

# Save Tons of Time

(or "The Get Sh\*t Done Book")

Sturdy McKee

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Do you ever wonder why you feel so busy and yet don't accomplish all the things you want?

Do you often wonder how some people seem like they don't even work, but have a nice house, cool car, two businesses, happy kids, and get to travel?

What about that dad who walks his boys to school each day, and gets to go to their practices, games, and performances, while not seeming stressed about working?

And on the other end of that spectrum, do you have a friend who is always "*Super Busy*" and never has any time, except to talk about how very, very busy they are?

*What is the difference between these people?*

It is how they work. It is a skill. *And it is learnable.*

So, how will you feel when you change your 12 hour work days into 4 hour days while getting more done?



"IMPOSSIBLE!" You say.

"THAT'S CRAZY!!" You say.

"What's the catch?" You say.

The only catch is, you have to follow the process.

Initially it seems like more work. But in actuality, it is less work. It is just "new" work, or a new way of approaching things, that takes a little getting used to.

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And since we all have the same amount of time each day, I am fascinated by how some people are stressed out and super busy working behind a coffee counter, while others are running \$1M, \$10M, or even \$100M businesses while surfing, playing golf, or walking their daughter to Elementary school in flip flops.

There will be those who try to market the "life hack", or the "one big secret" to gaining control of your time.

There is no real "secret". At least nobody is trying to keep it a secret. However, there is a key, a process, to gain control of your time and get more done.

The key is how they use their time, what they focus on, and what they say "No" to.

This is one of my passions! Getting sh\*t done!

I keep trying to get better at it. I practice. I slip. I fail. And I regroup and start over. It's a process, a habit, an exercise, and it only works when I actively do it.

It will only work for you when you actively do it.

And we will get to that in just a bit.

The flip side of this same coin is one of my real pet peeves.

This pet peeve is "multi-tasking". It is all the distractions we allow ourselves to pursue, and the swirl, the repetition of these patterns, despite all the evidence in our own lives, and that of those around us, that it does not work.

It is the not getting things done because we seemingly lack the tools to focus, stay focused, and get sh\*t done. And in today's world, it is super easy to get distracted, lose focus, and sometimes not even notice that it is happening.

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By first understanding the myth of multitasking, and fighting its allure, we can simply accomplish more. Lord Chesterfield knew about this in 1740 (check out Christine Rosen's article). Christine Rosen [wrote about it in the Atlantic](#) in 2008. And Dave Crenshaw published his book [The Myth of Multitasking](#), complete with exercises, also in 2008. They provide excellent resources on this topic, and I highly recommend you check them out.

Secondly, by establishing our focus through deciding what is really important, and then relentlessly focusing our attention, energy, and effort on that important thing, we cannot only accomplish more. We can accomplish great things. We can accomplish the *right* things.

*According to Bill Gates, "Most people overestimate what they can do in one year and underestimate what they can do in ten years."*

Do you think it might be possible that Bill Gates has presided over a business with more moving parts than yours? Has he been able to accomplish a little bit more in his life thus far? Have you ever thought about how he was able to do that?

He focuses on what he needs to get done. Relentlessly.

But relentless focus does not mean obsessing over a thing 24/7. It means using that relentless focus while we are doing that one thing. Then focusing on the next thing until it is done. And then focusing on the next thing until it is done. And it is making sure that the things we are focusing on are the right things, the things that will move us toward our goals.

And then we get to free up our time and mental energy to enjoy the reason we set those goals in the first place. We get to have the time and the mental energy to then enjoy the life we want.

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By establishing that important thing, and working on that important thing, that one important thing at a time, we have the power to accomplish so much more. We get in the zone. We start to flow. We make cool associations and have insights that don't happen when we get distracted.

Eliminating distractions, and controlling our tendency to "multitask" allows for that flow, for being in the zone, for ultimate focus.

Multitasking (which according to [Dave Crenshaw](#) is really switch tasking) vastly increases the time it takes to get refocused on each item and get back in the zone or return to your flow.

