



Extreme Productivity

Boost Your Results, Reduce Your Hours

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

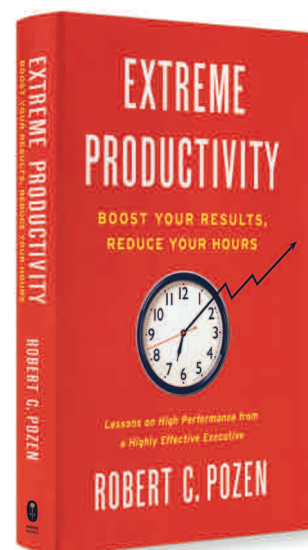
Robert C. Pozen taught a full course load at Harvard Business School while serving as the full-time chairman of a global financial services firm. He's written six books and hundreds of articles, raised a family with his wife of almost four decades, and served on many boards of local charities and public companies. Pozen is a prince of productivity, a man who has worked smarter and faster than almost everyone around him for more than 40 years.

In *Extreme Productivity*, Pozen reveals the secrets to workplace productivity and high performance. His book is for anyone feeling overwhelmed by an existing workload — facing myriad competing demands and multiple time-sensitive projects. Offering antidotes to a calendar full of boring meetings and a backlog of emails, *Extreme Productivity* explains how to determine your highest priorities and match them with how you actually spend your time.

Pozen shows that in order to be truly productive, professionals must make a critical shift in their mindset: from hours worked to results produced. He helps people at all stages of their careers read, write, and make presentations quicker and more effectively. He provides professionals with practical tips on how to efficiently use their time in the office while leading full and productive personal lives as well.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to set and prioritize your goals.
- How to improve your productivity in your daily routine.
- How to manage your subordinates and your boss.
- How to embrace change and use it to chart a satisfying career.



by Robert C. Pozen

CONTENTS

Introduction

Page 2

Part I: Three Big Ideas

Page 2

Part II: Productivity Every Day

Page 4

Part III: Developing Personal Skills

Page 5

Part IV: Managing Up and Down

Page 6

Part V: Pursuing a Productive Life

Page 7

Epilogue

Page 8

THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: EXTREME PRODUCTIVITY

by Robert C. Pozen

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Extreme Productivity: Boost Your Results, Reduce Your Hours by Robert C. Pozen. Copyright © 2012 by Robert C. Pozen. Summarized by permission of the publisher, Harper Business, an imprint of HarperCollins. 304 pages, \$27.99, ISBN 978-0-06-218853-3.

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Introduction

Success comes not just from hard work and careful planning — though those are both important. Success depends in large part on proper mindset: focusing on the results you plan to achieve, rather than the number of hours you work. The results are what matter most to your employer, clients and colleagues.

Let's begin with what I mean by "personal productivity." I mean the quantity and quality of your results in achieving your own objectives. I won't attempt to dictate what those objectives should be, only that you should clearly articulate them and their relative priority. You may be looking to climb the corporate ladder as quickly as possible or seeking a better balance between your professional and personal lives. In either case, you will benefit by getting more done in the hours you work.

What follows are specific and practical suggestions on how to increase your productivity at work. You can pick and choose whichever suggested techniques seem most helpful to you.

There are no miracle cures offered. Most of my recommendations call for rigorous thinking and disciplined behavior sustained over long time periods. ●

Part I: Three Big Ideas

Set and Prioritize Your Goals

No matter what your career aspirations are, you should begin by thinking carefully about why you are engaging in any activity and what you expect to get out

of it. Establish your highest ranking goals and determine whether your actual schedule is consistent with this ranking. This process has six steps:

1. Write everything down. On one or two sheets of paper, write down everything you are required to do in your professional life. This includes all those routine tasks in your job description. It also includes any long-term projects.

2. Organize by time horizon. Divide your list into three time categories: Career Aims (5+ years), Objectives (3–24 months) and Targets (one week or less). Make sure that each of your Objectives has one or two associated Targets.

3. Rank your Objectives. Start by thinking about what you want to do, what you're good at, and what the world needs from you. You should also consider what your boss wants and needs. Rank your own list of Objectives on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

4. Rank your Targets. Your Targets will typically fall into two categories: Enabling Targets help you accomplish your Objectives, and Assigned Targets are given to you. List your Enabling Targets and rank them based on the importance of the Objective in question and how effectively the Enabling Target furthers that particular Objective. In many cases, you should consider Assigned Targets low priority and spend as little time on them as possible.

