test it again.

4. **Have someone else test it.** Of course, you know what you mean by “add graphic to web page,” but will someone else? Give it to someone else to test and see what they come up with, where they get stuck, and what works well.
5. **Use it!** Checklists don't do any good if they're languishing on your hard drive. Use them – and if you find yourself NOT using them, ask why. Is it too complex? Too self-explanatory? Too simple? Then use that information to create a better checklist.

While checklists won't solve all of your productivity issues, they are a fantastic way to simplify complex information and provide guidance for outsourcing. They can be a bit time-intensive to create, but the time that you'll save on the back end will be well worth the effort.

Doing the Unthinkable

Quick – pull out a few of your old “To-Do” lists. Look through them for that one item that keeps appearing, over and over, as you transfer it from list to list. How old is it? A week? A month? Longer?

We all have these stinkers that sink to the bottom of every “To-Do” list. Maybe it's cold-calling a dozen potential partners. Maybe it's revamping your website. Maybe it's something as easy as making an appointment with the proctologist (yuk!). Whatever your personal roadblock is, it's time to bring it into the light of day and get it done. Here's how:



1. **Ask yourself why you haven't done it yet.**

Do you just not want to? Do you not know how to do it? Is it too complex to tackle all at once? Do you tell yourself it will take too long? Do you need more information before you can get started? Figure out what the hold-up is. Once you know what's causing your stopping point, you can work to address it.

2. **Chunk it down.**

If the task is a complex one and you're putting it off just because you think it'll take too long, you need to break it up into parts. Of course you're never going to get around to reorganizing your office if you're waiting for a block of 8 empty hours when you can tackle the chore. Instead, look for smaller pockets of time where you can accomplish more manageable pieces of the larger task. If the task is particularly odious or unappealing, 15 minutes is a good start.

3. **Give yourself a visual reminder of your progress.**

If you're dealing with a complex project that will require multiple tasks across many days, chart your progress where you can see it and be motivated by your completion (or lack thereof). Imagine a workout chart or a fund-raising goal to visualize how this would work.

4. **Write it in your calendar.**

If putting the activity on your “To-Do” list isn't doing the trick, put it on your calendar. Actually schedule a specific time that you will complete the task. Don't let anything else supersede your appointment!

5. **Reward yourself.**

Sometimes it's enough of a reward to think past the task and imagine how your life or business will improve as a result of completing the unappealing item. But

sometimes you need a little more motivation. If you're working on reorganizing your office, promise yourself a new desk set or planner. Dinner out at a special restaurant or \$20 to spend on Amazon are also good motivators.

It's been said that the only difference between a winner and a loser is that the winner does the things the loser wasn't willing to do. Turn your business into a winner by tackling those tasks you'd rather avoid. You'll usually find that getting them off your list will give you a huge boost of energy, leaving you ready to get on with the rest of your day with excitement.

Conclusion

It's great to make yourself a task-completing machine, crossing off items from your "To-Do" list as soon as you write them down. But knowing what **TO** do – and what **NOT** to do – is more important than being productive.

Through this report, I've introduced you to a number of different strategies and tools. Some will help you figure out where to focus your energy on a day-to-day basis, and some will help you use that energy more effectively. Remember, though, that tools are only as good as the person who holds them. No "To-Do" list, no software program, no mindset or trick or suggestion is going to help you build a better, more productive business. Only you can do that, and you do it by sitting down at your desk, day after day, and doing the hard stuff.

Whatever your business goals, I wish you peace, prosperity, and productivity.

Your Partner In Success,

Denise Griffitts

Email: info@virtualassistantindustry.com Telephone: 888-719-6711

Find me on the Web:

Your Virtual Assistant: <http://VirtualAssistantIndustry.com>

Virtual Assistance University: <http://VirtualAssistanceUniversity.com>

Denise Griffitts.com: <http://DeniseGriffitts.com>

Ask Denise Griffitts Your Virtual Assistance Industry Questions:
<http://AskDeniseGriffitts.com>

Internet Mastery Marketing Blog: <http://InternetMasteryBlog.com>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/denisegriffitts> and <http://twitter.com/VAUniversity>

Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Lafayette-LA/Denise-Griffitts-Virtual-Assistance-Industry-Expert/55167037874?ref=ts&_a=15&

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/denisegriffitts>

Your Partner In Success Radio Show: <http://blogtalkradio.com/denise-griffitts>