And to eliminate distractions and maintain focus it really comes down to prioritizing, deciding what that important thing is, and then keeping our energy and effort focused on that thing.

And that one thing does not need to be the only thing. It just needs to be the only thing being focused on at a given time.

We set three month strategic priorities. We usually set three of them. This is true of my businesses, and the businesses I work with. They all have 3 three-month strategic priorities, not more. Not 1, not 2, and not 5, but 3.

The key is to not bounce around from one to another. The key is to focus on one and do the things that need to get done, the things that you can do, today, to move closer to achievement, to completion, of each of the priorities.

Take one at a time, and do what can get done today. Then move to the next and spend time on it. Sometimes that's a 10 minute phone call. And sometimes that's an hour of quiet work to write or edit copy for a book or blog post.

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And to do that one thing, you will want to prepare, define your objective, and avoid interruptions. The 10 minute phone call may take 1 minute, or 20 minutes, of preparation, including defining a clear objective. What is the reason for the phone call? What is the desired outcome? And with that clear objective in front of you, you can focus your energy, effort, and attention on that conversation and achieving your objective. This is the relentless focus.

Interruptions distract from your objective, and remove your attention. Following an interruption, it takes time to get refocused. And not just for you, but for the other party. Interruptions can make someone else feel less valued, sending the signal that the interruption was more important than your conversation with them. Interruptions are to be strictly avoided.

But what do you focus on, and how do you choose?

In this world of near infinite options, prioritizing what is worth focusing on is extremely important. Not doing so, choosing to do everything, is really choosing to do nothing well.

And not deciding just means that your attention will be hijacked by the shiniest object, the loudest complainer, or someone else's emergency. So, prioritizing and being deliberate in our choosing is key to getting the right things done.

Prioritizing all the things you have to do is hard. We've all been there. We live in a state of perpetual overwhelm. We live in a state of constant interruptions, notifications, text messages, and even phone calls. And with each little beep, buzz, or ring we experience a dopamine hit that reinforces our destructive behavior, allowing ourselves to be interrupted and taken off task.

Without a system to get the important things done, it becomes impossible to complete those things that we need completed.

Later we will lay out a proven process for getting more done while getting your time back under control.

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But first, how do you define the things that need to get done?

## S.M.A.R.T.

Are you familiar with the S.M.A.R.T. paradigm for setting goals?

Basically, it means that the best practice for setting goals is to ensure they meet the following criteria.

- Specific
- Measurable
- Realistic and Relevant
- Time Bound

Yes, I left out the "A", intentionally. We'll come back to that in a moment.

But first let's go through S, M, R, and T.

**"S" is for specific.** Specific means the specificity of your goal. Defining what success really looks like, is critical to knowing if you have achieved it. "Creating a marketing plan" means just that, creating a plan. It says nothing about comprehensiveness, for whom, that it should be implemented, or for what. Including these other details would make this far more understandable and specific.

To improve specificity in your goal setting, imagine sharing it with 5 other people without being able to speak with them. Would they not only understand the goal, but would they come to the same conclusions about what success looks like? If the answer is "no", or "maybe", go back and make sure that your definition of successful achievement of the goal is specific enough that 3 reasonable people would come to the same conclusion without prompting.

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**"M" is for measurable.** Measurable means that there is a metric, a number, a measure of what success looks like. Maybe your marketing plan needs to generate 100 qualified leads per month. That's measurable. If you generate 98, that is not yet success. It may be close, but you will still want to adjust and ensure that you get to 100 to achieve success.

**"R" is for realistic.** Realistic means that it is achievable. And if you thought the "A" stood for "Achievable", this is why it does not. That would be redundant. So we focus on realistic, which means you have the resources, the skills, the team, and the wherewithal to achieve success. And if you are working on a stretch goal, or a BHAG\*, where you do not yet have all these items in place, you will have factored in the time to be able to acquire them along the way.

**"R" is also for relevant.** Relevant is included, because of the number of times I have seen people and companies set near term goals that do not propel them toward their longer term goals.

