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Increasing your personal multipliers

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HAVE you ever wondered how some people could do the same amount of work you do but they do it better and faster? Austria-american management consultant, educator and author Peter Drucker once said that “efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things.” If you take a closer look at your daily tasks, which ones should you be doing and, among those, are you doing them the best way possible?



My time management and planning skills were put to the test recently when we had overlapping activities which required me to focus on several tasks at the same time. I realized that I had a distinct advantage over some of my colleagues because I used to work in a fast-paced industry where I had to make decisions one after the other. I realized my exposure in the academe and corporate training in a hospital and multinational setting helped me develop my own personal multipliers.

Borrowing from the economic concept of a multiplier effect, personal multipliers are the tools and skills you possess to increase your effectiveness and efficiency. You acquire these through deliberate reflection of your own experiences, your observations of other people, and from using your work tools daily to enhance your work output. These are the skills, tools and behaviors that help you get the job done proficiently and successfully.

One of the important skills you need is knowing how to plan your day. Focus on the most important tasks of the day rather than being overwhelmed with incoming e-mails, phone calls, or even your boss. List down what needs to be done for the day and then prioritize which needs to be finished first in terms of your team's workflow. Once you have your priority activities, take one step at a time to motivate yourself and keep at it until it is finished.

Part of planning your day is to park activities that can wait and schedule them within the week. I find that when I put it in my digital calendar, I am automatically reminded of the task. Learn to decline meeting invitations without any clear agenda so you will not waste time. One of the things that helps me plan better is to reduce distractions on my table by putting only the things I need to do at work. I try to keep other things inside my drawer so I can focus on my tasks until I finish them.

With working from home and the ongoing pandemic, physical activities are limited. But try to keep healthy by eating the right food and doing home exercises. I have tried some excellent bodyweight exercises online that I can do at home whenever I can. Otherwise, I give the dogs a bath or clean their area as a home workout. Being healthy gives you more energy to do your work better because you train your body not to get tired easily. You get to do more because your energy is sustained, and your focus becomes consistent. This translates to having more time for self-improvement or hobbies which help you become more creative.

Being healthy also means cultivating a good mindset. Reframing issues and problems as opportunities for growth helps you focus on solutions more than finding blame. Several days ago, I had to facilitate a workshop where I did not feel as confident because I had not done any training for a while now. After the first batch, we were all congratulated for doing well but I knew I had to fine tune some parts of my discussion, which I did for the next batches. I could have stopped because I was doing well already but I knew I could still improve. Adopting a growth mindset helped me not only manage my anxiety in facilitating the

workshop, but also to keep an eye on what I can improve so confusion and questions are minimized. It gave us more time to discuss other things and provide more time for participants to do their planning.

One of the most important mentalities we need to develop is the digital mindset. Given a task, most people would dive right in and just do it. But only a few would stop and evaluate the best way to do the task. Abraham Lincoln once said, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." We must realize that we have at our disposal tools which have not fully maximized because we are too afraid to use them.

For example, people have been using presentation tools for a while now and yet not everybody has the same skill level. Your dexterity in using the tool will depend on your own interest—and your interest in learning its many uses. I still remember the first time I created an animated video using only Powerpoint and my colleagues thought I used a video editing tool. They were surprised to discover I was using the same tools as they did. The difference was that I was curious how my output could be improved given the tools available. A digital mindset can help you overcome your fear of new technology and learn as much as you can to do your work efficiently and effectively.

And lastly, surround yourself with people who will help you become better at what you do. Sometimes, your environment can hinder you from looking at better ways of doing your work, especially if it is a traditional organization. Your advantage would be a personality that can adapt to different kinds of people, especially the difficult ones. Past organizations have shaped the way I deal with people and the most powerful skill I have learned in dealing with people is empathy. When you know where people are coming from, it becomes easier to work with them.

Your personal multiplier also depends on how much you are willing to go out of your comfort zone. When you know what you want to accomplish, it will become easier to find ways to achieve it even when presented with obstacles. But once you develop the habit of improving the little things in your work, you will find it easier to fix the bigger ones.