

SPI 012: Mind Hacks, Physical Hacks and Work Hacks For Better Productivity and Getting Things Done

Today's session is all about getting things done, or in other words, how to be productive.

A lot of people have been asking me lately how I get so much stuff done. As many of you know I have my foot in many different income pools, like niche sites, affiliate marketing, blogs, iphone apps, revenue sharing article sites, and I also write content on my blog, produce videos for youtube and of course audio for these podcasts. I'm also on Twitter, Facebook and sometimes featured on other blogs and podcasts and interviews and comments and in forums. People tell me I'm lying when I say I typically work an average of 4 hours a day, but that's really how much time I have.

Before my son was born, I was working a lot more, but at the same time I feel like I was getting a lot less done. I think now that my son is born and my schedule is pretty much determined by him, I've learned to maximize my time, get rid of the distractions and really focus on work that will produce an outcome.

I could ramble about this kind of stuff for hours but I want to try and structure this session so it's a little more organized and, you know, in case you're taking notes or something it'll be much easier to follow and take action.

So, I want to break this session into three parts:

- 1) Mental Hacks - mindset type stuff
- 2) Physical Hacks - stuff you can do to your body which will help you become more productive
- 3) Work Hacks - actual work related things you can do to help you become more productive, which will include a lot of tools and resources that I use to stay on course (many specifically for online business and blogging), and it'll sort of tie everything together.

I'll start by talking about our mentality which I believe is the most important factor in staying productive, working smart and reaching our goals, but a lot of what I'll be talking about might cross over between physical and work hacks too, so just bear with me, I've got a lot of great tips to share.

And, as a disclaimer, these are tips and tricks that have helped me, stuff that I've figured out on my own and stuff that I've learned from other sources (and I'll do my best to give credit where credit is due) that I've learned what works best for me. So, some of these things may or may not work for you, because we're all different people and all have different styles of learning, of feeling motivated and getting things done, so really it comes down to you and you consciously keeping track of how productive you are and experimenting to see what kinds of things work best for you. Hopefully I can just give you a few things here in this session that you can use as motivation or a starting point to finding, again, what works best for you.

So, let's get right into it.

MENTAL HACKS

The main point I want to get across when it comes to productivity is this:

There's a huge difference between working ON something, and working TOWARDS something.

A lot of times we end up working for works sake, meaning we do things that keep us busy, and make us feel like we're getting somewhere, but in reality that work that we're doing isn't the kind of work that is actually going to get us anywhere.

Here's a quote to remember:

Do something that matters.

This quote can be interpreted in a lot of ways - from the actual goals that I have with internet business and blogging (meaning it's for something good and something that will benefit others), and exactly what I work on, which is stuff that drives results. I actually have this written down and posted on my corkboard right in front of me so I can see it every day.

Do something that matters.

This leads right into my next point, which is knowing what your goals are in the first place. You **MUST** set goals. If you don't know your goals, **WHAT** is it then, that you are working towards.

To use this analogy, you're driving to an unknown destination. You're using up gas, putting wear and tear on your car...for what?

When it comes to goals, I like to use this acronym to describe how goals should be, which I'm sure many of you have heard before.

Your goals must be S.M.A.R.T:

- **S = Specific**
- **M = Measurable**
- **A = Attainable**
- **R = Relavant**
- **T = Timely**

I think SMART goal setting comes from the project management industry, and other pnemonics like DUMB - D.U.M.B. are used as well, which stand for doable, understandable, manageable & beneficial. Same type of thing.

So you can be SMART, or DUMB.

Ok - haha, joking aside, let's go through each of these SMART GOALS really quickly:

1. Specific - Now tell me ask you if this goal is specific enough:

I want to be a millionaire when I'm older.

No way. Not specific.

Here's a better example: I want to be a millionaire when I'm 30. That's better, but a completely specific goal would be: I want to have 2.5 million dollars in the bank by December 15th, 2013.

Specific goals lead to specific actions, which if understood will help you get the right things done and stop wasting time.

2. Measurable - Your goals should absolutely be measurable. Again, this helps keep things specific and it helps us keep track of our progress.

Say your goal is to build a popular blog. You can't really measure popularity because popularity is subjective. If I ask 100 people what makes a popular blog, I'm going to get 100 different answers:

Certain quantities of RSS Subscribers, or maybe it's the amount of traffic or people subscribed to an email list, or even the number of comments on each post.

