

IT'S ABOUT
TIME



THE
1 DAY
REFUND

TAKE BACK TIME
SPEND IT WISELY

DONNA
McGEORGE

FREE
CHAPTER

WILEY

STOP what you're doing and read this. And then stop doing the things that are sucking your time, head space and creativity. Donna once again brings practical, fluff-free guidance to regain space and time to spend on what matters most.

— **Steph Clarke, facilitator, designer and podcaster**
(Steph's Business Bookshelf)

Organisations have always asked 'how do we get the most done in the shortest amount of time?'. The question for us as individuals is, 'how can I best spend my own time?' Donna makes work work and in this brilliant addition to her productivity series, she tackles the relationship between work and time, and shows us how to get a refund of our most valuable commodity – time.

— **Matt Church author of *Rise Up: an evolution in leadership* and founder of Thought Leaders**

We all remember a great teacher. Holding attention. Caring to make important matters practical and bringing joy to life. Donna is such a teacher. She brings care, attention and practicality into her teaching and writing about time, every time. In her latest book *The 1-Day Refund*, Donna puts a powerful promise on the cover, that's not left hanging. It's great to know there's a bit of science behind the 85% that yields flow, Donna then delivers the ideas, tools and techniques to think differently about how we achieve this. How we govern time ourselves makes for a better leader in each of us.

The 1-Day Refund completes Donna's 'Trilogy on Time' — it's a great bookend to her teaching and writing on being effective with the time we have available and making life better for everyone.

— **Dr Richard Hodge, This Century Leadership and Governance, DrRichardHodge.com**

The productivity section of the self-help bookshelf has never been my cup of tea. The genre has always been so intensely focused on maximising our ability to produce stuff that it rarely seemed conducive to actually enjoying a full and balanced life.

For that reason, Donna McGeorge's contributions deserve to be a category unto themselves. *The 25 Minute Meeting* and *The First 2 Hours* are each a gift to those of us that want to unshackle ourselves from the busyness of the status quo and embrace a life of calm and control. In that vein, I think the book you hold in your hands might be Donna's coup-de-grace. The stand-out quote from the introduction is 'Instead of trading time for money, we need to trade energy for impact', which resonates down to my soul, and in true Donna McGeorge style the pages that follow describe and unpack a strategy for helping you achieve exactly that.

Since reading this book I'm trying a number of the experiments Donna suggests, with some very encouraging results. If you too deserve a day of your time back, I heartily endorse Donna and the ideas shared in this book.

— **Col Fink, speaker, author of *Speakership and Tribe of Learning*, head of programs at Thought Leaders**

Anyone who can give me back an extra day each week is a total genius! Thanks Donna.

— **Kieran Flanagan, speaker and author of *Selfish, Scared & Stupid* and *Forever Skills***



Wiley 2022 ©

**THE
1 DAY
REFUND**

**TAKE BACK TIME
SPEND IT WISELY**

**DONNA
McGEORGE**

WILEY

Contents

<i>About the author</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>How to use this book</i>	<i>xvii</i>
Part I: Why we need to take back time	1
1 We're busy addicts	5
2 We need the capacity to adapt	17
3 We perform best with less	31
Part II: How to spend your time wisely	39
4 Thinking space	45
5 Breathing space	65
6 Living space	85
7 Working space	105
<i>Final chapter bonus!</i>	<i>129</i>
<i>Your savings plan</i>	<i>133</i>
<i>Where to now?</i>	<i>135</i>
<i>Work with me</i>	<i>139</i>
<i>Sources</i>	<i>141</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>147</i>

About the author

Donna McGeorge makes work *work*.

She is passionate about enhancing the time we spend in the workplace (too much, for many of us) to ensure it is effective and productive, and enjoyable.

Donna has worked with managers and leaders throughout Australia and the Asia–Pacific for over 20 years. In 2020 she, like many of us, transitioned her work from live, in-person to online. She delivers productivity programs, keynotes and webinars globally across a mix of industries.

Her CV is as eclectic as her record collection (yes, classic vinyl). In addition to roles at Telstra, Qantas, Ernst & Young and Ansett, she has managed Theatre, Sports and Concert Tours for the UK-based travel company Keith Prowse and been the Asia–Pacific Organisational Development Manager for the Ford Motor Company in Shanghai.

Donna also shares her knowledge for good through appearances on *The Today Show*, radio interviews across Australia and writing articles for publications including *The Age*, *Boss Magazine*, *Smart Company*, *B&T Magazine* and *HRM*.

The 1-Day Refund

The 1-Day Refund is the third book in her 'It's About Time' productivity series. The other two are *The 25-Minute Meeting* and *The First 2 Hours*, published by John Wiley & Sons in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

She runs her business from her home in Hope Island, South East Queensland, a region known for its world-class beaches, but her most creative moments come while sipping tea on her balcony and gazing at the meandering waterways with her husband, Steve, and her dog, Prudence.

Donna believes that while workplaces are complex, they are not hard. More often than not it's getting the simple things right, consistently, that has the greatest impact.

She also knows that when we decide to be intentional, we can surprise ourselves with what we can achieve.

www.donnamcgeorge.com

Introduction

In 2020, Kim, like many workers around the world, found herself either in lockdown or being encouraged to work from home as authorities tried to get a handle on the pandemic.

Based in Victoria, she experienced one of Australia's toughest and longest lockdowns as it affected not just her but her family.

Prior to the pandemic, she would take her three-year-old son to day care. Mornings were chaotic for everyone. A far from relaxed breakfast, often eaten on the run, was followed by a half-crazed drive for the drop-off and the daily heartbreak of her son crying and clinging to her legs.

When lockdown hit and she had to work from home, Kim had time to walk her son to day care because she no longer had to commute. The tears and clinging stopped immediately. The dawdling morning walk allowed for a slower and calmer transition.

Kim had been refunded her commute time. The two hours a day gifted to her by COVID-19 restrictions were hers to use however she wished. She could simply have continued the

upsetting morning routine, but she decided instead to spend the time wisely, and the return on that investment was huge.

If you were affected by lockdown, or had to work from home, how did you spend the commute time that was refunded to you?

Let's pause for a moment and do the maths. A commute of around one hour each way was common. Two hours' travel a day translated into ten hours a week that weren't spent in a car or on public transport. That's a whole extra day saved! Even if you caught the train and worked for part of the commute, the time saved was still yours to spend as you chose.

If I had asked you in 2019 what you would do with an extra day every week, how would you have answered?

You might have said you'd spend more time with your kids, read more, meal plan for the week, take up a hobby, study remotely or learn to navigate the new world in which many people work from home. Or maybe you would have said you'd simply catch up on sleep.

I don't think any of you would have said you would fill the saved time with more email and work-based projects.

Unfortunately, however, many of us perpetuated our already hectic lifestyles. Instead of recognising the time refund as a gift, we simply absorbed it back into our busy, out-of-control, overwhelmed lives. This meant many of us were more exhausted than when we commuted.

This book will help you take back time, get a refund if you will, build a time margin into your world so you are not operating constantly at 100 per cent-plus capacity, and rack up some room to move, breathe and think!

How good does that sound!?

People constantly tell me they are tired, exhausted and overwhelmed. They can't keep up with the pressures of modern-day living.

It's like we are always 'on' and have no idea how to hit the off switch—we don't even know there is one!

In Australia we work 3.2 billion hours a year in unpaid overtime, we have 134 million days of accrued annual leave, and 3.8 million of us don't take lunch breaks. And 7.4 million Australians don't get enough sleep.

We seem to have become 'rest resistant'. We are addicted to being busy and it's preventing us from getting the rest we need to perform at our best.

Wellbeing and productivity adviser Thea O'Connor reminds us, 'The simple fact is, if you don't give your brain a break you'll start to work more slowly and you'll make more errors.'

One of the things I learned in 2020 was that I didn't have to be 'on' all the time. I could actually organise my life so I started my first meeting at a time that suited me and I delivered sessions and workshops at a time that suited me.

I'm not sure why it took a pandemic for me to make that connection, but here I am. I spent a year protecting approximately 15 per cent of every day for time to think. I took time to reflect on what my customers needed rather than on what I was currently selling them. I spent time reading lots of articles online about what others were saying, and I began to craft my own story about what I had to offer. It led me to initiatives I had never thought of before. An Instagram account called 'Daily dose of Donna' provided simple tips and pick-me-ups for people in lockdown. I gained a heap of followers very quickly, and from those tips I began to develop programs that led me to a dozen new clients.

I believe that's why my practice was able not just to survive when others were folding or struggling, but to grow in a number of different directions. The investment of time saved gave me the ability to take advantage of opportunities.

For Kim and her son, that means never going back to the way things were before the pandemic. She considers the time she spends with him on the walk to the day-care centre sacrosanct and immovable.

That's my wish for everyone reading this book. I hope that by the time you've finished reading it you'll have implemented some simple strategies that will give you both the capacity and the space to think, breathe, work and enjoy your life even more.

Are you ready to see how?

How to use this book

This book mirrors the way I run my webinars, workshops, corporate programs and hands-on sessions. It is practical and easy to read and navigate, so you can quickly implement real yet simple changes in the way you work.

It isn't a hefty tome that you'll have trouble carrying around, or that you'll leave on your bedside table to gather coffee-cup stains. Rather, it offers quick tips, real-life stories, lots of no-nonsense advice, questions to encourage you to reflect on how you're working now and how you could improve, and exercises to help you implement the changes you want to make.

My suggestion for working through this book is to keep it simple and achievable. Start small and work your way up to the bigger concepts. Read the book and choose one or two things that resonate strongly with you, and start to action those immediately. (You will thank me for this when you see how simple it really is.)

