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MPRESENTS

DEEP WORK

RULES FOR FOCUSED SUCCESS
IN A DISTRACTED WORLD

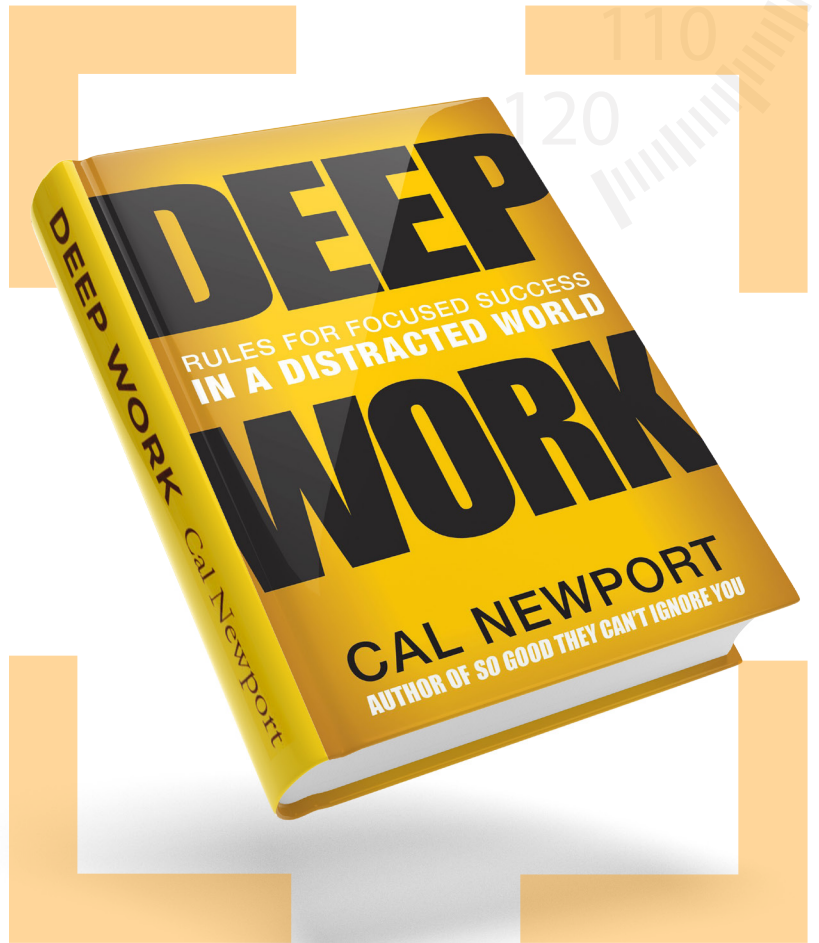
BY CAL NEWPORT

"DEEP WORK Rules For Focused Success In A Distracted World" by Cal Newport, Author of "So Good They Can't Ignore You", is so on point that when I read it, I knew I had to send a copy to you! So many of the concepts resonated with me that I had to share it with you. I hope you'll take the time to read this copy, listen on Audible, or download to your favorite device. If you're not a "reader" you can share this copy with another team member and read my notes below. I've tried to extract my favorite nuggets from the book along with a few comments.

Best,



Jonathan Slain



PS-

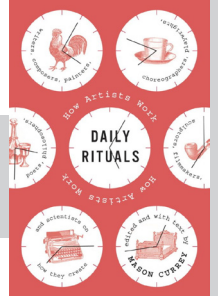
INTRODUCTION

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In his book *Daily Rituals*, journalist Mason Currey sorted through various sources on Jung to re-create the psychiatrist's work habits at the Tower. Jung would rise at seven a.m., Currey reports, and after a big breakfast he would spend two hours of undistracted writing time in his private office. His afternoons would often consist of meditation or long walks in the surrounding countryside.



Another great book, *Daily Rituals*, is all about how top leaders and producers own their mornings with strong routines.



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Deep Work: Professional activities performed in a state of distraction-free concentration that push your cognitive capabilities to their limit. These efforts create new value, improve your skill, and are hard to replicate.

... if you study the lives of other influential figures from both distant and recent history, you'll find that a commitment to deep work is a common theme.



