

WALL STREET JOURNAL BESTSELLER

DEEP

RULES FOR FOCUSED SUCCESS
IN A DISTRACTED WORLD

WORK

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Deep Work



DEEP WORK IS VALUABLE

DEEP WORK IS RARE

DEEP WORK IS MEANINGFUL



Deep Work is Valuable



WORK DEEPLY

- Deep work: Professional activities performed in the state of distraction free concentration that pushes your cognitive capabilities to their limit.
- If you cultivate this skill, and make it the core of your working life, you will thrive.
- If you can't learn you can't strive. If you don't produce you won't thrive. These two abilities depend on your ability to perform deep work.
- Law of productivity: high quality work produced = Time spent x intensity of focus

PEAK PERFORMANCE

- To produce at your peak level you need to work for extended periods with full concentration on a single task free from distraction.
- To advance your understanding of your field, you must tackle the relevant topics systematically allowing your converging rays of attention to uncover the truth laden in each.
- The differences between expert performers and normal adults, reflects a life-long period of deliberate effort to improve performance in a specific domain.
- Men of genius themselves were great only by bringing all their power to bear on the point they decided to show their full measure.
- The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind are stretched to its limits in a voluntary effect to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile.
- Eudaimonia- human flourishing creating work that is at the absolute extent of the personal abilities.

Deep Work is Valuable



CRAFTSMANSHIP

- Your work is craft, and if you hone your ability and apply it with respect and care, then, like a skill worker, you can generate meaning in the daily efforts of your professional life.
- Cultivating craftsmanship is necessarily a deep task and therefore requires a commitment to deep work.
- These efforts to create new value, improve your skill, and are hard to replicate.
- “Great creative minds think like artists but work like accountants.” - David Brooks

STRUCTURE

- Four disciplines for execution: 1) Focus on the wildly important goals. 2) Act on the lead measures. 3) Keep a compelling scorecard. 4) Create a cadence of accountability.
- Without structure, it is easy to allow your time to devolve into shallow non-creative behavior.
- With structure, you can ensure that you regularly scheduled blocks of time to grapple with a new idea, work deeply on something challenging, or brainstorm to instigate innovation.
- Your ritual needs rules and processes to keep your efforts structured.
- Put thought into your leisure time to give advance structure to your day within a day. Fill your free time with quality. Live and not just exist.
- You must overcome the distrust of structure if you want to approach your true potential as someone who creates things that matter.
- The goal is not to stick to a given schedule at all costs. It's instead it to maintain, at all times, a thoughtful say in what you're doing with your time going forward.

Deep Work is Rare



DRAIN THE SHALLOWS

- Shallow work: non-cognitive demanding logistical style cast often performed while distracted. These efforts do not create new value for the world and are easy to replicate.
- Is it acceptable to run your day out of your inbox, responding to the latest message with urgency while others pile up behind it, all the while feeling satisfyingly productive?
- The principle of least resistance supports work cultures that save us from the short-term discomfort of concentration and planning at the expense of long-term satisfaction and production of real value.
- Knowledge workers are tending toward increasingly visible busyness because they lack a better way to demonstrate their value.
- Busyness as a proxy for productivity: in the absence of clear indicators of what it means to be productive and valuable in their jobs, many knowledge workers revert back to an industrial indicator of productivity - doing lots of stuff in a visible manner.
- Your will is not a manifestation of your character that you can deploy without limits, instead it is like a muscle that tires.

QUIT SOCIAL MEDIA

- Our brains construct our worldview based on what we pay attention to.
- Scheduling internet use at work and at home can further improve your concentration.
- Deep work is at a severe disadvantage in a tech-opoly because it builds on values like quality, craftsmanship and mastery, that are decidedly old fashion and non-technological.
- Those with the ability to work with and tease results out of increasingly complex machines will thrive. The key question will be, “are you good at working with intelligent machines?”

Deep Work is Rare



CREATIVITY

- “There is a popular notion that artists work from inspiration, that there is some strike, or bolt, or bubbling up of creative mojo from who knows where. Waiting for inspiration to strike is a terrible plan. The greatest advice to anyone trying to do creative work is to ignore inspiration.” - Mason Currey
- Productive meditation: when you are occupied physically but not mentally, focus your attention on a single, well-defined, professional problem. Continue to bring your mind back to the problem when it wanders or stalls.

WHEN YOU WORK, WORK. WHEN YOU'RE DONE, BE DONE.

- “Idleness is not just a vacation, an indulgence, or a vice, it is as indispensable to the brain as vitamin D is to the body. Deprived of it we suffer a mental affliction as disfiguring as rickets. It is, paradoxically, necessary to getting any work done.” - Tim Kreiter
- Downtime aids insights. Downtime helps recharge the energy needed to work deeply.
- Providing your conscious brain time to rest allows your unconscious mind to sort through challenges.
- A shutdown habit is not necessarily reducing the amount of time you're engaged in productive work, but is instead diversifying the type of work you deploy.
- Directed attention required to concentrate is finite. If you exhaust it you'll struggle to concentrate.
- Attention restoration theory: spending time in nature can improve your ability to concentrate. Inherently fascinating stimuli in nature, e.g. sunsets, invoke attention modestly allowing focused attention mechanisms a chance to replenish.
- Regularly resting your brain improves the quality of your deep work.
- Your refreshed ability to dive deeper will increase the sheer volume of truly important work through the day.
- Embrace boredom for mental calisthenics. The ability to concentrate intensely is a skill that must be trained.

Deep Work is Meaningful



THE LAW OF THE VITAL FEW

- Clarity about what matters provides clarity about what does not.
- What we choose to focus on and what we choose to ignore plays into defining the quality of our life.
- The most dangerous word in one's productivity vocabulary: yes.
- People who multitask all the time can't filter out irrelevancy, can't manage a working memory, are chronicling distracted, initiate much larger parts of the brain that are irrelevant to task at hand and can't keep on task.
- In work, to increase the time you spend in a state of depth is to leverage the complex machinery of the human brain.

A DEEP LIFE IS A GOOD LIFE

- The typical man sees the eight-hour work shift as "the day." Man should use the 16 free hours left as an aristocrat would, for rigorous self-improvement.
- Crucial abilities for thriving in the new economy:
 - The ability to quickly master hard things.
 - The ability to produce at the elite level with both quality and speed.
- A commitment to deep work is a pragmatic recognition that the ability to concentrate is a skill that gets valuable things done.
- A deep life is not just economically lucrative but also life well lived.
- Struggle to support your mind to its fullest capacity to create things that matter and you will discover that depth generates a life rich with productivity and meaning.
- "I'll live the focused life because it is the best kind there is." - Winifred Gallagher