An example is setting a 1 year strategic priority to publish "The Get Sh\*t Done Book" by May 31, 2018, and then setting a fourth quarter 2017 strategic objective to publish the Focus Forward Business podcast. Unless there is a clear connection or reason the podcast would contribute to the book publishing, or to one of the other two 1 year strategic priorities, then it could be considered irrelevant.

You will want to make sure that your near term goals are aligned to your longer term goals, and that they are building blocks and stepping stones, to move you toward achievement of your longer term goals. In other words, your 3 month, or quarterly strategic priorities, ought to move you toward your 1 year goals, which should move you toward your 3 year goals, which should be aligned with your 3HAG\*, all of which should propel you toward your BHAG\*\*.

\*3HAG stands for "3 Year Highly Achievable Goal(s)" and is described by Shannon Susko on her blog, along with 6 steps to define and achieve yours.

\*\* BHAG is a trademarked term coined by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras from their 1994 book , Built to Last. It is pronounced bee-hag, short for "Big Hairy Audacious Goal(s)".

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"T" is for **Time Bound**. Time Bound means there is a due date, possibly a date and a time. April 15, 2018 by midnight, would be an example of a due date. Or maybe October 15, 2018 by 12:00 am. However you define it, that's when your 2017 taxes and filings are due. There is no ambiguity in when it has to get done.

Now to the infamous "A".

The "A" does not stand for "Achievable" or "Attainable". Since we've included "Realistic", achievable and attainable would be redundant.

What it does stand for, at least what I like it to stand for, is "Agreed Upon".

"A" is for Agreed Upon. It is critical to get agreement in goal setting, even when it is just you who is going to do it.

Questions you can ask yourself to gauge your own willingness to agree is, "Am I willing to commit to this goal? Am I willing to say "No" to other opportunities that might present themselves until after this goal is achieved?" If you are wavering in answering "Yes" to this question (convincingly), then you may want to reassess the importance of achieving and prioritizing this goal.

But gaining agreement is far more important when setting goals with others and where you will be reliant upon others to ensure successful achievement. And agreement does not simply mean agreeing to do something, but agreeing to the details and the time line for completion. Agreement to all the S.M.A.R.T. elements must be obtained.

Aside from goals not being specific enough and due dates not being made clear, the "A" is the thing that I see most often ignored. We think that telling someone to do something, especially if we are clear on what needs to get done and by when, is enough. Meanwhile, in their head, they may be saying to themselves, "And which of these other 78 things that I am supposed to do can wait, or not get done?"

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This is especially hazardous when delegating to people below you on the organizational chart. Failure to obtain agreement, to solicit objections, to find out why they might not be able to deliver the desired result by the given date and time, is what can lead to things not being completed and managers feeling like their team members are being passive aggressive.

It may have nothing at all to do with that. It may simply be conflicting priorities. It may be a sense of overwhelm. And it could be the person being “asked” to do a thing is not really being asked, but being told.

As practice, try changing your next delegation to fit the S.M.A.R.T. paradigm.

Come up with something you would like done by the end of today. Be specific, give a metric if applicable, make sure to provide a due date or time, and then ASK if they can do that thing by that time.

If they hesitate, explore that. It may be that they have too many things to do today already. And maybe a couple of those things do not need to get done today, but can wait for tomorrow. Maybe a couple of the things that they think they need to do don't ever need to get done.

Without exploring this, you may be delegating an impossible task, in their mind at least, or not clearing their plate of other items that will remain prioritized over the thing you need done.

And this is a key to enlisting others in your efforts to achieve your business goals and priorities.

This is a key in effective management, and effective leadership.

This is also a key in sales. Whether you are selling an inspiring vision, a plan of care, or a job, getting consent, gaining agreement, and soliciting objections, asking “why not?”, can be key to negotiating an outcome that benefits all parties.

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*# Please note that there are a number of alternative definitions to each of the elements of a S.M.A.R.T. goal. You are welcome to explore them [here, on Wikipedia](#). I strongly believe in the paradigm I have put forward here, because it works to get sh\*t done.*

Now that you are able to clearly define the things that need to get done, how do you decide what those things are that need to get done?