My favorite place for Deep Work is a long haul flight just like the one I'm on right now while editing this book review.

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The ubiquity of deep work among influential individuals is important to emphasize because it stands in sharp contrast to the behavior of most modern knowledge workers—a group that's rapidly forgetting the value of going deep. The reason knowledge workers are losing their familiarity with deep work is well established: network tools. This is a broad category that captures communication services like e-mail and SMS, social media networks like Twitter and Facebook, and the shiny tangle of infotainment sites like BuzzFeed and Reddit.

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Shallow Work: Noncognitively demanding, logistical-style tasks, often performed while distracted. These efforts tend to not create much new value in the world and are easy to replicate.



How much of your day is spent on Shallow Work?

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Our work culture's shift toward the shallow is exposing a massive economic and personal opportunity for the few who recognize the potential of resisting this trend and prioritizing depth.

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To remain valuable in our economy, therefore, you must master the art of quickly learning complicated things. This task requires deep work.



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The growing necessity of deep work is new. In an industrial economy, there was a small skilled labor and professional class for which deep work was crucial, but most workers could do just fine without ever cultivating an ability to concentrate without distraction. They were paid to crank widgets—and not much about their job would change in the decades they kept it. But as we shift to an information economy, more and more of our population are knowledge workers, and deep work is becoming a key currency—even if most haven’t yet recognized this reality.

The Deep Work Hypothesis: The ability to perform deep work is becoming increasingly rare at exactly the same time it is becoming increasingly valuable in our economy. As a consequence, the few who cultivate this skill, and then make it the core of their working life, will thrive.



PART 1: THE IDEA

CHAPTER 1

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Two Core Abilities for Thriving in the New Economy 1. The ability to quickly master hard things. 2. The ability to produce at an elite level, in terms of both quality and speed.

CHAPTER 1

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Though [Adam] Grant’s productivity depends on many factors, there’s one idea in particular that seems central to his method: the batching of hard but important intellectual work into long, uninterrupted stretches . . . he alternates between periods where his door is open to students and colleagues, and periods where he isolates himself to focus completely and without distraction on a single research task.



CHAPTER 1

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. . . when you switch from some Task A to another Task B, your attention doesn’t immediately follow—a residue of your attention remains stuck thinking about the original task.



I love the stickiness of the idea of the “attention residue.”

CHAPTER 2

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Many other ideas are being prioritized as more important than deep work in the business world, including, as we just encountered, serendipitous collaboration, rapid communication, and an active presence on social media.

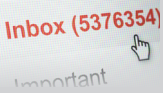


How do open offices, Slack, and social media affect our companies?

The Principle of Least Resistance: In a business setting, without clear feedback on the impact of various behaviors to the bottom line, we will tend toward behaviors that are easiest in the moment.

The second reason that a culture of connectivity makes life easier is that it creates an environment where it becomes acceptable to run your day out of your inbox—responding to the latest missive with alacrity while others pile up behind it, all the while feeling satisfyingly productive (more on this soon). If e-mail were to move to the periphery of your workday, you'd be required to deploy a more thoughtful approach to figuring out what you should be working on and for how long. This type of planning is hard.

Consider the common practice of setting up regularly occurring meetings for projects. These meetings tend to pile up and fracture schedules to the point where sustained focus during the day becomes impossible. Why do they persist? They're easier. For many, these standing meetings become a simple (but blunt) form of personal organization. Instead of trying to manage their time and obligations themselves, they let the impending meeting each week force them to take some action on a given project and more generally provide a highly visible simulacrum of progress.



I'm definitely guilty of letting my inbox sometimes set my agenda.



Busyness as Proxy for Productivity: In the absence of clear indicators of what it means to be productive and valuable in their jobs, many knowledge workers turn back toward an industrial indicator of productivity: doing lots of stuff in a visible manner.

... a deep life is not just economically lucrative, but also a life well lived.

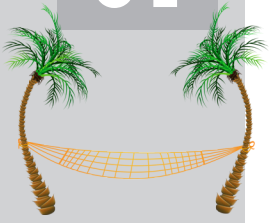


We tend to place a lot of emphasis on our circumstances, assuming that what happens to us (or fails to happen) determines how we feel.

