

Chapter 1

"Here's some of our thoughts on productive leadership that we found helpful for the CleanPix team over the years. We are happy to share these thoughts with you and hope that you find them useful too!"

- Nelson Vigneault, Co-founder

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So You Want to be More Productive?

Don't we all? Getting more done in less time is the dream for every business owner, team manager, employee... Pretty much anyone who's ever done anything, really. We'd all love to supercharge our levels of productivity, but this is an especially pertinent topic for those in leadership roles. Why? Simply put: you have so much on your plate!

We understand the heavy workload and ever approaching deadlines you operate under on a daily basis. That's why we put together this guide. Over the next few pages, we'll outline a few principles you can use to produce at peak levels more consistently.

By using the following information, you'll have the tools to improve your business or look better and more valuable to upper management. You'll start to become the leader you've always hoped to be and begin truly inspiring the people around you. You may even start meeting goals you previously thought out of reach. That's what increased productivity can do for you.

But before we dive in, let's get one thing out of the way... To truly become a more productive leader you're going to need to put in some extra work and get out of your comfort zone to adopt new habits. It might not be easy, but it will be worth it!

Just remember, there's nothing mystical about productivity and the most productive people don't possess anything you don't have or can't get. They just understand a few important facts about getting things done and they've developed daily processes to aid them.

Let's get started on the path to productive leadership!



Chapter 2

Productivity Is Your Responsibility



The first thing to realize in your mission to become a more productive leader is that it's completely your responsibility. Owning this fact and eliminating any semblance of victim behavior will automatically put you on the path towards greater productivity.

Once you've assumed responsibility for your level of production, take an honest look at yourself and your current work processes. What could you do better? Are there certain habits that suck up all your time? Do you let every little distraction derail you from the most important tasks? Have you been avoiding a certain job that needs to get done?

The Battle Against Procrastination

Procrastination is at the root of many productivity problems. Whether you're procrastinating because your current project is so big you don't know where to start or a certain task just seems so monotonous and boring, eliminating procrastination is paramount.

If the reason for your procrastination is the size of the project looming over you, break it down into bite-size pieces. Big projects are often just multiple smaller projects grouped together. When you realize this, the project won't seem so daunting and you'll be able to move from one step to the next much easier.

For example, crafting the marketing campaign for the summer launch of your company's new product may seem like a mountain of a project. But when broken down into manageable pieces like pinpointing your target audience, writing email sequences and scheduling social media posts, contacting press outlets... The "mountain" become much easier to scale.

What about those monotonous or boring duties? Data entry or paperwork tasks, for example. Have you been pushing off these types of jobs because the thought of them is mind numbing? If so, look for ways to get inspired. Realize that these small, tedious tasks are part of the bigger picture; they're helping you reach company goals and move your business and/or career forward.

Perhaps something as simple as playing music in the background while you complete these tasks will be all you need. We just recommend instrumental music as lyrics can become distracting.

Removing Distractions

Speaking of distractions, you'll never become as productive as you can be until you REMOVE them (at least as much as possible) from your work day. Your smartphone, inbox and social media feeds are the silent assassins of your potentially productive day.

Studies have shown that the human brain can take as long as 25 minutes to refocus once it's been distracted. 25 MINUTES! With this in mind, how can we ever expect to get anything meaningful done when our phones and emails are constantly sending us alerts, and pulling us away from our work?

The solution? Limit the time you spend on your cell phone during work hours. We understand that completely turning off your mobile device probably isn't an option for you. But if you can commit to not checking your notifications for stretches of time, you'll see yourself get more accomplished. Also, consider logging out of your email and social media feeds while doing your most important tasks. Instead, set certain times of the day where you allow yourself to check in. Every tweet and email will still be there when you get back

If you're having trouble mustering the self-control to remove these digital distraction on your own, technology may be the answer. There are many great apps such as Freedom, Focus Booster and RescueTime that help you maintain productivity by turning off notifications for you, blocking certain websites, etc.

Learning to Say No

You need to be willing to say no to certain requests and/or opportunities that don't align with your goals. This is important. As people, whether because of FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) or not wanting to disappoint someone else, our natural impulse is to say yes to everything. But productive leaders realize that their time is their most valuable asset and that they need to spend it in the most effective ways possible. That means you need to learn to say no.

