PRODUCTIVITY

"Time is a created thing. To say, "I don't have time," is to say "I don't want to.""

Lao Tzu

PRODUCTIVITY

WORKSHOP TECHNIQUES:

one: **ESSENTIALISM**
How to channel your energy

two: **CIRCLE OF CONCERN**
How to focus on the stuff you can control

three: **THE PRIORITY MATRIX**
How to better manage your time

four: **BAR CODE DAY**
How to better manage your time

five: **THE POWER OF LESS**
How to get into the habit of doing less

six: **GETTING THINGS DONE**
How to manage your workflow

RECOMMENDED READING :

- **Getting Things Done** - David Allen
- **Simply Brilliant** - Fergus O'Connell
- **The Power of Less** - Leo Babauta
- **Simpicity** - John Maeda
- **How to have a Good Day** - Caroline Webb
- **The Workshop Book** – Pamela Hamilton
- **Thinking Fast & Slow** – Daniel Kahneman
- **Essentialism** - Greg McKeown
- **12 Habits of Highly Effective People** - Steven Covey

INTRODUCTION:
SMALL HABITS – BIG CHANGES

There are many books on improving your productivity. This section features just a few of my favourite exercises. But first, here are a couple of little gems that can make a big initial difference.

THE 20 MILE MARCH
Polar explorer Roald Amundsen beat Captain Scott to the South Pole by consistently marching 20 miles a day. He had worked out in advance that 20 miles was the optimum amount for a team with their equipment. In bad weather the team did it anyway, and in good weather they stopped at 20 to save energy for the next day.

Scott's team either either stayed in their tents on bad days or overshot on good ones and wore themselves out.

The moral is that companies, teams and individuals should aim for similar consistency in order to be truly productive.

PING PONG RING
Making decent decisions is really hard if you can't concentrate properly. You need to remove yourself from distractions to work out what to do. These days, most of these distractions come from technology - often too many emails.

In his book Too Fast to Think, Chris Lewis references Vanessa Brady, a multi-award winning interior designer. If two emails have failed to solve a problem, her approach is: 'PING PONG RING'. The moral is that when an email conversation is getting long and out of control, break the deadlock with a call (and avoid further distraction).

BIG ROCKS
A Stephen Covey classic. This is featured in his 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (more exercises from this to follow). Imagine your time like a glass or vase. If you put sand and small pebbles in first, you will never fit in the big rocks. But if you put the big rocks in first, then there will still be room for the small pebbles and sand to fit in around. The moral is to get the big stuff done first.
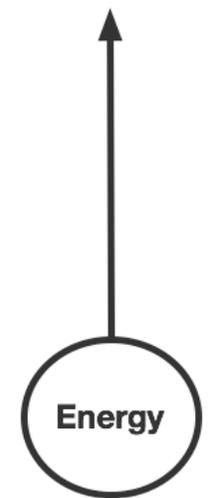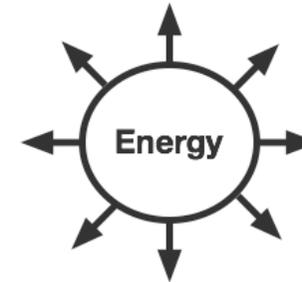
one: ESSENTIALISM
How to channel your energy

In his book Essentialism, Greg McKeown brilliantly identifies the differences between essentialists and non-essentialists.

The non-essentialist is all things to all people and pursues everything in an undisciplined way. The non-essentialist thinks that almost everything is essential. The essentialist, however, does less but better.

When it comes to energy, instead of doing many things half-heartedly, do one or two things properly. In both cases, the same amount of energy is exerted. It's the difference between a millimetre of progress in a million directions and significant progress in what matters most.
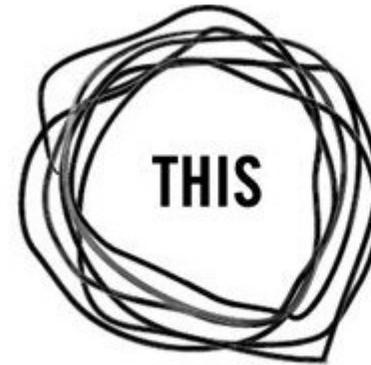
EXERCISE: Review your to do list. Identify one or two items to prioritise, and delay or ditch the others.

