

10 Strategies to Creating More in Less Time by Carol Dickson-Carr

Following is a list—a menu of options, if you will—of strategies that will get you on the road to creating more in less time and turbo-charging your productivity! I’ve often said that there is no “one size fits all” recipe to life, but if you try at least one strategy every three weeks, I promise you will see huge improvements in the overall quality of your life after the end of that third week. I picked a minimum of three weeks because it typically takes at least 21 days to develop a new habit. You can start with the one that jazzes you the most and take it from there. No pressure! Find a buddy or an accountability partner to try this with, or share it with your coach if you have one so you’ll have more incentive to make these positive steps forward. Are you ready? Here we go:

1. Manage your energy-this is a biggie!

I often get quizzical looks when I offer this suggestion without any further explanation, but trust me. Once I explain the process, it should make sense. There are four levels of energy that need our attention: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. You can manage your physical energy by eating nutritious foods, exercising, and sleeping. You can manage your emotional energy by paying attention to how you respond to events and being aware of what you can and cannot control. Also, spending time with positive, inspiring people can enhance your emotional energy. You can manage your mental energy by reading, expanding your knowledge base, and being curious. You can manage your spiritual energy by meditation or prayer, and being committed to a purpose in life that benefits all. Naturally, when your energy levels are higher, your productivity increases too.

I highly recommend the book, *The Power of Full Engagement* by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz. They do an excellent job of going in-depth on how you can manage each of these four energy levels.

2. Collaborate with others

This may be a stretch for people who are used to flying solo on most things, but you might surprise yourself if you find someone to work with that will result in an outcome beyond each of your dreams. This strategy comes in handy when you have a big project, or what James Collins and Jerry Porras call a “Big Hairy Audacious Goal” (BHAG). You can find collaborators by doing volunteer work in your community, networking, and taking advantage of your center of influence both locally and in the virtual world. It’s important that these potential partners share similar values with you, and if you both have a common vision, the sky can be the limit!

3. Pay attention to your body rhythms

In economics, we use a term called “decreasing marginal productivity,” and in layman’s terms, it means that your productivity levels tend to increase at a slower rate over time. If you know when you work best, you can consciously know when you’re maxing out and take a break when the time comes. Do you work better in the morning? How about in the evening or afternoon? If you have the opportunity to work when you’re the most productive and efficient, and rest when you feel like it’s starting to be a big effort, you’ll get more done. I realize that if you’re employed in a typical 8 to 5 job, that flexibility may not be built in, but I strongly encourage it for those who do have a flexible schedule.

4. Use your strengths and farm out the rest

Are you really saving money doing it all by yourself? Maybe not! Weighing the costs of time versus money can be very revealing. It’s usually best to focus on what you do best for better productivity. Think about what you could farm out to someone else. Think about your own worth per hour. Could you make more money doing what you’re good at rather than save money by doing something you should pay someone else to do?

If you can automate some of these processes (i.e., auto draft for bill paying, online bill paying, or direct deposit, to name a few), then all the better!

5. Recognize the cycle of chaos and order and use it to your advantage

I quietly suffered in silence for years because I felt that my life was a living paradox. But when someone I respected shared that paradoxes were the norm in life, I breathed a big sigh of relief! One of many paradoxes or dichotomies that come to mind is the cycle of chaos and order. Did you know that creativity can be a really messy process, and that it's not necessarily a bad thing? If you're in the midst of brainstorming ideas, you're probably not in linear mode. Your desk or work space may not be tidy during this process either. Take it in stride. It's highly likely that if you don't stress about the “mess” (conceptually and literally) when in the midst of creative, right brain activities, you'll move through the process much more quickly.

Oftentimes, the order naturally emerges during this process, and usually what comes out on the other end is quite coherent and delightful, whether it's a work of art or a business plan. On the other hand, order can also come in handy right from the very beginning, especially when working on more linear processes like paying bills, doing your financial forecasts, family routines, and so on. The trick is to have a system in place that has some structure with flexibility built in.

6. Use a balance of your natural personality plus a stretch goal in order to grow

In my “Free Relationship with Time” e-course, I talk about three basic personalities I've noticed over the years: the “goal-oriented with optimistic ‘to-do’ lists” personality; the “naturally schedule-oriented, planning your days to the minute detail” personality; and the “hate routine and fly by the seat of your pants, and maybe even thrive on it” personality. And there are variations within each of these. They can even overlap. There is no “right” way to be if it works for you instead of against you.

For example, optimistic goals are great, but the key is not to beat yourself up if you don't reach all of them. Instead, think of the journey you enjoyed trying to get there. You're probably further along than you would've been if you didn't have any goals.

Planning to the minute detail works well if you have realistic expectations about your ‘to-do’ list. Some things you have to do, and others you'd like to do. While you're planning, you might as well carve out some “fun time” for yourself and give yourself more time than you think it might take to complete the tasks. Committing an average of five to ten minutes a day to the very big but lower priority tasks can go a long way. These baby steps will definitely add up.

