

PA ENTERPRISE

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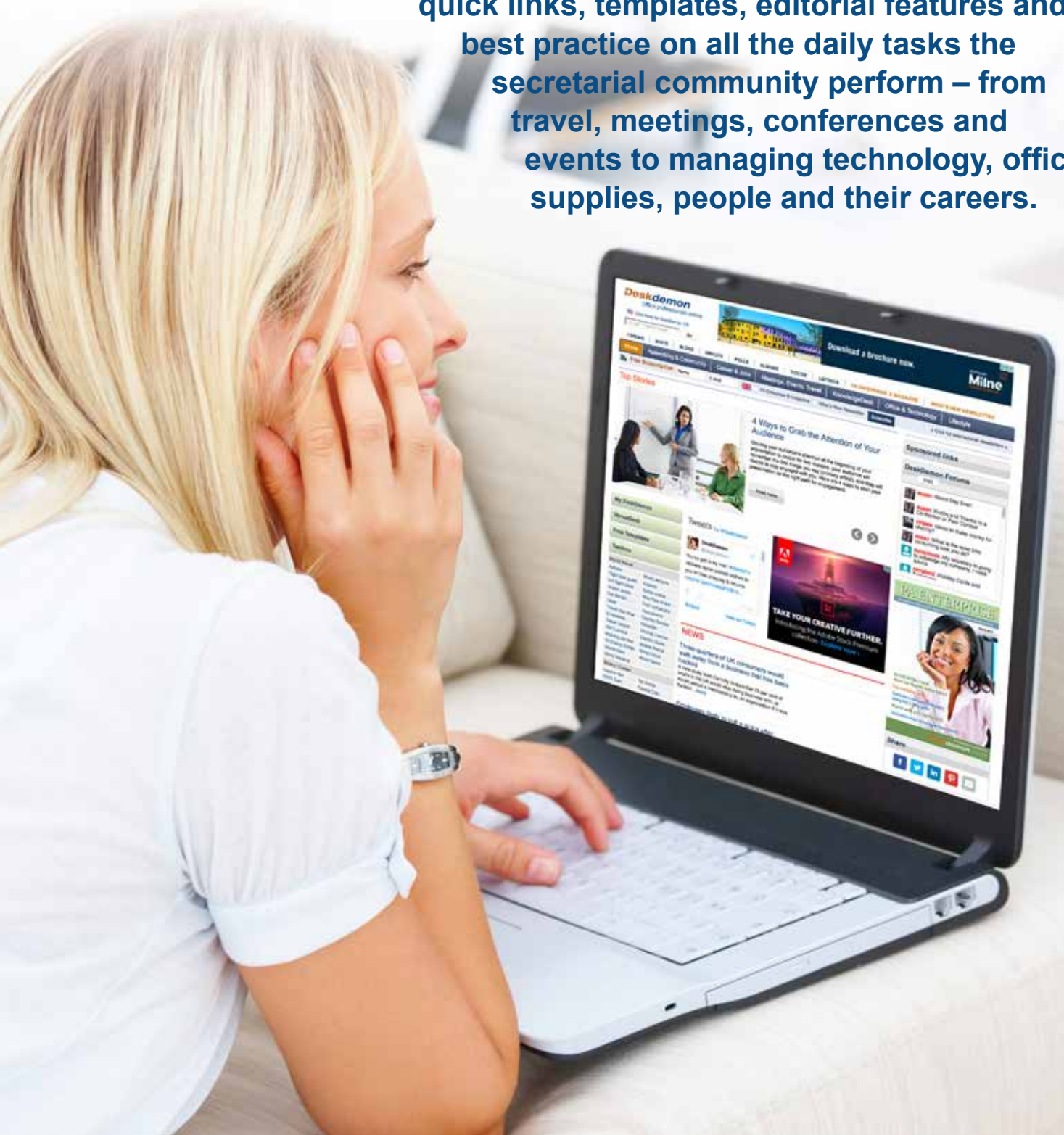
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How to create an effective work routine

A good work routine helps you eliminate distractions and accomplish more while maintaining efficiency. Top performers can do an impressive amount of work and achieve incredible results by structuring their schedules strategically. By practising habits that help maintain work efficiency, these top performers also maintain a healthy balance while maintaining their leisure and family time. In this article, we provide a guide to create your work routine and a few tips that can help you maintain a high level of productivity.

WHAT IS A WORK ROUTINE?

A work routine is a series of planned activities you complete throughout your day to help you stay focused. A good routine helps you adhere to your schedule, even as unpredictable circumstances arise. To create a routine that feels empowering and lets you perform at your best, you must understand yourself well and match your planned activities with your energy levels and capacity to concentrate.

