

The Science of Optimizing Productivity and Performance

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Becoming Superhuman teaches busy professionals how to get their most important work done, in less time, with less stress.

Recent Superhuman Alumni



Sustainable Peak Performance Index (SPPI®)



An assessment tool created at the UC Berkeley Haas School of Business used both in academic research and industry.

Purpose

- Determine employee performance baselines and assess the factors that impact productivity, effectiveness, and sustainability at the individual and organizational level

70k+ unique employee respondents since March 2020.

Number of respondents

- Total n = 28

Key Strengths



| % | Strength | Relevant Statements |
|----|----------------------------------|--|
| 73 | Awareness of High ROI Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">“I know my unique strengths and which activities and tasks yield the greatest ROI on my time.” |
| 70 | Weekly Breaks | <ul style="list-style-type: none">“I take intentional time (i.e. a few hours or more) to rest, recover, and/or disconnect at least once per week.” |
| 68 | Adequate Sleep | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Getting 7+ hours per night on average |

Key Areas for Improvement



| % | Area for Improvement | Relevant Statements |
|----|--|---|
| 85 | Digital Hygiene | <ul style="list-style-type: none">96% have chat open while working85% have phone out and visible while working |
| 66 | Limited Time for Creative / Big Picture Work | <ul style="list-style-type: none">“I don’t spend as much time doing creative work and/or thinking big picture as I’d like.” |
| 46 | Daily Prioritization | <ul style="list-style-type: none">“I plan and stick to my priorities for the day.” |

Biggest Productivity Barriers



| | |
|---------------------|---|
| #1 Challenge | Responding to emails / messages disrupts me from deep thought / skilled work |
| #2 Challenge | Getting approvals/feedback |
| #3 Challenge | Lack of clarity on ownership of tasks |

Today's Overview

3 of the biggest mistakes of productivity and performance

The scientific reasons WHY people commonly make those mistakes and what research-backed strategies to use instead

3M framework for preventing burnout

Practical strategies to cognitively “turn off” and get high-quality rest

MISTAKE #1

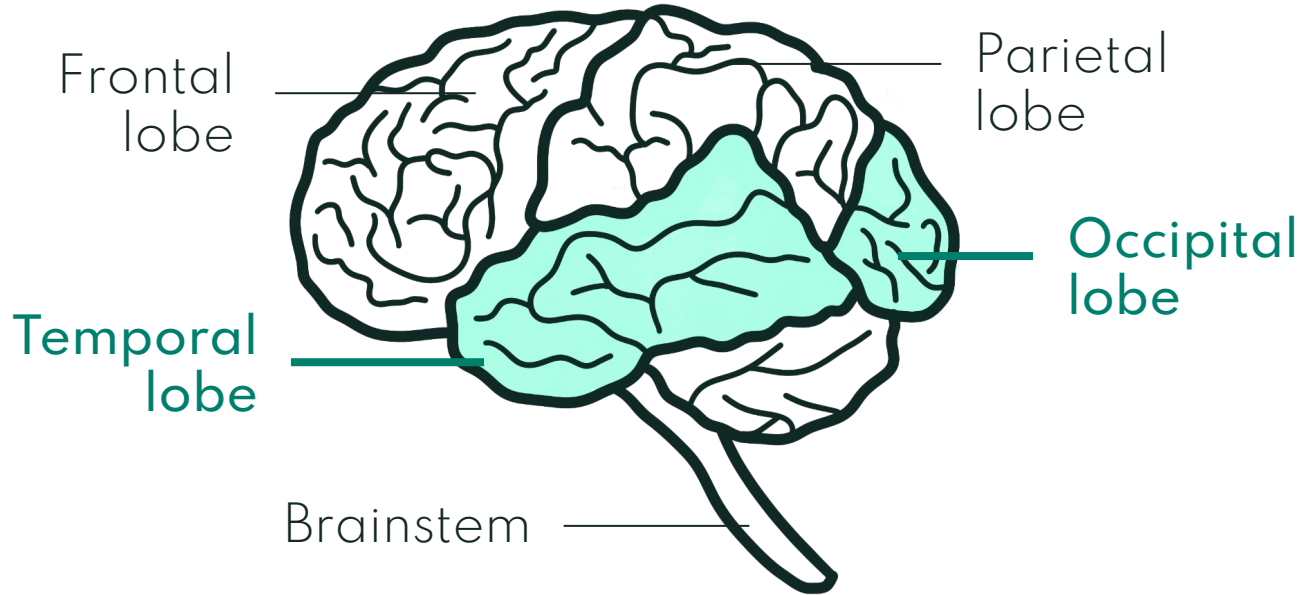
Poor Hygiene

1

**You are hard-wired to
constantly scan your
environment**



35-40% of Brain's Real Estate Dedicated to Seeing / Hearing





**What are the biggest drains
on our cognitive capacity?**





A photograph of two men in business suits engaged in a conversation. The man on the left is in profile, gesturing with his hands. The man on the right is also in profile, looking towards the first man. The image has a teal color overlay. Text is superimposed on the image.

~20% of energy

during video calls is spent on
processing your own reflection.

Hide Your “Self View” on Zoom

“Self-view”
on Zoom



Stop Video

Unmute My Audio

Pin Video

Rename

Hide Self View

SMARTPHONES

A smartphone is the central focus, displaying a weather application for London. The screen shows a temperature of 18°C and a 'Moderate rain warning'. Below the weather, a grid of app icons is visible, including Messages, Photos, Camera, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, Music, WhatsApp, Weather, Hue, Finance, App Store, and Settings. The phone is resting on a light-colored wooden desk. In the background, a portion of a grey keyboard and a blue mouse are visible, slightly out of focus.

**The #1 reason why phones
are so addictive:**

**The #1 reason why phones
are so addictive:**

NOTIFICATIONS.