Part I is all about why we need to take back time and how we collect our 1-Day Refund on the week. We will learn why 85 per cent is the limit we should be working towards (not 100 per cent or, dare I say, 120 per cent). We should all have a 15 per cent buffer in our lives for capacity and space.

Part II introduces strategies to help you spend your time saved wisely and to award yourself a daily refund. This will give you the capacity and space required to take advantage of opportunities to think and make great decisions, and to respond positively and proactively to changing conditions.

As you read, you will find I can be a little irreverent at times—because life and work are way too important to be taken too seriously. And reading a book should be a pleasure, not a pain!

So please read, implement, experiment and have fun being more productive!

PART I

**WHY WE
NEED
TO TAKE
BACK
TIME**

Wiley 2022 ©



Resources and energy are needed for growth; this applies to pretty much any area of our world where we want to grow or get better. It is true for communities, for individuals and for the natural environment.

And I'm not just referring to physical growth. I'm also talking about emotional and intellectual growth.

In science, this is referred to as a finite-time singularity. In a nutshell, unbounded growth demands either infinite resources and energy or a major paradigm shift. Without either, collapse is inevitable.

So tell me, how much longer can you go on before you exhaust your resources and energy, or you undertake a paradigm shift?

I'm not even asking for a major shift. Simply think about where you can refund yourself only 15 per cent of your time and resources across a range of aspects of your life to create some space that will allow you to be the truly adaptive organism you have evolved to be. Following a few simple principles will gain you one full extra day in your week.

But you don't have to believe me! There are a number of real-world examples where a 15 per cent buffer or margin is considered optimal operating capacity.

Capacity utilisation (mostly used in manufacturing) measures the difference between production and production capability. Accounting for the fact that it is unlikely that an economy or company will function at 100 per cent capacity, 85 per cent is considered optimal. This provides a 15 per cent buffer against setbacks like equipment malfunction or resource shortages.

Olympians and professional sportspeople, too, know they will perform better at 85 per cent because they are more relaxed and can optimise muscle strength.

Hugh Jackman, in his preparation for and performance in the role of Wolverine, aimed to expend no more than 85 per cent of his energy, in the knowledge this would enable him to function optimally over extended production periods.

If we are to keep our own performance levels high and to optimise our resources and systems, we should be aiming for a maximum energy expenditure of 85 per cent.

Wiley 2022 ©

This 15 per cent margin might seem arbitrary, or too little, and in many ways it's more about what happens in our heads than about watching the clock. Strive to feel as though you are performing at a steady pace, always with this tiny bit of room to breathe, not as though you are constantly catching up or struggling. You will feel in control instead of overwhelmed and exhausted from pushing yourself (or those around you) too far.

Of course, there will always be things outside your control: traffic jams, flight delays and other unexpected obstacles. Building in a 15 per cent buffer means you'll have greater capacity to manage disruptions.

This is how I arrived at the 1-Day Refund: 15 per cent of 7 is ... 1! By applying some simple techniques and looking to shave 15 per cent off where you can, every week you can take back a whole day in your life!

Let's now explore this in more detail.

CHAPTER 1

We're busy addicts

Wiley 2022 ©

We are all living in an epidemic of urgency and busyness. Unless we are flat out, working ridiculous hours, we are judged, and we often judge ourselves, as lazy or unproductive.

My friend Sharon is a senior manager in a large professional services organisation. She is also studying part time and has a seven-year-old daughter. She arrives for work most days around 8.15 am after the school drop-off and leaves around 5.30 pm most afternoons to get back to afterschool care by the 6.30 pm deadline. Some days are pretty tight!

Despite this, she is productive and effective, but not always super social at work. Her boss, having noticed her arrival and departure times, recently pulled her aside and said, 'People are noticing that you come in around 8.15 and leave around 5.30 most days. I've noticed as well. This would indicate to me that you don't have enough to do.'

To her credit, Sharon didn't react badly (I might have). She asked, 'What is it that others, or you, feel I'm not doing? Have I missed some deadlines or is my work not up to scratch?' Her boss said, 'No, no, your work is fine. I get great feedback. It's just that others seem to work longer hours.'

Sharon replied,

I'm focused and efficient. I have to be. I have to be able to hold the job down and get home to my family. When the quality or quantity of my output starts to be less than what you are wanting, please let me know and we can have a discussion about my work hours then.

I'm thinking she may have looked like a woman on the edge, because her boss agreed and backed away ... slowly.

But let's not blame Sharon's boss. Urgency is the new black. 'Busy' is the natural response to 'How's work?' The effect is cultures that pride themselves on 'fast-moving' or 'adaptive' workplaces. But they are often white-collar sweat shops, pushing people beyond their limits, and the result is burnout.

Matthew Bidwell, from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, says of managers that when they can't measure outputs easily, they will measure inputs, such as how long you are spending at work.

Trading time for money

Sharon told me that in her workplace, people are often judged not by their outputs but by how many hours they spend in the office. Some were even careful to arrive five minutes before,

and to leave five minutes after, their boss. I'm sure you have a similar story—most of us do!

My brother, for example, was once chastised in a performance review because he was 'too cheerful and didn't exhibit signs of stress', which indicated to his boss that he didn't have enough to do. He couldn't possibly be adding value *and* remain cheerful! My brother left that job shortly after and was told by colleagues that people kept discovering how much he did in a day. 'Bill used to do that' was the answer to just about every question asked about tasks in the department.

The notion that busyness, franticness and stress are indicators of hard work and productivity has been around for over 2000 years. It seems that we are somehow wrong if we aren't feeling these things. The Stoic philosopher Seneca, author of *On the Shortness of Life*, arguably the first ever management self-help book, argued:

People are frugal in guarding their personal property; but as soon as it comes to squandering time, they are most wasteful of the one thing in which it is right to be stingy.

The industrial revolution specifically linked time to money as the advent of artificial lighting enabled 10- to 16-hour workdays. It wasn't until Henry Ford introduced the eight-hour workday, and profits increased exponentially, that people started to think differently about productivity by the hour. His profitable methods, in effect, refunded two to eight hours to his workers every day.

We are also driven by a work ethic deeply rooted in Judaeo-Christian traditions that persuades us that to be 'idle' is to be 'ungodly'.

Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread.

Proverbs 20:13

In a culture that values hard work and productivity, we feel we are ‘winning’ when we are going hard all the time. Because being busy increases our level of (self-)importance and can become addictive, we may feel guilty or ashamed when we aren’t busy doing stuff.

So we have a bit of conditioning to undo!

Instead of trading time for money, we need to trade energy for impact.

For example, we are all familiar with the model that says I give you x hours of my time in exchange for y dollars. But what if we instead focused on the idea that I give you energy, value and impact in return for dollars?

Instead of thinking about how many hours I need to put in, I think about exchanging the most valuable and impactful work each day.

Begin by asking yourself, where will I get the best return on my energy investment?

Reframe laziness

If you have a dog or a cat, watch them. They spend most of their time sleeping, with intermittent breaks for eating, pooping and running after a ball or a bird.

I think it's time to reframe 'laziness' and to enjoy life's pauses. Let's not be like Nathan Hubbard, former CEO of Ticketmaster, who in this tweet seems to be encouraging people to go hard over the holiday period.

Wiley 2022 ©



For years researchers have proved time and time again the positive impact of restful activities:

- » Daydreaming, and even boredom, promote creative thinking.
- » Discovering non-work-related activities that both rejuvenate and excite you will provide the energy you need when it's time to get down to work. They also

create an awesome contrast frame so you'll enjoy work-related activities even more!

- » Being in flow: Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi coined this term in the 1970s for what happens when we become 'so immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity that we lose sense of space and time'. And we get more done! Up to 500 per cent more, according to a 10-year McKinsey study.
- » Socialising: We get cognitive boosts from social interactions and we also experience higher levels of intellectual performance.
- » Disconnecting from work: Those of us who are able to disconnect from work are healthier, more engaged when we are at work and less prone to procrastination.

Being less busy isn't the issue. The real opportunity here is to take time out. To stop and take stock of where you are at and make some decisions about how you want to work.

Without some level of mastery and control over your time, at best you will lose opportunities and at worst you will become ill.

STOP AND THINK

Studies of brainwaves show us that creativity, innovation, inspiration and intuition are only available to us when our brain is in certain states of consciousness.

Have you ever heard someone say, 'I just can't think clearly!' or 'I can't make sense of this!' or 'I just don't have the

bandwidth for this'? Just ask the parents of a newborn who are not getting enough sleep. Typically, this is because they cannot access sufficiently the brainwave that helps you feel centred, relaxed and creative!

The Dutch principle of *niksen* means to slow down and opt out of productivity expectations. The idea is you take a big breath, pause, and give your mind and body a chance to rest and reset.

Writers and philosophers have been talking and writing about this for centuries. It's no secret that our aha! moments often happen when we're resting.

In *Awakening the Mind*, Anna Wise explains that while we rarely use just one kind of brainwave at a time, each has its own job or characteristics. For example:

- » Beta brainwaves are the most commonly used, and they're the fastest. Typically, these are accessed in a waking state of consciousness or when you're thinking—like now, as you read this book. They help us manage everyday things like driving a car, making judgements and remembering what we need to do. They are responsible for analytical thinking and problem-solving.
- » Alpha brainwaves are the next fastest and are typically present when we are in a state of relaxation or distant awareness, such as when we are daydreaming. You can access alpha waves through anything that 'zones you out', like watching TV, working on a hobby or even taking a long drive. It's where positive thinking, stress reduction and accelerated learning lives. Its most useful function is to create a bridge between the conscious and subconscious parts of your mind. It's why you remember dreams.