How to create your work routine

The first thing to keep in mind about designing your routine is that it takes time and practice to develop. You're likely to go through this process several times before you get into a routine that boosts your productivity. Follow these steps to get started:

1. Pay attention to how you feel

Create a workflow that helps you perform your best work by matching tasks with your mood and level of motivation. For many people, mornings are the right time to do the concentration-intensive work, while afternoons can be better for meetings, brainstorming and collaborative work. Spend a few days paying

attention to how easy and enjoyable you find working at different times in the day.

2. Make your morning effortless

By creating a simple set of morning habits, you help yourself establish a reliable starting point each new day. Your sleep quality improves if you fall asleep and wake up at the same time. With better quality sleep, you may be able to wake up rested and ready for the day. Following a morning routine also helps you get through the morning without having to think deeply.

By having a set sequence of tasks like making the bed, preparing breakfast and doing light exercise, you can get ready for your workday without making these small, individual decisions. Once this sequence becomes a habit, it can get you from being sleepy in bed to a state of alert motivation with little effort.

3. Set priorities for the day

Staying productive while you have a lot on your to-do list can be challenging. To avoid being distracted by everything you want to do, learn to set priorities for the day. Identify the

top three most important tasks, then schedule enough time to accomplish them.

Make sure to include a little extra time so that you can do your tasks at a reasonable pace. Once you've set a schedule for accomplishing your top three tasks, you can easily see how much time you have for everything else. You may have less time than you imagine, which is why it's important to adjust your routine. By setting priorities and concentrating on your most important work first, you can enjoy fewer distractions.

4. Try to accomplish challenging tasks

Now that you've set your top three tasks for the day, the next step is to complete one with your full attention. By getting an important task done early, you give yourself the motivation to keep working. You may experience a sense of accomplishment, which actively helps your mood and trains your brain to be more motivated. Not only can this put you in a good mood at the moment, but it can also help you be happier at work over the long term.

5. Take scheduled breaks

After completing a task, it can be helpful to give yourself a short break before starting the next one. Your attention and ability to concentrate is finite. Though you feel motivated now, exhausting yourself before noon can make it challenging to maximise your productivity throughout the full day.

Try the Pomodoro technique instead. Schedule your work in half-hour blocks where you concentrate intensely for 25 minutes and take a five-minute active break. After completing four half-hour work and break cycles, take a longer pause of 20 minutes. Use a timer to help keep track. There are plenty of web and smartphone apps available



if you need additional help keeping to the times. Note that the breaks you take are more beneficial if they're active. Get up, walk around, breathe some fresh air or do some light exercise and stretching. Mild exercise also releases brain chemicals that help you feel motivated and happy.

6. Constrain vague tasks

While you can create a detailed plan for your day, something outside of your control is likely to come up. Often, these impromptu tasks can take a moment to understand and begin. A reliable way to make sure these tasks align with your plans is to put a specific time limit on them.

When a task or discussion comes up, set a specific timeframe to devote to it, and make all participants aware of the constraint. Simply tracking the time you spend on a task can help you stay on task and meet your goals for the day.

7. Plan the time you stop working

Putting time constraints on your work is a great way to manage your overall work commitment. If you find yourself idly scrolling through email messages after work or on the weekend, you might be impacting your productivity during your actual work time. Being constantly connected to work can make it challenging to define boundaries between work, home and leisure. Keeping these aspects of your life separate can help you be more present during each one.

Setting limits on your availability outside of work hours can help you establish boundaries. Likewise, muting notifications when you leave work helps too. While at work, try to be present, focusing on the tasks you need to complete. Remind yourself that being mindful of your current tasks can help you get work done in a more timely and effective manner, helping you enjoy your free time after work.

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TIPS FOR MAINTAINING A WORK ROUTINE

Creating a new set of habits at work can be challenging but rewarding. Going through the steps of designing a work schedule is only the beginning of the process. As you begin your routine, you may need a period to get used to it. Building a new habit takes time and repetition. Here are a few tips for helping you make sure you can follow your new routine for work:

Do weekly check-ins with yourself

At the end of each workweek, assess how well you were able to follow your routine. Note some areas of improvement and also be mindful of what worked well for you. Consider any adjustments you may need to make to be more successful. See if what you're doing allows you to meet your professional goals and feel productive.

Limit your choices and distractions

Rather than letting yourself pick from a wide array of tasks each day, limit yourself to a smaller list. This can shorten the time you spend choosing which task to do next and can help you get started on work earlier.

Planning your day the evening before can help you have a routine established, helping you be more productive and mentally prepared.

Limiting your distractions can also help you follow your routine. Closing irrelevant computer tabs, turning off notifications and putting up a distraction-free notification can help you focus on your work.

Move around the office

Schedule some time in your routine for work to be away from your desk. Your environment affects your mood and modes of thought. Sitting at your desk may be conducive to deep focus but meeting somewhere new for a brainstorming session with a colleague or creating the schedule for your product release may be better.