TO DO LIST	NON-ESSENTIAL (ditch or delay)	ESSENTIAL (do now)

	NON-ESSENTIALIST	ESSENTIALIST
THINKS	**ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE** *"I have to"* *"It's all important"* *"How can I fit it all in"*	**LESS BUT BETTER** *"I choose to"* *"Only a few things really matter"* *"What are the trade-offs?"*
DOES	**THE UNDISCIPLINED PURSUIT OF MORE** Reacts to what's most pressing Says "yes" to people without really thinking Tries to force execution at the last moment	**ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE** Pauses to discern what really matters Says "no" to everything except the essential Removes obstacles to make execution easy
GETS	**LIVES A LIFE THAT DOES NOT SATISFY** Takes on too much, and work suffers Feels out of control Is unsure of whether the right things get done Feels overwhelmed and exhausted	**ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE** Chooses carefully in order to do great work Feels in control Gets the right things done Experiences joy in the journey

two: CIRCLE OF CONCERN
How to focus on the stuff you can control

We so often waste our time and energy on things we cannot control (external factors). This exercise, from Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, helps us focus on the important items that are within our sphere of influence.

EXERCISE: Write a list of things that are on your mind and place them in the relevant areas of the circle. If they fall in the outer ring, you need to accept that you cannot control them and therefore you are better off moving on and saving your energy for items in the middle circle.

CONCERN

INFLUENCE

CIRCLE OF CONCERN
Things you CANNOT control or influence

CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE
Things you CAN control or influence
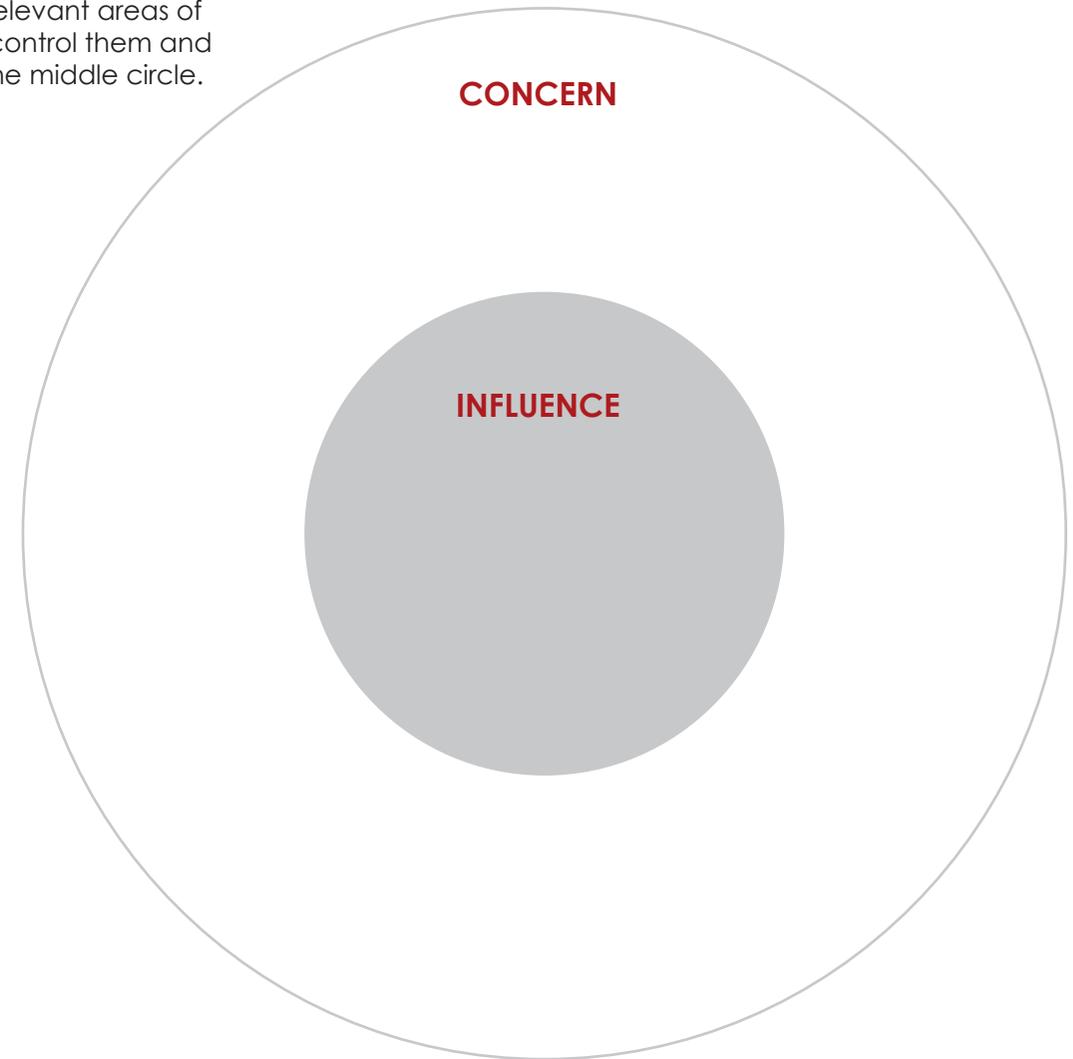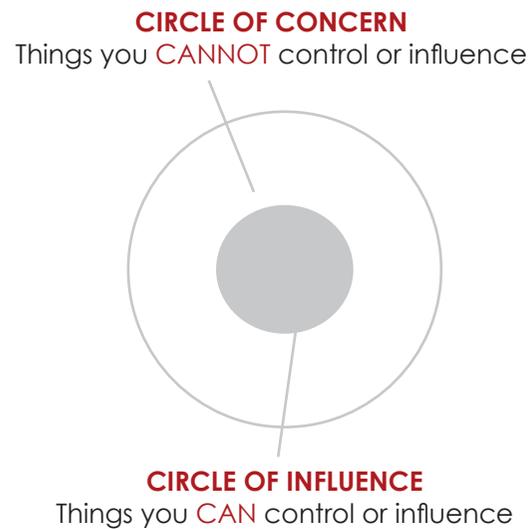
three: THE PRIORITY MATRIX
How to better manage your time