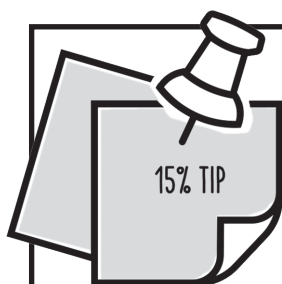
- » Theta brainwaves are accessed when you sleep, and more specifically in the rapid eye movement (REM) state. It's how we transfer things from short-term to long-term memory. If you meditate, you will be aware of the blissful feelings that result when you are able to access this state of consciousness. This is where aha! experiences live. It's where healing begins and it fosters feelings of deep inner peace. And it's also where creativity lives.
- » Delta brainwaves are the slowest and they belong mainly in the realm of the unconscious mind. They are present when all other frequencies are turned off, giving you the chance to get a good night's sleep. They can sometimes be present in waking states, showing up as intuition, empathy and instinct. When people say that, despite the evidence, 'I just knew ...', they are probably accessing delta brainwaves.

In a nutshell, if you are not accessing these brainwaves at the appropriate time, you will not have access to the ability to be creative, innovative and intuitive.

So we need to STOP!

To sum up chapter 1 in a sentence: we are told that we need to operate at 100 per cent capacity all the time, and anything less is less than optimal—but *it's not true!*

In chapter 2 we learn that there are forms of capacity other than working flat out at 100 per cent!



Begin to reframe boredom as necessary rest. It's okay to have nothing to do.

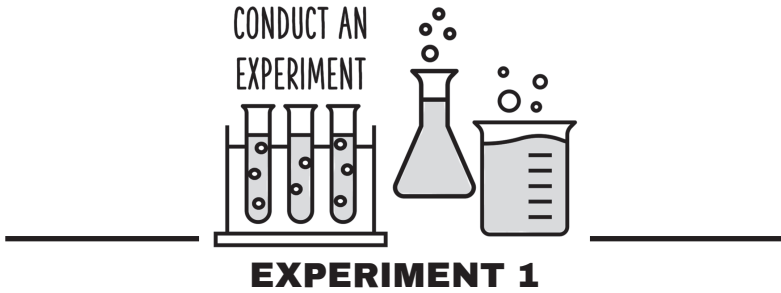
Wakeup call

'I can't afford to get sick!' I'm sure we've all said this from time to time. It was Deborah's catchcry. Her household was a typically busy one with two working parents and school-aged kids.

Deborah is a nursing unit manager at a major hospital and she was 100 per cent 'on' pretty much from the moment she arrived at work until her shift finished. She prided herself on being able to nip illness in the bud! Until she experienced an immune system breakdown due to prolonged stress and overload and the varicella virus, or shingles, reactivated in her body.

Because shingles is contagious, she had to take time off work. It was the first time in her life she had taken the time to heal and she saw it as the wakeup call it was. It was time to create some capacity in her world not just to slow down but to give her body a chance to rest. She began to focus on developing the abilities of her team so the workload was more evenly distributed, and this gave her the space to think and lead.

At home, because in the early stages her shingles had been quite severe, the family had had to step up. Once she got better, she didn't take back all the responsibilities she had relinquished.



Encourage your mind to wander:

1. Grab a notebook (or paper) and pen and set a timer for 10 minutes. (A 30-minute stretch works best, but baby steps, eh?)
2. Write whatever comes into your head. Just release the flow of consciousness. It doesn't matter if what you write doesn't make sense, or even if you admit, 'I'm writing stuff but I don't know why and this feels stupid, and now I'm thinking about giraffes.' Keep writing until the alarm goes off.
3. If you can eventually get to a full 30 minutes each day, particularly when you first wake, you'll notice the benefit.

This exercise is based on Julia Cameron's 'Morning Pages' from *The Artist's Way*: 'They are about anything and everything that crosses your mind—and they are for your eyes only. Morning Pages provoke, clarify, comfort, cajole, prioritise and synchronise the day at hand.'

PAUSE FOR A MOMENT



Remembering that daydreaming and boredom can be necessary to promote creativity, are you actually bored or is this essential downtime?

How could looking after yourself enable you to serve others better?

What mindfulness technique might you start with? You might begin by simply sitting with stillness and observing the detail around you.

First published in 2022 by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd
42 McDougall St, Milton Qld 4064

Office also in Melbourne

Typeset in Bembo Std 12/15pt

© John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd 2022

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

ISBN: 978-0-730-39820-2



A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the *Australian Copyright Act 1968* (for example, a fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review), no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, communicated or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All inquiries should be made to the publisher at the address above.

Cover design by Wiley

Cover and part opener image: © Ankudi/Getty Images

Internal illustrations by Donna McGeorge

Disclaimer

The material in this publication is of the nature of general comment only, and does not represent professional advice. It is not intended to provide specific guidance for particular circumstances and it should not be relied on as the basis for any decision to take action or not take action on any matter which it covers. Readers should obtain professional advice where appropriate, before making any such decision. To the maximum extent permitted by law, the author and publisher disclaim all responsibility and liability to any person, arising directly or indirectly from any person taking or not taking action based on the information in this publication.

IT'S ABOUT
TIME



Get on top of busyness

Donna McGeorge's *It's About Time* series will change the way you think about time, forever!

With *The 25-Minute Meeting*, you'll learn to give your meetings purpose and stop them wasting your time; with *The First 2 Hours*, you'll find the best time of the day to do your most productive work; and with *The 1-Day Refund*, you'll discover how to give yourself the extra capacity to think, breathe, live and work.

It's time to get your life back—one minute at a time.



GAIN MORE TIME FOR WHAT YOU LOVE

Are you constantly juggling multiple tasks and operating at 100 per cent or more? Do you feel you are permanently on the treadmill and can't get off? If you needed extra capacity for something urgent, could you find it? In *The 1-Day Refund*, best-selling author and time management expert Donna McGeorge shows you how to recover an extra 15 per cent of your time—10 minutes per hour, 1 hour per day or a full day each week—to think, breathe, live and work. By creating more space, you'll discover a new ability to focus on what's truly important to you.

Learn how to:

- achieve more and do less
- stop being at the mercy of other people's agendas
- develop your capacity to cope with change and unpredictability
- rid yourself of that feeling of overwhelm
- say 'no' when you truly don't have time.

With *The 1-Day Refund*, you'll be on your way to getting back a full day, so you can take advantage of any opportunity that comes your way.

DONNA McGEORGE is the productivity coach. She is obsessed with helping people make their work *work*. She uses a creative and practical approach to improve workplace efficacy and challenges traditional thinking on leadership, productivity, and working smarter.

www.donnamcgeorge.com

IT'S ABOUT
TIME




Collect the full series
and change the way
you think about time,
forever!



Cover Design: Wiley
Cover Image: © Ankudi/Getty Images

www.wiley.com

WILEY

 Also available
as an e-book

ISBN 978-0-7303-9820-2
52200



9 780730 398202

IT'S ABOUT
TIME



THE FIRST 2 HOURS

**MAKE BETTER USE
OF YOUR MOST
VALUABLE TIME**

**DONNA
McGEORGE**

**FREE
CHAPTER**

WILEY

WOW! What a great, easy to read business book. *The First 2 Hours* is overflowing with great insights and practical advice to make sure you truly do get the most out of your day.

—**Gabrielle Dolan**, Global expert on
business storytelling and
author of *Stories for Work* and *Real Communication*

I am a massive fan of Donna's two-part pragmatism and inspiration and *The First 2 Hours* meets all my expectations and then some. If you want an upgrade around how you live and do life then get your hot little hands on this one. You can't afford not to.

—**Georgia Murch**, Author and
keynote speaker

Many workplaces I go into are chock full of people blearily staring at screens in the morning, stressed and overwhelmed with the amount of work to be done. Donna's book *The First 2 Hours* is jam packed full of pragmatic ways to change that. Giving us the lens of when rather than what, Donna turns what we do with our day on its head. Donna's approach to how we use our time more effectively is accessible, doable and practical. The research is fascinating, as are the simple ways we can save ourselves from the crushing vortex of 'busyness fatigue'. Along with Donna's previous book *The 25 Minute Meeting*, *The First 2 Hours* is a game changer.

—**Tracey Ezard**, Professional Triber,
Learning Culture expert, speaker, facilitator and
author of *Glue* and *The Buzz*

Imagine that there were ways to set ourselves up to have awesomely productive days every day—rather than those days where we are struggling to get through our to do list, and find ourselves spending hours outside of work getting our work done. Donna has written a deceptively simple book and shows how, with a few tweaks to our day, we can tap into our energy levels and work so much more productively and enjoyably. Donna continues to set the benchmark for helping us manage our productivity and time, first with *The 25 Minute Meeting* and now with *The First 2 Hours*. If you are looking for a practical, evidence-based guide to help you design your day and take back control of your life, you must read this.

—**Maree Burgess**, Trainer, executive coach,
facilitator and author of *The XX Project*
and *Connecting Us*

With much written about being our best, working at our optimum, needing more sleep and the problems with multi-tasking, *The First 2 Hours* gathers, presents and explains the leading thinking on what we need to be doing with the most important time of our day. Tasks, activities, self-assessments and tips, combine with practical advice that can be implemented immediately. Leaders and teams in organisations would do well to adopt the advice here to make significant gains personally and professionally. It's time to stop fighting for productivity and start going with the elements that science, experience, research and data say will help us truly be our best. Aaaaah ... it feels better already.