How can you track your progress unless you put some measurable units into your goal? You can't. And, how will you know you've even reached your goal?

Craziness. Put some numbers into each of your goals, and when numbers aren't always used, put a date, because you can measure time too.

3. Attainable - It's great to dream high and go big - I always recommend going big, but your goals should of course be attainable.

In 2009 I wrote a post about my goals for 2010, and one of those goals was to have at least 10,000 Subscribers for my blog by December 31st, 2010. This was a very high goal for me, especially considering I only had about 2,000-3,000 subscribers at the time, but it was attainable, and in fact I reached my goal in September and have since changed that number to 15,000, which I'm very close to right now (I think I'm at 14,630 something).

If I had set an unrealistic, unattainable goal of 100,000 subscribers by new years, I would have totally been let down. Setting a goal like that can actually backfire on you and deflate your

motivation and productivity, so again make sure you set attainable goals.

4. Relevant - Why create goals for yourself that don't align with what you're trying to achieve or where you want to be in life.

A good example of this is if I were to set a goal to own a Fortune 500 company. That's a goal I'm sure a lot of people have and strive for, but that doesn't fit who I am or where I want to be.

5. Timely - All goals that we have should have some kind of a deadline. Time-sensitive goals are goals that get done and push us to do even more.

I've talked about setting deadlines as a productivity hack many times on the blog, and it works every single time. Plus, if you have 10 days to reach your goal, by day 5 you can see how you're progressing and you can adjust accordingly. If you don't know when something is supposed to be completed by or obtained, then you won't have any idea how you're progressing and if you're on the right track or not.

So, as a reminder - create SMART goals, it helps me big-time with overall productivity. Set a goal or think about one that you have already, and consciously go through the S.M.A.R.T. criteria to make it work.

Another important part of the mindset of productivity, which I, and I know I and many of you out there have trouble with, especially with the entrepreneurial mindset to go along with it, is staying focused on one thing at a time.

A typical entrepreneur has 100s, even 1000s of ideas floating through the brain simultaneously, and sparks of wonder, hope, dreams and action come with each of those ideas. This is good - ideas are fantastic and I always tell myself to write down every single idea (or put it in my iPhone) because they can be easily forgotten and you never know one of those ideas could be your next big win.

Also, because of social media and technology and all of the latest and greatest things that are said to help us with our businesses, it's really easy to get sucked into those things, get pulled back and forth between this and that and never get any real work done.

The trick to staying productive and actually getting things done (and completing them) is to simply focus on one project or task at a time. This sounds simple, but it's not. Trust me.

Now you might think that I'm a complete liar here because, like I said earlier, I have my hand in many different projects, but in truth I'm actually only focused on one project at a time, and I have specific times where I work on specific things that do require upkeep, like my blog posts and this podcast.

The reason it "seems" like I'm doing so much, when I'm really not, is because of the power

of passive income, and what this whole podcast and my blog is about, which is creating businesses or income streams that, once setup, can be run on auto-pilot and work for you, instead of the other way around.

For instance, let's take niche sites for an example. It takes a little bit of time to do the proper keyword research, setup a website, create some initial content and build backlinks, but after that time (which for my niche site *duel / security guard training* website was about 60 hours of total work, 1 hour a day for about 2 months, before I ranked #1 in Google and began seeing an income from it), I hardly do any work on it now and can do something like create a new iPhone app. So while I'm creating my iPhone app, my niche site is sitting there #1 in Google and earning an income (and I do go back to it from time to time, maybe 2 hours a week to check stats, test ad placements or affiliate offers or add content), and when I get to the point where I've completed designing my iPhone application and handed it over to my developer, I have about 2 weeks time before I get my first test version where I can do something else, like create another niche site, or work on an eBook or plan my next big thing.

So, I am essentially working on multiple projects at the same time, but in a way that allows me to continue to focus on each one at a time until I get to a stopping point. If I'm working on a project, I make sure I go all the way through it until it gets to that particular stopping point.

Now this may sound a little confusing and like its all jumbled up because there's so much going on, but I'll share with you in the Work Hack segment exactly how I keep track of all this and what you can do for each of the projects you're working on to make sure you're getting things done and staying productive.

There are three more quick things I want to talk about when it comes to the mindset, which again like I said is hugely important for productivity, and all three of these things have to do with *motivation*.