T-Mobile



6:45

Monday, June 25

Notification Center



NYTIMES

8m ago

Syria's leader denies using chemical weapons against civilians. Our video investigation uses a trove of evidence to prove him wrong.

2 more notifications



TWITTER

17m ago

Daniel Bader, Malarie Gokey, and 36 others liked Alex Dobie's Tweet

2 more notifications



INSTAGRAM

2h ago

stepan_matrosov24 started following you.

2 more notifications

Reclaim **your** digital life

Take control of your digital habits with thoughtful screen time controls and mindful moments.

[Download for iOS](#)[Download for Android](#)**86%**

Daily Success

25M+

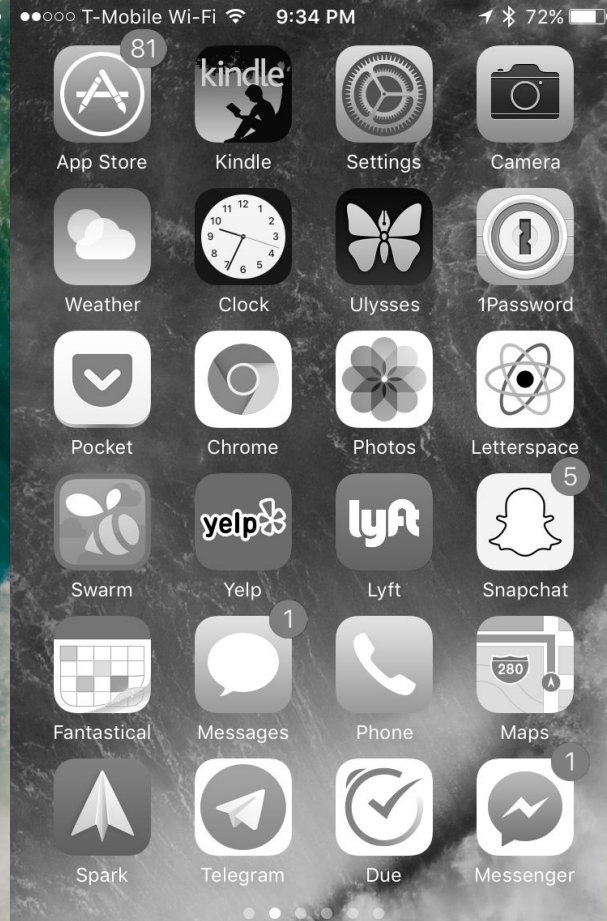
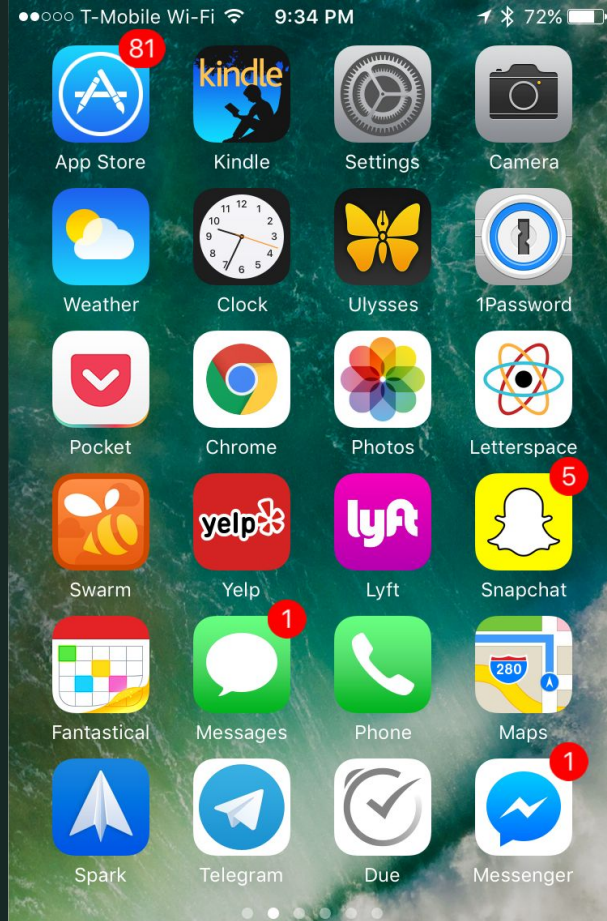
Hours saved