—**Lynne Cazaly**, Speaker, author and facilitator



THE FIRST 2 HOURS

Wiley 2019 ©

**MAKE BETTER USE
OF YOUR MOST
VALUABLE TIME**

**DONNA
McGEORGE**

WILEY

Contents

<i>About the author</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>How to use this book</i>	<i>xxvii</i>
Part I: Why the first 2 hours?	1
1 Discover what affects your capacity (and your day)	3
2 Lay the foundation for productivity	19
3 Design your best day	35
Part II: How to make the most of your first 2 hours	49
4 First 2 hours—Proactive	53
5 Second 2 hours—Reactive	69
6 Third 2 hours—Active	85
7 Fourth 2 hours—Preactive	103
<i>Your First 2 Hours clock</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Work with me</i>	<i>127</i>
<i>Sources</i>	<i>129</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>135</i>

About the author

Donna McGeorge makes work *work*.

She is passionate about enhancing the large amount of time we spend in our workplace (too much, for many) to ensure it is effective and productive, as well as enjoyable.

Donna has worked with managers and leaders throughout Australia and the Asia–Pacific for over 20 years. She delivers practical skills, training, workshops and facilitation to corporates—such as Nissan Motor Company, Jetstar, Medibank Private and Ford Motor Company—so they learn to manage their people well and produce great performance and results.

Her CV is as eclectic as her record collection (yes, classic vinyl). In addition to roles at Telstra, Qantas, Ernst & Young and Ansett, she has been Manager of Theatre, Sports & Concert Tours for the UK-based Keith Prowse, and Asia–Pacific Organisational Development Manager for Ford Motor Company in Shanghai, China.

Donna also shares her knowledge for good, writing articles for the likes of *The Age*, *Smart Company*, *B&T*, *HRM*, and other publications. *The First 2 Hours* is her second book; *The 25 Minute Meeting*, her first book, was published by John Wiley & Sons in 2018.

She runs her business from 20 acres in Heathcote, Victoria, a region known for its world-class shiraz, but her most creative moments come while sipping tea on her verandah and gazing at the rolling hills alongside her husband, Steve, and dog, Prudence.

Donna believes that workplaces are complex, but not hard to get on track. More often than not it's getting the simple things right, consistently, that has the greatest impact.

She also knows that when we decide to be intentional, we can surprise ourselves with what we can achieve. Read on and you'll soon see.

www.donnamcgeorge.com

Introduction

The alarm goes off and you jump out of bed towards the bathroom. You splash some water on your face and stare at your wardrobe trying to think of what to wear to the office. Wait—no time for that, you're going to miss your train!

The next hour is a blur of car parks and kid drop-offs. When you finally get to sit down on your commute, you open up your laptop and are horrified to see 100-plus new emails have pinged into your inbox.

In the following 30 minutes, you manage to delete 27 newsletters, reject 11 meeting invites and respond in detail to just two emails. It's only 8.30 am and your brain is fried.

By the time you get to the office you are *exhausted*, not to mention 10 minutes late to your first meeting.

Unfortunately, scenarios like this are all too common for all too many people.

We start off our day on the wrong foot, stressed and rushing for the door, only to open up our computers and be inundated with requests from other people and actions that take us away from our most valuable tasks for the day.

How can we expect to get a valuable day's work done if we start it by reacting to whatever is in our inbox or whoever is at our desk?

You're stuck in a vicious cycle: starting the day tired, doing the best you can through to the afternoon, working late, going home grumpy and then waking up the next morning to start the cycle all over again.

To try and fix the problem, you've been to endless time management courses and read all the productivity books in the world. Yet still, nothing seems to be working. The volume of your work is ever increasing, and you are now being asked to do more with less—I mean, c'mon!

The problem is that traditional time management theories haven't kept pace with modern workplace demands.

They focus too much on the *what* of our work. They require us to list all the tasks we need to do, then prioritise them according to what is most urgent and important—but what if *all* of your work is urgent and important?

We need to focus less on *what* we do, and more on *when* we do it.

In his book *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg explains that there are things that we can do upon waking that have a positive impact on our mental and physical wellbeing throughout the day. The same can be said for the habits we have in the first two hours of our working day.

There are things we are currently doing when we arrive at the office that drag us and our productivity down for the

entire day: checking our inbox, tidying our desk, responding to ‘urgent’ queries, discussing the football scores from the weekend or the latest exit from our favourite reality show. Sure, these things still hold a place in the day, but is first thing the best time to do them? That’s the question this book will answer.

What if I told you there are particular tasks that, if done first thing, would actually *add* value to your role and to your whole day?

Before you throw this book away in horror at the thought of not being able to grab a coffee on the way into work (I would never advocate that), what we’re talking about here is understanding that our mind and body have innate cycles that can help or hinder our productivity at certain times of the day.

What you’re about to discover is that there are optimum times for doing certain types of work—responding to emails, conducting meetings, devising next year’s strategy—not just in the first two hours of your day, but at all hours of the workday until home time.

So, while the first two hours of your day is important, the work doesn’t stop there.

Fortunately, the first two hours have a flow-on effect, so by understanding when you’re most alert or when you need some down time, and marrying that with the tasks you’ve got to do, you can become more productive. You can take yourself off autopilot and take back control of every hour of your day, doing the right work at the right time (even if you consider yourself a night owl).

You’re going to learn how to work with your natural rhythms, not against them, to fuel your productivity.

Just by making some small changes to our habits at specific times of the day, we can set ourselves up to be more efficient, effective and, well, happy!

The old adage of working smarter, not harder, is what is at play here. You will learn to make conscious choices about what you need to do, and then decide the best time to do it.

It's time to set yourself up for success with a different way of working throughout your day.

Ready?

Personal Productivity Quiz

Before we get started, it's important to get an understanding of what your current workday habits are.

Take this quick quiz, originally developed by the team at the blog I Done This and adapted with permission for use here.

Read the questions and circle the answer you feel sounds most like you. Be honest now, no cheating!

1. What do you generally do in the first two hours of your day?
 - A Drink coffee. I can't do or think about anything until I have had my coffee.
 - B Check my emails and start replying to them all before realising I was meant to be in a meeting five minutes ago.

- C** Check my emails, answer most of them immediately, then make a comprehensive to-do list that makes me feel immediately stressed.
- D** Check my emails, answer a couple, and then shut down my inbox and start on the day's most pressing tasks.
- E** Scan my email, and schedule time to respond to anything urgent or those that need a comprehensive answer. Check my schedule. Plan my day around what I want to achieve by the end.
2. When you get an unexpected project with a tight deadline, how do you feel?
- A** Totally flustered! It's not my fault that others can't get their act together.
- B** Okay. If my boss says it has to get done, I'll do it.
- C** Pumped! I love working fast against a deadline.
- D** Surprised but I'm ready for it. I like doing what needs to get done.
- E** Ready. I have a few things I need to shift around, but because I am generally on top of things, I can accommodate last-minute requests.
3. Your boss walks over to your desk on Monday with a long list of tasks due at the end of the week. What are you thinking?
- A** Seriously?! This is why I can never get on top of my own work.

(Continued)

Personal Productivity Quiz (cont'd)

- B** I'll drop everything and start on them right away.
 - C** I'll add them to my already packed to-do list.
 - D** Sure. I'll check out what needs to be done and work around that and/or do them later.
 - E** All right. I already have time for my most important things blocked out. I'll double check with the boss on the timing and prioritise them according to my schedule.
4. What's your favourite part of the workday?
- A** When I get to go home and eat dinner.
 - B** Don't really have one, any time I get a break I suppose.
 - C** Late afternoon. I feel the pressure of home time looming and that's when I get most of my work done.
 - D** Right after lunch. I feel so refreshed!
 - E** The morning, when I'm getting organised for the day.
5. Oh no! It's Wednesday, and you've just woken up with a stomach virus. Other than being physically ill, how do you feel?
- A** Justified. This is what happens when you are overworked.
 - B** I'm sick. I should stay home. Plus, the day off from work is nice.
 - C** Nervous and frustrated! It's going to be impossible to finish my to-do list.

D A little worried—I put off a lot to the end of the week, but I'll be able to get it done Thursday and Friday.

E Sick days are unfortunate but necessary. I'll be a little behind, but it's okay—that's why I stay on top of things.

6. On Monday, you have a day-long retreat from work. Instead of doing your job, you're going to be doing 'team-building activities' with your co-workers. How do you feel?

A Ugh! This will interfere with my 'real' work.

B Secretly excited. I get really invested in games.

C Nervous. It sounds like a good idea, but can I afford to lose a whole day?

D A little iffy on games, but if it will help the team.

E Looking forward to it. It's important to take time out from to work on our relationships and the bigger picture.

7. How do you behave in company meetings?

A Zone out. Most of our meetings are a waste of time.

B Try and stay focused while checking my email.

C Act as the meeting's scribe. After the meeting, I send out a comprehensive email, so everyone knows what they're responsible for.

D Take relevant notes and participate where necessary.

E Stay present. If it was important enough for me to accept and attend, I need to see how I can give and get value.

(Continued)

Personal Productivity Quiz (cont'd)

8. When do you drink caffeine?
- A All day, every day.
 - B Whenever I really need that extra boost to get on my game.
 - C Usually twice per day, at regularly scheduled times. Once in the morning and once in the afternoon.
 - D In the morning. Occasionally a cup in the afternoon if it's a busy day.
 - E When I feel like a treat and only as coffee. It's the thing I use to incentivise myself when I need a little more motivation.
9. You and your co-worker decide you need to set up a meeting with a client. What do you do?
- A Let your co-worker set up the meeting and accept it irrespective of what other meetings you have on. You can decide on the day the most important meeting to attend.
 - B Let your co-worker set up the meeting, and then find a way to work around it if it conflicts with something else.
 - C Let your co-worker set up a calendar invite. Then, the day of the meeting, prepare extensively.
 - D Agree who will send the calendar invite. Then, prepare for the meeting and meet with your co-worker briefly to ensure you're on the same page.

E Send the calendar invite to set up the meeting, along with an email detailing the meeting agenda. Then, schedule time to prepare for the meeting itself.