5. Estimate how you actually spend your time. Take out your calendar and answer these questions: How many hours do you spend at work? What are the



1-800-SUMMARY
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Published by Soundview Executive Book Summaries® (ISSN 0747-2196), 500 Old Forge Lane, Suite 501, Kennett Square, PA 19348 USA, a division of Concentrated Knowledge Corp. Published monthly. Subscriptions starting at \$99 per year. Copyright © 2013 by Soundview Executive Book Summaries®.

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Summary: EXTREME PRODUCTIVITY

three main activities on which you spend the most time? How many hours do you spend on company meetings, filling out forms or reports, or responding to emails? Now go back and compare your allocations of time with your ranked list of Objectives and Targets.

6. Address the mismatch between priorities and time spent. If you're like most professionals, you will find that you are spending no more than half of your time on your highest priorities. Some professionals have not carefully thought about their Objectives and Targets. They often neglect an important goal — until it becomes a crisis, demanding their full time and effort.

At higher levels in an organization, an executive's ego often causes him or her to spend too much time on certain activities. This discrepancy between top priorities and time allocation can occur at all levels of an organization. Some solutions will require changes in your personal habits. Other solutions will require changes in your organization's procedures — or the way you deal with them.

Focus on the Final Product

Focusing on the final product is critical to efficiently completing your high-priority projects, which are often broad in scope and complex in content.

Think hard at the start of a project about where it's going: What are the critical issues and how are they likely to be resolved? After a day or so of gathering relevant information, write down your tentative conclusions for the project. Write the conclusions in the form of a rebuttable hypothesis that can be revised as the project progresses.

Start with rebuttable hypotheses to guide your research, but you should not wait until the end to evaluate them. By pausing and reflecting midway through the project, you will be able to focus the second half of your work on a better set of hypotheses.

Many professionals have trouble getting started on their highest priorities. Instead, they procrastinate by distracting themselves with more pleasant tasks. Chronic procrastinators pay a high personal price for their habit. As the deadline nears, they go into panic mode.

Break the project into smaller pieces and get going on the first steps. Clear your docket, set aside time to concentrate on the big project, and cut off access to distractions.

You can help yourself by creating evenly spaced, mini deadlines — interim dates for completing specific stages of the project. I suggest that each of these mini deadlines be tied to a personal reward for completing tasks, such as allowing yourself to eat an ice cream sundae or watch a favorite TV show.

Focus on results, not hours. Punching a time clock made sense in the industrial age, but it makes no sense for professionals. Their contribution is not the time they spend on their work but the value they create through their knowledge.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

Though attention to detail is usually considered a positive attribute, your time commitment should vary according to the importance of the project and the needs of your audience. It may take you one day to do B+ work, but the rest of the week to bump it up to an A. For your highest-ranked Objectives and Targets, it is usually worth spending that extra time and effort. But for most of your low-priority tasks, B+ is quite often "good enough."

One technique for not sweating the small stuff is to follow the principle of OHIO: "Only Handle It Once." This means tackling your low priority items immediately when you receive them, if possible. If you let a backlog develop, you will waste a lot of time and increase your anxiety level. For example, every day you receive a barrage of requests for your time and knowledge from your co-workers, family, friends and people you don't know. When you get a request, decide promptly whether you should ignore it or offer a response. Respond immediately to important requests. Don't waste time by having to re-find an email or think twice about an appointment.

Waiting — for an hour, a day or a week — to respond to a legitimate request will double or triple the time involved. In the best case, you have to reread the request and think again about the issues it raises. In the worst case, you will spend a significant amount of time trying to find the request again.

Multitasking is a good way of accomplishing low-priority tasks efficiently. It's perfectly OK to skim a report while listening to a conference call. Don't try to multitask if both activities are mentally demanding. The rapid switching between topics wastes your brain's energy. And don't multitask in front of actual or potential customers; they expect your full attention.

Avoid the tendency to micromanage. Give your subordinates significant freedom to complete projects, even if you think that could lead to a higher risk of mistakes. Learn how to deal with, or get around, bureaucratic impediments that force you to spend too much time on low-priority tasks. ●

Part II: Productivity Every Day

Your Daily Routine

How can you make sure that you are accomplishing your highest goals every day? The key is to create a daily calendar that drives home your most critical Targets.