Motivation is the key to staying productive, because let's face it, when we have a brand new idea the juices are flowing and things are going well, but the buzz dies down and we often get to a point where we feel like we may not be on the right track anymore, or we're just bored, and it's at THIS point where many ideas, sometimes great ideas, die. Motivation will help us get through those tough parts and keep us going.

One major factor when it comes to motivation is support. If you're working alone and don't have the support of anyone, your family, friends or online acquaintances, it's going to be tough to stay motivated. I was very very fortunate to have a caring and understanding fiancée (now my wife), who at the time of my layoff was supportive of my decision to do business online. I guarantee that if she told me I was making the wrong decision, that thought would have been running through my mind the entire time I was setting up my businesses and monetizing my blog at *greenexamacademy*, and I probably would never have finished that eBook, which if you remember helped me earn over \$200,000 last year.

Support is huge, and you're not always going to get it, but find somewhere that you can. Mastermind groups are fantastic for this.

Another major motivation factor is accountability. For me, when I know that others know what I'm trying to accomplish, it totally pushes me to keep going and succeed. To be honest, this is partly the reason why I share so much on my blog, because you guys hold me accountable. When I started the P90X program, for example, I announced it on my blog and everyday I thought about how bad it would be if I just gave up and didn't go through with it. Of course, as many of you know I completed the program and had some major results, so thanks to you for that. I'll link to the post in the shownotes on the blog in case you're seeing some before and after pictures.

The same goes for the niche site duel. Because everyone was watching me create a niche site from scratch, I really wanted to crush it and it was you guys holding me accountable that kept me going, and like I said before the site is doing extremely well now at the top of Google.

The last part having to deal with motivation is rewarding yourself, even for the tiniest of wins.

This is why it's so important to setup your goal as SMART - specifically the "S and M" part of it - specific and measurable, because what you can do is break up your big goal into smaller goals that you can reach over time, and it feels really good to see that progress and reach those mini-goals as you work towards your big goal. It's huge for motivation.

So for example, If I wanted to gain 12,000 email subscribers next year, I could break that down to obtaining only 1000 email subscribers per month. Every month I reach 1000 new subscribers, it would be really motivating and help me keep going and climb that number even higher.

If your goal is to complete an eBook, you can break the entire book down into chapters and make each chapter a separate goal. After you complete each, you'll be that much more motivated to complete more as your book starts to complete itself over time.

Next, we're going to be talking about Physical Hacks - actual stuff you can do to your body (or with your body) to become more productive.

- Eat a better breakfast
- Get more sleep
- Take a power nap - 15 to 20 minute naps if you're feeling tired
- Take short walks throughout the day
- Drink lots of water
- Stay physically fit / work out
- Stay away from too much sugars
- If you need a sudden burst of energy, Coffee always works for me, and also 5-hour energy drink. I don't recommend any of the large energy drinks like redbull or monster - because you get some energy, but then you crash, and definitely don't drink that 4-

locl stuff. If you haven't heard of 4-loco, it's a terrible mixture of alcohol and caffeine that supposedly does some really bad things to your body.

- Get regular checkups - if you're sick and unhealthy, then you really can't enjoy everything you're working for
- Smile - seriously. Just smile every once and a while, take a breath and enjoy what you're doing and you'll get so much more done.
- Spend some time with your kids, if you have them. This has been huge for me, because I get a little workout and I get to remember exactly why I'm working in the first place.
- Experiment - here's a fun fact: I've found out that I speak better behind the microphone when I wear socks. Not shoes, not bare feet, but comfortable socks. I have no idea why, but this just works really well and I'm able to record my podcasts more cleanly, do interviews a lot smoother - it just works. I know, it sounds weird, but it's true. Yes, I'm wearing socks right now, and black ones actually.

In this last segment of this podcast, we're going to talk about Work Hacks - actual work related things you can do to help you become more productive, which will include a lot of tools and resources that I use to stay on track.

I had mentioned a folder system earlier that I use to keep track of all of the different projects that I work on, and this is how it works.

For every project that I work on, I have a separate folder, this is a physical folder that you can touch with your hands. You could do this on the computer or on the cloud, but having the ability to touch this stuff just really helps me.

That folder will have a piece of paper inside that lists all of the steps in order, from start to finish, in order to complete the entire project, with little checkmarks on each.

A procedure list.

These are for different things like iPhone apps, niche sites, etc. Things that can be created, completed and eventually work for me to generate an income on autopilot. Writing blog posts for the blog or creating podcasts like this won't work with this folder system.

