

18 MINUTES

Find Your Focus, Master Distraction, and Get the Right Things Done

PETER BREGMAN

PETER BREGMAN is a strategic advisor to CEOs and their leadership teams. He began his career as a teacher on wilderness and mountaineering with Outward Bound and then moved into the business consulting field. He founded his own management consulting firm in 1998. Mr. Bregman has advised CEO and senior leaders in many organizations including American Express, Deutsche Bank, JP Morgan Chase, GE Capital, Merck, Clear Channel, Nike and UNICEF. He is a regular contributor to *Harvard Business Review*, *Fast Company* and *Forbes* as well as the author of *Point B: A Short Guide to Leading a Big Change*. He is a graduate of Princeton and Columbia universities.

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ISBN 978-1-77544-708-5

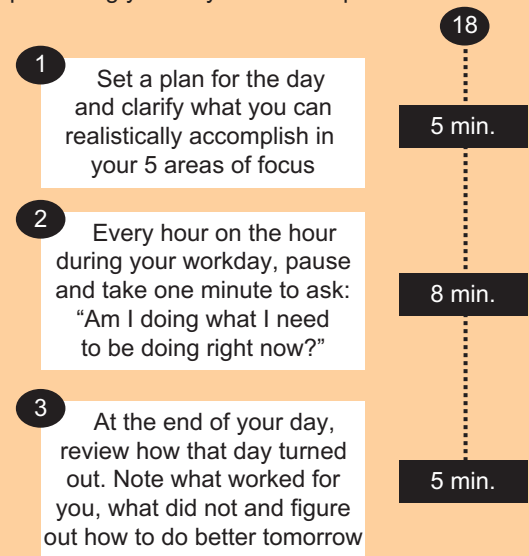
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MAIN IDEA

"Yesterday started with the best of intentions. I walked into my office in the morning with a vague sense of what I wanted to accomplish. Then I sat down, turned on my computer, and checked my e-mail. Two hours later, after fighting several fires, solving other people's problems, and dealing with whatever happened to be thrown at me through my computer and phone, I could hardly remember what I had set out to accomplish when I first turned on my computer. I'd been ambushed. And I know better."

— Peter Bregman

Time management doesn't need to be complex to work. Instead of trying to figure out how to cram more into your day, its better if you really focus on doing what's most important to you. A workable process for doing that is to spend 18 minutes daily prioritizing your day in three steps:



If you'll get into the habit of spending 18 minutes a day aligning your plans for the day with your priorities, refocusing every hour and then reviewing how you spent your time, you will steadily learn how to be more and more productive over the course of your career.

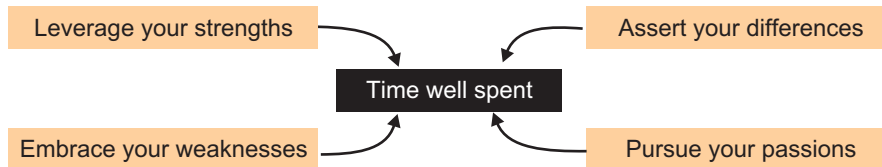
How to Reclaim Your Life in 18 Minutes a Day

1. PAUSE – Hover above your world and get a big picture view Pages 2 - 3

The first step in getting more done is to get a birds-eye view of the things that matter most. You have to take the time to figure out what you're good at, what you enjoy the most and what will bring the best results into your life. Until you specify what outcome you're trying to achieve, all the activity in the world won't help. Figure out what matters to you.

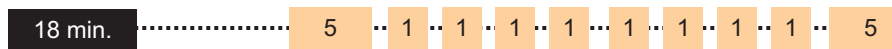
2. ASK: WHAT IS THIS YEAR ABOUT? – Find your focus Pages 3 - 4

Once you know what your life is all about, plan where you want to spend your time over the next year in order to reflect your full potential. Come up with an annual focus which can serve as the basis for all your daily plans. For you, the next year will be well spent if you:



3. ASK: WHAT IS THIS DAY ABOUT? – Get the right things done Pages 5 - 6

Even after you've established your personal focus, life gets busy. Days will get filled with all kinds of obligations which sidetrack you from what's most important. The solution to this lays in what you do each day – because a year is lived one day at a time. Spend 18-minutes every day in a daily ritual focused around getting the right things done.



4. ASK: WHAT IS THIS MOMENT ABOUT? – Master your initiative, boundaries and yourself Pages 6 - 8

Remind yourself the hardest part of time management isn't making a plan – it's the day-to-day follow-through. To get more done, concentrate on mastering distractions. To do that:

- *Master your initiative* – Learn how to overcome procrastination and initiate movement.
- *Master your boundaries* – Resist distractions by responding to requests from others.
- *Master yourself* – Combat interruptions by creating a few productive ones yourself.

5. CHOOSE YOUR ONE THING – Make it happen. Page 8

No matter where you are in your life or your career, your next best step is to choose the one thing which will make the most difference and do it – no matter what. If you make a habit of acting on what you know, you can then gradually incorporate other ideas in the future. It all starts with doing your one big thing.