## The Buffet List

I learned this exercise from Warren Buffet's former pilot, Michael. David Hassell, President of the Entrepreneurs Organization in San Francisco when I first joined EO, invited Michael, who was a friend of his, to one of our events where he shared his story. The story, as I remember it, went something like this.

*It's important to note, that Michael had us do the same thing that Mr. Buffet told him to do. And you can try it too, as you read through this and follow along.*

One day, when Mr. Buffet had boarded the private plane Michael was to pilot, Mr. Buffet's guest was running late. Michael had received the call, and went back to tell Mr. Buffet that their departure would be delayed by a few minutes.

He then asked Mr. Buffet if he could ask him a question.

The way I recall, Michael said that Mr. Buffet peeked over the top of the newspaper he was holding and gave a slight nod.

Michael then told Mr. Buffet that he was working on starting his own business. After briefly describing his project, he asked Mr. Buffet for any advice he might offer.

In response, Mr. Buffet told Michael to go get a piece of paper and a pen, and come back. He, of course, did so, and before he could hand Mr. Buffet the pen and paper, Mr. Buffet told him to write down all the things he had to do.

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Michael stopped where he was and started writing. After all, if you had just asked Mr. Buffet for advice and he instructed you to do something, would you ask why? Or would you just do what he said?

Mr. Buffet told him not to stop until he reached at least 25 items.

Mr. Buffet then told him to put a "1" beside the thing that was most important. I think it was phrased something like, "If you were only able to do one thing from your list, what would it be? Find it. Then put a "1" beside it".

Michael, of course did that. Then he looked up.

He was then asked to identify one more thing, one more thing that if that was the only other thing he was able to do, what would that be. And put a "2" beside that thing.

This repeated until he had five numbered items.

And once he had those five items, Mr. Buffet instructed him to copy the five items, in order, on the back of the same piece of paper. He numbered them 1 through 5, and was then instructed to cross them off the front of the paper.

Mr. Buffet then asked him what he thought he had.

When Michael stated that he had his "To Do List", Mr. Buffet asked him which side. Michael looked at him quizzically, and Mr. Buffet told him he had his "To Do List" only on the one side, the side numbered 1 through 5.

Then Mr. Buffet asked Michael what he thought he had on the other side.

Michael again looked quizzically at Mr. Buffet, and was promptly told that the other side, the side with the twenty things on it, was Michael's "Don't Do List".

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And before Michael could begin to object that he had to do all of the things, Mr. Buffet explained that the reason most people never complete the important things that they themselves identify as most important, is because of the other 20 things.

Try your Buffet List here. There are 25 bullets below.

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Now pick 5 items, 1 at a time on the previous page.

Ask yourself, "If I could only do one thing on this list, what would it be?" Place a 1 by the bullet.

Repeat for 2 through 5.

Then list them, in order below.

Cross them off the previous page.

And finally, relabel the previous page your "Don't Do List".

My (Buffet) To Do List:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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Now that you have your goals, or at least your very near-term "To Do's" ready, you can begin to really get sh\*t done.

Following is a daily routine for you to implement.

It will take a little bit of time in the beginning, but within a few days the process should be down to under fifteen minutes. And this fifteen minutes, will be the best way you can spend your time, in order to save more time.

I know that sounds counter-intuitive. Spend time to free up (make) time. But isn't that what we say about money? Spend money to make money?

It is just like that. It is an investment. The biggest difference is that it will pay off today, and tomorrow, and the next day. It will pay off within hours, not months or years. You will begin to see returns today, but only if you do the process.

I challenge you to implement this process. Follow the process. Do it daily, at least for a week.

You've taken on bigger challenges. You've likely taken on bigger challenges today!

Just think of what you have to gain – hours a day! Every day! Hours you can use to do more, play more, and spend on your relationships, your kids, your hobbies.

Will you accept the challenge?

Start with Step 1 on the next page. Go through each of the steps. Then add to your calendar for 1 week to keep the momentum going.

The results will speak for themselves. Then you can let me know how it goes.

Get started!