97%

User satisfaction

**Must Use QR Code for
1 month of Free Premium**

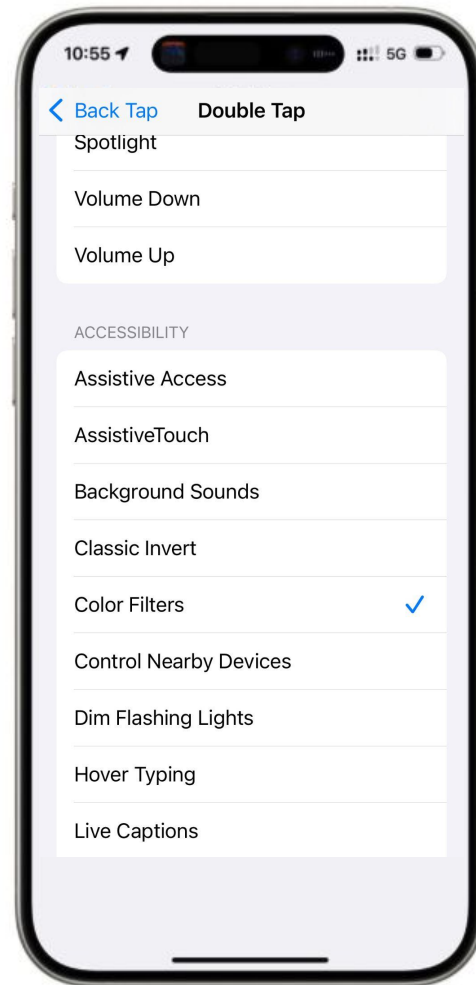
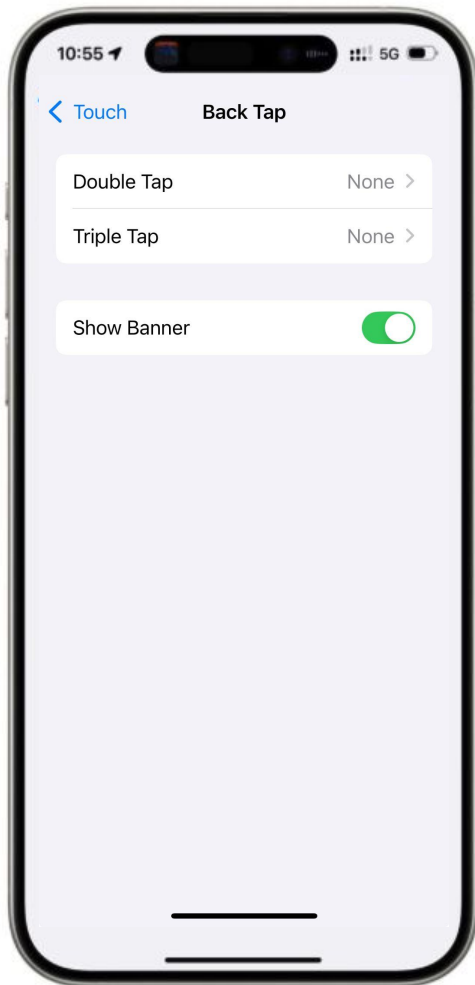




On average, working professionals
who change their phones to grayscale
win back 1 hour / day .







