



5 SIMPLE HACKS

TO

CONTROL YOUR TIME

BY- PRIYANK PATEL

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HACK 1 – INCREASE YOUR AWARENESS

Have you ever noticed you end up spending more time than necessary on any particular work?

People spend more than necessary time on two specific occasions.

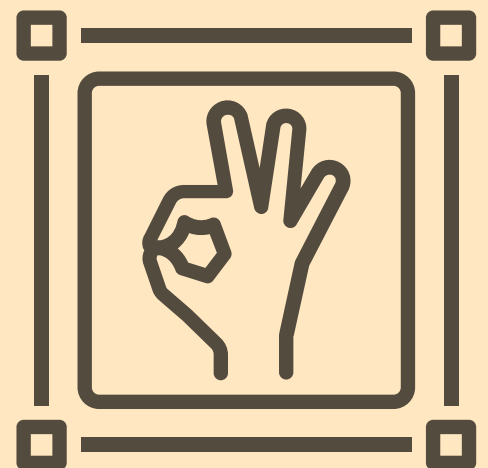
The **first instance** is when they love the work so much and they want to bring the best out of it.

The **second instance** is they hate the work and they can't motivate themselves enough to finish it on time.

Right?

Well, let's look at the first one. When we love the work and we want to be the perfectionist. How can we control our time?

Do you really think perfectionists are better performers at work?



One study from Harvard business review over the four decades on perfectionism examined the relationship between perfectionism and factors that impact employees' effectiveness.

They found that perfectionism is strongly and consistently related to numerous "*detrimental*" work and non-work outcomes, including higher levels of burnout, stress, workaholism, anxiety, and depression.



One of my office colleagues used to tell me this, "*Priyank, I am so perfectionist that I need everything in certain order. I need all the things in my house only at certain place. Even the tiniest shift of place can cause me anger. I spend so much time putting things back in its place and I often get very angry on my wife and kids when they mess it up.*"

That's true for most of us. Perfectionism can create so much stress, anger and anxiety.

How can we stop being perfectionist to control our time?

Be more aware on how you spend your time.

Before you start any work, ask yourself these **two questions**:

How important is this?

and

How much time do I want to spend on this?

Then, commit not to spend any more time than you have decided.

For example, if you are running a home renovation company and someone asks for a quote. If you are a perfectionist, you will spend too much time on the details and give them the most accurate quote.



Now, you may have many more people waiting to get the quote and they will run away to other supplier because they wanted a quick service.

What you might want to do is, confirm with the customer that if they want the final accurate quote or just an indication.



If they want just an indication, then spend as little time as possible to prepare the quote.

Mention that it might vary by 10% depending on what's on site and any special material required on site.

You can only do so much work every day. So, be aware of where you want to spend your time.

If the work is ineffective or insignificant, estimate the time you want to spend and get over it even if it is not your best piece of work.

Save your time for more complex and important work and give them the quality there.

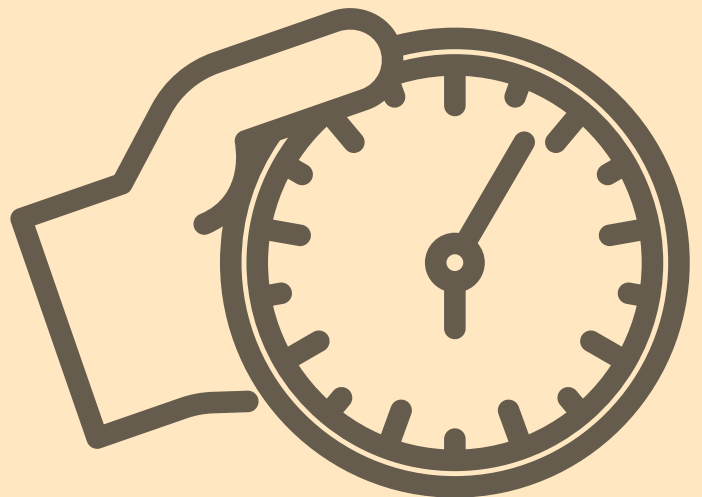
Stop being fussy:

As in my office colleague's case of being too fussy about keeping things tidy at home, I suggested him to allocate fix amount of time. I told him, he needs to overcome this mindset if he wishes to control his time.

I recommended to allocate 20 minutes only every day. As soon as he comes home, he can start tidying up the things and do as much as possible in 20 minutes.