Find the places in your workspaces that fit your work tasks. Individual and collaborative tasks may feel easier if you change the place where you do them. Finding the right spot for your work can increase your effectiveness and build in some more exercise into your day.

Essential work from home tips



Many companies have embraced the practice of working from home. If you're new to it, you may need to discover effective work from home strategies or change your habits to adapt to new routines. This includes figuring out where to work, when to work and the tactics used to separate your personal and work life. In this article, we review some benefits of working from home and the tips you can use to maximise your productivity.

With increased distractions, less communication from fellow workers and less accountability, working from home can be a big challenge. However, this doesn't mean that your productivity should decline. Consider the following work from home tips and tricks that help bring the most out of your remote work hours whether you do it a few times every week, every day, or just while you are recovering from an illness:

1. Maintain regular working hours

It's important to know what hours you will work and when it's time for other personal matters. Therefore, you need to set a schedule and stick to it. This will help you remain productive and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

2. Have a morning routine

Having a morning routine is a great working from home strategy that can help you get started with your day. You can decide when it's time to sit down in front of your computer and start working. There are many things you could include in your routine, depending on what works for you. For example, you could decide to exercise, shower and make a cup of coffee to get you ready for a day of working from home.

3. Set ground rules with the people around you

Setting ground rules with the other people you share your home working space with or just anyone who will be around as you work helps to prevent distractions. For example, you can instruct your kids about what they can and cannot do when they come home from school and find you working. You can also negotiate meeting times, quiet times and shared equipment like chairs and desks with the other individuals also working from home if there are any.

4. Take breaks

You should take consistent breaks that allow your mind and body to refresh and get back to work with more energy. You can align your breaks with the periods provided by your organisation or simply have periods where you walk away from the phone or computer screen if you are self-employed. You can start with the standard lunch and two 15-minute breaks for an eight-hour workday. Consider also having consistent periods where you stand and stretch, even for a few seconds, if you are engaged in sedentary work.

5. Leave home

When you can, get out of the house and move about to change your routine once in a while. Stepping out briefly before, during and after your work hours also allows you to appreciate the natural light and fresh air that are beneficial to your body. You can also break the monotony of working at home by going to co-working spaces, like libraries and cafes.

6. Install quality technology

Poor technology, such as an outdated computer system or a weak internet connection, can frustrate your workday. They might cause you embarrassment during video calls when your voice or video fails or missing out on important updates that lower your productivity. Therefore, you need to invest in quality technology that fully supports your work-at-home needs. If you work in an organisation, ask for help as they might have a budget to support remote workers.

7. Maintain a dedicated workspace

You may not have a spare room to use as a home office or find it unrealistic to buy a dedicated work computer. However, you need to consider setting aside some table space or a desk and some peripherals that you only use for work. You can even partition your hard drive and have a user account that is for work purposes only. This and other slight changes help you differentiate between personal and work time, leading to a better work-life balance.

8. Avoid getting sucked in

When working from home, you'll have easy access to the recreational activities you do at home. It could be watching your favourite TV programmes or even working on a

personal project. Avoid getting sucked into such activities just because you can. Keeping away from distractions is a sure way to make working from home work for you.

A few minutes in front of the TV could turn into half a day. You may end up feeling bogged down when you have accomplished nothing and have to rush to do many tasks at the day's end. If you have to, quickly do the things you cannot avoid during your breaks and have timers to notify you when to get back to work. Leave the rest until after you're done with your workday.

9. Use VPN

A VPN helps to protect your sensitive work data, especially when you are connected to public Wi-Fi in areas such as cafes, libraries, hotels, co-working spaces and airports. You can download and install a commercial VPN, or use the one provided by your employer if there is one. When using a corporate VPN ensure you don't use your computer for anything that you don't want your employer to know as your organisation could monitor your online activities.

10. Remember to socialise

Isolation, feeling disconnected and loneliness are some of the challenges you may have to deal with when working remotely. Some tips for working from home and avoiding the feeling of isolation are keeping in touch with your colleagues or friends. Some companies have a remote work culture that provides employees with ways to socialise and you can find out if your organisation has some. Use tools that help to minimise distractions when you use messaging apps and social media to catch up with the world.

11. Actively participate in meetings

Conference calls and video conferences are common when working remotely. There are certain meetings you have to convene or attend while some others will be optional. You should attempt to attend as many of them as you can and ensure that people feel your presence. Even if you cannot contribute to the meeting, signing off with a 'Thanks, everyone! Bye' as the meeting ends lets them know you were there.

12. Be your own cleaner

While back at the office you might have had a cleaner and the luxury to avoid some menial tasks, the same cannot be said for when you work from home. You need to be proactive and clean your home office to ensure that you are organised, focused and productive. Always keep a semblance of order that prevents important things from getting lost in the surrounding clutter.

