

# 5 Strategies for Getting More Work Done in Less Time

**Elizabeth Grace Saunders**

You've got more to do than could possibly get done with your current work style. You've [prioritized](#). You've [planned](#). You've [delegated](#). You've [tried to focus](#). The next frontier is increasing your efficiency so that you can spend less time and still do a good job.

Exactly which strategies will work best for you will vary person-by-person and situation-by-situation. But as a time management coach working with people who need to get more done in less time, I've found that employing even one of these five strategies can save you hours each week.

## **Clarify Actual Expectations**

When you take on a significant task, talk with any key stakeholders about what they expect from you. Perhaps they need a PowerPoint deck, or perhaps they don't. Perhaps they need an A+ job or maybe a B+ will be fine. Perhaps they need a comprehensive plan or maybe just an initial sketch will work.

One of my time coaching clients who works in the finance industry saved days of work when he got clear on the fact that in some instances, all that was needed was enough information to come to a go or no-go decision. Not all situations regarded a thorough in-depth analysis.

By clarifying what's actually needed and to what level, you can save hours of time deciding what to do and getting tasks done.

## **Re-Use Previous Material**

Your ability to reduce time by reusing and recycling work will vary depending on your particular responsibilities. But where you can, copy, paste, and edit. That could happen with emails, presentations, trainings, proposals, and almost any other type of activity where you're communicating something very similar.

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## **YOU AND YOUR TEAM SERIES**

### **Getting More Work Done**

This strategy has proven most helpful for my coaching clients who give presentations or who teach. When you're pressed for time, fight the urge to entirely update or overhaul materials, and use something you already have to save hours and deliver the best content. Top speakers tend to give the same speech again and again because practice makes perfect.

### **Develop Templates and Checklists**

To speed up your process on routine items, come up with a template or checklist or find ones you can use. For example, I have a template email that I fill in every year to send to my accountant with my year-end tax information. And on a monthly basis, I go through a monthly finances checklist.

You might want templates for activities like putting together weekly reports, presentations, or meeting agendas. Also, you may find checklists valuable for weekly planning, one-on-one meetings, or other repeated activities. Both templates and checklists allow you to do a good job in less time because you don't need to spend any time remembering what to do or deciding on the next step.

You can keep these templates and checklists in a more sophisticated system, but I find that often simply having them recorded in a Word document is sufficient.

### **Make It a Conversation**

Depending on what you need to accomplish, you can potentially save time by sharing what you've done verbally. For example, maybe your manager asks you to research a particular topic. Instead of writing up a formal presentation, it may accomplish your purposes in less time to take notes and then talk through your findings during a one-on-one meeting.

This strategy can also work well if you need to communicate about more abstract concepts, like design. One of my coaching clients found it much faster to communicate with an architect through talking about or drawing up her thoughts instead of trying to write them down.

### **Time Box Your Work**

Finally, a strategy for still doing a good job in less time is [deciding in advance how much time you will spend on a particular task](#) or part of a task, and then sticking to it. For example, if you tend to over-invest in the research stage, you may want to tell yourself that you have to stop after one to two hours. Or if you struggle with coming up with an initial draft, then you may pre-decide how much time you would like to invest in getting something typed out.

Time boxing doesn't guarantee that you'll finish the work in the allotted time. However, it can definitely help with focus. And deciding in advance on the time investment helps Parkinson's Law, that work expands to fill the time allotted for it, to work to your advantage.

We all have our limits so I can't promise that everything will get done by using the above strategies. But when you do employ these techniques, you can get more done in less time.

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