The Impact of Phone Location on Cognitive Capacity

Other Room



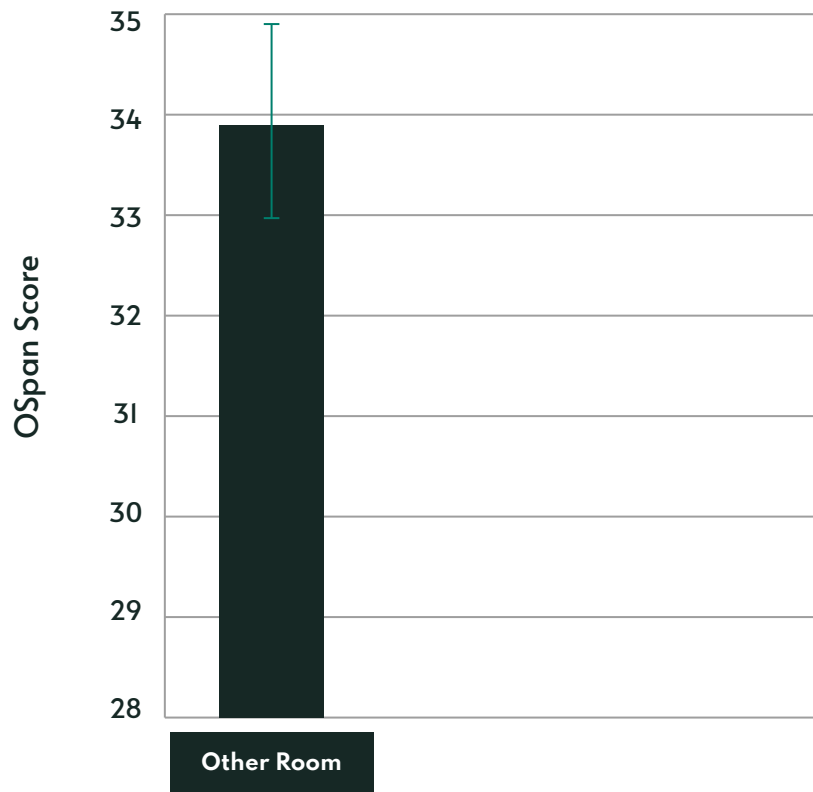
Pocket/Bag



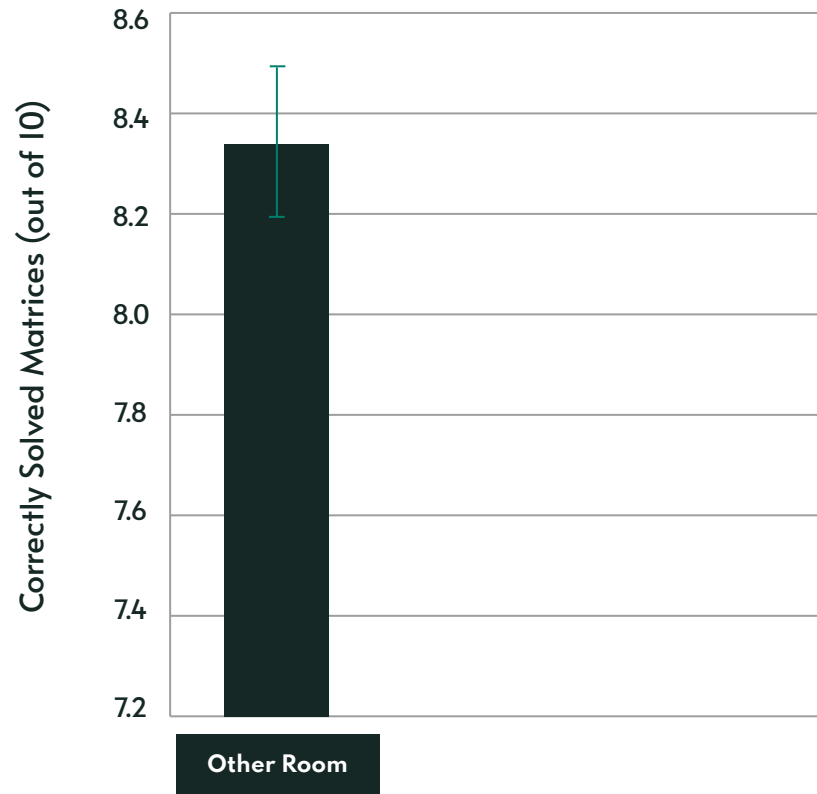
Desk



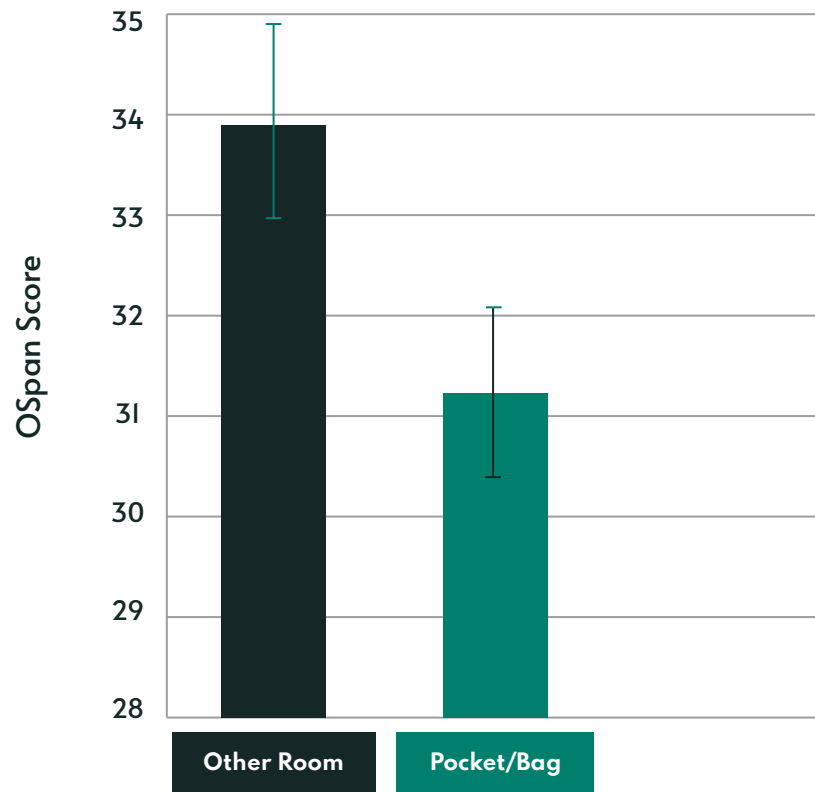
A. Working Memory Capacity



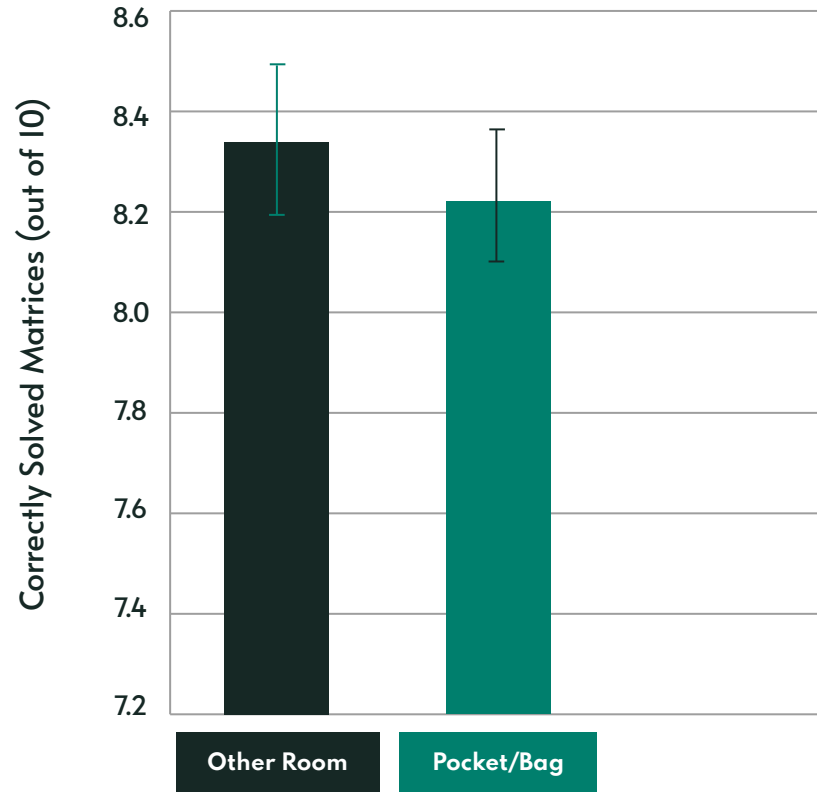
B. Fluid Intelligence



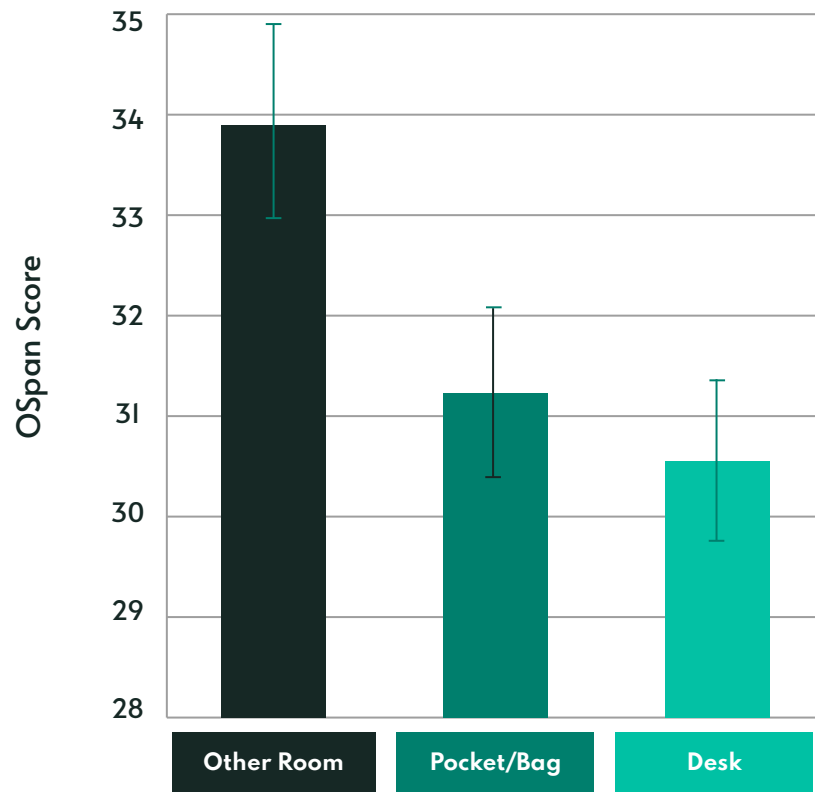