First, your calendar must record all of your daily commitments in one place in a way that you can easily see the purpose of each appointment and the importance of each assigned task. Second, the calendar must be mobile: you must be able to carry — or have electronic access to — your calendar during the whole day so you can easily add new items or revise your existing schedule.

Gaps are crucial to the successful schedule; they give you time to make calls, write notes or even think! Many executives line up meetings and conference calls for every hour of the day. That is a big mistake — you need time to digest what has happened and develop strategies for the future.

Next to a meeting or phone call, I write down my purpose for the event — what I want to get out of it. This ensures that I'm focused on the purpose of each meeting or call while I am engaged in them.

A very important part of my daily routine involves getting enough sleep and exercise, both of which are easy to brush aside when work gets busy. But skimping on either of these key activities will seriously harm your productivity.

Traveling Lightly

Even if you have a productive daily routine when living at home, you will have a harder challenge when you travel across the country or around the world. Although improved telecommunication has somewhat reduced the need to travel, there will never be a substitute for face-to-face interaction in certain situations. Professionals should learn how to remain productive when on the road for business. The key to a productive trip lies in good advance planning. Here are some suggestions:

- Make a to-do list — one that you can use every time you travel — that includes the dozens of small tasks involved in preparing for a trip.
- Line up a driver from the airport and check out local transportation when you plan your itinerary.
- Be clear about your goals for the trip and make sure your schedule reflects those goals.
- Never check luggage on a trip lasting less than a week. Instead, take a large carry-on roll-aboard with the items you really need to bring.
- Carry a canvas bag on the airplane with tools for

sleeping (eyeshades, earplugs) and reading materials (hard copies and flashlight or computer/iPad).

- Buy a business-class ticket for overnight flights. A good night's sleep is worth the extra price.
- Drink lots of water on the airplane — roughly one quart per four hours.
- Maintain your daily routine on the road: review your calendar each night, get eight hours of sleep and exercise daily.
- Get into your destination time zone as soon as possible to mitigate jetlag. Exercise as soon as you land so that you can stay awake during the day.
- Talk to your spouse and children every day while on the road. The phone is OK, but video chatting (such as Skype) is better.

Efficient Meetings

If run correctly, meetings can be quite productive. They can help formulate and implement an organization's policy, and they can provide forums to discuss and resolve issues. Unfortunately, too many meetings lack focus and fail to achieve any meaningful purpose. And in most organizations, there are simply too many meetings and they last too long.

Before I call any meeting, I carefully think about what I want to get out of it. If I'm not satisfied with my answer, I don't go forward with the meeting.

There are two main reasons to have a meeting:

1. You should call a meeting if you need to establish a personal relationship with someone outside your organization, such as an elected official or new customer.
2. Meetings are often necessary if you want to engage people in a debate; face-to-face dialogue cannot be replaced by email or phone calls.

You should not call a meeting simply because "it has always been held." Some weeks, the meetings may be necessary — but the boss should decide every week whether the meeting is actually needed.

Many in-person meetings are unnecessary in light of recent developments in videoconferencing. It's unproductive to spend hours on air travel to meet in person when you already know the other attendees and have access to top-quality videoconferencing.

Most meetings can be completed effectively within 60 minutes, and meetings really should never run longer than 90 minutes.

Hand out materials to be read one day before the meeting so that people have a chance to actually read it.

Summary: **EXTREME PRODUCTIVITY**

After the introduction, organize vigorous debate on the key points. The most powerful executive in the room must be willing to be challenged.

At the end of the meeting, ask participants to collectively decide who should do each task and when each task should be completed. ●

Part III: Developing Personal Skills

Reading Effectively

If you want to be an effective reader, you have to know your purpose for reading and stick to it.

List all the news sources, virtual and physical, that you read regularly for reasons other than amusement. Ask yourself how you're reading each source: Are you concentrating on your goal for that publication, or does your attention wander every time you see an entertaining headline? Next to each publication, jot down an estimate of how much time you spend each week reading it. Does your allocation of time make sense, given your professional Objectives? If not, read only those sections that are relevant to your purpose or stop reading that publication altogether.

To implement the general principle of active reading, you should follow a three-step process:

1. Grasp the structure of the reading. Before you start to read a document, take a few moments to understand its structure — how it begins and ends, and how it divides the major topics in between. In books, look at the table of contents. In shorter works, glance at the headings. This will help you both read faster and understand more, because you already know how the author plans to move from one idea to the next.

