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Across the Board

New Year, New Beginning

By **Yinka Fatona, Chief Governance Officer (CGO)**

It's a new year and this usually signals a new beginning. This is the time of year that most people declare a resolution to effect change(s) in their lives. The most effective resolutions have been those that could be evaluated externally. What is your new year's resolution? If you are like most, your resolution took an introspective scan to develop and should result in an externally noticeable change. The board is embarking on a new beginning with six new members. These are individuals who have made a pledge to serve the chapter and the community in which it resides. On behalf of the current board and chapter leadership I say welcome and thanks.

The current board has seen some attrition this past year. And there are some directors whose term would expire in March. To all who have served on the board we thank you for your service and dedication. The new board would be in place by the 1st of April. The new board is slated to have eight directors, which meets bylaw requirements of a minimum of six, and a maximum of nine directors. However, there remains one director role yet to be filled, that of the treasurer. Our chapter Bylaw requires the membership to elect the Treasurer. A nominations and election Committee has been convened to recruit and screen candidates from chapter membership. The committee plans to complete interviews by the 30th of January and screening by the 9th of February. The top three qualifying candidates will be placed on the ballot for a special election in February.

The new board would have the following members and listed below are their names, title and the year their term expires:

- Yinka Fatona, MBA, PMP – Director-At-Large (2016)
- TBD – Director-At-Large, Treasurer (2016)
- Linda McHugh, PhD, Med, PMP, CLPF – Director-At-Large, Secretary (2017)
- Steve Romero, PMP, CISSP, CPM – Director-At-Large (2017)
- Tyrone Navarro, MBA – Director-At-Large (2017)
- Malika Malika, PMP, CSM, SPC – Director-At-Large, President (2018)
- Angela Kay Plummer, PMP – Director-At-Large (2018)
- Jennifer Yeiko Evans, PMP, CSM – Director-At-Large (2018)

This new board would take the chapter reigns and charter a course lined with strategic efforts to keep ends policy statements relevant to member owner's needs and defining successful ownership linkage.

Please vote in the coming election. Remember you can volunteer in different roles besides that of the board. The chapter website has a host of roles that would leverage and build your project management skills. You are free to reach out to the board if you have any questions, comments or feedback at: bod@pmisfbac.org or directly to me at Yinka.fatona@pmisfbac.org.

Sincerely,
Yinka Fatona, MBA, PMP
Chief Governance Officer (CGO)

PMI-SFBAC 2014 Volunteer Excellence Award Recipients

By Zahra Afrookhteh

Each year the Chapter recognizes outstanding volunteers who make this organization function effectively and efficiently for all of its members. This year we are pleased to acknowledge these 11 volunteers for their contributions.

Parvathy Baajee

Professional Development

For her leadership and professionalism in streamlining and operationalizing the ongoing webinar capability of the chapter

Gusti Clark

Professional Development

For demonstrating her commitment, reliability, professionalism and leadership throughout her time with the chapter and thru the transformation and delivery of the Microsoft Project workshop program

Shivani Dalal

Evening Programs

For her effectiveness and holistic view of PMI-SFBAC event management, her cross-team organizational abilities and her willingness to go the extra mile in helping others

Sandy Mitchell

Professional Development

For her vision, teamwork and project management skill in the development and launch of the PMP training program that continually satisfies the needs of the members as well as being a significant revenue source for the chapter

Pamela Pugh- Event Planning Management

For her effectiveness and focus in providing superior event planning services for the entirety of the chapter. Thru her guidance and management, PMI-SFBAC events were flawless in execution and highly valued activities

Thomas Schneider- IT Help Desk

For his dedication and professionalism in managing member technical assistance requests and his directed management of the Help Desk backlog

Preeti Shanbhag- Finance

For her long term commitment to the financial health of the chapter thru her dedication to policy and process documentation, an unwavering focus on tax responsibility and an overall passion for excellence

Maria Shum – Professional Development

For her leadership and teamwork in the role of Director of Roundtables ensuring the continued success of this critical outreach program for PMI-SFBAC

Nupur Sinha – Volunteer & Membership Management

For her exemplary attention to recruitment of new volunteers while mentoring team members in their roles and responsibilities thru a passionate and exemplar attention to detail and a “one-team” mind set