So productivity is your responsibility. If you want to get more done each day and propel your career forward at a faster rate, realize that the burden rests squarely on your shoulders. By accepting this responsibility, you're already well on your way to reaching your productivity goals!

Chapter 3

Planning For Productivity

Once you've taken responsibility for your own level of productivity, you now need to develop a clear vision and a strategic plan. Accidental success is VERY rare and it's nearly impossible to reach your goals if you don't even know what they are.

These goals can and should be set on both macro and micro levels. A macro goal might be to increase company profits by 30% this year. This goal is company wide and not tied to any single project. A micro goal, on the other hand, is set at the project level and could be aiming to have this week's slate of social media posts written and scheduled by Tuesday. When you're able to gain clarity on exactly where it is you're trying to go, and/or what problem you're hoping to solve, you give yourself the best chance of actually succeeding.

One Goal At a Time

When you know what you want to accomplish, it's time to plan and schedule the necessary steps along the way to get there. Just about every plan has multiple steps. Determine what they are and schedule out deadlines to get them done.

It's important to remember that, in order to stay most productive, you should be focusing on one thing at a time. Again, this concept goes for both macro and micro level goals... You shouldn't be working on how to convert more leads into customers until you've worked out how to drive more leads to your website (macro level) and you shouldn't be thinking about next week's blog post until you've written the post for this week (micro level.)

Put all your energy (or as much of it as possible) into completing one goal, one task, at a time and you'll see your productivity rise.



Outcomes Over Activities

It's easy to focus on activities, but outcomes are what yield results. Always ask yourself, "what am I trying to achieve?" and align your tasks, your activities, with that answer.

This will help you spend more time on the most important issues and not just the pressing ones. Often times we let pressing issues dominate our day - responding to emails, attending meetings - but these pressing issues don't always get us closer to our goals.

Answer honestly, have you ever lost business because you responded to an email a few hours after you received it? For most of us, the answer is probably no and even if it has happened, it probably doesn't happen with any kind of frequency.

Always focus on the outcome and structure your time with it in mind!

Block Out Your Day

Which leads us to daily scheduling. Consider blocking out time in your day for everything; responding to emails, posting on social media, working on various projects, taking breaks, etc. - and stick to your schedule!

If you've only scheduled 1 hour to engage with your social media following, move on to the next project when that hour is up. Have a hard and fast rule of sticking to your schedule unless it's absolutely necessary - as in absolutely critical to the wellbeing of your business - to adjust it.

Going beyond simply putting tasks on a calendar, an effective schedule will also take advantage of your natural inclinations and tendencies. Are you sharpest in the morning? Schedule your most important tasks at this time. Do you find yourself nodding off in the afternoon? Perhaps scheduling a quick walk around the block after lunch would be beneficial. Knowing yourself and when you're most likely to be productive is critical in order to properly structure your day.

Finally, include in your schedule time to think, both creatively and strategically. As a leader in your company, it's your job to cast the vision. This takes thought. You need to dream up goals and figure out ways to make those goals a reality. By prioritizing regular thinking time within your schedule, you also glean the benefits of renewed inspiration and laser-like focus.

Communicating the Vision

No one is an island and nobody does anything by themselves. Which means that the productivity and ultimate success of your business relies on the team you have around you as well as yourself.

In the next chapter we'll talk more about delegating, but for now, just remember to loop your team in on projects. You'll be more productive when you don't have as much to do. And while you're looping them in, really communicate the vision, inspire them with your goals for the future, get them excited for the work you're asking them to do.

Plans vs. Workflows

In conclusion to this chapter, let's reinforce the difference between plans and workflows and the importance of each.

Plans are what we've been talking about: your company goals, both big and small, and the steps needed to accomplish said goals.

Workflows, on the other hand, are proven business processes your company repeats over and over again to achieve desired outcomes. For example, let's say your roofing business has just received a phone call from a new potential client. Your customer support team fields the call and transfers the customer to an available sales rep, who then speaks with the caller about the benefits of hiring your business.

At the end of the call, your sales rep fires off an email to the new potential client thanking him for the call and inviting him to read through the attached brochure, look at your pricing and contact him back when they're ready to move forward.