2. Read the introduction and conclusion. First, read the introduction carefully, looking for the theme sentence or paragraph that will unlock the whole article or chapter. Then skip directly to the conclusion. Why? Because the conclusion tells you where the writer is going to end up. Only when you know where the writer is aiming should you read the body of the text.

3. Skim the tops of the paragraphs. Unfortunately, skimming has gotten a bad rap in the academic community. But I'm not talking about that kind of passive skimming. To actively skim the body of an article or chapter, you should read the top of each paragraph. A good writer starts each paragraph with a topic sentence, followed by supporting facts or arguments.

As you read an article or memo, constantly ask yourself what you want to remember from it. Think about your purpose for reading before and during your review of the material. Think about what you want to remember during and after you review the material.

Writing Effectively

Writing is an essential skill for knowledge-based workers. They must compose documents to inform, lead, and persuade others both inside and outside their organization. Poor writing undermines professional productivity in many ways, frustrating customers, baffling employees, and creating office tension due to miscommunication.

Think of writing as having several distinct phases, including an initial phase of mapping the terrain and the second phase of translating that map into actual prose. Formulate a rough plan for the entire piece before you put pencil to paper. If you try to write without a plan, you will face an enormous challenge.

My approach to creating an outline is completely systematic: first I brainstorm, next I categorize, and then I outline the final product.

The three key elements of any essay are the introduction, the conclusion and the body. In my view, a good introduction must fulfill three objectives: provide the reader with context, state the main theme of the author and explain the organization of the writing.

Create an executive summary for long or dense documents that describes the big picture so that readers short on time can understand the main points.

Don't use your conclusion to merely summarize the piece; provide the reader with additional insight, such as broader implications or suggestions for future actions.

Use effective language. This means short sentences, clear relationships between clauses and proper use of antecedents for pronouns. Proofread your paper for grammar and spelling mistakes. When you've finished, proofread again.

Don't try to write and revise at the same time or you'll get hung up on every sentence. Don't try to write a long piece in one sitting; write every day for an hour or two in an environment that best suits you.

Speaking Effectively

The thought of speaking in front of an audience terrifies most people. But public speaking is an important skill for most professionals. Because most professionals have not been trained in this area, they make predictable mistakes.

The key to effective speaking is preparing well before the event. Preparatory activities can be divided into three main areas:

Summary: **EXTREME PRODUCTIVITY**

1. Know your audience. Start by figuring out the three Ws of your audience — who they are, why they are attending, and what they care about. For internal meetings make sure you clearly understand the priorities of your boss and your colleagues. For an external speech, think about the “bread-and-butter” issues that will affect the livelihood of your audience.

2. Structure your speech. Write an outline of your presentation. Make sure that your line of argument is crystal clear. Divide your speech into its introduction, body and conclusion. The body of your speech should have a logical progression. One possible structure is: here’s the problem, here’s my analysis, here’s how we could solve this problem.

3. Practice your delivery. After you’ve outlined your speech, rehearse it out loud several times. There is no other way to get comfortable with your speech so you can appear confident and natural. At the same time, rehearsing will show you the weak spots in your speech. A good way to rehearse is to present your speech to someone — a colleague or friend — who is willing to provide honest and constructive comments.

Your opening sets the tone for your whole speech. Put on a bright smile and start with a funny joke or amusing story. Next, introduce your audience to your thesis and show how the speech will be organized. At that point, your challenge is to turn the audience into active listeners.

Keep your speech as short as feasible — 30 minutes is usually as long as you want to go. Allow time at the end for a Q&A session. Be prepared for what types of questions may be asked. Get feedback — a video recording is best, but a frank colleague can also be helpful. ●

Part IV: Managing Up and Down

Managing Your Team

Managers can get the most out of their employees by helping them achieve meaningful progress every day. Sadly, most managers don’t seem to be aware of this. To be an effective boss, you have to set up a system that enables both you and your employees to get meaningful work done. The heart of that system is delegation.

If you’re following my advice so far, you’re spending most of your time on Objectives and Targets that rank highest for you and your organization. But your lower-ranking goals still need to get done. Here is where delegation comes into play: it allows you to focus on your top priorities while other people complete or assist with your lower-ranking goals.

So what’s the key to effective delegation? You and your lieutenants need to embrace the principle of “Owning Your Own Space.” After setting clear goals for a project, give your employees broad discretion to decide how best to achieve these goals — and then get out of their way.