Marie Spark – Professional Development

For her consistent and exceptional leadership in building a sustainable and vibrant Professional Development organization. Through her guidance, new programs have become a reality and flourished. Marie has been a superior contributor, encouraging all of her team to perform at the same exceptional level

Vladimir Tsutskhvasvili – Professional Development

For showing tremendous initiative, entrepreneurship and professionalism in his leadership of the Professional Development workshops and ensuring their continued success and sustainability

Treasurer Election- Please Vote

By Marie Spark, PMP

Dear PMI San Francisco Bay Area Chapter members,

The Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the special election to fill the open Treasurer position for Project Management Institute San Francisco Bay Area Chapter (PMI-SFBAC) Board of Directors, 2015-2016.

The election will open the week of Feb. 16 and continue until March. 2, 2015.

The individual who is elected will serve a dual role: both as the chapter's Treasurer, and also as a member-at-large of the Board of Directors.

There are three (3) candidates on the election ballot for member consideration to fill the vacant seat/officer position.

Members shall vote for one (1) of the following candidates.

- Amy B. Jackson, PMP, PgMP, PSM
- Scott E Merillat PMP
- Scott Akira Tsugita, PMP

The elected individual will serve as Treasurer for a 1-year term, and will serve as a Board Member At Large for a 2-year term. Both terms will start in parallel on April 1, 2015.

Contact the Nominations Committee with any questions at nominations@pmi-sfbac.org



Marie Spark

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHIES**AMY JACKSON**

is proudly celebrating her 10 year anniversary at Genentech/Roche. She is currently the Senior Manager of Quality Tracking Solutions within the Quality IT portfolio. This practically translates to TrackWise Center of Excellence – a computer systems solution supporting 10k users globally in the pharmaceutical regulated industry.

She has been in the Informatics industry since her graduation from Northwestern University in 1988 with BS Industrial Engineering. She has steadily increased responsibilities from Software Developer to Portfolio Manager over these years, at a few choice employers including Computer Science Corporation and PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

What experience do you have in financial reporting?

My Financial reporting experience is drawn from Project Management, Program & Portfolio Management and my personal household.

In each of these situations, the high-level objectives are the same:

- understanding the assets and sources of income
- understanding debts and where money is being spent
- optimizing spend to achieve the goals of the organization

Within my current role, I am responsible for approximately 3.5M budget, not including the resource costs of 8 FTE. Within this budget, I am responsible for budgeting projects and operational costs for over 10,000 user-base IT system supporting Quality in a global GMP-regulated Pharmaceutical Manufacturing company.

Why you have stepped forward for Board service?

I am passionate about the Project Management profession, and I would enjoy giving back to this organization which is providing best practices and certification to the profession. As part of my continuing education and development, I seek challenges that I can grow in as well as contribute to.

I do enjoy financial aspects of Project and Portfolio Management, I do my own taxes, and investments are a hobby for me...so I think I have the aptitude to be a Treasurer, although I admit that this would be a growth experience for me. I am also pursuing Certified Financial Planner (CFP) certification. I see this role as one step in getting more involved in the organization and broader community, and I would hope to serve in additional leadership capacities in the future.

LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/pub/amy-jackson/1/750/b22>



Amy Jackson

SCOTT MERRILLAT

Is an IT software development project manager for 10 years. He combines a passion for project management and volunteering to improve our community and future. His professional career experience includes: Wells Fargo Digital PMO IT Project Manager, AT&T PMO IT Project Manager, AT&T / SBC Manager of IT Results & Analysis, JP Morgan / Chase Technical Support manager.

His volunteer history includes: BAWAR crisis support, Newman Hall Loaves and Fishes (Board Member, Fundraising, Treasurer & Analysis, Volunteer Coordination, Outreach), Lenox HOA (Board Member: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer), Habitat For Humanity, Tenderloin Tessies (Board Member, Volunteer Coordinator).

He got his MBA and BS in Organizational Behavior & Leadership from the University of San Francisco. He also has his AA Liberal Arts and AS Social Science—Laney College

What experience do you have in financial reporting?