Then stop.

He will start tidying up the house without arguing or getting angry on anyone at home. This way he will not mess up with his relationship.



If someone is too fussy about cooking, you can allocate one hour for cooking and cook as many varieties as possible in one hour.

Of course, occasionally you want to cook more dishes and spend more time on it but most days, you can limit yourself to certain timeframe and this way you can be less fussy.



Now let's look at the second instance where people overspend their time.

When the work we are doing is **boring or we hate the work** and we can't motivate ourselves to get it done quickly, what can we do?

This may happen to people who do repetitive work for a long period of time.

There was a time in my career, I was doing same work for many months. It became so easy and autonomous that I started finding it boring and meaningless.



I tried many techniques to motivate myself to feel engaged at work, but nothing worked.

What did I do then?

I reduced my deadline. I gave myself tighter time frames to finish the work. It gave me some challenge.

Now, instead of looking for fun and challenge in the actual work, I started finding interesting to chase my time and beat my own records. Soon I started finishing the work in lot less time than I used to take. I also set up some rewards for me. I told myself, I will go for a longer walk in the evening or watch little more TV if I finish this work quickly.

This way, I learned how to control my time while doing the boring work or the work that I hate but still needs to be done.

As **Miles Davis** says, "*Time isn't the main thing. It is the only thing.*"

What did we learn in this chapter?

- Stop being perfectionist when it is not required
- How important is the work?
- How much time you want to allocate?
- Stick to your allocated time
- Stop being fussy
- Create a shorter timeframe for boring or repetitive works
- Reward yourself for being disciplined and getting the work done quickly

HACK 2 – INVEST IN THE SYSTEM OR PROCESS

What is the hack number 2 that you suggest to control our time Priyank?

My quick response would be, "invest in the system or process".

When I brought this topic up in one of my presentations on controlling your time, one of the participants immediately asked me, "*but how can I implement it in my everyday life?*"

Yes, investing in the system or process may sound suitable for the big corporates only but I am going to show you how you can also implement this easy approach in your personal life to control your time.

Anything you do repeatedly, you need a system for it. You need to have a process for it.

For example, I read books, create social media videos and presentations few times a week. Now, if I keep my books in one room, my mobile charger and microphone in another room, my video shooting accessories such as tripod and lightings in another room, do you think it is an efficient system?

No, right?

I should have it all in one place.



Whatever equipment I am using every time, and if it is more than ones every week, I need to create a process, a system, that I can save time on setting this up quickly. Even if it saves few minutes only, it all adds up. It also saves so much stress finding things as well.

If you have a business, find out what are the most common questions people ask you?

Try and see if you can cover all of them and create a frequently asked questions section.



Also, if you have to reply so many repeat emails like a follow up reminder, thank you notes, birthday wishes and so on, it is better to create templates for that.

Even if you save 1 minute for one email and if you have to send 100 of those emails in a month, that means you have saved 100 minutes.



You can use this extra 100 minutes for your personal use or invest back into the business to generate more revenue, isn't it?

If you are working in excel file and you have to do a lot of calculations, it is wiser to invest your time and learn to set up formulas and macros to automate the process.



This will save you a lot of time and also chances of error will almost be none, right?

I have seen many people cooking food for 2 days together. They use one portion and the rest they put it in a freezer and have it after few days.

Some people might argue that it is not a healthy habit but when you go to restaurant, do you think they cook fresh for you?

I know some of my busy friends especially where both parents are working fulltime and they don't have any other support, they do this very often. We also do this from time to time, especially when kids love their favorite food and they want to have more than once in a week.

At least it's a home cooked frozen food than the takeaways, right?

So, depending on your situation, review your lifestyle and see any work that you do repeatedly that you can create a process or system for it.

"The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement." Helmut Schmidt.

What can you think of?

If you have to pay some regular bills such as car loans, mobile re-charge or rent then you can either set up a direct debit or create a re-occurring payment for that.

When I went to one of my friend's place on Sunday afternoon, Sonal was doing ironing for kids' school uniforms and also their workwear for the whole week.

When I asked her why is she sorting out their whole week's workwear in advance?

Sonal said, this is our usual process for Sunday afternoon. It may sound crazy but it does save a lot of time for us during the week. Instead of doing it 5 or 6 times during the week, my husband and I both sort out our workweek on Sunday afternoon



all at once.