13. Use music and other audio content to keep you inspired

While working from home you can listen to all kinds of music, without bothering your fellow employees. Therefore, if you find that music pushes you to work more effectively, you are free to play your favourite music as loud as you want. You could also open your windows and let the sounds from your environment keep you going. Alternatively, you can also have a podcast or audiobook play in the background as you do repetitive tasks. However, if you work better in silence, leave your TV and audio systems switched off during your work hours.

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Benefits of working from home

Understanding the benefits of working from home can help you embrace this style of work and even actively seek remote employment. The following are the major benefits of doing your work at home:

Better work-life balance

You can easily align your working hours with your personal life when you're working from home. This allows you to remain in touch with the things that are important at home, such as spending time with family. If you learn how to work from home well and manage your time effectively, you can spend more time with your loved ones or travel more.

Custom work environment

You have supreme control over the workspace you want to maintain at your house. You can set aside a portion of your home to become your home office and design or style it in a manner befitting your desires. You can also change it whenever you want, in case it seems boring or does not inspire productivity.

No commuting

Working from home means that you don't have to worry about arriving late for work after being stuck in traffic. Zero commutes also translate to more money saved on public transport or petrol that you would have spent getting to your office.

Business Travel Advice for Corporate Travellers



We know that business travel can be stressful, and sometimes uncomfortable, but don't be discouraged! Following some rules can help you master everything you need to do when traveling for business. In the following list, you'll find a series of tips and tricks that will help you manage your business travel as if you've been doing it all your life.

1. Arrive at the airport early

Arriving at the airport on time is the most important part of the trip so you can check your luggage on time.

2. Follow your company's travel policy

Before you decide and plan your trip, make sure you read and understand your company's travel policy. In the travel policy, you will find the information you need to know on where to book, who to ask to validate the trip, how payments and refunds work.

3. Business etiquette

It is clear that respecting the traditions and local culture of the country you are travelling to is essential. Business etiquette is very important in order to avoid your country's customs that are not considered as such in other countries, for example: shaking hands.

4. Choosing the right seat on the plane

Choosing the right seat can make all the difference, especially on long flights. You can find many websites on the Internet that advise you on the best seats for each flight.

5. Travelling with carry-on luggage

Choosing a carry-on bag instead of a bulky suitcase is the best solution, both for time

saving reasons such as waiting for your luggage at your destination or if you lose it, and for ecological reasons, carry-on luggage is lighter and therefore consumes less fuel.

6. First aid kit

No one can know what might happen to you during your trip. Keep a first-aid kit handy with medications you usually take when you're not feeling well. This kit can include, in addition to first-aid items, painkillers, vitamins, hand cream, hand sanitizer, antacids and your regular medications.

7. Non-stop travel

If you can, choose to travel non-stop, there will be less waiting time and you will be more relaxed. In addition to saving time, you don't run the risk of having your flight canceled, overbooking and/or lost luggage.

8. Keep the necessary documents at hand

ID card, passwords, tickets, etc., keep them all handy to facilitate the check-in process.

9. Online check-in

Take the time to check-in online to organize your time in the best possible way and avoid waiting in line.

10. Wear clothes that are both stylish and comfortable

It's important to wear clothes that are both stylish and comfortable in case something unexpected happens: you may need to be well-dressed for an important meeting or need to dress casual for dinner.

11. Think about security checks

To make security checks easier, keep items like liquids, electronics and chargers together so you can get them out quickly at the security checkpoint. The same goes for bracelets, watches and belts.

12. Loyalty program

If you are a member of a loyalty program, be sure to check for benefits that enhance your trip. If you're not yet a member of the loyalty program, sign up to earn points and take advantage of all the offers.

13. External battery and charged devices

Make sure you always have all the devices you need charged for the trip, but also having external batteries to take with you is ideal for emergency situations.

14. Travel management apps

Having cab booking and ride-sharing apps on your phone can simplify your trip. The iPhone offers Passbook as an app to manage all the flight details or reservations in general, while for Android, you can use Walletpasses.

15. Parking

Reserve your parking spot in advance so you don't have to waste time wandering around town and can arrive on time for your meeting.

16. Request a room near the elevator

Generally speaking, rooms on higher floors are less prone to theft. But if you are a woman, we recommend that you request a room near an elevator so that you don't have to walk the halls alone in the middle of the night.

17. Pay attention to the internet connection

Check with your company's IT expert about all the security methods you can implement on your computer to avoid possible attacks by connecting to networks that are not considered secure.

18. Plug adapters

Remember that not all countries use the same plugs, always carry your own adapter.

19. Use your time correctly

Travelling for several hours, plus jet lag, can be stressful, but sleeping as soon as you arrive is not a good solution. The best thing you can do is get used to the local time as soon as possible: you can use apps such as Stay Well, Jet Lag Rooster and Entrain to help you cope with the jet lag.