The sales rep then logs the prospects info into your company's CRM software of choice and sets a reminder to follow up with them in 1 week if he doesn't hear back before then.

This is a company workflow. It's a process that is repeated over and over again within your company when certain conditions are met or specific circumstances arise. And having workflows in place can drastically improve your productivity and the productivity of your team, due to the potential for automation and the lack of decision making that needs to happen.

A few of the more common uses of workflows occur when hiring a new employee, onboarding a new client or approving employee time-off requests.

Chapter 4

Delegate and Conquer

In our previous chapters, we briefly mentioned that your time is your most valuable asset and that, even if you feel like it occasionally, no one is an island. Let's dive into that a bit more.

Focus on Your Strengths

If time truly is your most valuable asset, then you need to spend it wisely! That means spending more time on your strengths; what you're great at, what you love doing. This is where you're most effective and have the greatest chance of doing meaningful work.

Unfortunately, managing a business consists of a multitude of tasks - many of which might not align with your personal strengths. It's time to delegate.

Ask yourself, "What am I great at? What do I love doing?" If you're a creative type, maybe you enjoy writing the weekly blog posts. A social butterfly may love updating the company Instagram page and engaging with customers on social media. Does your brain thrive on numbers and spreadsheets? Sounds like budgeting, bookkeeping and the like may be right up your alley.

Whatever your strengths, it's vitally important that you understand them. Once you do, your job becomes figuring out ways to do more of what you're good at and less of what you're not. There are plenty of people in the world who excel at your weaknesses and these are the kinds of people you need on your team.

Effective Delegation

By matching yourself and your team members with your strengths, you'll do better work in less time, you'll each be more passionate about your jobs, and your company will thrive because of it.

When delegating duties, it's important to communicate effectively. Make sure your team members clearly understand what's expected of them, if there is anything in particular that must be completed in a specific way, etc. This will reduce

frustration, and ultimately save you time from continually correcting their work.

At the same time, learn to trust your team, take their opinions seriously and even consider making them part of the decision making process when appropriate. If you've delegated the right duties to the right team members, they should know more about this specific topic anyway.

Finding the Right Team Members

Learning to trust your employees starts with having the right employees in the first place. Let's go over a few quick hiring tips to give yourself the best chance at finding reliable talent.

- 1. Keep Your Talent Pipeline Full.** If you don't start looking for talented team members until you're actually ready to hire them, you may be in for a long search and your productivity will suffer as you try to complete tasks outside your wheelhouse. By accepting applicant information on your website (even when no positions are available) and visiting local meetups and entrepreneurial events in your niche, you'll be mingling with the right people and will have a database of qualified candidates to pull from when you need to fill a key position.
- 2. Write an Attractive Job Description.** When you do have a specific position you're interested in hiring for, it's important to make it sound appealing. Why would a potential candidate want to work for your company? Focus on what your business brings to the table and the benefits your employees enjoy. Top talent will normally have options when choosing a job; make a position at your company an opportunity they can't refuse.
- 3. Qualify Their Skill Set.** Has this potential candidate held similar positions before and do they have positive references from previous employers? This information is important, but qualifying skill sets goes beyond studying resumes. Consider creating a short homework assignment potential employees can complete to demonstrate their ability. Better yet, bring top candidates in for a trial day with your team!
- 4. Hire for Fit Over Skill Set.** Hiring employees that possess the necessary skills makes sense, but qualified candidates should bring more to the table than just a set of skills. The right "fit" is essential when hiring. Does your potential candidate hold similar values and beliefs as you? Do they fit in with your company culture and atmosphere? Would you like to be around them for 40 hours a week? Consider hiring for attitude over skill set... It's a lot easier to teach someone how to run a computer program than it is to teach them how to work hard and be respectful.

Chapter 5

Your Body and Productivity

So far, we've discussed a lot of tips, tricks and mindsets to improve your productivity. But if you really want to reach peak performance and get more done in less time, we need to talk about your physical health and important habits to form in regards to it.

Though these things may seem trivial in our "just work harder" culture, the amount of sleep you get each night, the time you rise each morning and your commitment to daily exercise and healthy eating are all essential to your productivity.