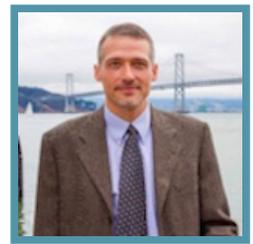
Over the past 15 years, I have held many board positions, including the treasurer's seat, for several non-profit organizations in the SF Bay Area. In these positions, I actively contributed to the organizations' daily operations and long-term mission.

I have ensured our organization is compliant with our charter, state reporting, and federal reporting. With an emphasis on bridging our current status and our future goals, as a treasurer for PMI San Francisco chapter, I will oversee accounts payable and receivable, and provide reporting, forecast analysis, and make strategic recommendations to the board.

Why have you stepped forward for Board service?

I have held several board positions for SF Bay Area non-profits over the past 15 years and believe that giving back to the community is important to make our futures better and brighter. In 2011, I received the President's award for volunteering. Serving our community through the PMI SF Chapter will combine my passion for giving back to my community and love for project management. I would be honored to support the project management community with my time and talents in the treasurer position.

LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/pub/scott-merillat-pmp/1b/993/164>



Scott Merillat

SCOTT TSUGITA

is the Assistant Controller for KP LLC, a commercial printing and marketing services company. He is responsible for the month-end close activity for all plants and departments, reviewing and reconciling balance sheet accounts and generating, analyzing and communicating revenue, value-added and contribution analysis to Senior Management. In addition, he is also responsible for managing all accounting and payroll-related audits and is the leader of the firm's Fixed Asset and Payroll teams.

What experience do you have in financial reporting?

I have years of experience providing reports measuring and analyzing customer performance, sales by customer by sales representative, costs by sales representative, actual project costs compared to budget, asset utilization by product line by plant, headcount by cost center compared to budget and prior year,.... While I pride myself in producing timely and accurate reports, I believe my ability to streamline and automate the process for providing the various financial reports is one of my strongest assets.

Why have you stepped forward for Board Service?

I believe this could be a mutually beneficial opportunity. Even though I have worked on many projects and passed the PMP exam, I am a little intimidated by project managers who utilize a more structured approach in larger companies. I believe being a part of the SFBAC would push me to be more active in chapter events. I know my 15+ years of accounting and finance experience combined with my knowledge of processes and GAAP will enable me to be a valuable asset at SFBAC.

LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/scotttsugita>



Scott Tsugita

Did You Know...?

That the PMI Career Headquarters is the premier source for job listings in project management. If you're seeking a new opportunity, you can post your résumé and apply for jobs. Visit the career section of the PMI Institute website to get more details.

And did you also know...

you can receive notice of new jobs when they are posted to the PMI Career Headquarters? To get started visit the PMI.org website to also sign up for Job Alerts.

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Tree Diagrams: Simplifying Complexity

By Ruth Hill and Mind Tools Team

We might associate tree diagrams with high school math, as simple tools commonly used to calculate probabilities or chart a series of events.

However, they can be useful in the workplace too. They can help you analyze options, solve problems, and brainstorm different ideas with your team. In this article, we'll look at what tree diagrams are, and discuss the many powerful ways you can apply them.

What is a Tree Diagram?

A tree diagram is a visual depiction of relationships that starts with a central node, or “trunk.” This is the problem that needs solving or the idea you are analyzing. Each possible solution or event has its own “branch,” which comes off the trunk to the top or bottom right-hand side. Additional decisions, consequences or effects split off from each of these “second layer branches,” giving the diagram a tree-like structure. You can use tree diagrams to break down categories or events into finer and finer levels of detail. This helps simplify complex problems (and their proposed solutions), and makes it easier for you to get an overview of your options.



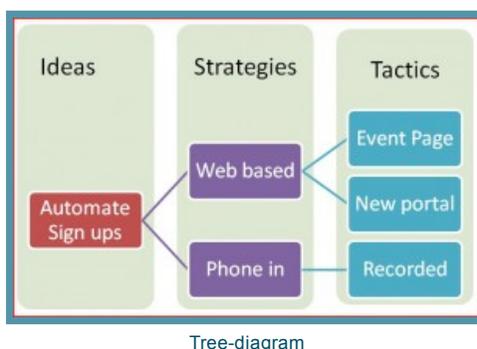
Ruth Hill

Among other uses, tree diagrams can help you to:

1. Find the root cause of a problem.
2. Outline the steps needed to solve a problem or implement a plan.
3. Identify the true scope of a project.
4. Explain steps or details to others.
5. Brainstorm possible outcomes.

