

PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY IN A DIGITAL AGE: A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM FOR CREATING TIME LITERACY IN THE WIRED WORLD OF WORK

It's Monday morning, and you are typing an email, participating on a conference call, replying to an instant message and reaching across your morning cup of java to answer your cellphone — all at the same time. Sound familiar?

There's a productivity crisis brewing, and it's a predicament that is resulting in distraction to the point of danger and a struggle to find the time and energy to focus on critical business goals and priorities. It is, in fact, a crisis of time literacy — the ability to understand, manage, prioritize and use time within varying contexts.

In today's 24/7 wired world, many business people have become out of touch with the principles and rusty on the practices required to be highly productive — while maintaining a sense of balance and purpose.

One study by Day-Timers, Inc. reported that 60 percent of workers say they always or frequently feel rushed at work, and 50 percent said they only accomplish half the work they have planned for that day.

In short, we are overloaded and overstimulated — with information, interruptions, requests, social media and ideas. Is it any wonder, then, that we have trouble getting things started, keeping them going or finishing them up with a sense of equanimity and productivity?

Personal Productivity in a Digital Age is a comprehensive program designed to assist executives, individual contributors, intact work groups and companies in developing the skills of time literacy. A variety of activities and resources, including personal and group assessments, workshops, offsites, coaching and follow-up materials, are available to assist you and your team in increasing your time literacy skills in the wired world of work. Programs include:

Assessment & Customization

The purpose of the assessment & customization is to provide the participants with an overview of where their current personal, company and/or individual work group culture stands in terms of time literacy.

The assessment is designed to capture, assess and present feedback from both managers and staff. Individual interviews with a small group of selected senior executives, key managers and staff will take place over the telephone.

The feedback collected during these interviews will help determine widespread and high-priority issues to be addressed.

Through the assessment, areas of opportunity for improving personal and group productivity and time literacy are revealed, and recommended next steps for enhancing the culture of time literacy over the long term are suggested.

Once the formal assessment is completed, the information gathered will be incorporated into the training programs and/or offsite. This process of customization allows the participants to gain an immediate understanding of how to enhance a personal and departmental culture of time literacy using principles and practices that can immediately be applied to their work situations. The process of customizing the programs includes the development of:

- Pertinent and useful examples
- Realistic role-playing situations (as appropriate)
- Relevant demonstrations
- Specific and relevant educational modules

Personal Productivity in a Digital Age Workshop and Offsite

A recent study by the Families and Work Institute found that 50 percent of us are either handling too many tasks at the same time or are frequently interrupted during the workday — or both.

In today's harried work environment, many businesspeople find it daunting to try and avoid distraction, find their focus, spend their time and energy efficiently and gain ground on important goals.

This program, which can be delivered as a one-day workshop or multiple-day offsite, educates executives, managers and individual contributors on how to overcome information overload and avoid the productivity and time traps unique to a digital age that lead to lost business, missed opportunities and unfulfilled potential.

Based on the latest productivity research, field-tested practices and expert advice from leading authorities, the workshop has taught thousands of participants from Fortune 500 and rapid-growth companies the best practices for:

- Navigating the interruption-driven workplace to enhance focus
- Managing multitasking so that concentration thresholds increase
- Overcoming procrastination by learning to make conscious choices
- Clearing out the mental and physical clutter that saps attention
- Infusing meaning and energy into everyday work
- Taking deliberate action that connects daily tasks with key goals
- Increasing the metacognition required for strategic thinking and reflective action

The program itself is composed of the following seven core modules:

Module 1: Navigate the Interruption-driven Workplace

Workers spend on average only 10.5 minutes on a task before being interrupted, and it takes an average of 23 minutes and 15 seconds for them to return to the original task — usually with their former focus having fizzled.

How often would you guess you get interrupted at work by external sources — other people, phone calls, emails, etc.? How about the self-interruptions caused by your own lack of focus?

In today's high-pressure workplace, learning to manage interruptions is a key habit of time literacy. This module spells out specific ways disruption-weary workers can fight distraction and find their focus.