20. Save your receipts and send them in

We recommend that you don't throw away receipts or vouchers: you'll need them later for your expense reports to claim reimbursement. If your company has expense management software, it can be helpful to download the app to your phone to keep track of your expenses. For added convenience, you can also take a picture of all your invoices so you don't risk losing them.

Apple debunks common iPhone myth

If you have ever dropped your Apple iPhone in water, you might have been advised to soak it in rice. Well, you might want to rethink doing that from now on. Over the years, you might have dropped your phone into a swimming pool, sink, or toilet. Disaster.

The immediate reaction among many smartphone users has been to soak their phones in rice to avoid water damage to the device. However, Apple has debunked the method as it can cause potential damage to your iPhone.

In a recent update to its support website, Apple has warned against using rice to dry out wet iPhones. For years, smartphone users have been relying on this urban myth as an age-old remedy. According to the company's website, placing a wet iPhone in rice can cause harm to the device as small particles of rice can enter and potentially damage internal components.

The company also warns users to not use an external heat source or compressed air to dry their smartphones. So, don't try to use a hair dryer on your smartphone to make it dry, or you risk damaging your iPhone's interior components – like the revolutionary new camera being tested for the iPhone 16.

They also warn against putting foreign objects, such as a cotton swab or a paper towel, into the connector. If your iPhone is wet, the

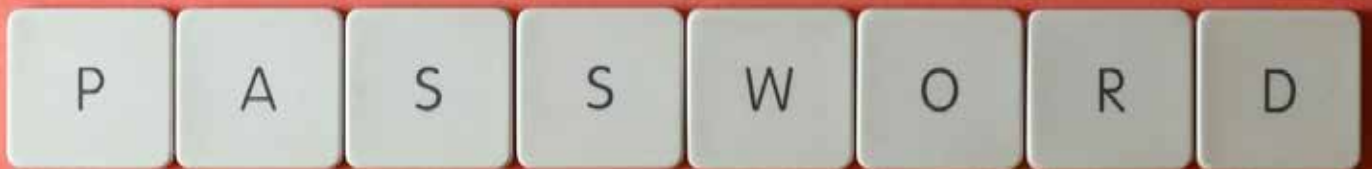


smartphone will display an alert through the new liquid detection feature. It will warn you that your phone is wet and you should wait to charge it.

In this situation, the first thing you should do is tap the iPhone on the top with the connector facing down. Leave it in a dry area with sufficient airflow and wait for 30 minutes. If you still see a liquid alert, that means your smartphone is still not fully dry. In this situation, it can take hours, even days, depending on how much water got in. No matter how badly you want to, resist the urge to plug your smartphone in and wait till it completely dries.

The latest iPhones are usually seriously sturdy and come with an IP68 rating – sturdy enough to survive falling from a plane, in fact. So, you don't have to worry about damaging your smartphone with just a little water.

Help employees make strong passwords a habit



'Use a strong password' is the 'wear sunscreen' of the digital world! Everyone knows it's good advice, but too few people actually follow it. Instead, they lean on go-to passwords that are easy to remember, throwing in that '!' at the end of their secret word or slotting '@' in place of the letter 'a.' Amazingly, P@ssword! is the most popular password.

The uncomfortable truth is that password security remains a common and underestimated concern. And for companies, one of the biggest challenges in shoring up their security is getting employees to practice better password hygiene.

The problem here is that human nature is complicated. It's not just that users don't want to expend precious cognitive energy on remembering unique and complex passwords for every account. Often, they're trying to avoid the feelings of frustration that accompany their failure to easily recall the information. Simple and familiar passwords will always trump complex and more secure ones. Sadly, the human factor of password security boils down to what's easy rather than what's secure. May the password gods forgive us.

We've seen how this plays out. Despite knowing the risks of weak passwords, which are vulnerable to brute force attacks, and repeating passwords, people do both over and over again. According to a 2019 Google poll, over 52% of users admit to reusing passwords and approximately 13% admit to using one password across all accounts. Simultaneously, 68% of password users admit they reuse credentials because they fear forgetting them; and 36% do not consider their accounts valuable enough to need more stringent security measures.

So what can companies do? The good news is it's not a question of choosing between gold standard security or nothing at all. Instead, companies need to find the approach that works best for their people — and that employees will actually follow. Here are five recommendations that managers and IT departments can share with employees and teams to help them find — and use — the right level of protection for any situation.

Level One: The throwaway password

A throwaway password is one that is utilized with a throwaway email address. If you've ever created a burner email address to use a

free trial, the idea is much the same. These single-use accounts are particularly useful if you know you're going to be immediately subscribed to an endless barrage of unappreciated sales emails for the rest of that account's lifetime ('unsubscribe' buttons be damned). The unimportant passwords for these trivial accounts provide protection in their insignificance. If (when) these passwords are stolen or these accounts are hacked, no critical information or passwords are lost. This theft will not put any critical accounts or passwords at risk.