10. What kind of worker would you describe yourself as? (Be honest, please...)

A I do what is required but often find demands are unreasonable.

B I always do my work, but it takes a lot of late nights.

C I do the job well, but I have a hard time caring about it sometimes.

D I stay pretty on top of things, but it becomes increasingly harder the more tasks that are dished out.

E I am immensely organised. I am one of those sickening people who have colour-coded binders for projects, always keep their calendar up to date and use the diary handed out at the beginning of the year to track tasks.

Now tally up your results to see which letter you responded to most and see where you sit on the Deny to Design framework, as shown in figure A (overleaf).

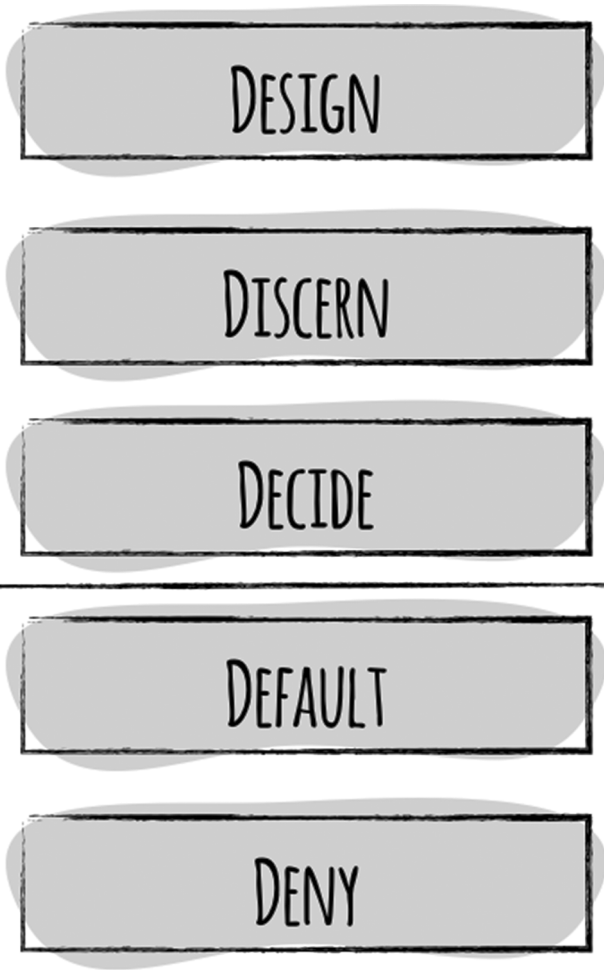


Figure A: the Deny to Design framework

MOSTLY A = DENY

'It's nothing to do with my productivity. It's the amount of work I have, or my boss, or my colleagues. There just isn't enough time in the day to get everything done.'

The funny thing about time is that everyone has the same amount, and yet some people seem to do so much better with what they have. In many respects it's like money. There are some people who earn relatively low salaries and still manage to build wealth and property portfolios. Then there are others who earn relatively *huge* salaries and don't have much to show for it. The feeling here is one of **helplessness** or **hopelessness**.

MOSTLY B = DEFAULT

'My work is controlled by others and I am at the mercy of my calendar and my workload. Shifting deadlines and demands of others determine my priorities.'

You are operating without any thought or direction. You are at the mercy of other people and their most important things. You don't think of your calendar as a resource, but as simply a way to keep track of all the appointments you have. It's likely that you are responding to things in a very reactive and unconsidered way. You experience feelings of **overwhelm**. You get to the end of a day or week and feel like you have been busy, but not productive.

MOSTLY C = DECIDE

'There has to be a better way. Perhaps I need to do a time management course!'

You realise that there is a different and better way of doing the work but have not yet figured it out. You try all sorts of time management or productivity courses but never seem to quite get there, as old habits are hard to break and new habits are hard to form. Often at this level we feel **fatigue**.

MOSTLY D = DISCERN

'Do I really have to be there or do that?'

You are getting there. You will be accepting meeting requests from others, but you are beginning to ask the question 'Do I really need to be there?' 'Is this work I really should be doing?' You are also starting to implement and see results from thinking and working more systematically. For example, you are using your email, calendar and tasks in a more integrated way, and starting to feel the benefits of that. We are starting to feel **hopeful**.

MOSTLY E = DESIGN

'I choose what I do, when I do it and how I do it. I'm still responsive to the needs of others and I am able to manage my workload effectively.'

You are the master of your domain! You use your calendar as a work resource and you allocate time accordingly. You choose what you do and when, and you feel under control.

You truly have life by design. You are clear on your priorities and you are able to make sound choices about what meetings you accept, what activities you undertake and with whom you spend your time. You likely feel **calm**, **centred** and **in control** most of the time.

§ § §

Unless you ticked E for each and every question, it's highly likely that you need to take some immediate action to improve how you prioritise and plan your work and your day. Good job you're here!

Let's help you do that—now.

How to use this book

This book mimics the way I run my workshops, corporate programs and hands-on sessions. It is practical and easy to read and navigate, so you can implement real, but simple, changes to the way you work.

This book is not designed to be a hefty tome you have trouble carrying around, or to be left on your bedside table to gather coffee-cup stains.

Rather, it has quick tips, real-life stories, lots of no-nonsense advice, questions to encourage you to reflect on how you're working now and how you could improve, and exercises to help you implement those changes.

My suggestion for working through this book is to keep it simple and achievable. Start small and work your way up to the bigger concepts. Read the book and choose one or two things that resonate strongly with you and start to action those almost immediately. (You will thank me for this when you see how simple it really is.)

Part I is about making the decision to work with your natural body clock and rhythms, why it's important and why it works. It will help you adopt the mindset required to make this change successful.

Part II shows you what you should be doing and when. It's about how to make the best use of not just your most valuable time, but all your time. It is the heart of this book, packed with lots of tools and techniques to help you be more productive and effective.

After that you can engage with me and other First 2 Hours folks at www.thefirst2hours.com.au or www.facebook.com/thefirst2hours where we share stories, ideas and more tools to help keep you and your team productive and on track.

And throughout this book you will find humour—because work should be enjoyable, not a chore. And reading a book should be a pleasure, not a pain!

So please read, implement, experiment and have fun being more productive!

PART I

**WHY THE
FIRST
2 HOURS?**

Wiley 2019 ©



Many of our productivity problems come about because we are operating on autopilot. We don't think about what, when or even why we are doing things; we just do them in the order in which the tasks came to us, or how they're written on our to-do list.

Just like the default settings of a computer program, our brain also has ingrained settings that it operates with: if I'm hungry, I eat; if I'm afraid, I run. These settings are designed to keep us alive.

Yet some of our less instinctive settings have been developed over years of learning, repetition and reward: in the morning, I check my email; in the afternoon, I hold our department meeting.

It can be very difficult to change settings that feel like they are hardwired. It takes understanding, discipline and practice. But you can do it.

More importantly, there is good reason to do it!

Even though you may be programmed to do things at a certain time because of habit, you are doing yourself a disservice.

When you learn how your body clock works, then you start to understand that there are optimal times for better brain performance at work. This means you can schedule the types of tasks you do to make the best use of your most productive time.

It starts with the first two hours of your day, and continues every two hours after that.

Read on to find out why there are good, better and best times of the day to do particular things, and how you can reprogram yourself to take advantage of that.

CHAPTER 1

Discover what affects your capacity (and your day)

So how do you currently spend the first two hours of your day?

Go on and think about it now.

I bet the first thing you do (like most of us) is open your email and see what pops up. Then, before you know it, it's 1 pm and you're *still* responding to emails or reacting to requests.

NEWSFLASH! You are letting email dictate your day.

Right now, you're wasting your energy and your most productive time on email, instead of on the real work you have to do.

Whether you are conscious of it or not, those emails you have read, replied to or filed create distractions for the rest of the day and make you unproductive. You have given up control of your effectiveness.

Don't worry—this book is not about being anti-email. After all, that's the way most of us communicate at work. What I am saying is that there's a time and a place for everything.

You need to start consciously thinking about the types of tasks you do throughout the day, when you do those tasks and whether you are making the best use of your most valuable time.

Why it's about *when*

There are good scientific reasons as to why we need to pay attention to *when* we do specific things at work.

A lot of this can be explained by jet lag.

When we travel across different time zones, we mess with our body's natural rhythms, known as circadian rhythms.

This is what creates feelings of fatigue and disorientation, and often results in insomnia at 3 am. Shiftworkers, who don't work a typical nine-to-five day, may also experience this quite frequently.

It's when we mess with our body's natural rhythm that we begin to have problems.

That's why we need to do our most important work when our body—and brain—is most awake, alert and ready for action.

For most of us, our most productive time will be first thing in the morning. Then by the afternoon our body and brain will be ready to switch to some routine tasks.

This is best explained by figure 1.1 (overleaf), which is based on the work (likely done in the morning) of Michael Smolensky and Lynne Lambert, published in their book *The Body Clock Guide to Better Health*. It shows a typical circadian rhythm.

As you can see, for the majority of us our peak alertness is at 10 am and our best coordination is at around 2.30 pm.

Tasks that require attention and focus are best done in the morning, and repetitive tasks that require coordination are best done in the afternoon.

So again, let's pause and consider the way you currently work in a typical day.

How does that match up?