A. Working Memory Capacity



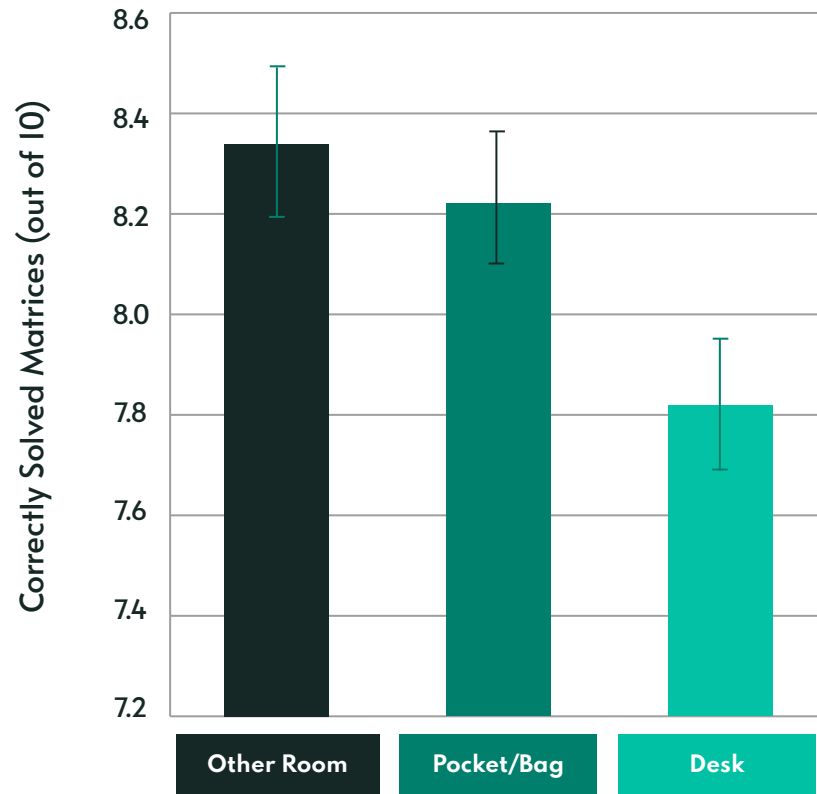
B. Fluid Intelligence



A. Working Memory Capacity



B. Fluid Intelligence



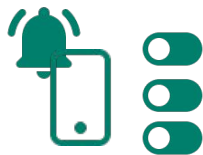
The Impact of Phone Location on Cognitive Capacity

“The mere presence of a smartphone reduces brain power, **even if it’s turned over and even if it’s off.**”

(Ward, 2017)