A very crude example might look like this (this is just a made up example, but you'll get the idea):

(go to <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/iphonefolder>)

iPhone application:

- Mindmap the idea (*I use mindmeister*)
- Wireframe / storyboard the application
- Create graphics for the application
 - Logo (57x57 & 512x512)
 - Splash Screen
 - Buttons
 - Other Graphics
- Write screen to screen description of the application for the developer

-Send to developer

Stopping Point

-Receive first version

-Test on iPhone

-Reply with remarks and clarifications

Stopping Point

-Receive second version

-Test on iPhone

-If needed, reply with remarks and clarifications. If okay...

-Write Description for iTunes

-Submit application to itunes

Stopping Point

-Receive approval notice from iTunes

-Change launch date to tomorrow's date

-Create ads for application in Admob

-Tweet and Facebook About the Application

Stopping Point

Each stopping point is a point where I am either waiting for something else to happen before I can proceed, or I'm finished with the project. This is when I can utilize the time I have while waiting for other projects.

When I'm working between stopping points, I don't work on any other projects until I reach a stopping point. So for example, if I receive a first version of the application from the developer, I only focus on this project, continuing to go through the steps until I reach another stopping point. This keeps me focused, and makes sure things really get done. While I'm at a stopping point, things are still getting done, just not by me.

Like I said, eBooks, niche sites, SETTING UP a blog - many other types of passive income businesses can be done using this folder system, and guess what, because it's a procedure list, if you get really detailed with it and actually include the "how tos" for each of the steps, you could hand the whole thing off to a virtual assistant and it would all get done for you.

It's something that I created which is probably a combination of other productivity strategies and methods, but it totally works for me and is how I get so much done at the same time. I currently have two folders for different wordpress plugins, a few niche sites, iPhone apps and another project which I'll talk about in a second - and I know that each of those folders is a potential income stream, which is totally motivating.

Things will overlap - so you will have to decide and prioritize various projects and decide which to work on first, but again the main point and I think the benefit of using a system like this is seeing the steps that you have to take next, seeing how far along you are in the process, and also making sure you work only in one folder at a time until you reach a stopping point.

If you're going through a project for the first time, how do create a checklist like this, especially if you don't know what you're doing. Well, the list kind of evolves as you do this more and more - the iPhone app list has definitely changed for me since the beginning now that I know how the process works, but if you're going through the process for the first time, do your best to create the list by doing research, following the footsteps of others - things like that. You should know what you want the end result to be, so work

backwards and fill in the gaps to get your folder checklist created. Once you have it done, when you rinse and repeat, it'll be much easier the second time around.

At the top of this iPhone application folder list, you'll see something called "mindmap the idea", which is what I want to talk about next.

Mind mapping is a way to see your ideas in a bubble diagram format that allows you to easily organize your ideas and create a hierarchy so you can have a sort of self-guided brainstorming session, as well as make things easier for you when you turn your idea into *something* more than just an idea. Mindmapping is something you can do to create your folder checklist if you haven't done so already.

I use a mindmapping software called MindMeister, which you can test drive for free through my affiliate link at <http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/mindmaps> (plural), and I literally use this tool almost every single week, especially when I come up with new ideas and I want to take those ideas and turn them into a product.

A mindmap will start with a central idea, with new ideas branching off of the central idea, and related ideas branching off of those - and what's nice, like I said, is that your ideas become a visual aid in your productivity process.

So for example, if I wanted to create an eBook about fly fishing, I would start with that central idea of fly fishing, and branch off of that. I could branch off and create a second tier idea such as fly fishing gear. Another 2nd tier topic might be fly fishing strategies, or maybe fly fishing locations. From those, I could branch off even further, so from fly fishing gear I could create a third tier topic for fly fishing rods, fly fishing reels, fly fishing lures. I could go into a 4th tier from fly fishing rods and talk about flexible rods and stiff rods, or maybe even freshwater or saltwater rods - it goes on and on, and at the end of the whole thing after brainstorming, reordering and creating this sort of hierarchy, I'd have a tree that IS my eBook, and what nice is that from here it's really easy to see your eventual outline for your book, or your table of contents. Then bam, there you go, you have your chapters already laid out for you, you can plug them into a folder checklist like I do and knock them off one by one, maybe creating some stopping points between certain sections so you can work on other projects, and then you've got yourself an eBook.

So that's an example of how you can use mindmapping to help streamline the product creation process.