Our brains instead construct our worldview based on what we pay attention to. If you focus on a cancer diagnosis, you and your life become unhappy and dark, but if you focus instead on an evening martini, you and your life become more pleasant . . .

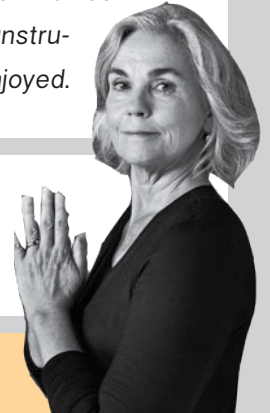


Knowledge work, which due to its dependence on ubiquitous connectivity generates a devastatingly appealing buffet of distraction . . .



Most people assumed (and still do) that relaxation makes them happy. We want to work less and spend more time in the hammock. But the results from Csikszentmihalyi’s ESM studies reveal that most people have this wrong:

Ironically, jobs are actually easier to enjoy than free time, because like flow activities they have built-in goals, feedback rules, and challenges, all of which encourage one to become involved in one’s work, to concentrate and lose oneself in it. Free time, on the other hand, is unstructured, and requires much greater effort to be shaped into something that can be enjoyed.



Winifred Gallagher – “I’ll live the focused life, because it’s the best kind there is.”

PART 2: THE RULES

RULE #1

... you can expect to be bombarded with the desire to do anything but work deeply throughout the day.

RULE #1

You have a finite amount of willpower that becomes depleted as you use it.

The key to developing a deep work habit is to move beyond good intentions and add routines and rituals to your working life designed to minimize the amount of your limited willpower necessary to transition into and maintain a state of unbroken concentration.

RULE #1

An even more extreme example of a onetime grand gesture yielding results is a story involving Peter Shankman, an entrepreneur and social media pioneer.

He booked a round-trip business-class ticket to Tokyo. He wrote during the whole flight to Japan, drank an espresso in the business class lounge once he arrived in Japan, then turned around and flew back, once again writing the whole way—arriving back in the States only thirty hours after he first left with a completed manuscript now in hand. “The trip cost \$4,000 and was worth every penny,” he explained.



I’m a huge fan of grand gestures to complete important deep work tasks.



RULE #1

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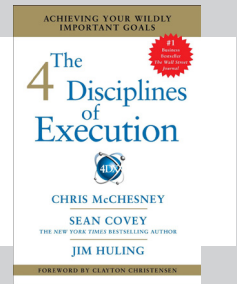
Discipline #1: Focus on the Wildly Important

As the authors of *The 4 Disciplines of Execution* explain, "The more you try to do, the less you actually accomplish." They elaborate that execution should be aimed at a small number of "wildly important goals."



JS

The book 4DX is another must read



RULE #1

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Discipline #2: Act on the Lead Measures

... lead measures turn your attention to improving the behaviors you directly control in the near future that will then have a positive impact on your long-term goals.



JS

A good scorecard focuses on lead measures.

RULE #1

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Discipline #3: Keep a Compelling Scoreboard

This scoreboard creates a sense of competition that drives them to focus on these measures even when other demands vie for their attention.



JS

A scoreboard is different than a scorecard.



RULE #1

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Discipline #4: Create a Cadence of Accountability

... a rhythm of regular and frequent meetings of any team that owns a wildly important goal.

RULE #1

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The 4DX framework is based on the fundamental premise that execution is more difficult than strategizing.

RULE #1

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Idleness is not just a vacation, an indulgence or a vice; it is as indispensable to the brain as vitamin D is to the body, and deprived of it we suffer a mental affliction as disfiguring as rickets ... it is, paradoxically, necessary to getting any work done.

Reason #1: Downtime Aids Insights

Reason #2: Downtime Helps Recharge the Energy Needed to Work Deeply

Reason #3: The Work That Evening Downtime Replaces Is Usually Not That Important



RULE #2

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The ability to concentrate intensely is a skill that must be trained.

Don't Take Breaks from Distraction.
Instead Take Breaks from Focus.