Module 2: Manage Multitasking Madness

In today's non-stop work environment — courtesy of PDAs, email, instant messaging and so on — the five projects people used to manage in a day have tripled to 15.

A recent report from the University of London found that when workers are constantly juggling between tasks, their IQ falls 10 points.

Too much input and too little control have left us struggling with much more than we can productively handle. This module teaches key practices to help you manage multitasking madness.

Module 3: Give Yourself a Procrastination Inoculation

You know what you need to do. You know why you need to do it. You even know what steps you must take to get it done. There's just one small problem — you can't seem to get started.

One study from the University of Calgary concluded that 60 percent of the population procrastinate — a four-fold increase from a similar study 20 years ago.

Another finding showed that up to 95 percent of North Americans procrastinate with work issues, costing businesses billions in lost revenue and productivity. This module shows proven strategies you can use to put a stop to putting things off.

Module 4: Fight Cognitive Overload and Increase Metacognition

In 1956, George Miller wrote a paper entitled, “The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two.” He had discovered that people can only focus on five to nine things at a time — anything beyond this has to be held in the unconscious mind.

Unfortunately, in today’s work environment, we too often have to do too much in too little time, with too little energy and too little focus — all leading to cognitive and information overload. In one survey of over 1,000 managers in the U.K., U.S., Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore, a key finding was that two-thirds of managers reported tension with work colleagues and loss of job satisfaction because of stress associated with information overload.

This module explores the components of overload such as too much information supply and demand, multitasking and interruption as part of a company or department culture and the workplace infrastructure required for metacognition.

Metacognition refers to higher-order thinking, which involves active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning. Activities such as planning, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating progress toward the completion of a task are metacognitive in nature.

Module 5: Manage Your Meetings

It seems things have gotten so out of hand that a June 2011 survey by Qumu, conducted by Harris Interactive, revealed that 62 percent of those surveyed believed that during work meetings, their co-workers were sneaking a peek at their mobile devices. Here’s what they thought was happening among their co-workers:

- 47% – Hid their mobile devices under the table
- 42% – Excused themselves to go to the restroom
- 35% – Hid their mobile devices in their folders/notebooks/papers
- 9% – Pretended to tie their shoes
- 8% – Created a distraction

Interestingly, 37 percent of the respondents didn’t think “sneaking a peek” was necessary — they thought people would just look at their mobile devices in plain view. It’s a slippery slope, and it seems the embarrassment of not paying full attention in a meeting has been trumped by the self-justified importance of being wired in — no matter what.

The real problem with all this mobile madness is that it can take a heavy toll on our relationships with others at work and has been proven to dramatically reduce our productivity.

In this module, participants explore the true cost of multitasking in meetings and learn a system for having shorter, more focused meetings that produce increased desirable outcomes.

Module 6: Take Deliberate Action Toward Your Goals

Wouldn't it be wonderful if, after giving voice to your goals, all you had to do was kick back and wait for the world to deliver them to you? Too often the pull of urgent matters forces you to focus on putting out fires, while your less pressing but important goals and strategies sit ignored.

A national poll by Day-Timers revealed that 86 percent of people who achieved success on a key goal or strategy noted a determination to succeed, especially when things got hard.

In this module, you'll learn the six deliberate actions that have been shown to increase your chances of achieving a goal by 400 percent.

Module 7: Clear Out the Clutter

Stuff — it's everywhere. To-do lists in your brain, cabinets filled to the max, notes on napkins and paperwork piled a mile high. One study showed that the typical executive spends 4.5 hours a week looking for lost papers.

Everyone needs his or her business bits and pieces, but taken to an extreme, out-of-control stuff — mental or physical — becomes clutter. And clutter saps your energy and slows you down.

If your clutter-clearing efforts have fallen on hard times, don't despair. In this module, you'll learn an easy four-step process to sort out the stuff in your head and your office and reclaim your space.