This gives us the view for the whole week and also we don't have to worry about what to wear in the morning. We find this **really effective and time saving** for us.

Saving energy and time, double benefits. ←

If you know you have to do certain work few times a week, you can **group them together** to control the time you spend on it.

So, which system or process you can implement in your life to control your time?

Take a moment, think about it, do it now.

As Brian Tracy says, "Move fast. A sense of urgency is the one thing you can develop that will separate you from everyone else. When you get a good idea, do it now."

What did we learn in this chapter?

- Anything you do repeatedly, you can create the system or process for it to control your time.
- Automate the re-occurring work where possible.
- Group together certain work so you save time on preparing or winding up the work.

HACK 3 - MOST DIFFICULT BUT PARAMOUNT FOR YOUR SUCCESS

Now I am going to share with you the most difficult but very important for your success in controlling your time.

What is the most difficult thing for many people?

Learn to say "NO".

"The difference between successful people and really successful people is that really successful people say no to almost everything." - Warren Buffett.

We all want to be the "nice person" so when someone comes to us asking for a favor, we hesitate to decline.

I remember about 15 to 20 years ago, when I first read the article on this topic, my first impression was, this is so simple. Why do people find it hard to say NO to others? I had just finished my graduate and came in the "real world" that time.

I did not have any experience taking responsibilities at work or at home. Not many people were coming to ask for help at that time, so I never thought saying "NO" is the hardest thing to do.

As I started getting busy at work and in my personal life, I started realising that my control over my time was getting less and less. I realised that I had to learn some techniques to improve my time management abilities. At that time, I came across this concept to say "NO" without offending them. This itself is an art that takes time to learn.

When you start implementing this strategy, you will hurt some people because you don't have experience of saying "NO" nicely, right?

Accept this. It will happen. But, in your 30 to 40 years of career, this art of saying "NO" will be really useful so you would want to learn this sooner or later. Why not start early, yeah?

As Sanhita Baruah said, "Some selfish people rise because some kind people haven't learned the art of saying no to them."

Say **NO** at work

I remember the famous words from Steve Jobs.

He said, "It's only by saying "NO" that you can concentrate on the things that are really important."

Don't let your mouth overload your back at work. It is very important to say "NO" at work.

"But Priyank, I want to get promoted at work. Shouldn't I be doing more work?" You may ask.

Well, higher productivity is good but when you take too much in your plate, you risk not delivering on time or you risk burn out. Be careful on this.

As Tony Blair said, *"The art of leadership is saying no, not saying yes. It is very easy to say yes."*

"But Priyank, there may be some instances where saying NO is not possible, what should I do then?"

I understand your concern. I will cover this in the next chapter. For now, don't let anybody steal your precious time. If you are always available to help, people will start taking your advantage. Try and learn to say NO as much as possible without hurting your boss or your co-workers in the office.

Say **NO** at home

Ok Priyank, I got it. I can say NO in the office on many instances but what about at home?

How can I control my time at home?

To control your time at home, develop a habit of saying "NO" to time wasting activities.



Particularly, things that are not important and not useful. Such as watching too much of TV or social media.

Of course, some entertainment is necessary in life but if you overdo it then it's not good.

So,

- Try saying "NO" to too much TV at home.
- Try saying "NO" to too much sleep at home.
- Try saying "NO" to too much gossip at home.

What else can you say **NO** at home?

Too much relaxation? Too much cleaning or cooking?

After all it's your life and you have to decide where you invest your time, right?

Some activity may be most important for someone, but it may be inessential for you, right?

Everyone is different.

To start with, pick one activity that you think you can easily stop or reduce your time spent on it at home.



Which one would you pick? Take this time, pause for a minute or two. Think hard, is it sleep, TV, social media or something else? Which one you would want to start reducing your time on?

Say **NO** to yourself

Once you learn to say NO at work and at home, you can move on to the little harder category.

It's easy to say "NO" to others but many people find it very hard to say "NO" to themselves.

This is very common problem in most entrepreneurs, creative people or ambitious people. They have so many ideas and so much to do, their mind keeps running all the time.

They find it hard to say "NO" to themselves.

If you are one of those people, what can you do?

I face this challenge many times. When I am working on one book, many thoughts come up in my mind for another book or creating an online course.

What do I do?

I have created a "**perhaps**" list and "**do it later**" list.



