

Weekly Focus Blocks

Create Focus Blocks of Time for A & B-Level Work

A Focus Day is a specific day of the week you set aside to work primarily on a few key A- or B-level projects. On your Focus Day, you'll block out three to four hours of your best time to invest in your highest-value A- and B- level activities.

Push Days are all the other days of your work week that you use to just “push” your normal projects another step forward. Focus Days help you create long-term impact on your business; Push Days help you keep your day-to-day operations rolling forward.

We suggest that you start by designating one day each week as your Focus Day, and within that Focus Day you permanently schedule one three- to four-hour “focus block” that you reserve for your highest-value activities. On your “Push” days, do your best to block out one hour of focus time for higher value activities.

Enroll your team in supporting your Focus Day. Encourage your key staff to set aside their own Focus Days, too. What do you do with the other four to five hours of the day that aren't in your focus block? Whatever you normally would do. Your focus block is so valuable for your organization that it is okay to let the rest of the day go to your C- and even a few D-level activities.

To the right is a sample weekly schedule showing how your week might work when you use this simple yet potent concept.

On your Focus Day, get outside of your old business routine and instead work on the highest-leverage, highest-value, highest-return part of your business. This could mean building out a baseline operational process to use with new clients, investing time in coaching your key team members, refining your hiring system, or visiting your two most important customers or prospects to deepen the relationship or close the sale.

Think of your focus block as an appointment with yourself, when you are at your best, in the morning or the afternoon, whenever you feel sharpest, to do those highest-value

A- and B-time items only you can do for your company. Put it in your calendar to guarantee yourself a focus block of at least one hour of uninterrupted time even on your Push Days. Even if you do this in small, incremental steps with two Push Days a week, you'll start to notice a significant impact on your productivity level.

This simple methodology allows you to reclaim those critical blocks of your best time. **Remember, the world won't volunteer to turn off; it takes a structured, well-designed approach to make these blocks of time to invest in your highest-value activities.** If you're passive about this, your time will be fractured into small pieces. Ten minutes here, five minutes there.

Mon		Tues		Wed		Thurs		Fri	
8	Focus Block	8	Focus Day	8	Focus Block	8		8	Focus Block
9		9		9		9		9	
10		10		10		10		10	
11		11		11		11		11	
12		12		12		12		12	
1		1		1		1		1	
2		2		2		2		2	
3		3		3		3		3	
4		4		4		4	Focus Block	4	
5		5		5		5		5	

This is about using all this extra time wisely, because it's actually *not* time that's the scarcest resource—attention is. Your best attention, the time when you are at your best in terms of productivity and focus, is the most powerful weapon in your arsenal.

For many of us, that first hour of the day, when we are sufficiently rested and fresh, is the most valuable. Lesser organizational leaders and managers crave control and immediate emotional rewards, so the first thing they do when entering the office is check their email. In fact, they likely already checked it twice before reaching the office. What a wasted opportunity! Most email just helps you tread water. Instead, when you get to your office, invest your golden hour in something that truly makes a difference.

Imagine the power of a four-hour Focus Day block and four days of one-hour focus blocks, giving you eight uninterrupted hours each week to invest in your top priorities. Now multiply that by the forty-eight weeks a year you work (you *are* taking off a minimum of four weeks' vacation a year, right? If not, why not?). That's the equivalent of forty-eight full eight-hour days of your very best time—nine working weeks of you at your best doing upgraded activities. You can see how this is a key early step in breaking the link between one hour of time worked and one hour of value created.

The more you create these uninterrupted blocks of time, the more you can upgrade your use of that time and inject value into your daily activities. Instead of going from one thing to the next, to the next, you'll be amazed by how much you get done when you are more intentional, keeping this principle of quality blocks of time in mind. Many business leaders allow their time to be "sliced" to death. They have five minutes to focus on a project before an email interrupts them. Then they move to a meeting, only to have fifteen minutes to prep for the next meeting that starts soon after the first. Then they get hit with two staff requests as they leave that meeting on their way back to their office. And so goes their day. You already know it's extraordinarily difficult to create your best value in small slivers of time. You need those blocks of uninterrupted best time in which to think, plan, create, and execute on key items.

As you progress, add a second, even a third Focus Day to your week so that you can create even more value for your organization. Here is what David's typical week looks like on his calendar:

RECAP: Set aside one Focus Day every week. Block out a three- to four-hour block of focus time during which you'll work exclusively on the highest-leverage, highest-value, highest-return activities (A and B) that add real value. Then, schedule in a focus block of at least one hour every Push Day.

David's Typical Week
with Focus Days and Reserved Focus Blocks

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
8	Focus Block	8	Focus Block	8	8
9		Focus Day	9	Focus Day	Focus Day
10			10		10
11		11	11	11	11
12		12	12	12	12
1		Focus Day	1	Focus Day	1
2		2	2	2	2
3		15.5 Hours / Week			3
4					4
5		5	5	5	5

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8 am					
9 am					
10 am					
11am					
12 pm					
1 pm					
2 pm					
3 pm					
4 pm					
5 pm					
6 pm					

7 Focus Block Best Practices

1. Schedule your week with recurring Focus Block appointments. Start small and build momentum.
2. In general, schedule your Focus Blocks first thing in the day **before** the entropy of the day hits.
3. Communicate your weekly schedule to your team. Enlist their support. Explain about The Time Value Matrix™ and Focus Blocks, and encourage **them** to create their own Focus Blocks each week.
4. Filter out the world (e.g. email, apps, alerts, texts, calls, interruptions, and distractions) during your valuable Focus Blocks.
5. Concretely identify your 1-3 “Big Rocks” at the start of every week. Use your Focus Blocks to do your Big Rocks – along with any other A or B-level activity you have that week. Remember, Focus Blocks are only for A or B-level activities, not C or D-level “work”.
6. Start fresh every day and week.
7. Set the stage at the end of today for tomorrow’s Focus Block.