EXERCISE: Another technique from Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. This matrix is great for prioritising your to do list.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	PRIORITIES	THINK + PLAN
NOT IMPORTANT	DELEGATE OR DO FIRST (QUICKLY)	IGNORE OR CANCEL

four: BAR CODE DAY
How to better manage your time

The bar code provides a visual depiction of a day filled with hundreds of short, bitty tasks. This is not always the choice of the person doing the work, it's because they keep being interrupted.

When that happens it takes the average person 12 to 15 minutes to get back to doing what they were doing. So it they are disturbed more than four times an hour, they have lost their whole career.

Studies show that multitasking doesn't work. If you want to produce proper high quality work, you need to allocate a decent run of time for each task or project, without interruption.

EXERCISE: Use the chart below to properly plan your day (and turn off easy distractions like email alerts and your mobile phone).

1 234567 890128 >

9am ------ 1pm ------ 6pm

9am ------ 1pm ------ 6pm

MORNING PLANNING	PROJECT :	EMAIL CHECK/ CALLS	PROJECT :	LUNCH	PROJECT :	EMAIL CHECK / CALLS	PROJECT :	REVIEW / WRAP UP

9am -- 1pm -- 6pm

five: THE POWER OF LESS
How to get into the habit of doing less

In his book The Power of Less, Leo Babauta outlines his six essential productivity principles that 'will change your life'. 1. Set limitations. 2. Choose the essential. 3. Simplify. 4. Focus. 5. Create habits. 6. Start small. Here's a checklist of his recommended habits.

EXERCISE: How many of the following are you currently doing?

Set your 3 MITs (Most Important Tasks) each morning.		Follow a morning routine.	
Single-task. When you work on a task, don't switch to other tasks.		Eat more fruits and veggies every day.	
Process your inbox to empty.		Keep your desk decluttered.	
Check email just twice a day.		Say no to commitments and requests that aren't on your short list.	
Exercise five to ten minutes a day.		Declutter your house for 15 minutes a day.	
Work while disconnected, with no distractions.		Stick to a five-sentence limit for emails.	