Now, I just came across a cool tool that I've been using lately that has really helped me remember things. As I said before I like to keep track of all of my ideas and things I should be doing, even if it's not related to online business or blogging, and the tool I use is called Evernote. If you haven't heard it before, it's a cloud based sort of note taking system, cloud based meaning the information you provide is stored on the web, and what's nice about this is that I can have access to it, change it, update it and delete things from any computer in the world, and even through a mobile phone - so if I'm on the go and some idea pops in my head, like a blog post idea or an idea for a new product, I can simply take out my phone, open up the evernote application and type in a note and it uploads onto the cloud and when I get home it's there to remind me on my computer. I can also take pictures with my phone and upload them along with note, or take voice recorded notes too. Very helpful, it's a great way to kind of expand your brain allow yourself to be a little forgetful at times without worrying about it, so check it out if you haven't already.

There are two last concepts I want to talk about when it comes to doing business online and staying productive, and those concepts are eliminating distractions, and consolidation.

Glen from Viperchill.com writes a lot about “minimalist internet marketing” that I definitely recommend you take a look at, which I’ll link to in the show notes on the blog - remember this is session #12 - but here are a few things you can do to eliminate your distractions:

- Turn off that which does not help you with what you should be focusing on. If you’re in your folder checklist and performing a certain task, turn off all of the distractions - especially twitter, facebook and email. Seriously, that @ reply can wait until you’re finished, nothing you check on facebook will dramatically effect what you’re trying to accomplish at the moment, and your email, just turn it off. You know you check it way too often. There’s actually a tool for Mac you can use called “Self Control” where you can choose to literally disable websites of your choice, and there’s really no way you can have access to them until the time you set it up - even if you close the application and restart your computer. For things like Twitter and Facebook, I have 2 30 minute blocks each day where it’s okay for me to use them.
- Having a to-do list like the folder checklist will help, because it’ll keep you focused on the tasks that you need to perform, and you’ll have to train yourself that there are no exceptions, you must reach a stopping point before you can do anything else.

There are a lot of other ways to eliminate distractions, but these are the two tactics that have helped me the best. A clean desktop will go a long way too.

For consolidation, it’s all about shortening the length of time it takes to do something that would usually take a lot longer. One cool tool that I’ve been experimenting with is Postling. Postling is a free service that consolidates and manages all of your social media streams, so you can see your facebook, twitter, facebook fan page, and even blog comments all in one spot. You can even reply and share from your postling page as well.

I also like to use a tool called NetVibes that Glen Allsop introduced to me, which you can use as a hub to do a number of different things. Too many to list here actually, but on my netvibes.com page I have the ability to read all of the rss feeds from the blogs that I’m subscribed to, watch the twitter streams from people I follow, see exactly where on the web people mention my name or my brand - I could even setup a stock ticker here since I do own a few stocks - there are a lot of options available and it’s drag and drop easy to organize it all so definitely check that out if you’re interested. As Glen puts it, it’s a great free service that you can use to create your “Brand Hub”.

And to finish up, sort of related to all of the things we talked about so far, the biggest distraction really for many people is worrying about what other people are doing. It’s great to read other people’s blogs and be inspired by other people’s success stories, but in order for YOU to find success, you can’t worry too much about that stuff. Don’t compare yourself to others (there’s really NO good that can come out of that), just worry about your business, improving your own business and use other people’s stories and examples as fuel for your own success.

So that’s it, session #12 is in the history books. I hope you’ve enjoyed some of those tips and tricks that I use and hopefully you’ll find yourself getting much more done in 2011.

Before I let you go, I want to tell you about something I’m really excited about, and it’s about the niche site duel between Tyrone and I. As you know, we hit the number one spot in Google for our keywords and we’re actually getting into other niches and finding success with those too. I just created a second niche site and in a month and a half I’m on the first page of Google and am making a few dollars each week already, which is great.

Anyways, a lot of people have started their own niche sites and many people have been interested in getting some 1 on 1 coaching from either me or Tyrone to create their own niche sites. We sat down and talked about this for a bit, and we decided to open up a small coaching program to teach those who are interested in building a niche site.

We're really excited about this because it's not just a simple membership website or eBook or anything like that, we're actually going to be working closely with students for 8 to 10 weeks, meeting once a week in a webinar style classroom type format where we'll teach you something and you'll almost have like, homework to hold you accountable through the process.

For more information about this unique opportunity, please check out <http://www.nichesitecoaching.com>.