I. Clean Up Your Hygiene

Most Impactful



Turn off (almost all)
of your **notifications**



Put your **phone out of sight, out of mind** when
you want 100% capacity

I. Clean Up Your Hygiene

Most Impactful



Turn off (almost all) of your **notifications**



Put your **phone out of sight**, out of mind when you want 100% capacity

Quick Wins



Hide **self-view** during video calls



Turn your phone from color to **grayscale mode**

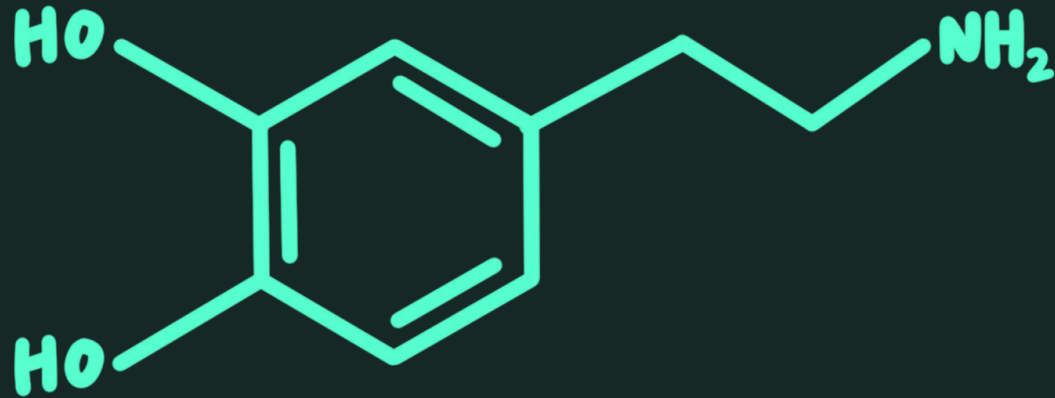
MISTAKE #2

Being a Passenger In Your Day

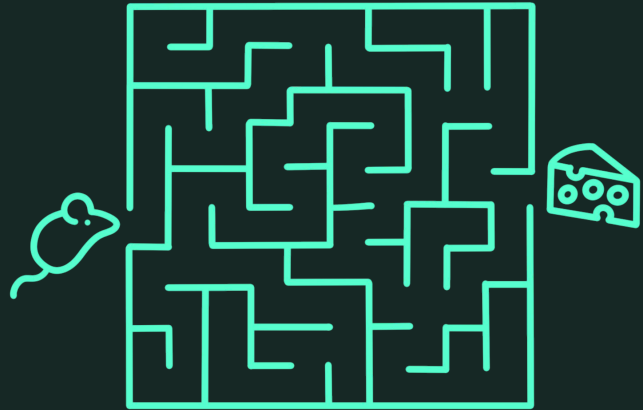
2

**You are wired to seek
reward and avoid pain**

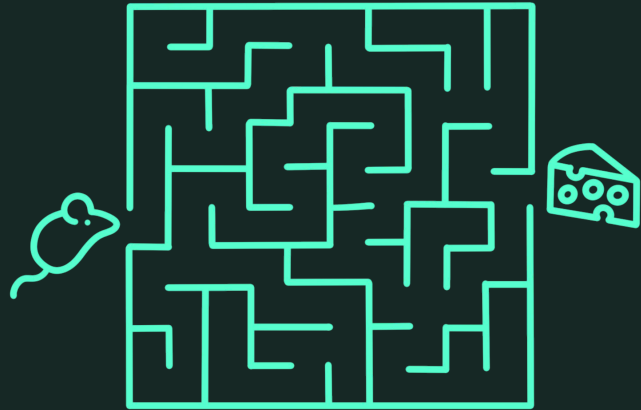
We Are All Dopamine Addicts



Slow Dopamine



Slow Dopamine



Fast Dopamine





Your to-do list is like your fridge / pantry.

Most Important Tasks (MITs)



Slow Dopamine

Most Important Tasks (MITs)



Slow Dopamine

Least Important Tasks (LITs)



Fast Dopamine

2. Drive Your Day

Most Impactful



Write down your **most important tasks (MITs)**, a small list of 1-3 max each day



MITs

1

2

3

Personal MITs

LITs

Focus Sprints

Brain Breaks

Parking Lot



“

With all the fires and unpredictability in our industry, **I need daily MITs** - which I actually write down on a clipboard every single morning **to anchor around what drives results.**

Alesia Haas
CFO, Coinbase

coinbase



Set Daily MITs / “Rocks” in Team Slack Channel

“Everyday we go through this ritual to stay focused on what matters most.”

Adam Kerin
Former Product Marketing Lead

stripe



The Progress Principle

Through exhaustive analysis of daily logs of thousands of knowledge workers, **the #1 factor that can enhance emotions, motivation, and productivity during the workday is making progress on meaningful work.**

(Amabile, 2011)



The Progress Principle

Through exhaustive analysis of daily logs of thousands of knowledge workers, the #1 factor that can enhance emotions, motivation, and productivity during the workday is making progress on meaningful work.

“The more frequently people experience this **sense of daily progress**, the more likely they are to be **creatively productive in the long run**.”

(Amabile, 2011)



Results

From a Training and
3-week Daily MIT Challenge



28%

Average Increase in
Individual Productivity



42%

Reduction in
Burnout Sentiment

“Thank you for giving us **our most productive quarter in history by far**. This was easily the highest ROI training investment I’ve ever made. **Every ambitious company should do this**, especially if they plan to stay remote.”

Ware Sykes
CEO, Seasoned
(TPG Portfolio)



2. Drive Your Day

Most Impactful



Write down your **most important tasks (MITs)**, a small list of 1-3 max each day

Quick Wins

Be aware of when you are in “LIT land” and use the 15-20 minute gaps in between meetings for LITs

MITs

1

2

3

Personal MITs

LITs

Focus Sprints

Brain Breaks

Parking Lot



MISTAKE #3

Excessive Multitasking

3

**You pay a fine every
time
you switch tasks**

Multitasking Test

Draw 2 lines on a piece of paper:

Multitasking Test

Write the sentence first and then the sequence of numbers:

I am a great multitasker.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Multitasking Test (Round 2)

Draw 2 more lines on a piece of paper:

Multitasking Test (Round 2)

ALTERNATE writing down letters and numbers until you produce the exact same sentence and sequence of numbers.

Multitasking Test (Round 2)

ALTERNATE writing down letters and numbers until you produce the exact same sentence and sequence of numbers.

|

Multitasking Test (Round 2)

ALTERNATE writing down letters and numbers until you produce the exact same sentence and sequence of numbers.

I

1

Multitasking Test (Round 2)

ALTERNATE writing down letters and numbers until you produce the exact same sentence and sequence of numbers.

l a

1

Multitasking Test (Round 2)

ALTERNATE writing down letters and numbers until you produce the exact same sentence and sequence of numbers.

l a

1 2

Multitasking Test (Round 2)

ALTERNATE writing down letters and numbers until you produce the exact same sentence and sequence of numbers.

I am

12

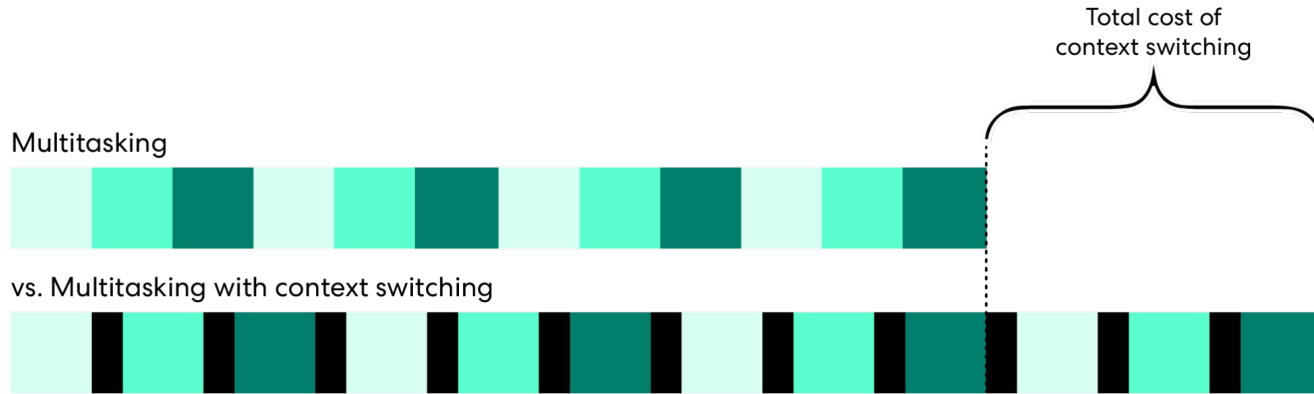
Multitasking Test (Round 2)