six: GETTING THINGS DONE
How to manage your workflow

Here's a useful workflow chart based on David Allen's Getting Things Done - how to achieve stress-free productivity.

```
                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │     "STUFF"     │
                          └─────────────────┘
                                  │
                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │    In-basket    │
                          └─────────────────┘
                                  │
                          ┌─────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────┐
                          │   What is it?   │                    │      Trash      │
                          └─────────────────┘                    └─────────────────┘
                                  │                        ┌──────
                          ┌─────────────────┐    ┌──────┐  │
                          │ Is it actionable?│───│  NO  │──┤
                          └─────────────────┘    └──────┘  │
                                  │                        └──────
                              ┌──────┐                           ┌─────────────────┐
                              │ YES  │                           │    Reference    │
                              └──────┘                           └─────────────────┘
                                  │
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │   What's the next action? │
                    └──────────────────────────┘
                                  │
                  ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
                  │  Will it take less than 2 minutes? │
                  └──────────────────────────────────┘
                     │                              │
              ┌─────────────┐               ┌─────────────┐
              │     Yes     │               │      No     │
              └─────────────┘               └─────────────┘
                     │                     │              │
         ┌─────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────┐
         │      Do it      │    │   Delegate it   │  │     Defer it    │
         └─────────────────┘    └─────────────────┘  └─────────────────┘
                                         │              │           │
                               ┌─────────────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
                               │    Waiting      │ │ Calendar │ │   Next   │
                               │(for someone else│ │(to do at │ │ actions  │
                               │    to do)       │ │ specific │ │          │
                               └─────────────────┘ │  time)   │ └──────────┘
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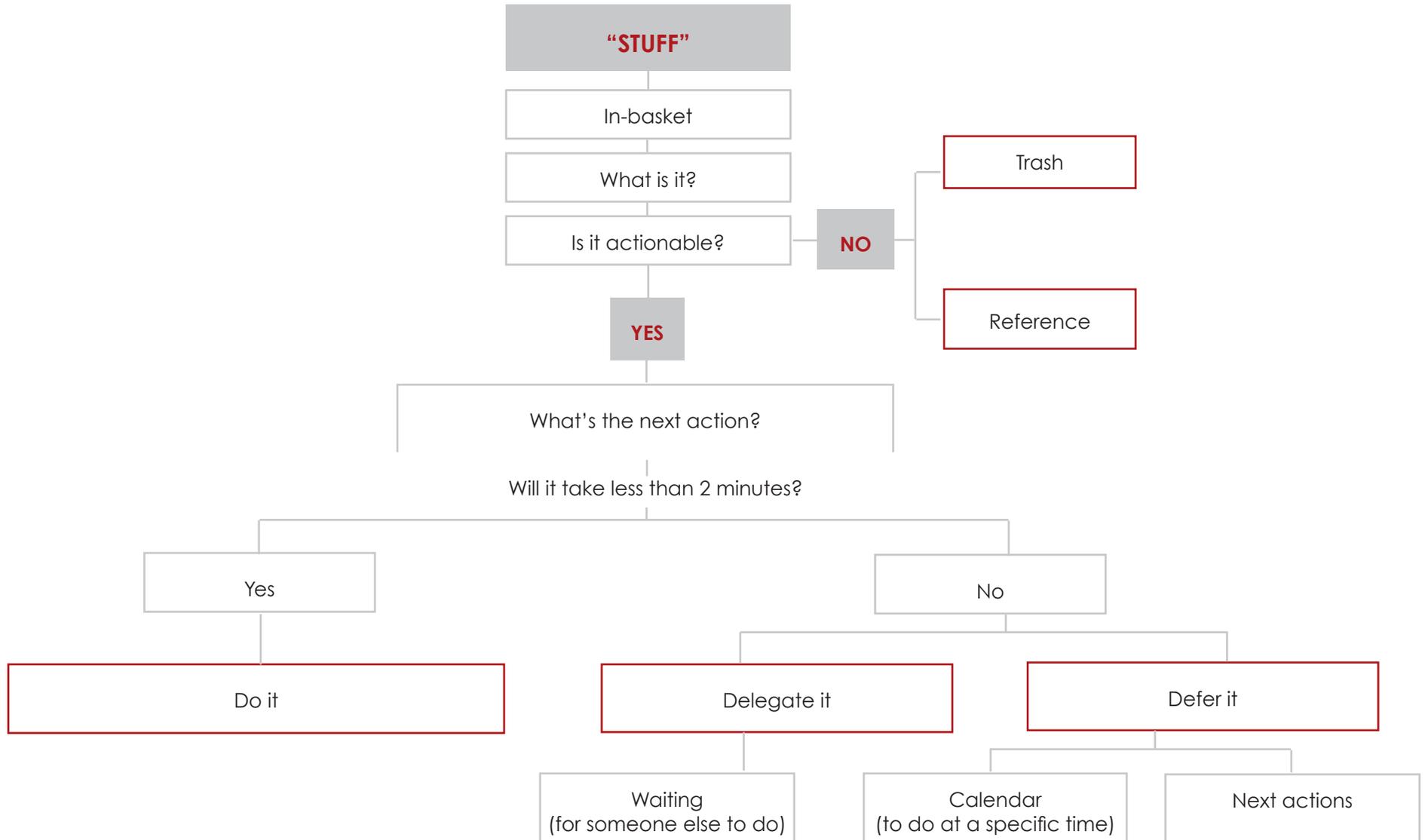
EXERCISE: Take your current to do list and work through the process.

To Do	Do	Delegate	Defer	Trash	Ref

"Some people take no mental exercise other than jumping to conclusions."

Harold Acton