Methods

Research indicates that most individuals learn and retain information more effectively if the learning setting is designed to encourage maximum participation. With this in mind, a strong emphasis is placed on the participants practicing what they are learning — both during the course and after. The methods used during this course include:

- Facilitation-style imparting of information
- Small group discussion and exercises
- Written exercises
- Pre-course homework
- After-course learning aids

After the completion of the training programs or offsite, a telephone consultation will be conducted that assesses the success of the project against participant evaluations and makes recommendations for the continued strengthening and enhancement of the client's time literacy focus.

Group Productivity in a Digital Age: A Management Module for Time Literacy

A busy executive checks his email on a PDF while one of his subordinates presents their key findings on a major project. The harried head of a department texts under the table during a staff meeting. A Vice President of Human Resources takes a cellphone call and leaves the room while an important training session is taking place. Common occurrences in any company today — and all of them send the message that multitasking is to be expected, and paying full attention is optional.

But, as it is with most company cultures, management sets the tone for how the rest of the organization will behave. It's no different when it comes to time literacy. Executives and managers who model healthy productivity have staff who mirror their attitude and actions. Those who don't create a chaotic environment where crisis rules and stressed-out workers are the norm.

So how can today's well-meaning yet overwhelmed leaders walk the talk of time literacy and set an example as a role model? When all is said and done, the art of time literacy is really the art of decision-making. It's the courage to choose what actions you are going to take, when you are going to take them and how you will get them done. It's about choosing your most important goals and prioritizing accordingly.

This one-day executive workshop is a companion to the Personal Productivity In A Digital Age program and helps managers learn how they can promote, model and train themselves and their staff in the best practices of time literacy.

Executive Coaching in Personal Productivity & Time Literacy

As a stand-alone program, or as a follow-up to the core training program or offsite, one-on-one time literacy coaching may benefit a selected group of executives, managers and key staff members. The executive coaching services offered by Karen Leland offer executives research-proven ways to de-clutter their day and bring more creativity and energy into their daily work lives. Each consulting project is customized to meet the client's objectives and may include the following:

- De-clutter your workspace with hands-on organization of files, desk and work area.
- Receive coaching in the core habits that improve efficient use of technology.
- Learn a new system for prioritizing that leads to more accomplishment in less time.
- Implement proven strategies for overcoming procrastination and get stuck projects and goals moving again.
- Design a time plan that results in a greater work-life balance.
- Identify your biggest time wasters and strategize how to overcome them.
- Create a system to capture and organize all your floating to-do's.
- Overcome multitasking madness and increase ability to focus on key goals, projects and objectives.
- Better prepare for business trips with minimum stress and overload.

Online Follow-up Email Training

While email remains the most used communication tool for businesses, its remote nature — which eliminates tone of voice and body language — presents a huge potential for misunderstanding and misinterpretation. In addition, the overwhelming amount of messages most businesspeople receive in their inbox daily is a constant source of stress and overwhelm.

Essential Email is a web-based, interactive workshop designed to help participants gain mastery over their electronic mailbox in the work environment. After completing this online course, participants will be more effective at communicating their messages via email with style and impact, as well as improving their overall efficiency at responding to and managing the messages they receive. The program topics include:

Module 1: Making the Most of the Medium

This first module provides an overview of email and explores how it can be an invaluable tool for receiving and disseminating information quickly and easily in today's rapid-paced and global business environment. The participants will examine:

- Best and worst uses of the medium
- When not to communicate via email
- How to use email to its best advantage

Module 2: Brushing Up Your Email Etiquette

In this module, participants will learn the basic code of conduct for using email at work and the core do's and don'ts for composing, posting and responding to email messages. Areas covered include:

- The ten most common email mistakes and how to avoid them
- How to respond when you have to say "No"
- Ways to create a personal email style that has a positive impact on outgoing messages
- Basic grammar

Module 3: The Ins and Outs of Email Ethics

Few areas in recent history have challenged the legal system as much as online communication. Areas covered include:

- Privacy issues
- Intellectual property
- Copyright

As more and more people use email in place of traditional forms of business communication, established standards, guidelines and etiquette are required to ensure that clear communication is the rule in cyberspace.

