

8 Ways Doing Less Can Transform Your Work & Life Do less, be happier.

“Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.” - *Antoine de Saint Exupery*

Post written by Leo Babauta, author of *The Power of Less*, the fine art of limiting yourself to the essential...in business and in life.

Most productivity blogs and books will teach you how to do more, to get more done, to be more productive.

I want to teach you to do less, to get less done and to be less productive.

And while I’ve written about it before, I think it’s time we take a look at how this can really change your work life, and your life as a whole.

Doing less is not about being lazy (though being lazy is a good start) — it’s about focusing on quality rather than quantity. It’s about getting off the hamster wheel of productivity, so that you can create something great rather than just being busy.

Let’s take a few examples:

- A furniture maker can mass-produce a ton of cheap furniture that will fall apart within a year. Another craftsman might produce way fewer pieces of furniture, but make them beautifully and solidly, so that they’ll last for generations. If he makes them well enough, they might even be sought out and remembered for their great design.
- A programmer can write tens of thousands of lines of code, and produce a lot of software that works. A less productive coder can write a tenth of the lines, perhaps even editing down what she writes so that there’s less code, but they’re better written. This small program might be the most useful thing on many people’s computers, flawless code that just works.
- A writer can churn out lots of words (hundreds of thousands, if not millions), but have his work read by relatively few. Another writer can write a small but powerful blog post or ebook, and have the post be spread by thousands of people.

In each case, the person produced less, but focused on quality. The impact of the smaller work was higher, and thus the time worked was better spent.

I’d argue that by focusing on quality, you could work less and still have a higher impact. I’ve done this in my life — by cutting back on my work hours, I actually get less done but have a higher impact.

I should note: this takes courage, to do less. You have to shed all the old ideas of working harder and working more and being more productive. You have to forget about what others think about your work habits, and instead think about the impact the work has on the world and your life. You have to change the way you do things, and that's never easy.

But it's worth the effort.

Here are some ways this philosophy can change your life and work:

1. **Less hectic, busy schedule, less stress, more peace.** Doing less leaves free to schedule less, leave more space in your schedule, work at a more human pace.
2. **More ability to focus, to find Flow, to work in the moment.** When you are doing too much, you are constantly switching from one task to another, constantly interrupted, constantly distracted. Do less, clear away distractions, single-task.
3. **Work has more impact and spreads further and wider.** When you do too much, your work is spread thinner, you have lower quality, and people won't spread your work or give you awards for low-quality work.
4. **More pride in your work, which feels good.** Feels awesome, actually, to create something worth putting your name on.
5. **People appreciate higher quality.** Customers rave. Readers enthuse. Reviewers glow. Bosses promote.
6. **More time for family and loved ones.** Not a small benefit. Be sure that if you do less, you use the saved time for something important. Like quiet time for the ones you love.
7. **More time for other things you enjoy.** I use my time for exercise, or reading, and of course my family.
8. **Free yourself up to create amazing things.** Creating is hard to do when you're busy and distracted. By doing less, you can create something great.

How to Do Less

I almost didn't include this section, as to me it seems obvious: you just ... do less. But I realize it's not obvious to everyone, so I'll share a few tips:

- Slowly cut back on non-essential commitments.
- Have fewer meetings.
- Say no to requests, as much as possible, so you can focus on doing something great.
- Cut out distractions, especially the Internet.
- Single-task and focus.
- Churn out a shitty first draft, then edit.
- Edit some more. Make it beautiful and minimal.
- Make it something you will be proud to claim credit for.

- When you find yourself doing busy-work, stop, put it off, find ways to cut that out of your life.
- Whatever blocks you from doing your great work, kill it.
- Set limits on how many things you do each day.
- Focus on the most important tasks first, before you get distracted.
- Set limits on your work hours.

It won't happen overnight. Change gradually, but surely.

"Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius – and a lot of courage – to move in the opposite direction." - *E.F. Schumacker*

4 Tips for Being a Great Conversationalist

If you sometimes find it difficult to make conversation with others – especially strangers – here are 4 tips that will put you more at ease:

1. **Be fully engaged** – Being fully engaged involves incorporating these powerful communication skills:
2. **Don't tell. Ask.** – So you don't have to feel the pressure of carrying the conversation by talking about yourself, ask questions instead. By asking questions of the person you are speaking with, it shows your interest and engages them further in the conversation. Close-ended questions are answered with a simple "yes" or "no" response. Therefore, ask open-ended questions which start with "Who", "What", "Why", "When", "Where", "How", "What if" and "Tell me more." Open-ended questions require that the speaker share more about the topic, and often leads to stimulating and thought-provoking conversation.
3. **F.O.R.I.M. keeps the conversation alive** – A surefire way to keep the conversation going is to ask open-ended questions about the subject that matters most to the person you are talking to – themselves. Use this simple formula to keep a conversation flowing – **F.O.R.I.M** – **Family, Occupation, Recreation, Interests, and Message.** You can ask many questions in these areas that include inquiring about their spouse and children, hobbies, passions, interests, sports, type of work, where they live and more.
 - **Be genuinely interested** – When you are interested in people, they know. Good conversationalists show their interest by focusing their attention on the person they are talking to. They make solid eye contact, they nod in understanding, make short affirming comments, they do not interrupt, and they do not allow their attention to be diverted with distractions.
 - **Actively listen** – Active listening skills include paying close attention to what is being said by the speaker and not thinking about what you are going to say next. Paraphrasing back what you heard, and asking clarifying questions are

effective techniques to ensure that you understand what the speaker has said.

Once you master asking open-ended questions using **F-O-R-I**, you can use the "**M**" (**Message**) to close your conversation. You might say something like, "It was wonderful chatting with you, do you have a business card?", "I'd love to get together some time, would you like to do that?" or simply, "It was great to talk with you, good luck with your business."

A strong close makes you and the other person feel that your encounter came full circle to a satisfying completion.

Know when to bring the conversation to an end - Even the best conversations will eventually come to a natural end or be ended by an interruption. Notice the cues of the other person such as them looking at their watch, restless body language, lulls, or their attention being diverted. At that point, give them your "**M**" (your **Message** from #3), and end on a positive note.