

- One of a leader's most critical roles is to identify the Challenges for each project. Setting out four to six Challenge questions for each project will help the team surround the problem and ensure that all critical aspects are given adequate attention. The more quickly you can focus your mind on what you're really trying to do, the faster you gain creative traction.

- Here are some ways I've seen clients apply this practice to great effect: • Set aside an hour in your day to do strategic thinking and plan your projects. It's much easier to maintain a conceptual, strategic mode of thinking than it is to try to regain it once you've switched over to more concrete tasks. • Cluster meetings as much as possible, and make sure to leave large blocks of uninterrupted time open each week. People tend to spread their meetings throughout the day, with fifteen minutes

- to a half hour between them. This practically eliminates your ability to engage in deep thought. To immerse yourself in a problem requires stretches of time, and if you're allowing for only small pockets of time to think creatively, you're probably wrapping up just when you're getting to a place where you're likely to start experiencing insights. In addition, you may want to schedule your strategic thinking time ahead of meetings if possible to avoid the energy lag that often happens in their wake, and so that you'll have time to think ahead about the issues you'll be discussing.

- Set aside a dedicated time each day for responding to e-mail. Rather than living perpetually in the inbox, cluster all your communication in dedicated blocks of time. This will help you focus more deeply throughout the day rather than being constantly interrupted by the demands of others. If you need to do frequent e-mail checks throughout the day, that's fine, too. You can schedule ten minutes at the beginning of each hour to address your inbox. While there are certainly exceptions, there are very few e-mails that will cause our world to come crashing down if not addressed within an hour.

- Separate your conceptual/creative time from your concrete /task time. When you fragment your day with fifteen minutes of design or writing, ten minutes of invoicing and time tracking, five minutes of e-mail, et cetera, you are paying a significant task-switching penalty. Try to give yourself—as much as you are able—no less than a half hour of uninterrupted time whenever you are doing design, writing, or other largely conceptual work, and an hour is preferable. If the projects don't require that much time, try to cluster a few together. Not only will this help you stay focused longer, you will also regain a significant amount of time wasted by switching programs, moving windows around on your screen, and quickly checking that funny little headline that caught your eye.

- Structuring Your Study Plan

- keep a small stack of index cards with me at all times for use in taking notes and recording observations. I place a fresh index card in every book I'm reading, or start a new one for every meeting I have.

- Using a Notebook for Effective Note Taking

- prefer to use a notebook

- This will serve as a reference for indexing and referencing ideas. Next, create two index pages in the front of

Usar evernote mas para notas sobre ideas / stimuli

- whenever you have an interesting thought, even if it seems completely random and unrelated to anything you're working on, record it.

- Regularly reviewing your notes is critical to staying alert to potential ideas.

- Clear ten minutes at the very beginning of your workday.

- In every talk I give at conferences or companies, I ask the question, "How many of you would say that great ideas are critical to the future of your career or your business?" Without hesitation, nearly every hand in the room goes up. I immediately follow with the question, "How many of you had time on your personal calendar this week dedicated exclusively to generating ideas?" Crickets. Nothing. Maybe an occasional hand or two goes up.

- Why the discrepancy? After all, if ideas are that important, why don't more of us spend time trying to generate them? I think there are a few reasons. First, many of us wouldn't know what to do with the time.

- While it's uncomfortable to think about wasting an hour thinking about the creative problems in our life and work, spending our time in this way can be infinitely more productive than filling that hour with e-mails and minor tasks.

- If you really believe that ideas are important to you, start putting your resources behind it. Begin by setting aside time for the sole purpose of generating ideas. How much time? I recommend beginning with an hour a week.

- This is not time to strategize, write copy, design, or in any other way execute an idea you've already had. This is not time to do work; this is time to think about work.

- This may sound almost too obvious, even silly. "Put time on your calendar to generate ideas." It's so simple that it's tempting to dismiss it.

- it's the small things that make you effective. It's your attention to details that sets you apart.

- Knowing does nothing for you—it's

- doing that matters.

- If you want to thrive you must dedicate yourself to doing the things that few people are willing to do. You need to go beyond hacks and quick fixes, and instead develop practices. Practices not only develop skills, they increase your capacity. They form the banks that allow the river to run deep. When you begin to

- Future. What would a solution to this problem look like? What would it feel like? What is the ultimate state that would describe that the problem has been solved? Write a few words, then start generating ideas off of them. Past. What are some assumptions that are presently keeping us in gridlock around this problem? Are there any assumptions that need to be

- challenged or that could serve as a starting point for idea generation? Try to challenge one of these assumptions by generating ideas designed to disprove it. Conceptual. What are other problems and corresponding solutions that I know of that are similar to this one? Are there any learnings from case studies or other items I've been exposed to that could apply to this problem? Try to force a connection between something you're familiar with and the problem you're currently working on. Concrete. What are the specific and concrete attributes of the problem? Can the problem be broken down into three words? If so, do these words give me a new way of perceiving or attacking the problem? Free-associate new words off these concrete attributes and see if they spark any new ideas. Take for example