If you're efficient and stress-free with flying by the seat of your pants, then who am I to rock the boat? But if you find yourself stressed physically or mentally as a result, I'd suggest going outside your comfort zone gradually. I wouldn't spring a ‘to-do’ list on you right off the bat. That would probably be a slow death to you! But if you could have someone support you as the deadline looms, it will help. Also, try putting a notepad or a piece of paper near your work station or someplace where you'll see it every day, and as a task you know needs to be done occurs to you, write it down on the piece of paper or notepad. If there's an imposed due date, write that down next to it. It will be there as a constant reminder, and you may be inclined to complete it ahead of schedule rather than in the nick of time, or not at all.

Procrastination can transcend the personality types mentioned above, so think about why you procrastinate. Is it because it's a boring task? Is it a big scary task? Is it a task you don't see as a high priority? Naming it out loud and on paper is a good start.

Here’s a challenge for the chronic procrastinator. Take out a piece of paper and draw two lines in a cross so that you have four boxes:

What I’ve procrastinated on:	Why I’m procrastinating:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
Costs of not doing tasks:	Benefits of doing tasks:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

The idea would be to get in touch with your rebel and write all the things on which you’ve procrastinated in the top left box; in the top right box, your reasons for procrastinating; in the bottom left box, the cost of not doing them; then in the right bottom box, all the benefits of doing those things you’ve procrastinated on. After you’ve done that, share these with someone you know who wants you to succeed. In fact, you can even email them to me at carolmanagingpersonalresources.com, and I will acknowledge you for this step in the process.

7. Practice daily self-awareness

Another favorite activity of mine is what I call “Downloading my brain to paper.” You wouldn’t believe the relief I feel after journaling—especially after a stressful day. If you’re a scheduler, carve out a certain time of day to do this. Or if you’re like me, journal when the spirit hits you if scheduling seems too restrictive. Write everything that is on your mind, including items you know you need to be working on. These can include areas of physical well being, relationships, or some tolerations you’ve been avoiding like shampooing your carpets, cleaning out a closet or desk drawer, and so on. Don’t edit yourself. No one has to see what you wrote. Some of the greatest ideas have been born in the journal. I always have more clarity after journaling and my productivity goes through the roof as a result.

Also, if you’re aware of some of the assessments out there such as the MBTI® or the DiSC, knowing your personality type and behavioral style can also help you use the most efficient methods specific to you to get things done.

8. Make sure you schedule “you” time every day

I can already hear some of you screaming at me, “Carol, I don’t have time to take time for myself, and you’re already giving me these challenges that I don’t have time to do. And aerobic exercise? Puh-leeze!” This is just another one of those paradoxes. I promise you after taking down time for yourself— even if it’s just 30 minutes to an hour a day, doing something you absolutely love—you will be much more productive after you’ve come back from that break. Remember, when your marginal productivity decreases, you’re wasting time anyway.



“Leadership and Empowerment through Self-actualization”

Many of you who are moms may have heard the phrase, “If Mom’s not happy, then no one in the house is happy!” But even if you’re not a mom, and you live with others, this rule can apply.

Invitation: Take a moment to write down three rituals that you know give you energy. Examples can include reading, exercise, journaling, gardening, music, sports, sailing, tai chi, yoga, or spending time in nature.

9. Employ some of the traditional ‘time management’ tips

Here are a couple of ideas to consider. Visit <http://www.power-edsolutionsinc.com/TimeTracker.pdf> and download the time log chart and print it out. Then try the following for a week: Either the night before, or the following morning, make a list on the left hand side of the grid of what you intend to do that day. Then on the right side, at the end of the day, list what you actually did. Evaluate how you did each day. Did you meet your expectations, or did you schedule too much?

List all of the distractions that come up for you—the annoying ones and those that you find enjoyable. I challenge you to use those fun distractions as rewards after putting a dent in your proverbial “to-do” list. If the phone rings, let it go to voice mail. Turn off your instant messaging (if you have it). Tell your friends not to come over unannounced unless it’s an emergency or unless they want to help you with your tasks. And prioritize, prioritize, prioritize!

Again, if you find that you don’t have the discipline, inclination, motivation, or inspiration to do any of this, then perhaps a friend, a coach, or someone you trust can serve as an accountability partner to support you and keep you “honest”.

10. Create passive income

I’m just going to plant some seeds here, because the “how to” of this process is a rather lengthy one, but well worth pursuing. Why? Because when most of your money is working for you instead of you working for most of your money, it gives you more time to do the things you enjoy doing in life. You can do this by receiving commission as an affiliate of other people’s products sold, creating digital products of your own, investing (in the market and certain forms of real estate, for example), and even network marketing. There are so many options out there with many moving parts, but if you choose and master just one source of creating passive income for yourself, look out!

I realize that “life happens,” but as I said at the beginning of this article, if you try just one of these strategies for three weeks straight, watch those productivity floodgates open for you. I invite you to email me and tell me how it went for you, and I’ll congratulate you with a big grin on my face!

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Carol is also the creator of the interview audio series, "[Master Your Time and Live Your Dreams: Conversations with Coaches and Creatives Who Get It Done!](#)" and is also co-author to the book, [A Guide to Getting It: Purpose & Passion](#).