Improve Your Sleep and Get More Done

A good night sleep is imperative, both to your mental and physical health, as well as your levels of productivity. After all, we all know that a well rested mind is much sharper, meaning tasks can be completed in a much more efficient manner.

Experts recommend between 7 and 9 hours every night, but many adults get far less than this. In fact, most of us are so used to running on insufficient sleep levels that we can't even remember what a good night sleep feels like!

The good news is, your low levels of productivity can potentially be fixed by simply going to bed a bit earlier. Even 20-30 minutes less than recommended can be harmful as sleep deprivation has a cumulative effect and those few missed minutes will multiply over a longer period of time.

The Early Bird Gets the Worm

What time does your alarm clock go off in the morning? Better question: how many times do you usually hit the snooze button before finally dragging your groggy body out of bed?

Studies have shown that early risers tend to be more proactive and accomplish their work in a much more efficient manner. No wonder almost every business heavyweight, from Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz to Apple CEO Tim Cook, wakes up well before the sun.

A path towards enhanced productivity

Another added benefit of early rising will be your ability to accomplish certain tasks free of distraction... You won't be sidetracked by emails if none of your colleagues are awake to send them to you. When you commit to getting up with or before the sun, you take control of your day and you'll have time to structure your morning the way you choose rather than just rushing through your daily rituals to get to work on time.

Just remember, if you do decide to start rising earlier, you'll need to also go to bed earlier. Our previous point about getting sufficient sleep still applies!

Commit to Regular Exercise

To take another page from some of today's highest achievers, this time billionaires such as Richard Branson and Warren Buffet; commit to a regular fitness routine. Exercise boosts your energy levels, helps sharpen and focus your mind, and enables you to stay at peak productivity levels for longer.

But this doesn't mean you need to adopt a hardcore bodybuilder routine... A brisk walk each morning, 20 minute bike ride to work or even investing in a standing desk so you're not sitting all day can each have powerful effects on your health and productivity.

Say No to Junk Food

Your mom has been telling you to eat your vegetables your entire life, and you know what? She was right. Healthy foods can boost brain power, give you more energy and, ultimately, help you become more productive. But junk food - candy bars, fast food, pastries - has the opposite effect and will make you feel sluggish.

Some examples of brain supercharging foods include fruits and vegetables, especially blueberries, avocados and green, leafy veggies, as well as lean proteins like fish, eggs and nuts.

Finally, remember to stay hydrated! That means drinking plenty of plain ol' H₂O and is not an excuse to order another round at the bar or get a 3rd refill of soda during lunch.



Embrace Your Leisure Time

We have a problem in today's culture... We're so consumed with working hard that we're neglecting a critical element in our mental and physical health as well as our ability to work productively. As a result, many adults in the workforce experience the dangers of burnout.

Yes, we have a tendency to over work ourselves and it's only getting worse as employers can now reach their team at anytime via their smartphones. But, counterintuitive as it may sound, you'll never be as productive as you can be if all you do is work. And your work won't be of as high a quality either.

If you want to consistently perform at peak level, you need to make time for rest and leisure. Step out of the office, both physically and mentally, to focus on other interests and passions. Use your paid vacation time and take a trip or spend the week with family. When you come back you'll be refreshed and focused.

Additionally, by removing your brain from a project, you'll give your mind the chance to "chew" on it subconsciously. Have you ever had a brilliant work idea when you're in the shower, driving your kids to soccer practice or at some other random time? That's the power of your subconscious mind. Let it work for you.

Finally, consider setting a weekly time limit for work. By restricting the amount of hours you have to work each week, you'll be forced to prioritize your tasks and focus on the most important things, thereby increasing your production.

Remember, taking care of yourself is incredibly important in regards to your productivity and will also enable you to live a healthier, happier life.

Chapter 6

Perfection is the Enemy

Recent studies have shown that perfectionist tendencies have been on the rise in recent years, especially among millennials. Some have even called it an epidemic sweeping across college campuses.

Whether you're fresh out of school or have been a part of the workforce for years, all of us have felt the self-imposed pressure to meet higher standards. In this final chapter, let's talk about our culture's dangerous proclivity for perfectionism and how that tendency is killing your productivity.

