

How to be more productive in 2017?

Running a business is tough. Distractions occur every minute. How do you control your time better?

We can't control time, but we can control how we *use* our time so that we are not just busy but productive too. And we can do it every single day. We can control:

- What we work on
- What we prioritise
- How often we check email
- What goals we set
- How often we plan
- Our energy levels
- Our focus
- Our output
- Our mobile phone notifications

Practical tips to help business owners become more productive

Tip 1 – Know the priorities for you and your business

Tip 2 – Understand how you work

Tip 3 – Control your distractions

Tip 4 – Manage your focus

Tip 5 – Identify routine tasks for low energy times

READ MORE: Sign up for [monthly business inspiration](#) from *ThinkBusiness*.

Tip 1 – Know your priorities

What are you trying to achieve, what are your goals? Do some thinking and planning. Set weekly or daily goals and identify the tasks that will accomplish these aims. Now you have your priorities. Focus on achieving these tasks.

Remember, if you don't set your priorities, someone else probably will.

Tip 2 – Understand how you work

The first step in changing how you work is knowing how you work.

You can also do this in a structured way. Keep a simple 'time log' for a few days or preferably a week (template available at beproductive.ie). This can seem like a painful exercise, but people are amazed how much they learn about how their time is spent when they track it. Once you know this, you can take steps to control it.

Tip 3 - Control your distractions

Your time log analysis will tell you what distracts you. Take steps to eliminate or at least minimise your distractions now that you are aware of them.

We let ourselves be distracted. We've all been there: 'I'll just check this Twitter notification,' and 30 minutes later we're still on our phone.

So for electronic notifications:

- Analyse all the notifications you receive. Are you giving them all the same priority? Are you letting a Twitter interaction distract you as much as the alert for an email from an important client?
- Turn off the low priority notifications.
- Check Twitter or other social media interactions at a set frequency that make sense for your business.
- Consider if you can have periods in the day or week when your email alerts can be on silent. Take control.

Tip 4 – Manage your focus

Our focus is affected by our energy levels and this, in turn, is affected by what we eat, whether we take breaks, how much we sleep. When we're in business for ourselves, we often compromise these factors.

A 15-minute walk around the block at lunchtime can work or maybe sometimes eat a banana instead of that chocolate bar.

Tip 5 – Identify routine tasks for low energy times

Running a business presents plenty of routines, so-called “lower priority” tasks such as updating your contact database, sending follow-up emails, arranging meetings, ordering supplies or maybe subscribing to a newsletter to stay informed.

For example, between 3 pm and 5 pm on a Friday can be a very good time to do new contact follow-up emails when your energy may be low after a busy week.

You are still productive because you are getting things done.

Be productive in 2017

Try these changes in the New Year, and you have every chance of making 2017 your most productive year ever.

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