Module 4: Time Management for Your Mailbox

Upon completion of this module, the participants will be able to better organize their incoming messages and send outgoing messages that hit the mark. Areas covered include:

- Separating the significant few from the trivial many
- Writing emails that produce the desired action
- Composing emails that save time for others

Module 5: Creating Online Rapport

Research shows that 55 percent of what we learn comes from body language, 38 percent comes from the tone of the voice and only 7 percent is derived from the words. Email, however, is like flying blind — unless you take steps to ensure that you are creating electronic rapport with the person to whom you are sending your message. In this module, the participants will learn primary tools for creating electronic rapport and dealing with upset customers. They include:

- Mirroring your customer's style
- Creating rapport with sensory language
- Backtracking key words

Module 6: The G.R.E.A.T. Method

This module teaches the participants how to write emails that generate action and impact. By learning the G.R.E.A.T. method for all email communication, the participants will incorporate the five key areas for composing email messages that present a professional image.

Biography

Karen Leland is co-founder of Sterling Consulting and Marketing Group, an international management and marketing consulting firm. Over the past 25 years, she has been an executive coach, workshop leader and keynote speaker to some of the largest corporations in the world including American Express, AT&T, Oracle, Apple, Microsoft, Johnson & Johnson, Nordstrom, Pacific Bell, Marriott Hotels and many others.

Karen is the bestselling co-author of seven business books, which have sold over 400,000 copies. In addition to distribution within the United States, her books are available in over fifteen countries. In 2007 she wrote *Watercooler Wisdom: How Smart People Prosper in the Face of Conflict, Pressure and Change*, which was based on surveys of over 20,000 executives, managers and staff from around the world. Her most recent book is *Time Management in an Instant: 60 Ways to Make the Most of Your Day*.

She is currently a nationally featured business columnist for The Huffington Post Business section and has written over 300 articles for a wide variety of publications including:

Woman's Day, Self, Entrepreneur, Hemispheres, The Los Angeles Times, Inc. magazine, AllBusiness.com, the San Francisco Chronicle and the Christian Science Monitor, among others. She was formerly a featured productivity columnist for WebWorkerDaily.com.

Karen has extensive on-air experience and has been interviewed by hundreds of national radio and television programs including CNN, CNBC, Bloomberg, The Today Show and The Oprah Winfrey Show.

She is also a much sought after business expert to print media and has been featured, quoted and interviewed by such publications as The New York Times, Redbook, Ladies Home Journal, Fitness Magazine, Black Enterprise, Inc. magazine, Entrepreneur, Business 2.0, Woman's Day, Quick and Simple, Real Simple, Harvard Business Review, Time, Newsweek and many others.

Considered one of the top speakers in her field, Karen has traveled around the world and delivered hundreds of keynote presentations to a wide range of groups including: The American Management Association, The American Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals, The Bakersfield Business Conference, The Direct Marketing Association and The Young Presidents Association.

Inc. magazine chose Karen as one of their primary judges for The Inc. Positive Performer Award, which honors companies that have achieved an outstanding level of business excellence. For a period of five years, she was responsible for selecting the winning finalists from among 500 applicants and served as a spokesperson for Inc. magazine, where she conducted a series of sponsored keynote presentations to small business owners throughout the United States, underwritten by such companies as Bank of America, IBM, Apple Computer and others.

In addition to her work in the business world, Ms. Leland has had a lifelong

commitment to the arts. She is a working artist whose painting and prints have been shown in the Sausalito Art Festival, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Triton Museum Of Art in Santa Clara, The American Craft Council Show and The Celebration of Craftswomen.

Her passion for the arts encompasses performing as well. Karen has done industrial films, voiceovers and performances on stages throughout the Bay Area and Los Angeles including The Marin Playhouse, Novato Theater Company, Sonoma Community Theatre and Ross Valley Players. Her most recent role was a lead in the review Shopping! The Musical, currently running at the Shelton Theater, San Francisco.

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