

Ten best practices to improve your productivity

To maximize your productivity identify and focus on what's most important. Our productivity tips begin with goal-setting guidelines and conclude with ways to help keep your top priorities focused on customers.



1 Define your goals

Goals are either strategic or tactical. Long range, strategic goals like improving customer satisfaction are never "finished;" whereas shorter term, tactical goals like sending a "thank you" note to customers after orders are delivered, can be marked as complete once a process for it is implemented. Consider both long range strategies and short term tactics when setting personal and company goals.

2 Set meaningful goals

The S.M.A.R.T. acronym is very useful in defining tactical goals. Make them Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely.

3 Focus on results

It's easy to fall into routines. When goal setting, ask yourself if old habits or procedures are providing the best return on your time and effort. For tasks that are clearly worthwhile but don't require your expertise, consider delegating or reassignment.

4 Think profit and growth

After brainstorming a list of goals, evaluate them in terms of their contribution to your business' profits and growth. Even if it's painful, don't be sidetracked by goals that provide only one. To ensure your future financial strength, give priority to the goals that will deliver profit *and* growth.

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5 Know your customer

This tip may be obvious, but unfortunately phrases like “customer first” are often nothing more than lip service. Real understanding of your customers’ problems, challenges, and preferences will help you focus on goals that will improve customer satisfaction. When you understand what your customers value most from your business, make sure your goals reflect it.

6 Revisit your goals

Like new year’s resolutions that fade with time, if goals aren’t made a priority they won’t progress. Mark your calendar for monthly or quarterly reviews. How are you progressing? Do any goals need refinement? Any lessons learned that will increase future successes?

7 Keep your goals top of mind

If your goals are filed away in a folder somewhere on your desktop or in your briefcase, it’s harder to make them a priority. Print them out and display them in a prominent place in your office, where you and everyone else will be continually reminded.

8 Make your To Do Lists work harder

To Do Lists are great productivity tools. Consider pre-printing a few sheets of paper with your monthly or quarterly goals at the top, with plenty of space below to jot down your daily or weekly action items.

9 Find the right balance

Technology speeds efficiency and communication, but nothing beats personal contact. Use technology to improve customer service—quick reminders, status updates, confirmation emails, etc. But don’t use it to replace the phone calls and face-to-face meetings that are the foundation of customer service.

10 Smile

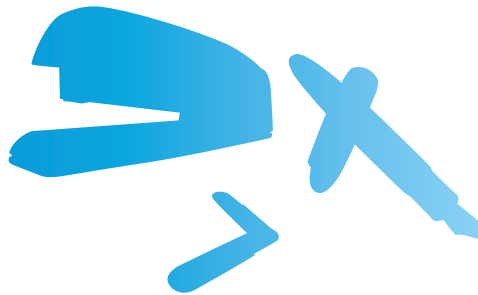
It should go without saying that the more customers you have, the happier you should be. But it’s easy to get caught up in the details of business and forget to take a moment to express your appreciation to your customers. Remember to smile—it’s more productive.



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