ALTERNATE writing down letters and numbers until you produce the exact same sentence and sequence of numbers.

I am

1 2 3

“Multitasking” / Context Switching Wastes 2+ Hours Daily



MIT's study on most efficient way to process email

Two groups: those who checked through self-interruptions (“batchers”) and those who relied on notifications.

Email
“batchers”

Email in
“real time”

(Mark, 2016)

Email “Batchers” Report Greater Productivity and Lower Cortisol



The **less daily time** spent **on email**, the **lower** measured **stress**.

(Mark, 2016)

3. Improve Your Focus

Most Impactful

- Schedule intentional time to focus on accomplishing a clear task (i.e. Focus Sprint)

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Most Impactful

- Schedule intentional time to focus on accomplishing a clear task (i.e. Focus Sprint)

Quick Win

- Record “interruptive ideas” or tasks that come up in a “Parking Lot”

MITs

1

2

3

Personal MITs

LITs

Focus Sprints

Brain Breaks

Parking Lot



Daily Uninterrupted Focus Time



47% are dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend “in the zone” / doing focused work without interruption

76% believe carving out a daily block of focus time (e.g. one 90 minute block or multiple 30-minute blocks) would positively impact their and their team's productivity.

A person is shown in a starting crouch on a track, with their hands on the ground and feet in starting blocks. The image is dark and serves as a background for the text.

THE SINGLE HIGHEST ROI PRODUCTIVITY METHOD

FOCUS SPRINT


ON AVERAGE, INDIVIDUALS REPORT **GETTING WORK DONE
2X FASTER** WHILE REDUCING THE RISK OF MISTAKES



F

FIND

and set aside
60 minutes in
the calendar

 Focus time
10:00 - 11:00

F

FIND

and set aside
60 minutes in
the calendar

🔔 Focus time
10:00 – 11:00

O

OUTLINE

what you
aim to
accomplish

- FINALIZE SLIDES
(10 MIN)
- MAKE DATA
TABLE (15 MIN)
- SEND EMAIL
(3 MIN)

C

U

S

F

FIND

and set aside
60 minutes in
the calendar



O

OUTLINE

what you
aim to
accomplish



C

CUT

out all
distractions



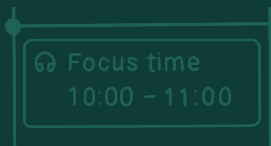
U

S

F

FIND

and set aside
60 minutes in
the calendar



O

OUTLINE

what you
aim to
accomplish



C

CUT

out all
distractions



U

USE

a timer
and focus
for 50
minutes



S

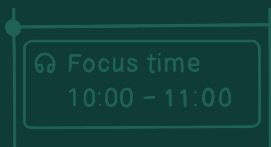
Timebox Your Focus Sprints to Work Faster



F

FIND

and set aside
60 minutes in
the calendar



O

OUTLINE

what you
aim to
accomplish



C

CUT

out all
distractions



U

USE

a timer
and focus
for 50
minutes



S

STOP

and take a
brain break





WHAT'S IN YOUR PRODUCTIVITY & WORK-LIFE CARE PACKAGE?



Focus Sprint Desk/Office flag

Sign holders for cubes and open
floor workspaces



Pyramid stress reliever

Productivity Bundle Guide

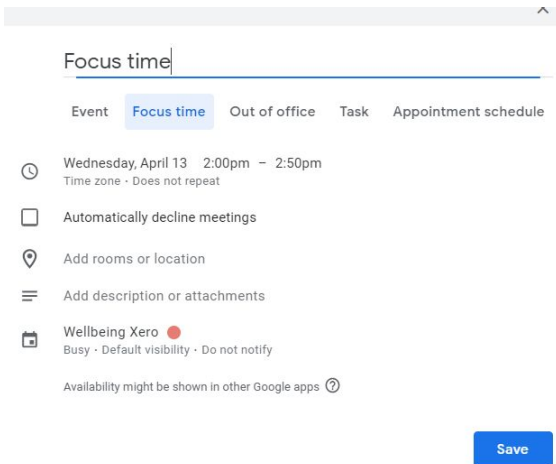


VISA

3 tips to help you succeed with Focus Sprints

1. Create Focus Time events in your calendar

- Can choose to automatically decline meetings during focus time, and send a personalised autoresponder (see tip 2!)
- Track how much focus time you get each week using Google Insights
- Choose a different colour so focus time stands out in our calendar view



The screenshot shows the 'Create event' dialog in Google Calendar. The title 'Focus time' is entered in the top text field. Below the title, there are tabs for 'Event', 'Focus time' (which is selected and highlighted in blue), 'Out of office', 'Task', and 'Appointment schedule'. The event details section shows 'Wednesday, April 13' from '2:00pm' to '2:50pm' in the 'Time zone' field, with a note 'Does not repeat'. There are checkboxes for 'Automatically decline meetings' and 'Add rooms or location'. A section for 'Add description or attachments' is visible. At the bottom, there is a 'Wellbeing Xero' status indicator with a red dot, and a note 'Availability might be shown in other Google apps' with a help icon. A blue 'Save' button is at the bottom right.