For these accounts, you could actually use a password as simple as a word, a few letters, and a special character. For example: Frodo123! But never use this password again with any other email account. Reusing a simple password across multiple platforms can be the kiss of death.

Level Two: A password phrase

Four- or five-character passwords, regardless of the combination of numbers, letters, or symbols, are similarly vulnerable. That's why experts now recommend at least a 12-character password. The problem is that no one likes to remember a bunch of long, complicated passwords. Here's where password phrases come in.

A password phrase is longer in length than a simple one-word password but easy to remember. Most of us should be using password phrases instead of words to increase character length, but they should not be something as simple as song lyrics (professional hackers have been on to this ploy for years). Using 'everybreathyoutake,' 'oopsididitagain,' or 'igottafeeling' is practically



asking to be hacked. Here's a better example, which might be more applicable for you Gen Xers: In1984VanH@lenRock\$! Although these passwords are not the gold standard of good password management, they are useful for those who will not regularly use good password hygiene outlined in the higher levels of online protection.

Level Three: A password phrase that utilizes a pattern

This is a password that can be incorporated across different platforms, but is just different enough to allow for that password not to be used twice. For example, if you have various social media accounts, you could use a word with a color (and unique number/character pattern) across those accounts. For example: Instagram — urRED!@7am&8pm, Facebook — urWHITE!@7am&8pm, LinkedIn — urBLUE!@7am&8pm.

A word of caution: some organizations demand that passwords be changed every 90 days. Sometimes individuals use the four seasons to align with the required update times. For example: 'Spring2023!,' 'Summer2023!,' 'Fall2023!,' 'Winter2023!.' Again, a professional hacker will be able to crack this code in under a minute. Use a combination that is specific to you — and only you (and stop using '!' so much — try using '+' or another less-common symbol).

Level Four: A password phrase with two-factor authentication

Two-factor authentication is recommended for more sensitive login accounts, such as with banking information, work emails, and file sharing. This can rely on a confirmation text, email, biometric, or token, whether it's a physical fob or an authentication system

like Google Authenticator. By incorporating two-factor authentication in conjunction with a complex passphrase, you are greatly minimizing your chances of being hacked. While not perfect, two-factor authentication provides the user with something that any security professional will tell you is of value: It makes you that much harder of a target, which usually means your adversary will likely move on to easier victims.

Level Five: Password manager software with two-factor authentication

Knowing that a complex passphrase coupled with two-factor authentication is the best way to secure your login information, the problem remains of memorizing, recording, and/or sharing this information. For this reason, it is recommended that organizations that share login information have employees use a password manager software, such as 1Password or Dashlane.

While still not infallible, a password manager helps employees who might practice poor cyber hygiene prevent data from unintentionally leaking out. It also allows for an immediate lockout of an employee who was recently terminated, without having to waste time on an overall organizational password reset.

Shared accounts pose an inherent risk. The moment you share a password with another person, vulnerabilities increase and so does the likelihood of being hacked. If you're going to share a password, it needs to be changed at least every 90 days and as soon as anyone with access to the password leaves your organization. Most large public and private organizations mandate this frequency of updating passwords. Just make sure to avoid



the easily anticipated formats mentioned above.

Poor password management has been the leading cause of data breach for more than 10 years. One million passwords are stolen each week. The use of stolen login information is the second-most common method of breach. Eighty-five percent of data breaches prominently involve a personnel component such as phishing, stolen credentials, and human error. These instances of compromised data are often conducted by external actors for financial gain. The 2022 Verizon Data Breach Investigations Report explains that, when targeting businesses and organizations, hostile actors often access networks via

weak or stolen passwords — in fact, 82% of security breaches that occur within basic web application attacks are achieved by stealing credentials like passwords.

Companies have to find the most secure approach that employees will actually follow. When setting password security policies, keep this in mind. The best system in the world won't do you much good if employees end up working against it. So while companies should work to show employees that being secure and using good password hygiene doesn't have to feel burdensome, they should also try to strike a balance that really works for their employees.

Work Hacks that will make your job so much easier



You're determined to make this the best year for your career yet. Your motivation is running strong, but when it comes to actually making this happen, you're a little stuck. Whether you want to save yourself time and frustration or do a better job of focusing on what really matters, these tips are easy to implement and will get you one step closer to making this the year that you actually take your work life up a notch.

1. Take regular breaks with the Pomodoro Technique

Are you the type of person who sits at your desk for hours without realizing how much time is passing? Or, maybe you're the type who finds yourself getting distracted every few minutes.

Either way, the Pomodoro Technique can be helpful. This time management approach requires that you split your workday into smaller, more manageable chunks (called pomodoros) and use a timer to track them. You'll work for a stretch of 25 minutes and then take a five-minute break. After completing four pomodoros, you reward yourself with a longer break of about 20 minutes.