If you allow your workers to own their own spaces, they can adapt quickly to changing conditions rather than waiting for your approval. When you give your workers broad discretion to carry out projects, they feel responsible for the outcome and become much more invested in its success.

If you have the power to hire people, take advantage of it! If you select the right lieutenants, you will save thousands of hours through effective delegation. Here are lessons for the recruitment process:

- Ask candidates to talk about their personal history, starting with where they went to high school.
- Ask candidates how they made the biggest contribution in their prior jobs.
- Engage candidates in intellectual debate about a subject of their choosing that they know well.
- Try to gauge the creativity of the candidate by asking a question such as “What are all the possible uses of a brick for our business?”
- Choose the candidate with the most potential, not the person with the most experience in the industry.
- Make the reference calls yourself and press hard for honest evaluations, rather than the usual platitudes.

After recruitment, carefully build trust between you and your employees. Have integrity, be courteous, and communicate openly and frankly. Provide employees with support and resources to complete tasks that they have been assigned. Be their advocate elsewhere in the organization.

At the start of a delegated project, agree with your team on objective and subjective metrics for each project goal. Choosing the right metrics will often force you to have a deeper discussion with your team about what you really consider important. Make sure that you carefully design each metric to accurately capture the project’s goals.

During the course of the project, discuss its status with your team and revise the project’s goals and metrics if needed. But let your employees decide how to implement those revised goals and metrics. Tolerate and celebrate well-intentioned mistakes, but don’t condone repeated errors or ethical lapses. If you need to criticize

Summary: EXTREME PRODUCTIVITY

your employees, do so in private. Address their specific behaviors; don't attack their personalities.

Be effusive with praise of your subordinates. It's very hard to give them too much positive feedback.

Managing Your Boss

Just as your productivity depends on how you manage your team, it depends at least as much on how you deal with your boss by "managing up." That does not mean manipulating your boss or apple-polishing; it means establishing a mutually beneficial partnership.

Start by getting on the same page with your boss: give him or her a list of your assignments, ranked in order of importance from your perspective. Your boss can then amend the list if there are any misunderstandings.

Whatever the management style of your boss, he or she will become your biggest fan if you consistently deliver high-quality projects on time and within budget. When you do good work, your boss will be more receptive to your ideas and give you more discretion to run your own show. You should also be a team player. Willingly perform whatever tasks need to be done for your boss, even if they involve grunt work.

When you succeed, make sure your boss knows it, especially before performance reviews or bonus decisions. On the other hand, your boss will turn against you if you do not produce results as expected. If a project looks as though it may fail, make sure to give your boss plenty of advance warning. Bosses don't want to be surprised by long delays or major blowups. When you warn your boss of a serious problem, you should simultaneously offer possible ways to mitigate its negative effects. You should also accept responsibility for a problem that has arisen under your watch.

For conflicts that do arise, if the stakes are modest or your chances of prevailing are low, grit your teeth and go along with your boss's position. When you do decide to stand your ground, you have to do it in a problem-solving way. Do your research and keep the tone collaborative. These strategies are even more important if you and your boss have repeated clashes rather than a one-time disagreement. ●

Part V: Pursuing a Productive Life

Maximizing Your Career Options Over a Lifetime

You don't control the trajectory of your career. There are just too many factors beyond your control that will shape your job opportunities — such as global economic

trends, political elections, industry regulation and company finances.

On the other hand, you can increase your probability of success by approaching your career with the right mindset. Career planning is not a one-time event; it's a continual process that has to be actively managed over a lifetime. At each step, ask yourself: what can I do next that will maximize my options in the future?

To start, establish some tentative Career Aims by critically evaluating your supply and the world's demand:

1. Your Supply: Think about your own interests and the skills that you can offer to employers. What topics do you find most enjoyable and interesting? Are you more adept at reading and writing or playing around with numbers? Consider not only your formal credentials but also your intangible personal skills, such as the ability to think on your feet or empathize with the less fortunate. To get a good understanding of the skills and interests that you need for particular jobs, talk to people already in these jobs.

2. The World's Demand: Evaluate whether there is sufficient market demand for your desired career. Even if there are some jobs for your desired profession, there may be too much supply relative to the demand. Don't just look at market demand by taking a snapshot in time; find out where the industry is going. Is it expanding or contracting?