If you are like most, you rush through your day from one crisis to another, answering as many emails as you can in the gaps between pointless meetings. It's likely that when you get home from work, you will spend the evening inhaling coffee to stay awake, catching up on correspondence, preparing

The First 2 Hours

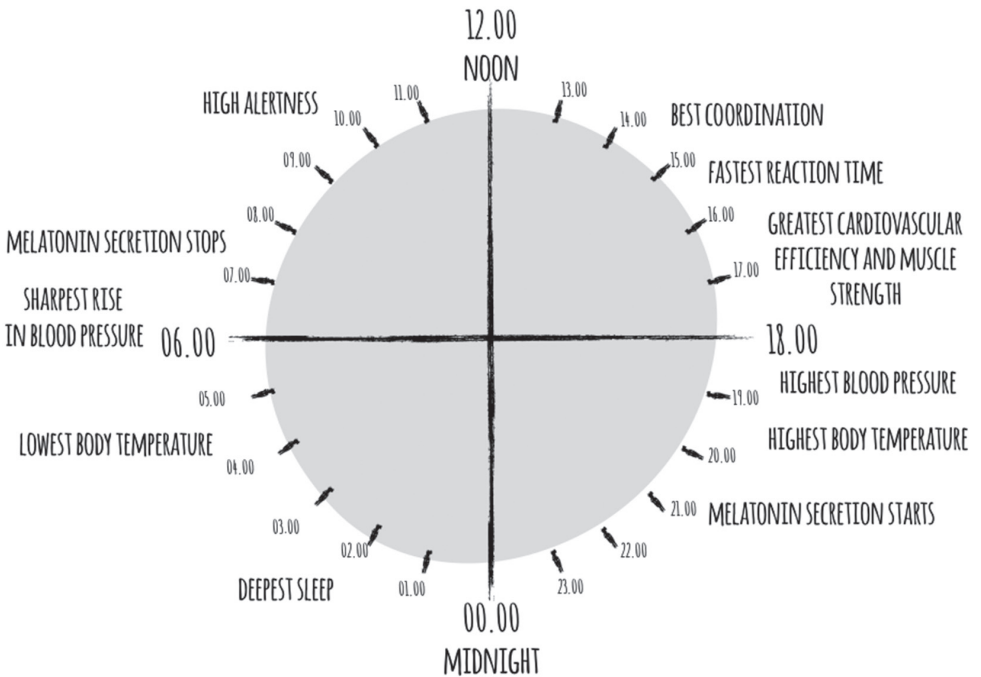


Figure 1.1: typical body clock

Adapted from *The Body Clock Guide to Better Health*
by Michael Smolensky and Lynne Lamberg

presentations for the next day, and getting work done at a time when your body wants to slow down and rest.

You're stuck in a vicious cycle, and it's doing you more harm than good.

Just like what happens with jet lag, if you continue to mess with your natural rhythms you will begin to interrupt your routine sleep habits. This is why it's hard to switch off at night.

We need to pay more attention to the clock in our bodies than the clock on the wall.

I can't decide!

Ever noticed that as the day wears on, your patience (and fuse) in meetings or discussions becomes shorter and more erratic?

If you look at the body clock in figure 1.1, then you'll see why.

At 3 pm when you've been asked to decide between option A or option B—something that could cost the company millions if you're wrong—you've probably sighed and said something like, 'Let's just go with option A and move on.'

When you leave important decisions until the afternoon, then your cognitive alertness is impaired and it's more likely you'll be reactive ('You should be able to make that choice yourself!'), because you're feeling tired from having worked all day.

My friend Sonia says that the one thing that drives her nuts as a working parent is when she gets home from work: the first question she's asked is 'What's for dinner?'

After a day of solving complex problems and negotiating million-dollar deals, she just doesn't have the energy to figure out what everyone is going to eat.

Making important calls, having important discussions and doing important work should be done in the morning before you suffer from 'whatever syndrome', aka decision fatigue.

Just stop and think about this for a minute. For many of us, our jobs require that we make decisions—in fact, it's why we are hired as a leader in the first place! We need good knowledge, experience and the ability to make a sound judgement in our area of expertise.

If you are not making good decisions, then you are putting your career at risk.

Decision fatigue affects everything you stand for, and everything that you, as a manager or leader, are employed for!

One study by Cornell University showed that we make around 200 decisions each day about food alone! Is it any wonder that we are exhausted by the time we have to approve the \$1.5-million budget?

This is compounded by the fact that we make decisions every time we open, read and action an email. So, if the email is spam, and the decision we are making is to delete it, that decision uses up options we may need later when we need to formulate a more considered response.

Just think: if we only had 100 decisions available to us before our judgement became impaired, how many of these would we be wasting on email every morning?

When your mental energy is low, depleted by making lots of decisions throughout the day, your brain starts to try and find ways to shortcut thinking. This can result in reckless decisions. Or you might avoid making the decision altogether.

This also explains why some of us lose our temper, make impulse purchases, buy junk food or do something that makes you later think, ‘Why on earth did I do that?’

Our self-control wears down, and trying to do too much means we don’t end up doing anything well at all. We may even shut down mentally and just accept the status quo.

Both are bad when it comes to work. We don’t want our leaders or managers lacking self-control and making reckless or poorly considered decisions, nor do we want people doing nothing!

This is exactly the reason why Barack Obama only wore blue or grey suits while he was the US president—to save his energy for the world’s most pressing and important decisions.

Time it right

The evidence shows that our body clock has a natural rhythm and we’re often working against it, not with it.

Recent studies show that timing is everything:

- » In a 2016 study titled ‘Diurnal Variations in Executives’ and Analysts’ Behavior: Evidence from Conference Calls’, researchers found that CEOs who had meetings about earnings with analysts and shareholders were more likely to be upbeat and positive

in the mornings. The tone grew more negative as the day progressed. This was an alarming finding, as much of an organisation's value could be determined by how those conversations went.

- » The 2011 report 'Temporal Patterns of Happiness and Information in a Global Social Network: Hedonometrics and Twitter' studied Twitter users over a two-year period, finding a pattern that indicated users felt more active, engaged and hopeful in the morning. This plummeted in the middle of the day, and then rose back up again in the early evening. Culture and day of the week had no impact on the findings.
- » Another study published in the journal *Emotion* asked over 900 women to choose from a list of adjectives (happy, frustrated, annoyed, enjoying myself, and so on) to characterise how they felt at certain times of the day. The results were almost identical to the Twitter study in the previous point: overwhelmingly, people felt happier in the mornings.

The results are in.

**We are happier, more alert, optimistic,
considered and energetic during the first few
hours of our day, and certainly before midday.**

**We need to design our day to take advantage
of that!**

Early bird or night owl?

My friend Rebecca is a 'morning person'. She gets up at 4 am each day. After a coffee and some breakfast, she starts work at 4.30 am and gets her best work done before 7 am. She is

usually in bed by 9 pm to accommodate this, but says she can't imagine working any other way.

Another mate, Sharon, gets her best work done between 9 pm and 1 am. She generally goes to bed around 2 am, and, while she gets up around 8 am, she still feels slow until about 9. She needs a lot of coffee in the morning to get going and doesn't feel like she's really at her best until about 1 pm.

Curious about the rest of the people in my world, I posed the following questions on Facebook:

Are you a morning person or an evening person?

What time of day do you feel at your best and most productive?

Of the 76 responses, 67 per cent identified as morning people, and 33 per cent as evening.

The most productive time of day (on average) was 9 am, with most people giving two or three hours of productivity sometime between 5 am and midday.

These results are consistent with most research findings, a lot of which employ the Morning Eveningness Questionnaire, developed by James A Horne and Olov Östberg in 1976. Its main purpose is to measure whether a person's circadian rhythm produces peak alertness in the morning, evening or in between.

Apparently, it is not strictly an either/or question, but rather a spectrum. So some people are more extreme night owls, and some extreme early birds (or 'larks').

While the results vary from study to study, in a normal population:

- » between 10 per cent and 21 per cent of people are extreme night owls—surviving on minimal sleep and working late into the early morning
- » around 20 per cent are extreme early birds—up, alert and working before many of us have hit the snooze button for the first time
- » about 70 per cent are ‘normal’—at our most alert between the hours of 9 am and 12 pm.

Statistically then, true night owls are rare.

You may be burning the candle at both ends, which is making you feel tired in the mornings, or you have a job that requires you to work long into the evening (those US conference calls are killers), forcing you to sleep later in the day. Worse yet, you could be messing with your body clock, scrolling through your phone at night.

So if you do your best work at night, then it's worth considering if you're really a night owl or if your schedule or lifestyle is making you one.

Last 2 minutes

We are more alert, cheerful and energetic in the morning, and we suffer with decision fatigue by the end of the day. Hence, we need to think about our work schedule more through the lens of *when* we are doing it, rather than *what* we are doing.

Understanding your circadian rhythm means you can start working with your body and mind rather than pushing yourself against it—that's what Experiment 1 (page 15) will help you with.



**TIMING
TIP**

Don't fight nature. Work with your body clock,
not against it.

A time for everything

In an actual experiment by the Israeli parole board, three prisoners who had completed around two-thirds of their sentences were ordered to appear before the parole board (consisting of a judge, a criminologist and a social worker).

Read the following examples and guess who you think was the most likely to get their freedom, and why.

1. Case 1 (heard at 8.50 am): An Arab Israeli serving a 30-month sentence for fraud.
2. Case 2 (heard at 3.10 pm): A Jewish Israeli serving a 16-month sentence for assault.
3. Case 3 (heard at 4.25 pm): An Arab Israeli serving a 30-month sentence for fraud.

If you guessed Case 1 you would be correct. Despite the fact that the prisoner had the same sentence for the same crime as Case 3, being heard in the morning increased his odds of a favourable decision.

After analysing more than 1000 decisions, it was discovered that prisoners who appeared early in the morning received parole about 70 per cent of the time, while those who appeared late in the day were paroled less than 10 per cent of the time.

This famous study concluded that crime, sentence and ethnic background had little or no bearing on the decision. What had the biggest impact was the time of day that the hearing took place.