Perfection is the Enemy

On the surface, striving for perfection may seem like a good thing. In fact, many athletes and successful people have attributed their success to refusing to settle for less than perfect. Shouldn't we always attempt to do our best work possible?

The answer is, yes, we should always strive to do the best we can, but demanding perfection has dangerous side effects, both for your personal health and your levels of productivity.

Think about it, perfection, in reality, is unattainable. If we really waited until everything was perfect, we'd never accomplish anything. Businesses would never start, products would never be created, blog posts would never be released... And that's the danger of perfectionism in regard to productivity - It keeps you from moving forward.

The MVP Philosophy

In his popular book, 'The Lean Startup,' author Eric Reis outlines his Minimum Viable Product (MVP) principle and describes it as:

"A version of a new product which allows a team to collect the maximum amount of validated learnings about customers with the least effort."

Meaning, in the beginning, companies should aim to create the simplest version of a product, take it to market, and discover if customers connect with it. Then Reis suggests using customer feedback to improve the product.

This same principle can be applied to most things you do in your business. For example, perhaps your company is looking for a new CRM software. A perfectionist may decide to spend days, weeks even, researching every option and analyzing the pros and cons of each. All the while, losing valuable time that could be spent working on more important tasks.

But were you to apply the MVP principle, you may look over the options, narrow it down to a few and then just choose one the same day! You can always change your mind and go with a different product in the future if you choose.

This idea can be applied to blog posts, marketing plans, press releases, etc. Just ask yourself, "What's the simplest solution?" or, "What's the minimum I can do to make this work?"

Once you truly embrace the fact that the work you release or the plan you actually set in motion, imperfections and all, is 100% better than the "perfect" project or plan that never sees the light of day, your productivity will skyrocket!

Continuous Improvement

Just because you've released something into the world or set a plan into motion doesn't mean you should never look for ways to improve it. In fact, the opposite is true! Success and productivity stem from a culture of continuous improvement. Ask yourself, "Can we do this better, faster, more efficiently?" If so, how? Always look for ways to improve upon your current processes, products, etc.

This principle goes beyond the project you're working on and also applies to your personal growth. To increase productivity, look for ways to improve your mindset, skill set, tools... There are plenty of books, podcasts, seminars and the like on every subject imaginable. Use them!

Just Start

The biggest key is to just start. Choose the software, post the blog, release the product... Whatever it is, get it out into the world, begin using it, get feedback, improve it and then start the whole process over.

So many people get stuck because they never start. Don't let this be you! Always remember that the imperfect work you release (or the process/software you actually use) is far better than the perfect work that sits on the "shelf" forever.

"Good enough" is good enough for now. Adopt that mentality, just start and then continually look for ways to improve.

Chapter 7

Bringing It All Together

So that's it, 5 steps to becoming a more productive leader. By accepting responsibility, having a plan, focusing on your strengths, delegating when appropriate, keeping an eye on your health, and eliminating perfectionist tendencies, you'll start to see your levels of productivity rise.

Implementing these steps will take time and effort, but your increased productivity will more than make up for it. So don't wait! Make these mentalities, tips, and lifestyles a part of your workflow now, while they're still fresh in your mind. Pretty soon they'll become habits and you won't even need to think about them.

In conclusion, we just want to say thank you for taking the time to read this guide. We hope you've received some useful information and have enjoyed our time together. Once you begin using the tips and tricks outlined in the previous pages and start seeing results, let us know. We'd love to hear about your success.

Until next time, thanks again from everyone here on the CleanPix team. Now go get stuff done!



About CleanPix: Since 2001, CleanPix has been helping business owners and marketing teams "put their brand into action." As a Digital Asset Management (DAM) company, their straightforward software enables companies to securely store, organize and access critical brand elements from one central hub. Stop wasting time searching for logos, pictures and videos across the thousands of files on your computer. Use CleanPix and take control of your brand. To experience the convenience of CleanPix first hand, start your free 14 day trial.

About the Author: Jacob Thomas is a professional copywriter and content marketer currently living in Bend, OR. His straightforward approach has helped numerous companies better connect with and engage their customers. Feel free to contact Jacob about working with your company.

My one single great goal today is:

make a drawing of it...