Tree diagrams also help shift your thinking from the “big picture” to the subtleties of an issue. When you first draw the diagram, you look at the issue in its broadest sense. Your focus narrows when you flesh it out, and drill down to the finer detail. This shift in perspective is especially helpful when you're faced with large or particularly complex problems

Figure 1-Tree Diagram



Tree diagrams also help shift your thinking from the “big picture” to the subtleties of an issue. When you first draw the diagram, you look at the issue in its broadest sense. Your focus narrows when you flesh it out, and drill down to the finer detail. This shift in perspective is especially helpful when you're faced with large or particularly complex problems.

Example

Mariella's boss has asked her team to improve its performance by 20 percent. She draws a tree diagram to break the objective down into meaningful sub-goals, so team members can understand exactly what they need to do.

She begins by writing the primary goal first; this is the “trunk” of the diagram.

1. Improve performance by 20 percent.

Next, she and her team discuss how they can meet this goal. The team creates a new “branch” in the diagram for each idea to help it become more productive.

- Cross-train team members.
- Get better organized.
- Find more customers.

Each of these ideas is broken down further, so team members are clear about what they need to do. So, the group keeps brainstorming, and adds the following additional branches:

- I. Cross-train team members: Job rotation, job shadowing, job sharing.

- II. Get organized: Simplify client filing system, reduce clutter in the office, time-management training.
- III. Find more customers: Increase cold calling, social networking outreach, sponsor community events.

Mariella and her team keep expanding the tree diagram, using the final branches to assign tasks to specific people and to set deadlines. She then puts a printout in the break room to remind everyone what they're working on, and who is responsible for each task.

Types of Tree Diagram

There are many different types of tree diagram, and each has a specific application.

Making Decisions

Decision Trees are a common form of tree diagram. They can help you make the right choice when you're faced with several possible options. With them, you look at each alternative and investigate its potential outcome to determine which one offers the best balance between risk and reward.

There are always consequences when you make a decision. Sometimes they are positive, other times they're not. The Futures Wheel tool uses a type of tree diagram to help you explore them. You can also use a tree diagram when carrying out an Impact Analysis to identify the possible negative consequences of a proposed change.

Solving Problems

If you're faced with a complex problem, it can be challenging to identify its root cause and come up with an effective solution. Specialist tree diagrams can help you simplify this task.

Cause and Effect Analysis uses "*fishbone diagrams*" which are effectively horizontal tree diagrams. They enable you to discover the root cause of a problem, identify bottlenecks, and analyze why a particular process isn't working.

Sometimes you'll need to come up with several possible solutions to a problem, and this is when Concept Fans – based on the structure of tree diagrams – are useful. They let you take both a micro and a macro look at your problem, and generate as many options as you need to solve it. Critical to Quality Trees are similar – they help you identify your customers' needs, and explore ways to meet those needs.

Predicting Behavior

You can use tree diagrams to predict behavior. For example, they're commonly used in game theory to predict how your competitors might react in a given situation, or how a negotiation could play out. In this context, you use "game trees" to chart "players'" every possible move.

Taking Notes

Tree diagrams can be useful for taking notes. For example, Mind Mapping is a useful tool for summarizing information, for consolidating large chunks of information, for making connections, and for creative problem solving. Mind Maps show facts, as well as the overall structure of a subject and the relative importance of individual parts of it.

How to Create a Tree Diagram

This is a relatively simple task, and there are several ways to do it.

On Paper

To draw a tree diagram by hand, start on the left-hand side of your paper (for a horizontal tree), or at the top (for a vertical tree). Write the problem or issue you're addressing in a square or circle.

Then, drill down to the next level of detail. For example, if you're trying to find the root cause of a problem, think about what could be causing the issue. Draw lines out for each possible cause and label it appropriately.

Once you've brainstormed all the possibilities at this level, look at each idea in turn. Using our problem-solving example, you can then drill down to the next level of detail by asking "What" or "Why" questions. For example, "What do we need to do to make this happen?" or "Why does this happen?"

Using Software

You can draw tree diagrams using packages like Microsoft® Word. There are many free templates that you can download from the Internet, which automate and simplify the process.