Every idea or opportunity I see, I put them into one of those two categories. I then set up a periodic time to refer to this list.

This helps me control my time and not get distracted by other things.

I have noticed on many occasions, when I refer back to those two categories at a later date, more than half the ideas were irrelevant.

Most of the times those are random thoughts coming up in my mind to distract me from my current work. By following this method, I find I am more in control of my time.

If you are a student, you know you are supposed to study at the moment, but your mind diverts away on social media. It is so tempting, and you can't resist.

What can you do?

Have you heard people complaining, they can't concentrate, or they don't feel like doing certain things even though they know those things are good for them?

Their desire to do other things are so strong that they can not say "NO" to themselves.



If you happen to have this problem, what can you do?

Do it later.

Yes, tell yourself that you will do it later. You can even set up a reminder for this so you don't forget.

In order for you not to get distracted by something, you need to know what you are focused at.

As Stephen Covey said, *"It's easy to say 'NO' when there's a deeper 'YES' burning inside."*

Decide what is most important and most useful for you. If someone wakes you up at the middle of night, you should be able to answer this question.

What is most important and most useful for you?

"But Priyank, sometimes the urge to check on social media or watching TV is so strong and I can not control myself, what should I do?"

You may ask, right?

In those cases, **allow yourself to get distracted.**

What? What do you mean Priyank?

Go easy on yourself sometimes. Allow yourself to cheat a little. It is like one of those cheat days you keep when you are on diet. But you want to keep the control in your hand.

I found what works for me is, I set up a timer for 5 to 10 minutes. I allow myself to go and fulfill my temptation and come back to work when the alarm goes off.

This way, I have satisfied my hunger of getting distracted in minimum time.

What did we learn in this chapter?

- Learning to say no without offending someone is an art worth mastering.

Say NO at work.
Say NO at home.
Say NO to yourself.

- Use the "*perhaps*" and "*Do it later*" lists.

- Remember what you want to be focused at so you are aware of all your distractions.

- Be sure to always know what is the most important and most useful to you and say NO to everything else.

HACK 4: LEARN THE ART OF CONTROLLING YOUR TIME

Priyank, I have read the previous chapter on saying NO but sometimes I find it impossible or very hard to say NO, especially to my boss or our high valued customers. We simply can't afford to say NO to them.

On many occasions at home or in my personal life, there is no option to say "NO" to control my time.

What should I do then?

Well, I understand it's not always easy to say NO straight away, here is the next better thing to do.

Yes, this is one of the skills of controlling your time. You can simply negotiate for the time to do the work.

Negotiate for the time.

"Everything is negotiable. Whether or not the negotiation is easy is another thing." - Carrie Fisher.

Yes, this is one of the skills of controlling your time. You can simply negotiate for the time to do the work.

Instead of accepting to do the work straight away, you can negotiate to do it later in the day or next day. Be sure to confirm with other party that the new timeline is suitable for them.

This way you still do the work for them but it's more suitable to your time.

“What are some of the best ways to negotiate for the time Priyank?”



Well, there is no right or wrong way. The aim of the negotiation is to get you what you need and also make the other party feel happy at the end of the conversation.

Once you propose the new timeline, you can ask, *“Would that be okay with you?”*

OR you can simply ask, “when do you need by?” Let them come up with the deadline.

Everybody needs their work urgently Priyank. What if they say, I need it straight away, what should I do then?



If the deadline is too tight for you, you can ask to find out any reason for the urgency.



Try and deep dig to find out the real reason for the urgency and then you can give them alternative ways and negotiate for the deadline. Sometimes, instead of giving the full work, they might be happy with only half the work or part of the work that is most important for them and you can do the rest at a later time.

As Jacob Lew said, *"The most critical thing in a negotiation is to get inside your opponent's head and figure out what he really wants."*



For example, your boss needs you to work on one project immediately. That project has multiple different tasks. Only one of them is really important and urgent at this stage. Others can wait till next week. Once you find out the reason for urgency, you can simply offer to do that particular task straight away and then do the rest next week. This way, you have negotiated for the time that is suitable for you and your boss is also happy, right?

So, when "No" is not an option, you can use "Negotiating" technique to control your time.

Remember this piece of advice from Harvey Mackay, *"You do not get what you want. You get what you negotiate."*

What did we learn from this chapter?

