



Make the right move to get ahead

Spare some time in your workday for self-development.



Your move next: Managing your day at work efficiently can leave time for you to develop and grow in an organisation.

As the pace of working life continues to grow, so does your "to-do" list. While it usually covers day-to-day tasks, items addressing your professional development rarely make it on the list.

So how can you manage your time so you still have room in the day to focus on your development and growth?

Simply relying on ad hoc development of key skills and expertise is dangerous and will most often fail to deliver the ideal career progression.

Instead, it is essential to have a focused and strategic plan that helps you improve to make significant professional developments.

Career transitions such as a new role, promotion or

relocation are the most common triggers to change your work approach, and DBM has identified some key strategies to help your professional development:

1. Work out where in your list of priorities professional development lies. Obviously, there will be core pieces of work that take precedence over everything else. But when they are finished, can you allocate time for you? To ensure success, you need the support, understanding and commitment of colleagues and superiors. Write down some professional development goals you want to achieve throughout your day, week, month and year. The goals have to be measurable, realistic and easily definable. Communicate them and seek clarity on where they sit on

your list of priorities. Flexibility is also essential as work can spring from anywhere and turn your day on its head. If you miss a day, then it is important to recover it on another occasion.

2. Look to those you admire and observe their work approach. Then pick their brain. Most will be flattered you would like to learn from them and will be happy to become your mentor. Absorb what they have to say as most people enjoy talking and will unload a lot of information if they have a captive audience. Sometimes these lessons can not be gathered in a structured environment such as a meeting, but in a more informal relaxed setting such as lunch, dinner or office drinks. Do not try to reinvent the wheel when seeking innovation. Most organisations have managers or professionals who can help in your transition and professional development. If not, there are professional coaches who can provide the tools and plan to get there.
3. Understand your work style and strengths and use tools that make them shine. To ensure a well-rounded skill set, you must work on strengths and weaknesses. This takes a high degree of honest and objective self-analysis and sometimes may require someone else to hold the mirror in front of you. Ask colleagues for feedback on areas you can improve on. Having a detailed professional development plan is useless if you do not have enough time

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in your day to implement it. It's fine to adopt time-management strategies, but be careful the free time you create in your day is not filled by more day-to-day work.

Here are some ways to get more out of your day:

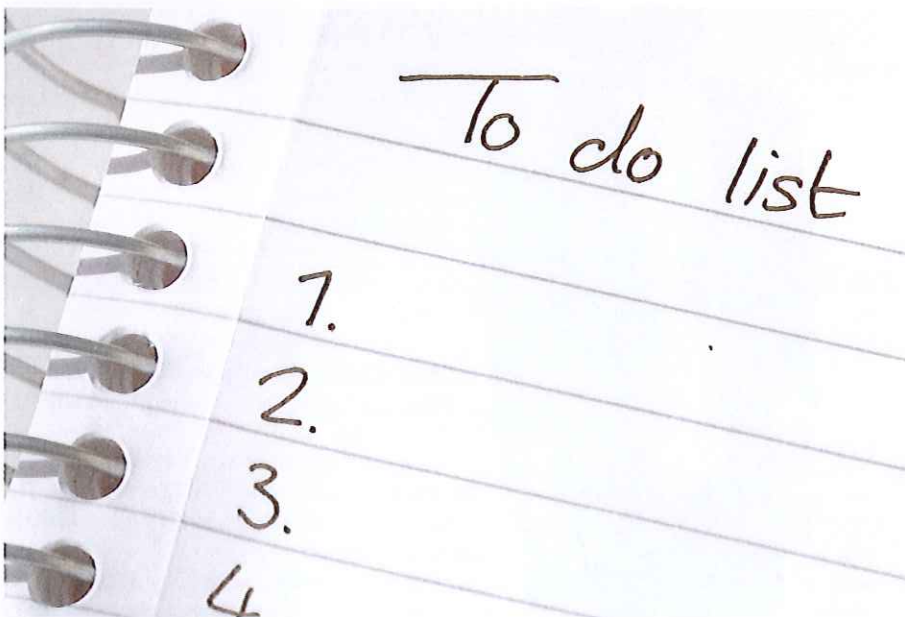
1. Strive for efficiency and effectiveness at work. Prioritise your day's activities and don't be afraid to say "no" to colleagues' requests. Setting aside blocks of time to finish a project or meeting a deadline will be more effective than taking on reactive work and will help you focus and complete core tasks.
2. Think about cutting a level in the project review process. Do projects really need to be signed off by all levels of management or can a few steps be removed? You will be surprised how this reduces stress and accelerates production.
3. Strive for the most effective and appropriate form of communication – whether it is email, phone or face-to-face. Don't dither on an email when a 30-second

conversation will deliver the same result and filter information in terms of urgency and relevance to your work.

4. When communicating, seek clarity of thought and purpose. Make sure your colleagues know what is expected of them and give them the tools and resources to accomplish goals.
5. Pace yourself. Assume long hours if that is what quality – not politics – demands. Set priorities and eliminate a few routine, time-consuming tasks from your workload. Schedule some "normal" time in your life. When stressed, take up activities that counteract your regular work. For example, if you sit at a computer all day, do something that is active after work.
6. If you don't manage your diary effectively, the number and length of meetings in a day can get out of control. Meetings can be effective in getting work done, but can also be a waste of time. Question the purpose of the meeting and the need for your involvement. For meetings you attend, communicate at the start the amount of time you have set aside. If the meeting is getting off the agenda, request the digressed topic be discussed at another time and resume the focus.
7. Shuffle the deck if you need more time to complete a project. Quickly assess other items on your list that might be dropped, delegated, delayed or done with less polish to allow the extra time you need.
8. If you find yourself being driven by the clock on a creative task, take a refreshing break or purposely do something else for a while to reduce some of the pressure.

Professional development is important for your career aspirations and ambitions and deserves discipline, attention and effort.

By pushing back on additional work requests and working efficiently, you will help find the time in your day to focus on how you can improve, innovate and professionally grow. **H**



To do, or not to do: Organise your diary effectively so you can get more out of your day.