You can also download software, like SmartDraw™, or add-ins for Microsoft Excel, such as TreePlan™, to create comprehensive and professional-looking diagrams. The advantage to using software is that you can share what you create with others easily, and quickly make changes or add more branches. It also allows you to create high quality, professional diagrams, and seamlessly insert them into presentations or reports.

Using Online Apps

There are also web-based applications, such as draw.io™ and Creately™, which help you create and save your tree diagram online. These applications are useful for team collaboration, especially when you're working with a home-based or virtual team.

Key Points

Use tree diagrams to solve problems and make decisions by breaking information down into finer levels of detail. They help you to simplify complex problems, and make it easier for you to visualize all your options. Tree diagrams also help you find the root cause of a problem, break down large goals, and explain steps to others.

To draw a tree diagram, start by writing your problem or issue on the left-hand side of the page; this is the “trunk” of your tree. Next, identify the tasks that you need to complete to accomplish your goal; each should have its own “branch” off the central trunk. Look at them individually, and create further branches until you can’t simplify or drill down any further.

Apply This to Your Life

- Think carefully about any problems or situations you’re facing now at work. Draw a tree diagram to brainstorm possible solutions.
- If you have a decision to make, use a tree diagram to explore your options and identify the consequences of each one.

© Ruth Hill. Ms Hill works with Mind Tools and lives in Brighton, England. Mind Tools Home and Tree Diagrams Article

The 7 Cs of Communication-A Checklist for Clear Communication

By Tom Hallett

Think of how often you communicate with people during your day. You write emails, facilitate meetings, participate in conference calls, create reports, devise presentations, debate with your colleagues... the list goes on.

We can spend almost our entire day communicating.

So, how can we provide a huge boost to our productivity? We can make sure that we communicate in the clearest, most effective way possible.

This is why the 7 Cs of Communication are helpful. The 7 Cs provide a checklist for making sure that your meetings, emails, conference calls, reports, and presentations are well constructed and clear – so your audience gets your message.

According to the 7 Cs, communication needs are:

In this article, we look at each of the 7 Cs of Communication, and we’ll illustrate each element with both good and bad examples.

Clear

When writing or speaking to someone, be clear about your goal or message. What is your purpose in communicating with this person? If you’re not sure, then your audience won’t be sure either.

To be clear, try to minimize the number of ideas in each sentence. Make sure that it’s easy for your reader to understand your meaning. People shouldn’t have to ‘read between the lines’ and make assumptions on their own to understand what you’re trying to say.

Concise

When you’re concise in your communication, you stick to the point and keep it brief. Your audience doesn’t want to read six sentences when you could communicate your message in three.

Are there any adjectives or “filler words” that you can delete? You can often eliminate words like “for instance,” “you see,” “definitely,” “kind of,” “literally,” “basically,” or “I mean.”

Are there any unnecessary sentences? Have you repeated the point several times, in different ways?

Concrete

When your message is concrete, then your audience has a clear picture of what you’re telling them. There are details (but not too many!) and vivid facts, and there’s laser-like focus. Your message is solid.

Correct

When your communication is correct, it fits your audience, correct communication is also error-free communication.

Do the technical terms you use fit your audience’s level of education or knowledge?

Have you checked your writing for grammatical errors? Remember, spell checkers won’t catch everything.

Are all names and titles spelled correctly?

Coherent

When your communication is coherent, it’s logical. All points are connected and relevant to the main topic, and the tone and flow of the text is consistent.

Complete

In a complete message, the audience has everything they need to be informed and, if applicable, take action.

Does your message include a “call to action”, so that your audience clearly knows what you want them to do?

Have you included all relevant information – contact names, dates, times, locations, and so on?

Courteous

Courteous communication is friendly, open, and honest. There are no hidden insults or passive-aggressive tones. You keep your reader’s viewpoint in mind, and you’re empathetic to their needs.



Tom Hallett

Note:

There are a few variations of the 7 Cs of Communication:

Credible – Does your message improve or highlight your credibility? This is especially important when communicating with an audience that doesn't know much about you.

Creative – Does your message communicate creatively? Creative communication helps keep your audience engaged.

