Rise and shine: 7 tips to make you a better boss

There are two key reasons books like *Atomic Habits, Principles* and *Best Self: Be You, Only Better* are on the *New York Times* Bestseller list this year: Most people want to be more effective in their lives than they currently perceive themselves to be—and few know exactly how to do that.

All of these books hold their own useful nuggets of information, but Robert Pozen, MIT lecturer, author, productivity expert and former president of Fidelity investments, argues that optimizing productivity ultimately boils down to "the application of systemized common sense."

In fact, his Pozen Productivity Index rates a person's potential for productivity, based on their habits across seven broad categories, ranging from how much they sleep to how effectively they delegate work.

Make these tweaks to how you approach each day based on Pozen's index, and you may just find yourself attaining that holy grail of working smarter instead of harder.

1. Structure your week based on outputs

You can't avoid every unproductive meeting or eliminate all unnecessary emails, but when you approach your week focused on productive outputs versus an endless stream of tasks, you gain more clarity around where and how to spend the bulk of your time and attention to reach your end goals in the amount of time that remains.

You can apply the same ideology to team interactions and weekly employee one-on-ones. Conversations should center on what the employee aims to accomplish for the week, what hurdles or challenges you can help her solve to do so, and additional outputs she'll focus on in the coming weeks.

2. Schedule time to limit typical distractions

Set aside time to tend to distractions like emails, voicemails and text messages so you proactively set boundaries around how time-consuming they become.

For example, Pozen recommends checking your email inbox no more than 10 times a day. For context, one survey by Adobe recently revealed that white collar professionals spend an average of 3.1 hours of each workday checking work-related emails.

3. Simplify your personal life

To manage your personal time for maximum productivity, Pozen advocates for a return to the basics: Get at least seven hours of sleep. Spend at least two hours of non-screen time with friends and family each day. Routinize tasks like what you'll eat for breakfast or lunch.

4. Require that every meeting have an endgame

Any meeting that's scheduled has some kind of purpose. In each meeting you schedule, add a notation to the invite that specifies exactly why the meeting was scheduled, and what you intend to accomplish in the time allotted.

5. Prevent procrastination

Whether it's submitting expense reports or conducting performance reviews, we all have work tasks we'd rather push to another day. And another … and yet another.

Pozen suggests staving off procrastination by breaking the tasks you'd rather avoid into small chunks. Reward yourself for each small milestone you hit on the path to completion.

6. Use outlines to guide your communications

Whether the task at hand is a project update for executives and stakeholders, a presentation to clients or leadership or a team meeting with your staff, start with an outline. You'll waste less time editing what you write, and you will stay focused on the messages you need to communicate.

7. Schedule time to think each day

Productivity isn't just about checking things off your list; it's about accomplishing priorities to the best of your ability.

To ensure that you're continually exploring the most innovative or effective ways to solve problems or view opportunities, you need time to think, process potential approaches and arrive at new ideas.

Pozen argues that this opportunity will rarely present itself if you don't proactively make the time for it—yet it's a critical aspect to making sure that your day is aligned with your goals.