- Use NEGOTIATION to control your time when you cannot say NO.
- For long term relationship, the sole objective for the negotiation can be to create win-win for both parties.
- Find out the real reason for urgency and then negotiate accordingly.
- Your ability to negotiate determines what you can get in return.

HACK 5 – MOST WONDERFUL STRATEGY

Ok Priyank, I have learned to increase my awareness, investing in the system or process, art of saying NO, and negotiating for the time, is there any other technique you can share with me that works all the time?

Many people ask me, *“What is the most wonderful strategy to control my time?”*

My answer is simple, use the **“2D Strategy”**.

What is 2D Strategy means Priyank?

Don't do

OR

Delegate to be done.

“What Priyank? How can not doing the work help me control my time?” You may ask, right?

Sometimes we spend too much time on some unimportant work or things that do not add any value to our life.

Some of the tasks are like short term impulses that arises in the mind, those are the distractions to our current work. We need to learn to simply ignore them, don't do them.



MY 10 SECOND RULE



One thing that helped me for not doing something is my 10 second rule. Every time I want to check my social media during my work hour or I feel the need to send a message while I am working on something, I will take 10 second pause.

I take a deep breath and count backwards from 10 to 1.

During that time,

I think about what's most important right now?



Most of the time, I don't feel the need to get distracted on social media after 10 seconds. Yes, I may waste 10 seconds for taking a break, but I save a lot more by not getting distracted, isn't it?

We need to learn to simply ignore them, don't do them. If the task is required to be done, but you think someone else can do it for you then you have to learn to delegate.

But Priyank, delegate only works for managers and supervisors, right?

Well, not really. Anyone can delegate the work.

If your wife asks you to bring milk on the way from work because she forgot to buy from shopping, she is delegating her work on you. When you ask your wife to iron your shirt because you are too busy to do it, you are delegating your work.

Delegating means getting someone else to help you in completing your work.

When we hire other people to do our house cleaning, we are delegating our work.

Outsourcing is a kind of delegating as well. We are focusing on most important things and we let other people do easy, repetitive work for us.

If delegating is so easy and saves us a lot of time, why do most people not delegate Priyank?

Most people hesitate to start delegating because they think they can do it better than the other person. Sometimes they love the work so much and they think it's fun so they don't want to delegate.

Very often, it takes too long to explain or teach other people and they fear of not getting the good quality of work.

What should you do then? How can you overcome this dilemma?

Well, nothing works first time.

Be clear on your intention.

Do you think if Warren Buffet, Bill Gates or Elon Musk did not delegate their work, they would have ever built such a big empire?

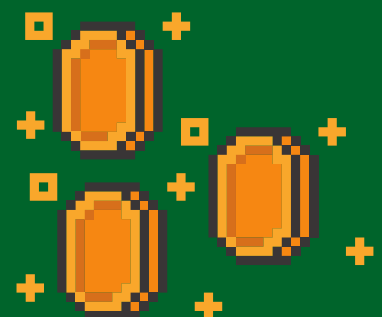
No, right?

You have to start somewhere. You have to let go of holding too much of your work and let someone else do it.

If other people are able to do 80-90% of your standard, give it to them. Don't expect other people to perform same as your quality standards. As long as they are not too bad, it is worth delegating to them to free up your time.



Remember, your time is the most valuable asset you can have. You have to control where you invest your time.



So, next time, remember to use the "2D strategy".

2D stands for *Don't do* or *Delegate to be done*.

What did we learn in this chapter?

- Remember to apply 2D Strategy - Don't do or Delegate to be done as often as possible.
- 10 Second rule. Count backwards from 10 to 1 and think, "What's most important right now?"
- 2D Strategy is a habit that you can develop by consistent practice. Everyone can get better at it as they practice more.

CONCLUSION

After years of research and tons of trial and errors on time management, I came up with these 5 simple hacks to control the time.

Currently I am working in a fulltime job, I have a side business that is almost like a fulltime work. I am also writing books, creating courses and doing presentations on personal and professional development topics. I am doing all these with a young family of 2 kids. It won't be possible without learning to control my time, right?

I have personally applied all of these simple hacks in my life to control my time. I am sure applying these in your life will instantly help you control your time too. You can accomplish more in the same time and live a balanced life.

Remember, time cannot be created or destroyed but it can be controlled in a way how you spend it.

Best wishes for all the success and fulfillment in your personal and professional life.

Yours lovingly

Priyank Patel