What does this do for you? It boosts your focus by instilling a sense of urgency because you'll naturally want to get as much work accomplished in that 25-minute chunk as you can. Plus, it ensures that you get up from your desk every now and then, which is important for your brain and your body!

2. Save time with email batching

For most of us, email is the bane of our existence. I'm one of those people who keeps

my inbox tab open all the time and can't resist the urge to check immediately as soon as I see a new message has arrived.

But here's the thing: I know that majorly sabotages my focus and productivity. I'm constantly ripping my attention away from the task at hand to read an email that likely isn't all that urgent or important anyway.

That's why so many people swear by email batching, where you only allow yourself to read and respond to emails two or three times per day at set intervals. It'll reduce your urge to constantly monitor your inbox, and prevent email from continuously sidelining your workday.

3. Manage your energy with a to-do list coding system

Your energy probably doesn't remain consistent throughout the day. Maybe you're ready and raring to crank through your to-do list as soon as you grab your morning coffee, or perhaps you're someone who really doesn't hit your stride until the afternoon.

Being productive is about more than managing your time, it's about managing your energy. ▶

It's smarter to reserve more complex tasks for when you feel your most focused, and the mindless ones for when you feel drained.

After you make your task list, use a simple coding system to indicate where tasks fall on your energy spectrum. You can choose the symbols that work for you. For example, use an up arrow to indicate really mentally demanding tasks (like creating that presentation) and down arrows for things that are far more routine (like filling out your expense report). Or opt for a smiley face and frowny face. Or simply star the more high-energy tasks.

You have some flexibility here, but notating your to-do list in this way will help you truly make the most of the time you have during your workday.

4. Stop feeling frazzled by silencing notifications

It'd be nice to blame all of our distractions on the things around us, but we know that isn't the case. A lot of our focus-stealers are self-imposed, especially when it comes to digital notifications.

The advice to silence your notifications when you really want to get work done isn't exactly new, but I'm willing to bet that you still haven't implemented it.

Summon your courage and finally give this a try. Turn off all of the push notifications on your phone. Close your email tab. Set yourself to "do not disturb" in your instant messaging platform. That will give you some much-needed uninterrupted time to focus on your actual work.

5. Prioritise what matters by making your to-do list early

Are you one of those people who makes your to-do list each morning? I can't blame you—I used to be that very same way. Here's the downside of that approach: it leaves room for everybody else to dictate the most pressing priorities of your workday. You probably aren't creating your list until you've checked in on emails and other requests that came in since you left, which means those things immediately earn a spot on your task list (even if they aren't time-sensitive).

Instead, try making your to-do list for the next day before you log off for the night. You're far more likely to jot down the bigger, more important priorities then, rather than letting your inbox completely rule your schedule. When you return to the office tomorrow, you'll have an instant reminder of what you actually wanted to focus on.

6. Stop reinventing the wheel by creating templates

Every job includes some repetitive tasks, but that doesn't mean you need to start from scratch each time. Templates can help you ensure consistency while also saving time.

Do you find yourself sending a similar email on a frequent basis? Save it as a canned response so you can quickly drop it into a blank message and customize the details. Are you a writer who's always starting with a blank page? Create a template that has the bare bones in place for you.

In a similar vein, it's also helpful to create a cheat sheet for yourself. Whether it's instructions you're always digging through email threads to find or photo dimensions you can never remember, pull all of those details

into a handy document that lives directly on your desktop so you can quickly find them when you need them.

7. Instill a sense of urgency with mini-milestones

It's hard to chip away at larger goals. The payoff seems so far away, which makes it tough to keep yourself focused and motivated.

That's the beauty of breaking those larger objectives down into smaller milestones. For starters, it makes the entire process feel more manageable. Plus, it'll give you more opportunities to score frequent wins. So, break that mountain down into some molehills. It'll feel way less daunting that way.

8. Figure out what's most important with this matrix

Do you ever have so much to do that you can't even figure out where to start? We've all been there, and it's easy to be so paralyzed by disdain for our to-do lists that we don't end up making any progress at all.

Setting up a simple matrix can help you figure out what you should focus on first. It's easy: draw a square, and then divide it into four equal parts. Along the top line of the square, write "urgent" and "not urgent," and along the left-side line write "important" and "not important."

Then, start plotting your tasks in the appropriate squares. Maybe that grant application is both urgent and important, but responding to social media comments is important but not urgent.

This matrix makes it easy to categorise your tasks and then address them accordingly:

- **Urgent and Important:** Put these first on your to-do list.
- **Urgent and Not Important:** Delegate these if you can. If not, tackle them next.
- **Not Urgent and Important:** Pencil some time in your calendar to handle these in the near future.
- **Not Urgent and Not Important:** These can probably fall off your list entirely for now.

See? It brings a little order and strategy to all of your tasks, rather than just guessing about where you should get started.