Key Points

All of us communicate every day. The better we communicate, the more credibility we'll have with our clients, our boss, and our colleagues. Use the 7 Cs of Communication as a checklist for all of your communication. By doing this, you'll stay clear, concise, concrete, correct, coherent, complete, and courteous.

© 2014 Tom Hallet. Mr. Hallet works for the Mind Tools and he writes about communication management for the Mind Tools website at http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCS_85.htm

25 Minutes To Increase Productivity

By Bruce Harpham

You're here to learn how to increase productivity. Great! Read on to learn how I used a simple count down timer to improve my focus. How can a clock increase productivity? Read on to learn the step by step process I use.

Whenever I'm facing a task that is dull, I simply set the timer and use the Pomodoro technique. This method saves me when I'm struggling to focus. It helps fight procrastination. You can fight the urge to browse the Web too. Best of all, this technique does not cost any money and takes less than an hour to put into action.

The Pomodoro Technique to increase productivity was created by Francesco Cirillo. Before you start buying books and courses, I encourage you to experiment with this practice first. After all, it may not suit you. This productivity tip will be especially valuable if you are engaged in complex and creative work such as writing, programming, or art.

An "almost magic" way to get started with Pomodoro Technique

Getting started with this practice takes a few simple steps. I recommend you follow these steps to the letter at first. You can always make changes in the future when you are a pro. Until then, stick to the basics.

- Choose One Task To Work On. For example, "fix bugs in the customer database"
- Get A Glass of Water (or Tea or Coffee). Having a drink on hand makes life better. There is no urge to wander off for a few minutes while you work.
- Set a timer. Use your watch, smart phone or a timer website for 25 minutes
- Work: For the next 25 minutes, work exclusively on your task. Ignore everything else.
- Reward Break. At the end of 25 minutes, take a 10 minute break! I recommend actually getting up from your desk and walking around for a few minutes. You could also do a bit of light exercise – squats or push ups – and enjoy a few minutes with your current book.
- Start over at Step 1

The above technique can be applied equally well to dull and necessary tasks and creative work. This method to increase productivity is one of the best ways I know to improve your focus in a short period of time. If you find it completely impossible to focus with this exercise, there may be more significant problems undermining your productivity.

As Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain shows, the mind and body are linked. In the short term, sleeping more and getting daily exercise will do wonders for your energy. Taking care of your body will improve productivity.

The Pure Magic of Using Time Limits To Improve Productivity

Endless opportunity and endless information – that's one way to describe the world we live in. If you even minimal curiosity about the world, you have the ability to distract yourself from work. That's why you're learning to improve productivity. The Pomodoro Technique understands that you have plenty of interests AND that you have work to do. Instead of forcing you to quit cold turkey, this method gradually increases your focus over time.

If you use a computer in your daily work, there are plenty of ways to improve focus. RescueTime reports how much time you spend on different applications (e.g. fifty minutes in Microsoft Word and five hours on Facebook). Monitoring may be enough for you. Peter Druck put it best: "what gets measured gets managed."

Writers have other options to improve productivity while writing. For times where I have sought to write fiction or other material for extended periods of time, I recommend using Freedom (for Apple) or TextRoom (for PC). These tools exterminate the Achilles's heel of productivity that afflicts many of us. The old line of "oh, I just want to check email, / Facebook / Twitter for a minute and then I'll get back to work" trap.



Bruce Harpham

Why It's So Important To Take Breaks To Improve Productivity

Rewards are a key reason that the Pomodoro Technique has helped me become more productive. Even if I am working through a dry and boring task – like updating a complex database – I have the reward break just on the horizon a few minutes away. By deciding on your reward in advance, you will have something enjoyable to look forward to during your work. Anticipation is a key productivity lifehack.

Four Sure-Fire Ways To Stay Production Using Rewards

- **Reading From A Print Book:** Reading a few pages from a print book also gives your eyes and hands a break from the computer. I'm currently reading "Imperium" by Robert Harris, a historical novel set in the Roman Republic. If you are looking for a basic and reliable introduction to the art of productivity, you cannot go wrong by reading "Getting Things Done" by David Allen.
- **Go Outside:** by going outside for a few minutes, you can experience some sun and wind.
- **Read An Article:** Reading is a major source of leisure for me so I often like to read to relax. If you like longer articles, I recommend Long Reads.
- **Talk To A Friend or Colleague:** assuming you are based in an office of some kind, going to talk to a friend for a few minutes makes sense. Not sure what to talk about? You can always improve business relationships with a cookie!

