

The Way of The Productivityist

A Manifesto

by Mike Vardy



Introduction

I coined the term “productivityist” because I believe there’s a need for it. There’s too many so-called experts in this realm and not many actual ones. I’m certainly not one. But I’m most certainly a productivityist.

Yes, I've talked about it before...but it bears repeating: A productivityist is not a productivity expert. A productivityist is not a guru. A productivityist is a productivity enthusiast.

They study productivity, be it the tools or habits. They dive deeper into the realm than most people. Just like a comedian looks at the world differently, so does the productivityist. They are a lot like enthusiasts in other areas; they like to go further in their craft and push boundaries. They like to explore new processes, new ideas, new ways to get things done.

It's because of this that many productivityists end up spending more time “doing” productive rather than “being” productive for a while. Eventually, they start to shift the other way over time – that’s what happened with me. I’d like to spare you that time spent in world of getting caught up in that, so I’ve assembled a manifesto for all the productivity enthusiasts out there.

I call it The Way of The Productivityist and whether you’re a productivityist or not, there’s some real gold to be mined from it.

1

Don't fight your body clock.

Night owls can be just as productive as early risers. They can also be just as unproductive. Your body knows you better than the outside forces that compel you to get up early or stay up late do. It knows when you're at your peak and when you aren't. Listen to it and go with the flow. Once you stop fighting your body clock, you'll be able to plan out your day (both work time and leisure time) so that you can get the most out of your daily life.

2

Push through urgent to get to important.

There will always be urgency in our lives. Someone will have something for you to do that they needed yesterday. So push through it. If you work on it knowing that the important stuff is waiting for you on the other side and that not doing it only keeps you further and further away from it, you'll get it done. And if you are able to work on the important stuff often enough, the quality of your work on that transcends to everything you do – including the urgent stuff.



Stop doing productive.
Start being productive.

Doing for the sake of doing isn't the goal. Otherwise, you'll never stop doing. You need to stop doing from time to time in order to just be. And if you're being productive, you'll be doing the right things – not the wrong things. No matter what the time.



Don't just pick stuff.
Pick the right stuff.

This falls in line with the whole doing vs. being concept. Make conscious choices that will help you get to where you want to be with the least amount of resistance (self-imposed or otherwise). Otherwise you'll find that the stuff chooses you instead. And it's often the wrong stuff that does.



Set limits.
They are your guardian
against overwhelm.

You can't do everything. Stop trying. We're not machines; we're living beings that need more than just achievement and accomplishment as sustenance. Don't be afraid to turn things down if they aren't for you at that moment. Better to close a door now than to have several shut in your face later because you didn't live up to what was beyond what you could do at the time. (Note: Three truly is a magic number. Don't try to do more than 3 things at once. Ever.)



Take the time to create
space for yourself and you'll
create the space to make
time for yourself.

Basically this boils down to planning. Set yourself up so that you have the space (mental, emotional, environmental, etc.) so that you can make the best of the time you have. Do that, and you'll be able to take the time away from everything and simply enjoy life.



Sometimes paper is the best form of technology there is.

Don't underestimate its power. Paper is the real touchstone of personal productivity. It doesn't require a special device to use it, it doesn't need to be connected to the Internet for it to work and it is incredibly user-friendly. A productivityist always has paper and a writing instrument with them...because you just never know. Embrace paper however you choose, whether it be with a simple legal pad and a Bic or a fancy notebook and Pilot Hi-Tec C. Just be sure to embrace it.



The to-do list is done – as in it was never done. The “why to-do” list? Now that's a list worth doing.

Checking off boxes is really just checking off boxes. At the end of the day, unless you've done a lot of what I've mentioned above, all you've accomplished is a lot of tasks that are as empty as the boxes you just checked. Why are you doing those things? Why do you need to be the one doing them? Why do they even need to be done? These are the aspects of the “why to-do” list. This list will always be shorter in terms of what you're going to do in a day and is infinitely more fulfilling –

because there's a deeper meaning behind it. Make that list from now on. Getting things done isn't important. Getting your things done is.



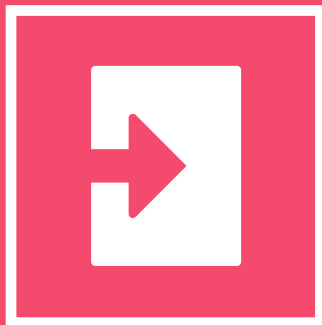
To be more productive over the long-term, you need to spend some time setting up your system in the short-term.

A productivityist knows this and is able to deal with this. They know that an email inbox is different than a task management inbox. They know that by setting up filters and rules in their software that they will lose time initially, but they will gain it back in spades over time. Take the time to build your system – a system that works for you over the long haul. Because if you have the foundation of a strong system in place, then any task, goal or project you throw at it will be handled far better than a system that was a weak foundation – or no foundation at all.



Being selfish with your time can make you more selfless over time.

You need to take time for yourself. You need breaks. You need to shift. You can't be stuck in the same thing all the time or you'll get stuck. You need to move. You own your time, but it is fleeting. You only get a moment once, so use it wisely. If you treat yourself well with your own time, you'll be able to treat others well with theirs.



Conclusion

I'm not perfect. I stray from this...more often than I'd like. I'm on the path just as much as anyone else. Hopefully this manifesto will help keep all of us on the path to enhanced productivity.

Thanks for reading.