EXPERIMENT 1

In his book *When*, Daniel Pink suggests that the simplest way to identify your natural work inclination, or chronotype, is to answer three simple questions:

1. What time do you generally go to bed at night?
2. What time do you generally wake up in the mornings?
3. What is the midpoint between those two times?

For example, if you normally go to bed at 10 pm and wake up at 6 am, your midpoint is 2 am.

Use figure 1.2 (overleaf) to identify your chronotype.

This is of course according to the rule of ‘all things being equal’. If you are a shift worker, or if you have recently returned from an overseas trip and your body clock is a bit out of whack, then the results may not be accurate for you. Instead, you could try the free and anonymous online Circadian Rhythm Type Test (AutoMEQ).

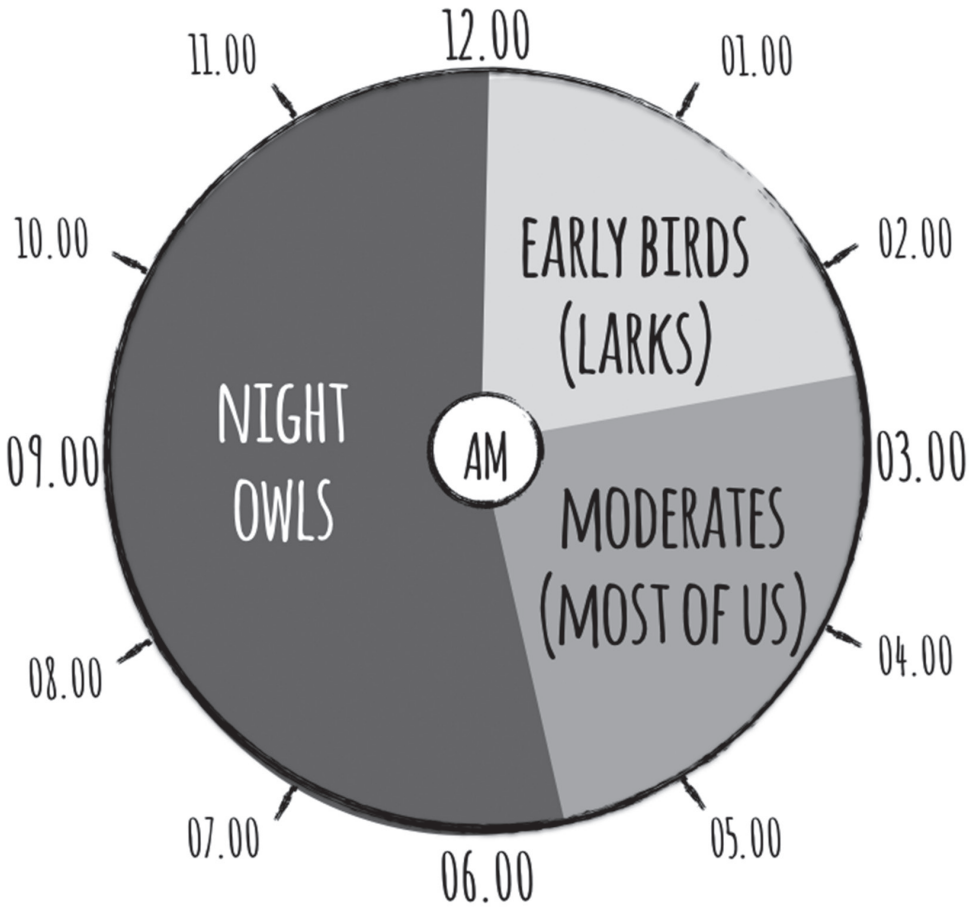
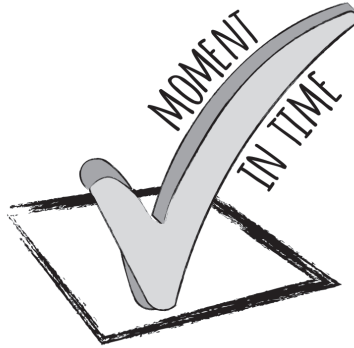


Figure 1.2: your chronotype



Track how you currently spend your time.

- » **Keep a list for a week of what you do and when.**
- » **Start from the moment you wake up, and continue until you go to bed.**
- » **Use table 1.1 to help you. Download the template from www.thefirst2hours.com.au. It's okay to generalise and say 'email' or 'meetings' for a few hours. If you need to, cast your mind back to one or two days last week, and simply capture what you did.**
- » **Analyse the list. What do you find?**
- » **Make some adjustments to what you are doing (it could be as simple as going to bed an hour earlier) to improve your productivity.**

Table 1.1: track your time

Time	Activity
7.30 am	Wake up
8.00 am	Gym
9.00 am	Arrive at work—emails for about 1.5 hours

First published in 2019 by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd
42 McDougall St, Milton Qld 4064

Office also in Melbourne

Typeset in 12/15pt Bembo Std

© John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd 2019

The moral rights of the author have been asserted



A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the Australian Copyright Act 1968 (for example, a fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review), no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, communicated or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All inquiries should be made to the publisher at the address above.

Cover design by Wiley

Cover image © Rashad Ashur / Shutterstock

Printed in Singapore by C.O.S. Printers Pte Ltd

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Disclaimer

The material in this publication is of the nature of general comment only, and does not represent professional advice. It is not intended to provide specific guidance for particular circumstances and it should not be relied on as the basis for any decision to take action or not take action on any matter which it covers. Readers should obtain professional advice where appropriate, before making any such decision. To the maximum extent permitted by law, the author and publisher disclaim all responsibility and liability to any person, arising directly or indirectly from any person taking or not taking action based on the information in this publication.

IT'S ABOUT
TIME



Get on top of busyness

Donna McGeorge's *It's About Time* series will change the way you think about time, forever!

With *The 25-Minute Meeting*, you'll learn to give your meetings purpose and stop them wasting your time; with *The First 2 Hours*, you'll find the best time of the day to do your most productive work; and with *The 1-Day Refund*, you'll discover how to give yourself the extra capacity to think, breathe, live and work.

It's time to get your life back—one minute at a time.

Wiley 2019 ©



GET MORE DONE WITH YOUR DAY

The First 2 Hours is essential reading for anyone seeking to enhance their efficiency and avoid common productivity traps. Author Donna McGeorge draws on research from neuroscience, energy flow and the body's natural rhythms, to reveal how to divide your workday into 2-hour blocks to match the level of intensity and impact required.

Learn how to:

- recognise the habits holding you back
- maximise your first 2 hours and set yourself up for daily success
- build on your body's strengths for better performance
- track your patterns and create a personalised workflow
- discover the optimum time of day for new business, meetings, emails, projects and more.

The way you plan your day is the key to your productivity and *The First 2 Hours* shows you how to do great work, consistently.


DONNA McGEORGE is a speaker, author and mentor who helps people make their work work. Using a creative, practical approach, she improves workplace effectiveness while challenging thinking on leadership, productivity and virtual work.

www.donnamcgeorge.com

Cover Design: Wiley
Cover Image: © Rashad Ashur/Shutterstock

www.wiley.com

WILEY

 Also available
as an e-book

PRODUCTIVITY

ISBN 978-0-730-35959-3



9 780730 359593

IT'S ABOUT
TIME



THE

25

**MINUTE
MEETING**

**FREE
CHAPTER**

**HALF THE TIME
DOUBLE THE IMPACT**

**DONNA
McGEORGE**

WILEY

As a leader of busy teams, it's important to me to continue finding ways to balance productivity at work with what's important to all of us outside the office ... life! Barack Obama, Elon Musk and Bill Gates are amongst those that have offered practical tips on how to make meetings more productive, but it's trusted team facilitator and workplace performance guru, Donna McGeorge who really brings it altogether in this great read on how to practically reduce the many, many, many, (...many) unproductive hours we spend in meetings for meetings' sake. I thought I'd hit a personal best getting some of my meetings to 45 minutes but clearly there's room to improve!

— **Cath Stone**, Director Donor Services,
Red Cross Blood Service

Immediately useful. At least three changes I can make this week to get more out of the meetings I need to be at, and get out of those I don't.

— **Anne-Marie Johnson**, ACA, GAICD, Director
Professional Services

For a large number of modern day executives meetings are a necessary evil—whether global, regional or local, conducted face to face or virtually across multiple time zones, meetings are a way of life. Unfortunately, many meetings don't achieve the intended purpose of communication, alignment or execution while wasting valuable time and energy! I applaud *The 25 Minute Meeting* which tackles not just the 'why' of meetings but also the 'how' of saving 35 minutes per traditional 60-minute meeting!

— **Daryl Mahon**, Vice President Human Resources - Ford
Australia & New Zealand, Ford Motor Company

Meetings are a highly luxurious, even decedent way to get work done. When we get a bunch of people together for a chunk of time, we ought to ensure that we maximise this time. But unfortunately, we often don't. We too often get too many people together for too long with no clear focus or process to achieve the outcomes. In *The 25 Minute Meeting*, Donna McGeorge shows you how to half the length of your meetings, and double their impact. Full of practical strategies that work, this little book packs a big punch. Give this to everyone you meet with and change the meeting culture around you today.

— **Dermot Crowley**, thought leader and best-selling author of *Smart Teams* and *Smart Work*

It is rare that you can read a book, immediately apply practical advice tips and tools and change the way you work. If meetings continue to be a drain on your time, give this book a try—a great read.

— **Gayle Antony**, General Manager, Global Learning and Development, Nissan Motor Company

The 25 Minute Meeting is the game changer for organisations and leaders to get laser focused on what matters. The default one-hour meetings mean people aren't thinking consciously about what the purpose of the meeting is or what the ideal outcome needs to be. In a world of trying to do more with less, *The 25 Minute Meeting* is the disruptor to create a productive and high performing team.