What The Most Productive People Know About Getting Away From The Desk

Did you notice that only one out of the four suggestions for short rewards involved using your computer? That is not by accident! Giving your mind, eyes, and hands a short break from focusing on your computer is a key benefit to taking a break. If you don't believe me, consider the recommendation of the American Optometric Association:

"Rest your eyes for 15 minutes after two hours of continuous computer use." – American Optometric Association

Remember to give your eyes a break even if you decide to work longer than 25-30 minutes at a stretch. There's nothing wrong with seeking to increase your powers of concentration. Simply keep in mind your body has certain limits and it is best not to test those limits too often.

5 Proven Ways To Increase Productivity Through Minimalism

The Pomodoro Technique is only the beginning of how to increase your productivity through focus and using limits. Read on to learn about five other methods that can make all the difference in helping you put on blinders to focus your mental energy.

- **The Fifty Minute Focus Finder:** This method to improve productivity was created by Dean Jackson. He is the excellent co-host of the I Love Marketing podcast. It is loosely related to Getting Things Done (GTD) principles.
- **Reading One Book At A Time:** In re-reading one of Scott H. Young's articles about reading over 70 books in a year, I discovered this principle again. From time to time, I start reading another book. It's one thing to decide to abandon a book that is simply not interesting.
- **Creating Sub-Deadlines For Projects:** This is a student lifehack I learned years and years ago that can be applied beyond the classroom. Let's say your manager (or publisher or client) gives you a deadline to complete a project two weeks from today. Taking five minutes to plan your project into sub-components gives you smaller deadlines to reach. If you're addicted to the "rush" of racing to meet a last minute deadline, this productivity tip is for you!
- **Making Your Work Into A Game (i.e. The "Personal Record" Hack):** A few weeks ago, I started to use Lift App to encourage myself to drink more water. I have also seen other people use the app to pursue fitness goals and writing goals. When I go for a run, I sometimes push myself to achieve a personal record. From time to time, it's fun to apply the game concept to productivity too.
- **The 30 Day Challenges:** Popularized by Matt Cutts from Google in his TED talk, Try Something New for 30 days, this concept is a great way to hack creativity. The 30 day challenge is uncharted territory for me personally. It's on my list to experiment with later this year. I can see great merit in applying this idea. The 30 day challenge is particularly helpful if you are seeking to build a habit. Researchers have found that habits often take three to six weeks to form.

An almost unknown way to be more proactive: use limits

Setting constraints to increase productivity is simply another way to be proactive about how you use your day. Becoming proactive can be a daunting task, especially since "be proactive" is a somewhat vague recommendation to put into action. Using timers and calendars to put structure on your time allows you to ease into the proactive mindset gently.

Applying limitations and constraints to improve productivity is one of the paradoxes of productivity I've discovered in my work. I find that such limits can also increase creativity. You may read this article and then that limits are not for you. You might think your work is too creative for this approach to be useful. If that's what you think, then keep reading for an alternate perspective

You might be right! I encourage you to experiment with this approach first. It may be a key lifehack that can increase your output significantly. At the very least, your body will get some much deserved rest from constant computer use. Put the concepts of constraints into action for at least two days before you decide whether it suits you.

About the Author – Bruce Harpham earned his MA in history from Western University, as well as a master's of information studies from the University of Toronto. He's currently a senior financial analyst at the Bank of Montreal. Find him online at Project Management Hacks and follow him on Twitter @PMPHacks. B Harpham

Scopemasters — Develop your Communications Skills

By Chuck Siu

Toastmasters is not just a forum for better speaking skills, it's also a great venue for discussing, practicing, and perfecting communication techniques for all types of situations, from meeting facilitation to professional networking. The Scopemasters chapter adds a project management focus to the mix, and the result is available, PDU earning, meeting that can pay big dividends for the time invested. If you are interested in finding out more about Scopemasters please send an email to scopemasters@pmi-sfbac.org and include your contact information. We'll get back to you with more details about how to be a part of this exciting organization.

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