

How to make 2013 more fun, more productive and more profitable - with Elliot Hayes

This is a transcript from a webinar delivered by Elliot Hayes

We always start the year with a lot of energy and drive, committed to making the present year a lot better than the previous one. However, sooner than we realise we lose the energy and enthusiasm because of circumstances either within or beyond our control. To help you keep your energy and drive throughout 2013 and make 2013 more productive and fun, I've outlined some easy steps to enable you to have more of all the good things you want.

Plan Your Rewards

The first thing I want to start with is, plan your rewards. This might seem as a little bit of a surprise because you probably expected me to start with process and goals which are usually the stuff most people would talk about when they discuss productivity and profitability.

I want you to look ahead over the next 3, 4, 5, 6 months and actually think, what are the fun things that I want to do? What are the fun experiences, fun hobbies or things I always want to learn? Is there a short course that I can do 1 hour a week that will not require setting up KPIs or addressing productivity and profitability? Is there a short course that I can take purely for the fun of it, but still increases my knowledge?

The Importance of Quiet Time

At this point, I would like to remind you of the importance of quiet time. By quiet time, I don't mean the time where you sit and castigate yourself for what you haven't done. Quiet time is where you just literally stop, sit, smell the roses as they say. Just pay attention to your thoughts and just see what ideas come up, what insights come up when you stop checking emails and tune-off that noise a little bit. I think you might be pleasantly surprised or reminded just how nicely and easily the ideas flow and “AHA” moments come to you when you turn-off that noise down and just relax. A relaxed body definitely works more effectively. This feeds into your being more productive in your workplace.

Breathing Exercise

There's a very simple breathing exercise that gets you to come into the present and it starts by you paying attention to your breathing. It is a nice way of getting you to focus.

It's not dogmatic or too religious. It's a very practical exercise. You don't need to believe in meditation or god and anything like that. Just believe in breathing, just believe you need to breath and that's something you can start by focusing on. Then see what ideas come from that or see how much you come back re-charged into the ideas you already had.

It is very important to plan your rewards. Plan the things you can afford. This then keeps you moving and focused to your goals.

Create Value

The 2nd thing I want you to focus on is the concept of creating the value as compared to being busy. The mindset behind this is to start to see yourself as someone who is an investor compared to someone who is a spender. That mindset you hear about that in terms of building wealth, gaining assets, investing in property, getting shares in whatever particular area is of interest to you if you have done that; but from our perspective the greatest asset we've got is our time.

Time is our Greatest Asset

Time is completely a non-renewable resource. So start seeing it as something where you invest your energy and your time based on what it will return to you now and in the future as opposed to just spending it. There is an old saying that killing time is not murder, it's suicide. Sorry for the graphic language but that's a good reminder of how important time is.

Time Saving Tips

Strategize your Sales Calls

Imagine you invest time in designing and testing a sales process rather than having an odd random of phone calls or emails with anyone that comes to your mind at that time. Actually having a central list of people you want to contact and having a process of getting hold of them, getting their attention, getting their interest, and bringing them into a purchase as opposed to what most people in sales do which is whatever comes to mind, call, chat, email, whatever. Some of those random occurrences lead to good results but there is no doubt that you get more results if you are going to be more strategic.

Prepare an Email Template

Another tip might be having an email template rather than writing the same thing over and over. So, if you catch yourself writing the same email repeatedly, you tell yourself, “you know what; I will turn this into a template”.

Use the Speed Dial function of your Mobile Phone

I recently looked on my phone, the main people I call each day. There were about 6 or 7 people and I didn't have all of them in my favorites, that's speed dial. So I added them and updated my list. This saves me time having to look for the names of people I frequently call.

That concept of being more strategic in your actions rather than being random brings a lot of results.

Record Your Presentation

You probably gave a speech in a local event on a topic that you know very well and is related to what you're working on. Once the speech is done, it's gone.

But what if you record it? For example, I recorded a presentation I gave early this year. I’ve used a clip from the presentation as an audition piece for other people who are considering using me as a speaker at their next conference. I’ve also used it to feed into a product we’ve created. I’ve used it as a value add. I had it transcribed and used it as an article. I did one small thing, but it leveraged in multiple ways. It is worth investing some time and money to have your speech or your presentations recorded.

Enrol in a Training Program to Enhance your Skill

Another example that creates value is by enrolling in a training program would enhance a valuable skill. That training program should help you get better in your chosen area. It should improve your skill and prevent you from being the same old you. If your ideas and skills have actually plateaued, if you haven’t moved to the next level; it’s time to sharpen the saw.

The more enhanced your skills are the more you can charge. The more enhanced your skills are, the more valuable you are in the organization.

I’ve got one joint venture with a partner who unfortunately had to let some staff go. It is part of the whole restructure. The staff that are easy to let go are the staff with mediocre skills. These people haven’t really tried to increase their value. They just do their job. And unfortunately, very unfortunately, they are more easily dispensable.

So, an enhanced skill makes you a little less dispensable.

Be More Creative with your Time

My incredibly beautiful and intelligent wife just started a retail shop. Obviously, there are a lot of retail shops in that area but her shop is the only shop that allows customers to leave their contact details. Because of that, she was able to build a nice mailing list where she can stay in contact proactively with customers and prospects rather than what most shop owners do - have a chat with whoever comes in and once they leave, it’s goodbye. So, that idea of creating a value by making your time get a return of investment now and in the future will set your mind in different directions.

Build trust with your team

Build trust with your team. I could meet for an update or I can have an ulterior motive (in a good sense) on how to increase trust with that team. Should things go wrong in the future (which they inevitably will) I get more of a bank account credit of trusts from that particular individual.