- What should Unnecessary Creating time consist of? One technique is to keep all your potential projects in a Project Queue. Anything goes! Editing family movies, writing a short story or essay, rearranging your furniture, songwriting, developing a concept for a new business, or anything that requires you to exercise a degree of creative thought can count for your Unnecessary Creating. Keep a small whiteboard on your wall at home, and use it to track ideas for Unnecessary Creating projects you'd like to work on, or simply keep a list in your notebook or on your computer. Once you list the projects, you may want to simply attack them in sequential order during your Unnecessary Creating time. Some of these may be shorter projects, taking less than an hour, and some may be longer-term projects that require a week or more of your planned times. Regardless, it's best to work your way through the list so that you'll feel a sense of accomplishment as you check items off.

- Take notes on ideas you're excited about and things you'd like to do. Start a Project Queue. Set some time on your calendar. As you experience the benefits of Unnecessary Creating, you will be glad that it's a part of your rhythm.

- Big 3: What are your Big 3 for the week? Write Challenges for each of the Big 3. Clustering: Are there ways you can structure similar work this week so that there is less task switching? Block specific time on your calendar for these activities. Relationships Circles: Do you have a circle meeting on the calendar? Do you need to prepare for it? If so, put time on your calendar. Head-to-Heads: Do you have any head-to-heads this week? Do you need to prepare? When will you do it? Put time on your calendar. Core Team: Do you need to reach out to a member of your core team for advice on something? If so, add it to your task list

- Whole-Life Planning: Are there any potential conflicts this week between work and personal activities or expectations? How will you get ahead of them? Pruning: Is there anything that you'd planned but now realize may not be a good idea, given your upcoming schedule? How can you prune it? Additionally, are there any "hard runs" in which you'll have all-day or back-to-back meetings? How will you plan something energizing around or between them to prevent burnout and stay energized? Stimuli Study: When will your personal study times be this week? Put them on the calendar. What will they consist of? Take a look at your Stimulus Queue and map your week's stimuli. Notation: Take just a few minutes to glance at your notes from the previous week as well as the indexes in the front of your notebook.

- Purposeful Experience: Do you have one on your calendar this week? When will it happen? Hours Idea Time: When will you structure your Idea Time this week? What will you

focus on during these sessions? Put it on the calendar with the associated project name. Unnecessary Creating: What will you do for Unnecessary Creating this week? Put it on your calendar. On page 188 is an example of what your week

- Focus Challenges: What are the biggest projects you'll be working on in the coming month? Do each of them have Challenges? If not, create them. Big 3: What are your Big 3 for the month? Write Challenges for each of the Big 3 if they don't already exist. Clustering: As you examine the upcoming month, are there days or weeks where you can cluster project work in order to focus more deeply? If so, plan ahead by marking those days on your calendar. Relationships Circles: When will your circle meet this month? Put time on your calendar or send invites to members. Head-to-Heads: Do you have any head-to-heads

- this month? Put them on the calendar or send an invite to the other participants. CoreTeam: Do you have any Checkpoints coming up with your core team members? You may want to schedule a lunch or a call. Send an invite or an e-mail. Energy Whole-Life Planning: As you survey the landscape of the upcoming month, are there any potential conflicts this week between work and personal activities or expectations? How will you get ahead of them? Pruning: Look at your upcoming month; are there any especially busy weeks where you may need to prune either work or personal commitments in order to maintain a healthier energy level? Do it now, before things

- Study: Which items from your Stimulus Queue will you incorporate into your study times this month? Determine now what will best help you with your upcoming work and schedule. You may even want to create a note in your calendar on a weekly basis with the stimuli you hope to use that week. Notation: Take a few minutes to review your idea index. Is there anything that may apply to upcoming projects? Is there anything that needs to be turned into a project? This is the time to do it. Purposeful Experience: What kinds of experiences would you like to schedule into the upcoming month? What experiences would help you with your work? Create a list to use in your Weekly Checkpoints, or go ahead and put them on your calendar now. Hours Idea Time: Given the nature of your upcoming work, would your Idea Times be best placed at

- the beginning or end of your weeks? Which projects will definitely need some focused Idea Time? Make this list now to use in your Weekly Checkpoint. Unnecessary Creating: What kinds of Unnecessary Creating projects will you work on this month? Take a look at your Project Queue and select the projects that seem the most appropriate given the time and energy you'll have this month. Add them to your calendar, or just make a list for use in your Weekly Checkpoint.

- People are brilliant at developing permanent solutions to temporary problems.

- One member of our coaching community shared how these Quarterly Checkpoints have been invaluable to her. She says, "They help to create balance in my life. I go to the library for about four hours on a Sunday afternoon armed with my daily notes and journal entries from the past quarter and my calendar for the upcoming quarter. I then analyze the past and plan for the future. It has been interesting stepping back from my own life and looking at it as an outsider.

