

SPARK

Chapter 8 Exercises:

DEMONSTRATE CONSISTENCY

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EXERCISE 1: THE CONSISTENCY HABIT

Sparks are consistent in thought, word and deed. Consistency is a discipline that requires a daily commitment to it. Use this exercise to reflect upon your true priorities and how they can be more present in your life. At the conclusion, you'll see there's a place to reflect on what you should stop doing so you can be more effective.

- 1 If you had an extra two hours of uninterrupted work time added to each day in your office, how would you use it?

- 2 What if you had two hours of additional time each day outside of work — how would you use it?

- 3 What do your answers to questions 1 and 2 tell you about yourself?

- 4 Do you feel your time is spent away from your most important priorities? Describe.

5 What do you feel is preventing you from being consistent? Describe.

6 Do you fall victim to any of the below time-stealing habits or inconveniences?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Frequent e-mail checks | Text/Facebook/LinkedIn messages |
| Poor organization | Meetings that aren't helpful or relevant |
| Assignments that don't add value | Other people's emergencies or dramas |
| Inability to focus on a task through completion | Competing personal errands/activities |

7 Reflect upon your answers to the questions above and identify two specific things you need to stop doing to be more effective.

1. _____
2. _____

EXERCISE 2: TIME MANAGEMENT

Often it's your time management skills that prevent you from being a focused, effective Spark. The following represent 8 Time Management Best Practices that allow professionals to be effective and efficient in all that they do.

- 1 Organize your work space**
A tidy workplace inspires productivity. Just a few minutes of straightening up can result in hours of efficiency.
- 2 Create a realistic to-do list at the end of each day**
When you wrap up your workday, you have the best vantage point on what needs to be tackled the next day. Create a realistic to-do list at the end of each day so your "next day self" is set up for success.
- 3 Practice "worst first"**
When you get to work, tackle the headiest task on your to-do list first. Mornings are typically when we have our best attention. Use this on a task that would otherwise eat away at you (mentally) throughout the day.
- 4 Create white space**
The most efficient leaders carve planning time into their calendars so they can be strategic. White space is several hours of unscheduled time where you can be focused and at your best.
- 5 Be deadline driven**
If you find yourself constantly behind, set realistic deadlines to everything and communicate them to others. A simple "I'll get you this by Thursday," even if a deadline isn't really needed, helps you stay focused on getting tasks done.
- 6 Reduce communication cycles**
Not every email needs a "thank you." Not everyone needs to be cc'd on every email. Also, there are times when we find ourselves in endless email volleys when a phone call will quickly resolve the question. When you reduce communication cycles, you save yourself much needed time (and spare yourself some unnecessary agony).

7

Complete the Friday inbox purge

At the end of each week, clean out your inbox – this will help you relax and restore your energy throughout the weekend. Plus, when you get to work on Monday, you’ll be ready to start the week ahead (not wrap up the week you left behind).

8

Manage efficient meetings

While you may not manage every meeting you go to, ensure the ones you do are well organized so you don’t waste your time and the time of others. Unnecessary, lengthy meetings are productivity killers. Use an agenda with your meeting and have clear start and stop times.

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Spend some time reflecting on the Top 8 Time Management Best Practices and then answer the following questions to help you become more effective and efficient.

1. Which Time Management Best Practices do you engage in currently?

2. Which Time Management Best Practices would you like to incorporate into your routine?

3. What type of results do you anticipate experiencing if you were to practice any (or all) of these best practices?

4. How can you inspire these practices in your environment?
