

# GET IN THE GROOVE

*Productivity is more about rhythm than motion*

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any people feel that in order to be truly efficient in their workday they have to be constantly busy. These people make a continual effort to not waste a single moment in their day.

The reality? Productivity is more about rhythm than perpetual motion. As a professional in your field, you need to find the proper rhythm for how you use your day.

Over the last 10 years in our technology-oriented society, we've learned to expect the unexpected. There are always interruptions to your schedule — the emergency phone call, the unexpected coworker, the child at school who is suddenly ill. If we do not create space in our schedule to deal with these interruptions, we will instead be constantly switchtasking, alternating back and forth between tasks, rather than giving each task the full attention it deserves.

Each day as I meet with my clients, I schedule 30 minutes of buffer time between each hour appointment. I use that 30 minutes for a variety of things:

- **DICTATE notes from the previous meeting.** This helps both me and my clients review what we discussed.
- **GIVE myself time to “power down” from the meeting.** Just being able to relax for a few moments goes a long way toward avoiding a feeling of burnout.
- **ALLOW myself time to answer phone calls that happened during the meeting.** Calls are bound to happen, and the extra space gives me time to respond to them in a timely manner.
- **SCHEDULE time to “power up” for my next meeting.** I prepare my notes, look over any important files and get myself in a state of readiness for the unique needs of the next client.

## HOW CAN YOU FIND YOUR OWN UNIQUE RHYTHM FOR YOUR DAY?

**1** *Understand that drastic task switches require more time.* If you're switching from one e-mail to another e-mail, the switching cost may only be a second. But if you're switching from working on a creative design solution to entering bookkeeping, the mental cost involved is significant. The two are completely unrelated. Give your brain time to make the transition by building extra buffer time between unrelated activities.

by **Dave Crenshaw** Business coach, creator of the TimeGym

Dave has coached and consulted business owners from London to Manila and from San Francisco to New York. He is the author of *The Myth of Multitasking*. Questions? Visit online at [www.davecrenshaw.com](http://www.davecrenshaw.com).

**2** *Consider how often you are likely to be interrupted.* The more you are interrupted, the more you must increase the amount of buffer time between appointments and tasks. Schedule blank space in your calendar. Allow yourself room to answer phone calls, respond to e-mails and answer questions from co-workers.

**3** *Consider the rhythm of your business.* Certain businesses have key “money hours,” the time of the day in which sales are most likely to occur. Other businesses, such as auto repair or hair salons, have “interruption hours” when customers are most likely to walk in unannounced with a need. Pay attention to the flow of work in your business. Leave yourself more space during the time periods in which there are more interruptions. Also be sure to schedule “money appointments” during money time.

**4** *Be aware of your unique physiological rhythm.* Each person is wired differently to the cycle of the day. Personally, I'm a morning person. My most effective hours for processing e-mail and performing tasks are before noon. Therefore, I work on projects or handle processing in the morning and put off more structured meetings until the afternoon as much as possible. Become aware of how your body responds to the progression of the day and schedule tasks accordingly. **ww**