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1. Look at your goals. If you don't yet have 3 month strategic priorities, you can use your Buffet To Do List. Just make sure to set them in writing.
2. Close the door, and turn off your phone. Turn off all your email, calendar and social media (SoMe) notifications. (Consider setting your computer and phone to airplane mode for a few minutes.)
3. Set a timer for 5 minutes.
4. [Make a list](#). Do a brain dump of all the things you need to do. Keep going until the timer goes off. If you finish early, keep thinking. If you're not finished, pretend you're finished. You'll get to do this again tomorrow.
5. Look at your goals again.
6. Review each item on your list and cross out anything that does not move you toward your goals. Cross those out. Do not keep them, unless for some reason they are truly important, like renewing your drivers license, or paying your taxes. You can keep these items on your list, but only if they are truly important.
7. Review the list again for anything that could be put on your calendar or schedule, like "lunch with Chad". Schedule it. Send the invite, if necessary. Then cross it off your list. Or change your list item to "Schedule lunch with Chad" instead of "Have lunch with Chad". Once you've scheduled, mark it Completed.
8. Review your list for anything that can be delegated. And don't just think about people who work for you, but about anyone who likes to do that thing and who might even do it better than you. Remember there are places like Fiverr and Task Rabbit. Delegate these items. Make sure to include any specifics that will determine the success of the activity and a due date & time. Ensure you get agreement from the person who is going to do it. Then move those items to your Delegation List, along with who is doing it and when it is due, so you can follow up later. Cross those items off your list. Once you've delegated, mark it Completed.

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9. Review what's left on your list. It should be shorter than when you started. Sort what's left in order of priority. Put anything that is seriously urgent at the top. Place anything that other items are dependent upon next, meaning that this item must come before another item in order to get the second item done. Then prioritize the rest. Place them in order of priority asking yourself "What gets the biggest result with the least amount of input of your time, effort, and money?" This will put the highest leverage potential items at the top of your list.
10. Start at the top and do the list.
11. Keep any remaining items from your list for tomorrow.

Put this on your calendar to be the first thing that you do for the next week. Repeat this tomorrow. Start over with a new piece of paper, or new tab on your spreadsheet. Start by writing down anything that you didn't complete today. Then go to step 1. Repeat the next day. And the next.

What you are likely to find is that on day 1, the process is a little bit slow and seems daunting. You may not complete everything on your list. Those items will move to day two's list.

But on each successive day, the process will get easier and take less time.

By day four, you should have your list well under control, and will likely find that you are beginning to finish early, with time to spare in your day. If you have a really big backlog, this may take until day six or seven.

You may find that instead of staying late into the evening at work, or having a bunch of loose ends nagging at the back of your mind all evening, you are finished at 2:30 in the afternoon.

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Don't scoff! Try it.

This is just like exercise. If you do not do it, it will not work.

The only way to prove me wrong is to commit to the process today, and the next seven days.

This process worked, and works, for me. I use it especially when I get overwhelmed and have too many commitments and things to do. It has worked for thousands of people. So, why not you?

This is the best time investment I have ever made. Because it allows me the free time to spend with my family, and on the things I enjoy, while being productive and getting things done in my businesses.

After 4 days of following the process, jump over to my Facebook page and [post a comment](#). If you are having difficulty, I am happy to help.

I would simply like to know how this is working for you.

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## The [Focus Forward Starter Membership](#).

Not everyone can afford to invest the time and money in one on one business coaching. But new and smaller businesses, especially when they are growing, need many of the same tools as larger and more established businesses.

In addition, starting, growing, and running a business can be lonely.

That's why we created the [Focus Forward Starter Membership](#).

It is a free membership where you get access to tools to help your business run smoother and generate more profit. You also get an immediate network of other business owners who are serious about running their businesses better. Members can join a monthly group call with Sturdy to ask questions, share challenges, and solve problems facing them and their businesses.

To learn more about the membership, please visit the [Focus Forward Starter Membership](#) at [SturdyMcKee.com](#).

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And check out the [Focus Forward Business Podcast](#) where we explore the entrepreneurial journey with some truly amazing guests. Also on [iTunes](#).

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