The goal of productive meditation is to take a period in which you're occupied physically but not mentally—walking, jogging, driving, showering—and focus your attention on a single well-defined professional problem.

Suggestion #1: Be Wary of Distractions and Looping

When you notice your attention slipping away from the problem at hand, gently remind yourself that you can return to that thought later, then redirect your attention back.

When you notice it, remark to yourself that you seem to be in a loop,

Suggestion #2: Structure Your Deep Thinking



The Any-Benefit Approach to Network Tool Selection: You're justified in using a network tool if you can identify any possible benefit to its use, or anything you might possibly miss out on if you don't use it.

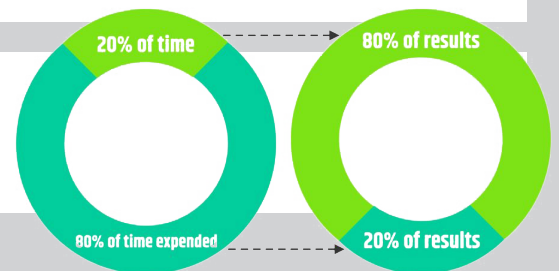
The Craftsman Approach to Tool Selection: Identify the core factors that determine success and happiness in your professional and personal life. Adopt a tool only if its positive impacts on these factors substantially outweigh its negative impacts.



I'm doing my best to adopt the Craftsman Approach over the Any Benefits Approach! It's not easy.

There's a lot of communication in my life that's not enriching, it's impoverishing.

The Law of the Vital Few*: In many settings, 80 percent of a given effect is due to just 20 percent of the possible causes.



... the key point that all activities, regardless of their importance, consume your same limited store of time and attention. If you service low-impact activities, therefore, you're taking away time you could be spending on higher-impact activities. It's a zero-sum game.

The business world understands this math. This is why it's not uncommon to see a company fire unproductive clients. If 80 percent of their profits come from 20 percent of their clients, then they make more money by redirecting the energy from low-revenue clients to better service the small number of lucrative contracts—each hour spent on the latter returns more revenue than each hour spent on the former. The same holds true for your professional and personal goals.



"It's not a zero sum game, Maureen. Just because I've met some one else doesn't mean I've stopped loving you."

... figure out in advance what you're going to do with your evenings and weekends before they begin.



If I don't plan my weekends, I notice they seem to slip into the void.

In the summer of 2007, the software company 37signals (now called Basecamp) launched an experiment: They shortened their workweek from five days to four. Their employees seemed to accomplish the same amount of work with one less day, so they made this change permanent.

The shallow work that increasingly dominates the time and attention of knowledge workers is less vital than it often seems in the moment.

... treat shallow work with suspicion because its damage is often vastly underestimated and its importance vastly overestimated.

We spend much of our day on autopilot—not giving much thought to what we're doing with our time. This is a problem.

Schedule every minute of your day.



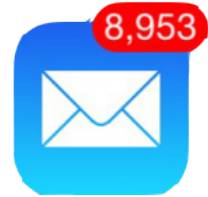
Decide in advance what you're going to do with every minute of your workday. It's natural, at first, to resist this idea, as it's undoubtedly easier to continue to allow the twin forces of internal whim and external requests to drive your schedule.

No discussion of shallow work is complete without considering e-mail.

Tip #1: Make People Who Send You E-mail Do More Work

Tip #2: Do More Work When You Send or Reply to E-mails

Tip #3: Don't Respond



I recommend the service Sanebox.com to help tame your inbox.

CONCLUSION

To leave the distracted masses to join the focused few, I'm arguing, is a transformative experience. The deep life, of course, is not for everybody. It requires hard work and drastic changes to your habits. For many, there's a comfort in the artificial busyness of rapid e-mail messaging and social media posturing, while the deep life demands that you leave much of that behind.

But if you're willing to sidestep these comforts and fears, and instead struggle to deploy your mind to its fullest capacity to create things that matter, then you'll discover, as others have before you, that depth generates a life rich with productivity and meaning.



The deep life sure does sound good to me!

Email me at Jonathan@AutobahnConsultants.com with your feedback on the book, Deep Work.