After creating some tentative Career Aims, ask yourself how you can move your career in the right direction. You should pursue a combination of formal classroom education and informal learning on the job. Seek knowledge and skills — such as leadership skills, experiences in foreign countries, and stints at different types of organizations — that would be transferable to many types of jobs in the future.

Embrace Change but Stay the Same

To make productive choices in the working world, you need to learn how to embrace change at each step and take advantage of the opportunities change presents. At the same time, certain aspects of the working world have remained the same over the years. These include the fundamentals of profit and loss and the ethical values of honesty and integrity.

Despite the inherent preference for stability, change at work occurs frequently at several levels. People change jobs more often than ever. Leadership and strategy change constantly. Over a longer time horizon, your organization's standing will not remain the same. At the global economic level, your career prospects are likely to

Summary: EXTREME PRODUCTIVITY

be adversely affected — and perhaps derailed — by short-term crises.

When you start thinking about your next career step, pay close attention to long-term trends. You can gear your career choices toward products or sectors that are attractive to the largest demographic group. You also need to stay on top of technological trends. Interdisciplinary fields can offer great potential for breakthrough changes.

Whatever path you take in developing your career, abide by these precepts:

- **Economic fundamentals.** A company must generate profits as well as revenues to remain a viable business, and stock prices ultimately reflect the company's expected stream of future profits. To be successful, your firm will have to deliver economic value over time, as reflected by a steady stream of profits rather than just a growing volume of revenues.

- **Your personal integrity.** Personal integrity includes not only complying with applicable laws, but also following your own ethical code on standards of business conduct. My code includes honest communications to all stakeholders, fair treatment of employees, and no misuse of corporate information. Identify three or four main principles that will guide your personal behavior over your professional career and write them down.

Balancing Home and Work

What's the point of getting more done in less time? In my view, the point is not just to build a more rewarding career, but to enjoy a more rewarding life. The more efficient you are at work, the more time you'll have for your family, your friends and other aspects of life that you care about.

Imagine that suddenly you had five extra hours to spend each week. Suppose you would spend most of that extra five hours per week with your children. That means that extra time with your children is more valuable to you than extra time at work. Or suppose you would spend most of the extra time on yourself. That choice implies that you feel you have given up too much of your personal life to tend to your job and your children.

To shift the balance from work to personal activities, there are two areas you should focus on:

- **Find a flexible employer — or try to create one where you are.** Almost 80 percent of employers permit some workers to periodically change their starting and quitting times within specified ranges. In partic-

ular, many high-tech companies and customer service firms allow employees to work from home. Investigate your employer's policies on paid leave and flex time before you accept a job.

- **Change the way you work.** Go home for dinner. Although you may occasionally have to work late at night if there is a real emergency, there cannot be one every day. Protect your family time. You will have to be assertive and learn to say no. You may be anxious about setting limits with your boss. But remember: if you have shown that you are productive and trustworthy, your boss knows that you will get your work done with a more flexible schedule.

When you finally arrive home, concentrate your full attention on your family. This is not a place for multitasking. Avoid interruptions from work such as phone calls and emails. When you're with your family, avoid all but the most critical interruptions from work. Most issues from work can wait until tomorrow morning. ●

Epilogue

Professionals at all levels should focus on results produced rather than hours worked. It's the best way, in my opinion, for you to get more done at work while enjoying more time with your friends and family. However, I've also been impressed by how much your approach to productivity should depend on your own specific situation. You should carefully consider your own stage in life and your organization's culture as you apply the lessons offered here.

Remember that you have control over your own mindset and behaviors on productivity. Write down your goals, divided into time periods and ranked in order of priority. Then you'll be in a good position to spend the most time on your highest goals and minimize the time you devote to less significant matters.

Regardless of your employer's culture, you can adopt most of the specific techniques in this book. Ultimately, it is within your power to boost your results and reduce your working hours. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Extreme Productivity*, you'll also like:

1. **Full Engagement!** by Brian Tracy. Managers will learn how to inspire peak performance and trigger the "X Factor" that maximizes productivity.
2. **You Already Know How to Be Great** by Alan Fine and Rebecca R. Merrill. Well-known performance coach Alan Fine reveals his simple and proven approach to achieving breakthrough performance.
3. **The Power of Professionalism** by Bill Wiersma. Wiersma outlines the seven key mindsets that drive performance and build trust.