Do it Now

This is the concept of outputs versus inputs - the flip side of having time to reflect. Once you’ve set your to-do list, do them now.

For example, if I run my own business I want to make sure I send messages out to my clients and to people who are important in my network rather than having all the thoughts in my head but nothing is

going out. It’s like the marketing equivalent of a tree that falls and no one’s there to hear it. Did it actually make a sound?

Condition yourself - today I am going to send a message to my clients (rather than having a lot of ideas to send something out but nothing actually leaves your desk). You can let people know what you are doing and increase your chances of a sale or opportunity.

On the personal side, creating memories for your children rather than just ‘taking them out to the park’. That can create a whole different focus that could be really poignant. Imagine taking some photographs and putting them in a “memory book” that has a catalogue of your recent adventures. That’s something they might not appreciate now but down the track they might treasure that as an important memory they’ve had with you.

So, that mindset of creating value compared with being busy is very powerful and I encourage you to consider it – you are an investor not a spender, changes your focus.

A practical exercise on that would be to write a list of your tasks from the last fortnight. Try to look, what represents real value that you’ve created in your work, in your life.

What really was just busy stuff that really didn’t add much value to what you’re building. That might start to give you clarity on what are the things that you do that really add value and what is just stuff. What are the critical few tasks that really get the results? What gets you forward and ahead rather than sitting where you were 12 months ago and not much progress?

Technology Tips

Audacity and Dropbox

Moving on, a few things on technology tips.

I am going to be boring here and say the same old stuff and maybe you’ve heard me say before but I continue to find it a powerful tool or technique to “say it and edit it” rather than write it from scratch. There was a lot of stuff I had to write last month. But I actually didn’t write it, I dictated it. I dictated it using Audacity (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>). After dictating the recording, I export the file into a media export file and then I upload it to dropbox (<https://www.dropbox.com/> you can join dropbox for free) and then I share the link with my virtual assistant.

It is a very powerful tool, I say it and edit it and share it at dropbox and my virtual assistant comes back with a word document capturing my words. I just quickly edit it. This is so much quicker than sitting and writing your articles. This is important especially if you are doing marketing online. You don’t have to sit and write it, that will drive you crazy. But you can say it and edit it. It is very inexpensive and a massive time saver to get content organized.

Egg timer

Another technology tool you can use is egg timer. If you type in “egg timer” in Google, you’ll see it brings up a timer. If you have 10 minutes to do something important, let’s say calling all the important people in your business, then click that timer and call. And then don’t look at the timer until you’re done calling. I actually shared that technique before but I continue to be impressed by how much focus it brings to say “right, this is my time. I am not going to do anything else and make the most of the next 10 minutes”.

Outsource

If you don’t have a virtual assistant yet, then I strongly encourage you to get one and to start working on a simple task you can outsource just to free up your time for more important things. I mentioned in the past, websites like www.remotestaff.com.au. They are a great place to start. They will source people in your behalf. They are a bit of a cushion for you if this is the first time for you to start working with a virtual assistant. But be very clear on what things you want to outsource, what specific tasks you want done.

Emails

Next stop, oldie but goodie. Avoid checking email every few minutes. This is a critical point. I am amazed at how so many people get into checking their emails every few minutes and distracting themselves. That is a major undermining force from your focus.

Test Often and Quickly

And lastly, I would like to make a point. Test often and quickly.

Distinguish between Nice Ideas and Opportunities

If you have a bunch of wonderful ideas, then get a place to store them but very quickly distinguish between a nice idea and an opportunity. An opportunity is something that would actually add value to your career, your business, or your work.

Create criteria to determine the opportunities. We have a whole program for making it happen which is actually dedicated to this very topic but in simple terms, you must have criteria of how much time, money and energy you can spend on any new idea and filter it through and decide what is an idea that is a nice idea, what is an opportunity, something I can do this year, this month, this week, today that would add value or create some value in what I am doing.

Test your Ideas Quickly

This is the point people really miss, test them quickly. Do a little test. Send an email to your clients. Ask them what they think. Make a phone call to a bunch of people and see if they are interested. Evaluate if people are interested in what you are putting forward. Is this something that will work or is it really something you should dump and move on?

Don't Waste Time on Dumb Ideas

This is a major topic. Don't waste time on dumb ideas. This is where persistence and discipline are major negatives because you persist trying to make something that isn't going to fly, fly. I've seen this happen to people and cost them lots of time and lots of money, in some cases relationships. It is a serious point, don't keep banging your head on the brick wall.

Test quickly and move forward.

And lastly, I want to say have a fantastic 2013. Stay in touch. Check out our new products and programs. And we absolutely love your input and feedback. It is a fuel for us to create content that is hopefully useful for you in cutting through all the clutter and deciding what to do next and what you should make happen next. That's it for me now. Check us out at www.findtime.com.au. We love to hear your feedback.

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About the author:

Elliot Hayes has worked across seven different industries – ranging from telecommunications to film and television to corporate training and development. It was during his tenure as manager of one of the top Optus franchises in Australia that he began to develop his skills as a trainer and educator. He has been running training programs in productivity for over four years, specialising in how to combine technology with time management principles for the maximum benefit. He has featured in BRW, and his clients have included Australia Post, Telstra, Department of Justice, and Optus.

His company – About Time Management Solutions – has helped over five thousand people improve their performance results.

Elliot also consults and trains in the areas of innovation in the workplace, sales and marketing. And he is a qualified tai chi instructor. If you would like to give any feedback or contact Elliot to exchange ideas on how to improve productivity, then email info@findtime.com.au

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