9. Make time for yourself by scheduling self-care

We've all heard of the importance of self-care, but that doesn't mean making time for it is easy. It's something that you need to be really intentional about.

Make yourself stick to it by scheduling it (yes, I mean physically blocking space on your actual calendar) every single week.

Whether it's a hot yoga class, a massage, dinner with a friend, or even just some time to sit on your couch and veg, you'll be far more inclined to make time for yourself if you reserve it proactively.

When it comes to your work life, it's easy to become stuck in your ways and stick with the same bad habits. But, if you've vowed that this is the year you're going to change that, these hacks can help.

Put one (or even a few!) of them into play, and watch as the positive changes start happening.



Applying for jobs? Here's how to keep track of your applications

Are you applying for jobs? Do you sometimes struggle to keep track of multiple applications? Often, you could wait for weeks and months before learning about whether you have been invited for an interview. Keeping notes of your applications is important.



Recruiters may call you up and expect you to know which job they are referring to. You would also need to remember to follow up on applications if you have not heard from the recruiting organisations. Employers could take job descriptions offline when the application round closes. If you do not save the job criteria and the application materials, you could come across as unprofessional when asking for these. If you do not keep detailed records of your applications, you may come across as disorganised from the start and this may negatively impact your application.

Here are some useful tips to help you keep track of your applications and land the job of your dreams.

Treat it like a project

Have you managed projects before? You

have most probably kept detailed progress notes. Applying for jobs is similar to managing a project. You would need to clarify your objective, set a timeline, and record any actions you have taken. You could open an excel spreadsheet and dedicate it to keeping track of job applications. You would highlight your end goal e.g. to receive a job offer as a Marketing Manager by 20th December 2023.

Remember SMART goals

If you take a look at the above goal, you may notice that this is specific, clear and tangible. I have used the SMART framework to formulate this objective. If you have not used this tool for a while, here is a useful reminder: S- specific, M – measurable, A – achievable, R-realistic, T- time-bound.

When you create specific and tangible goals, you make it easier for yourself to achieve them. Think of your brain as a search engine. The more specific words you use for searching, the more likely the search engine (your brain) will come up with creative solutions to help achieve the goals.

Details are key

Once you have opened an excel spreadsheet, you may find it helpful to create several columns: job reference, job title, name of recruiter, application closing date, expected interview date (if any), status of your application, name and contact details of a person who deals with job-specific enquiries, salary, date when you have applied, questions you may have, date when you last heard from the recruiter etc. It is important that you note the name of the employer. Two vacancies, offered by different recruiters, may have the same title.

Save your documents

In addition to keeping a record of the above details, you would also need to save several documents in a dedicated folder. Make sure that you always save a copy of your application form, CV and cover letter which you send to the recruiter. If you get an interview invitation, you will need to look at these documents again.

Diversify

Many job applicants think that they are not supposed to express interest in several jobs. It is wise not to put all your eggs in one basket. If you concentrate all your efforts on one specific area (one job only), you may easily end up disappointed. If you would like to work in the Higher Education sector, you could

apply to different universities and colleges around the country, as opposed to focusing on one specific geographical area.

Would you be willing to relocate if the right job came up? If so, which parts of the country would you consider? Would you like to work in a fully remote position? Would you prefer a blended job, with some element of home working? How far would you be willing to commute? Diversifying your options means looking at different geographical areas, different organisations and roles, and different ways of working.

Make it bespoke

There is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to job applications. Choose the technique which works for you best and suits your preferences. If you find that you prefer writing down job details using a pen and paper (and you dislike spreadsheets), use the approach which you are most comfortable with. If you prefer apps, here are some great apps which you could help you structure your job search e.g. Roadmap, Teal, and Jobwell.

Set up job alerts

Most job platforms allow you to set up alerts and be notified of upcoming vacancies. Setting up an alert could save you time and help you ensure that you will not miss out on interesting jobs. If you wish to work in the Higher Education sector, you may find it helpful to set up an alert at jobs.ac.uk.

Once you have seen a vacancy which is of interest to you, do try to apply as soon as you can. Recruiters can close applications well before the published deadline date if they receive a sufficient number of applications for the advertised vacancy.



Follow up

At times, you may not hear from the recruiting organisations for weeks and months. You may of course assume that you have been rejected. However, you could send a brief follow-up e-mail if you have not heard from the recruiter for 3 weeks or more after the application closing date. Here is a brief template you can use for your follow-up communications:

Dear Human Resources Team,

I applied for the XXX vacancy on XXX (date of application). Please see the below confirmation of submission. May I please ask if you have any updates on the status

of my application?

Kind regards,

XXXX (your name)

Ask for feedback

At times, you may not be offered the job following an interview. Of course, this could be disappointing. However, you could request feedback on your interview performance and try to learn from the experience. If a member of the interviewing panel offers a brief phone conversation to give you feedback, do accept this opportunity.