2. Create an email autoresponder when in Focus Time

"You've just received my out of office, which has probably given you the impression that I am not working today. But, I am in fact "deep working". This means that I am using this time while my brain is at its best, to focus and work without distractions on challenging and meaningful tasks. It's awesome for many reasons, feel free to ask me about it! If you do need something urgently, please call me on XXXX XXX XXX"

3. Set your status to Focus Sprint in Slack

Set a status



Busy/Focus time

Clear after: 1 hour

☒ Pause notifications

Cancel

Save



If You Want to Be 25+% More Productive

(WITHOUT WORKING MORE HOURS)

1

Clean up
hygiene



If You Want to Be 25+% More Productive

(WITHOUT WORKING MORE HOURS)

1

Clean up
hygiene



2

Set MITs at the
start of each day



If You Want to Be 25+% More Productive

(WITHOUT WORKING MORE HOURS)

1

**Clean up
hygiene**



2

**Set MITs at the
start of each day**



3

**Use Focus Sprints to
accomplish more**



Today's Overview

3 of the biggest mistakes of productivity and performance

The scientific reasons WHY people commonly make those mistakes and what research-backed strategies to use instead

3M framework for preventing burnout

Practical strategies to cognitively “turn off” and get high-quality rest

Stress vs. Burnout

A lion is shown in profile, walking from left to right across a savanna landscape. The image is dark and semi-transparent, serving as a background for the text. The lion's mane is visible, and its body is in motion. The text is centered over the lion's body.

**We Previously Experienced Stress
in Short (and Complete) Cycles**

A sequence of seven matches arranged horizontally, showing the progression of burning from left to right. The first match on the left is tall and mostly unburnt. As the matches move to the right, they become progressively shorter and more charred. The last two matches on the right are significantly bent over, with their tips drooping, symbolizing exhaustion and burnout.

**Burnout is the Result of Thousands
of (Uncompleted) Stress Cycles**

3M Framework for Preventing Burnout

Macro Breaks

FREQUENCY: Monthly

DURATION: Half-to-full day

3M Framework for Preventing Burnout

Macro Breaks

FREQUENCY: Monthly

DURATION: Half-to-full day

Meso Breaks

FREQUENCY: Weekly

DURATION: 2-4 hours

3M Framework for Preventing Burnout

Macro Breaks

FREQUENCY: Monthly

DURATION: Half-to-full day

Meso Breaks

FREQUENCY: Weekly

DURATION: 2-4 hours

Micro Breaks

FREQUENCY: Daily

DURATION: Minutes

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a grey sweater, sits at a desk with her hands clasped, looking thoughtfully at a man. The man, wearing a tan shirt, stands and points his finger towards a laptop screen. The background is a dimly lit office with bookshelves. The text is overlaid in white, bold font, with the phrase 'psychologically detach' underlined.

**In order for each break to
actually be effective, you must
psychologically detach from work**

BRING INTENTIONALITY TO YOUR DAY

Start your day with intention by identifying “what success looks like for the day”.

End the day with intention. Full cognitive closure.

BRING INTENTIONALITY TO YOUR DAY

No matter what the day looks like, it gives a human a great sense of control to “choose” to pick up our stress and then close the cycle and put it down.

1 Predictable, Required Night Off Every Week

Stop work at 5pm on one weekday and your team will completely cover you

A photograph of a person walking away on a forest path. The path is covered in fallen leaves, and the trees are tall and thin, with some yellowing leaves visible. The overall tone is dark and moody, with a semi-transparent dark overlay. The text "Take a 'Nature Pill'" is centered in white, bold font.

Take a “Nature Pill”

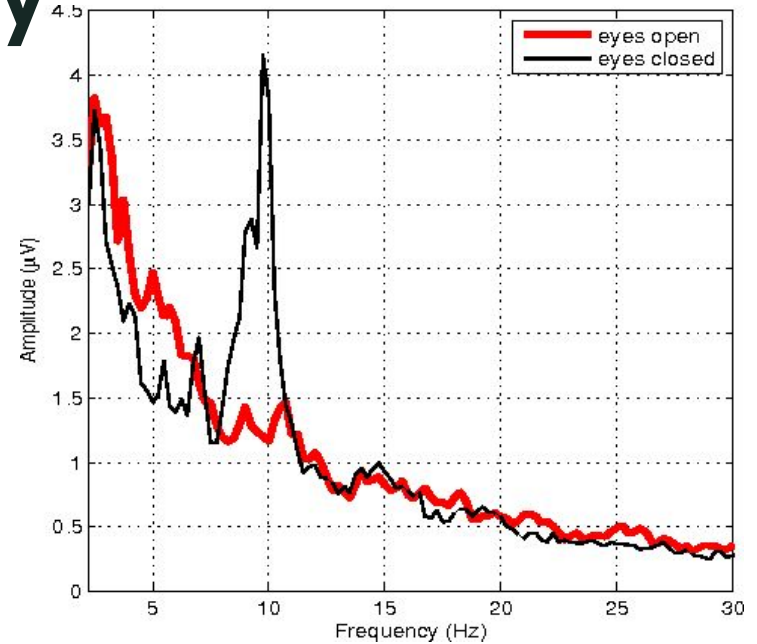
(Hunter, 2019)

A person is walking away from the camera on a dirt path through a forest. The trees have yellow and green leaves, suggesting autumn. The path is covered in fallen leaves. The overall scene is dimly lit, with a dark overlay.

**Take a “Nature Pill”
for at least 20 minutes**

(Hunter, 2019)

Close Eyes for 10+ Seconds to Regain Energy



Get copy of deck, 20% off BSH products,
and access to Quarterly Research Review



**SCAN QR CODE WITH
YOUR PHONE'S CAMERA**



CODE: "REDF"

becomingsuperhuman.science