I look at where my energy has been going and where I want it to be going. I come away from the retreat with

- my Big 3 for the next quarter. The Big 3 go on my daily log that I use at my day

- QUARTERLY CHECKPOINT PROMPTS Focus Establish areas of focus. Divide a sheet of paper in two and on one side write “work” and on the other write “personal.” Spend twenty to thirty minutes thinking of all of the commitments you will be accountable for. You want to be as comprehensive as possible because this will provide the working template for how you structure other elements of your...

- work initiative that will require a lot of creative effort, or it can mean a small personal project you’re personally committing to get moving on. This is not a wish list of things you’d like to do someday; it’s a list of things you are actually committing to doing or are accountable for doing in your work. If it’s on the sheet, it’s something you’re planning to get done in the next three months (or planning to spend a significant amount of time working on). What are the Big 3 for the quarter? These are the big conceptual hurdles you will need to jump this quarter in order to succeed in your work. Establish Challenges for each of the Big 3. These should be phrased in the form of a question, and they should capture the main creative problem you need to solve. For each commitment you’ve...

- can begin setting some rails for the other practices. Your relational rhythms are best examined on a quarterly basis to make sure that you are filling your schedule with stimulating interactions but not becoming overwhelmed with obligatory ones. Doing this will also help you determine where there are gaps in your existing relationships that you may want to fill in the upcoming season. Who are the people you will be setting head-to-heads with this quarter? Have you thought through how this will happen? What is the best timing for your meetings? What kinds of things will you discuss? Take the opportunity afforded by your Quarterly Checkpoint to do an audit of all your relationships and to set new expectations around them. Perhaps you have standing meetings that need to be reevaluated. Maybe there’s an old friend or colleague whom you’d like to spend more time with. Maybe there are some...

- To some this may sound a little harsh. After all, how can we treat our relationships as a matter of convenience and discard them when they become cumbersome? To be clear: that’s not at all what we’re talking about. In fact, this is actually about making the relationships we choose to maintain more productive and meaningful. When we are selective about how and where we spend our relational energy, we find that our connections deepen and that we’re actually able to give more of ourselves to the people in our life. It’s when we’re not selective that we end up living on the margin and giving leftovers to others. Will you be meeting with a circle? If so, what will that rhythm look like for the upcoming quarter? Think about your core team. When will you meet with them? You need to give these people enough notice so that they are able to give you their full attention when you meet. Whom...

- Energy After you’ve listed each of your commitments for the upcoming quarter, you will begin to gain a sense of what you’re expecting of yourself, or others are expecting of you, in the next few months. If you’ve never performed this exercise before, seeing the entire scope of your work laid out before you can be an eye-opening experience. It may even be a little

overwhelming to see all your work and personal creative aspirations listed side by side. Not to worry—that's precisely the reason we're doing this exercise. A little discomfort now will save you a ton of stress down the road. Each of these commitments represents not only time and creative work that you'll be accountable for but also energy that you'll be required to expend. As we discussed earlier, sometimes projects—even very good ones—can steal needed energy from more critical,...

- require energy and focus many months, even years, later. As these commitments begin to show up on your list, you see the true effect of choices you've made and how they may still be limiting your ability to engage with more pressing work. Are there any projects that need to be pruned? Of all of the things on your list, is there anything that needs to go away this quarter so that you can focus your efforts on more productive work? Is there anything else coming up this quarter that is abnormal but that needs to be considered? Are you taking vacation, or are there any other trips on the calendar? You need to take these into account, because they will affect your workflow and your energy. Often we don't look at how things like trips, time off, or family commitments will affect our ability to engage, and as much as possible, it's best not to plan our critical work...

- Energy is to identify any easy decisions about what needs to be scaled back or where you may have...

- Stimuli What kinds of stimuli will help you with the projects you'll be working on? Can you identify any knowledge gaps in the commitments on your list? Are there any projects that will require special information? Now is the time to identify those needs and to list a few resources that may be able to help. What are you curious about right now? List a few subjects that you're curious about or that you'd like to explore. If you can, list a few resources that are interesting to you and that you'd like to add to your Stimulus Queue. How will you challenge yourself to...

- Hours Which of the projects on your list will require the most creative thought time? Can you identify four or five projects that will require an extra amount of creative effort? Not that you are going to do anything about it at this point, but it's good to begin identifying them now, in advance, so that you can earmark Idea Time against them. What will your Unnecessary Creating projects be? Some of these may be listed already on your commitments list, but spend some time thinking about the kinds of projects you would like to initiate or continue this quarter. These items will be added to your Project Queue,...

- Intentionality means that you are approaching your life in a systematic way and not haphazardly.

- Comfort is frequently the enemy of

- greatness.

- "Be yourself; everyone else is already taken." —Oscar Wilde