— **Jane Anderson**, Australia's most awarded personal branding expert, author of 5 books, certified speaker, mentor to industry leaders

Wiley 2022 ©

**THE
25
MINUTE
MEETING**
**HALF THE TIME
DOUBLE THE IMPACT**
**DONNA
McGEORGE**

WILEY

Contents

<i>About the author</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>How to use this book</i>	<i>xxi</i>
Part I: Why meet in 25 minutes	1
1 Meetings are painful	3
2 It's easier than you think	13
3 There's nothing to lose	21
Part II: How to conduct 25-minute meetings	31
4 Set up	35
5 Show up	67
6 Step up	89
Part III: Add value to your 25-minute meetings	121
7 Get virtual	125
8 Add variety	135
9 Think visual	147
<i>Your 25-minute meeting roadmap</i>	<i>161</i>
<i>Work with me</i>	<i>167</i>
<i>Sources</i>	<i>169</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>173</i>

About the author

Donna McGeorge makes work *work*.

She is passionate about enhancing the large amount of time we spend in our workplace (too much, for many) to ensure it is effective and productive, as well as enjoyable.

Donna has worked with managers and leaders throughout Australia and Asia–Pacific for over 20 years. She delivers practical skills, training, workshops and facilitation to corporates—such as Nissan Motor Company, Jetstar, Medibank Private and Ford Motor Company—so they learn to manage their people well and produce great performance and results.

Her CV reads like her eclectic record collection (yes, classic vinyl): Manager of Theatre, Sports & Concert Tours for the UK-based Keith Prowse; Asia–Pacific Organisational Development Manager for Ford Motor Company in Shanghai, China; as well as roles at Telstra, Qantas, Ernst & Young and Ansett.

She lives on 20 acres in Heathcote, Victoria, a region known for its world-class shiraz, but her most creative moments come while sipping tea on her verandah, gazing at the rolling hills, alongside her husband, Steve, and dog, Prudence.

Donna believes that workplaces are complex, but not hard. More often than not it's getting the simple things right, consistently, that has the greatest impact.

She also knows that when we decide to be intentional, we can surprise ourselves with what we can achieve. Read on and you'll soon see.

www.donnamcgeorge.com

Introduction

We all know it.

Meetings suck.

They suck up our energy and enthusiasm for life at work.

Many of us are time-poor, stressed out, overwhelmed and on the verge of ‘death by meetings’. Our calendars are full of irrelevant or tedious back-to-back ‘catch-ups’ and our email is overloaded with messages screaming for attention.

Every time we get a chance to breathe and catch up on some ‘real work’, our computers *ding!* to remind us of another pointless meeting that is starting in five minutes.

Last year, I put the following post up on Facebook:

Meetings seem to be the de facto way of working yet they aren't always as effective as they could be. In fact, most people roll their eyes at the mention of meetings ... I'm researching for my new book and would love to know what is the one thing you HATE MOST about workplace meetings?

Top 10 meeting pet peeves

Here are the top 10 responses I got back:

- » That you have a meeting to get ready for the meeting, and a meeting after to go over the meeting (like having to clean the house before the house cleaner comes).
- » People showing up late. People showing up unprepared. People showing up who don't need to be there. People not showing up at all.
- » An agenda not sent in sufficient time to allow people to prepare properly. Then, not even sticking to the agenda. Or lacking a clear commitment to time frames set for the agenda.
- » Looking at phones rather than being present.
- » People who leave midway because they have 'more important matters'. (They tend to be serial offenders.)
- » Managers who turn up late while everyone sits around waiting, like their time is far more important.
- » Lack of clarity as to the purpose of the meeting.
- » Never having time OUTSIDE meetings to get anything done. Senior managers seem triple booked from nine until five, and they are exhausting themselves after hours trying to 'work'.
- » A meeting that gets hijacked by two people who spend the group's shared meeting time discussing something that should be discussed at another time between just the two of them.
- » Lack of clear action items. Like, what are we supposed to do next?

This list is by no means exhaustive. As more people saw the post, the more (and angrier) responses I got back.

It's time to stop the meeting madness.

What I'm about to show you is that you don't have to suffer like this. There is a solution to all of this meeting mess, and it's a lot simpler than you might think.

We need meetings. We need them at work because when they work, they are valuable. Clear actions get set, decisions are made and the whole business moves forward.

But what we don't need is for meetings to waste our time, money and resources.

What we need is a 25-minute meeting. A meeting that is short, sharp and productive. A meeting that gets the job done efficiently. A meeting that gets more value in way less time.

Stop for a minute and look at your calendar. How many of your meetings are 60 minutes or more? By choosing to do 25-minute meetings, you will free up a large chunk of time to get your day-to-day work done. Or even just have space to think!

Too often I have heard people say that they spend all day in meetings, so their evenings (when they should be with their families, friends or enjoying leisure time) are spent doing their actual work or catching up on emails they have missed.

With 25-minute meetings, your team members and colleagues will thank you for the time you gift them back.

Your organisation will thank you for the money you will save them—around \$5775 per week, if you do the following maths.

According to Glass Door, a company that provides average salary information across a range of roles and industries, the average salary of a manager is \$110 000.

They say that there are approximately 75 people at this level in a number of large organisations, and they spend between 35 per cent and 50 per cent of their time in meetings.

For the sake of simplicity, let's work with a 40-hour week. ('Dreaming!' I hear you say; but stay with me.) Say 7 managers spend about 15 hours per week (or 3 hours per day) in meetings. Here's what it will cost:

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbf{7 \text{ managers} \times} \\ & \mathbf{\$55 \text{ per hour} \times} \\ & \mathbf{15 \text{ hours per week} =} \\ & \mathbf{\$5775 \text{ per week}} \end{aligned}$$

Remember, that's just in a week. Imagine how serious these numbers start to get over the course of a year. AND this is not taking into account any opportunity cost!

In fact, a 2014 Bain & Company study of time budgeting at large corporations found that a single weekly meeting of midlevel managers was costing one organisation \$15 million a year!

It is such a big problem that *Harvard Business Review* has even developed a Meeting Cost Calculator app to help you figure out exactly how much meetings drain your bottom line.

This level of spending in any other context would be tightly controlled by the finance team. Yet someone as junior as the current intern can be responsible for setting up and running a weekly team meeting that consistently and constantly brings down teams, the whole organisation, without any regulation.

This is why we must get more frugal in both our time and costs. This is why we must meet in 25 minutes.

The very idea of this might be enough to make you laugh. You'll say, 'Twenty-five minutes, is she serious? Like that could ever be done.'

Well, I am here to show you that not only is it possible, but it is plausible.

Together, we'll start a meeting revolution.

Are you ready to rework the way you meet?

Bad meeting habit checklist

Take this checklist to your next meeting. How many of these bad meeting habits do you see?

- There was no reason for us to meet. This could have been done without bringing a bunch of people together around a table.
- The people present were not actually able to make a decision or move the topic forward. They still had to go and 'check' with someone else.
- People were late, technology didn't work or we had to call people on their mobiles to check if they were coming or not.

- People were distracted during the meeting, accessing their phones, tablets or computers to check email, messages or take a call.
- There was no clear agenda.
- There was no clear process.
- I contemplated why I was at this meeting.
- We had to schedule an additional meeting because time ran out while we were all skirting around the subject.
- Most of us arrived from other meetings with no time to gather our thoughts and be mentally ready for the topic at hand.
- The presenter at the meeting simply read the slides to the participants, and we all zoned out.

If you ticked more than three boxes on this list, it's likely that you need to take some action to improve your meetings. Read on!

How to use this book

This book mimics the way I run my workshops, corporate programs and hands-on sessions. It is practical and easy to read and navigate so you can implement real, but simple, changes to the way you meet.

This book is not designed to be a hefty tome you have trouble carrying around, or to be left on your bedside table to gather coffee cup stains.

Rather, it has quick tips, real-life stories, lots of no-nonsense advice, questions to reflect on how you're working now and how you could improve, and exercises to help you implement those changes.

My suggestion for working through this book is to keep it simple and achievable. Start small and work your way up to the bigger concepts. Read the book and choose one or two things that resonate strongly with you and start to action those almost immediately. (You will thank me for this when you see how simple it really is.)

Part I is about making the decision to have 25-minute meetings, why it's important and why it works. It will help you adopt the mindset required to make them successful.

Part II shows you how to set up a 25-minute meeting, how to show up at one and how to step up and get everyone else to contribute value, too. This is the heart of this book, packed with lots of tools and techniques to help you make your meetings productive and effective. This is what will make you successful at running 25-minute meetings.

Part III is for when your 25-minute meetings are working well and you are ready to take it another step further to maximise the value of each and every meeting, so you increase your overall impact.

After that you can engage with me and other 25-minute meeting folks at www.the25minutemeeting.com, where we share stories, ideas and more tools to help keep you and your team productive and on track.

Throughout the book you will find humour—because work should be enjoyable, not a chore. Meeting with our colleagues should be fun, not brain-numbing. And reading a book should be a pleasure, not a pain!

So please read, implement, experiment and have fun running meetings!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna" with a long, sweeping underline.

PART I

**WHY MEET
IN 25
MINUTES**



Imagine a world where, as you walk down a corridor, you think to yourself, ‘Gosh I’m looking forward to this meeting’.

I know, you might chuckle now, but soon you’ll be grinning from ear to ear.

The 25-minute meeting method promises to halve the amount of time you spend in a meeting while doubling the value of that time.

But the first step is to understand why what you are doing now is not working, and what you need to do to change things. Only then will you be able to transform from running painful meetings to purposeful meetings; to switch from being on autopilot to being an action hero.

As you’ll soon see, 25 minutes is not some arbitrary number conjured up from the heavens. There is both an art and a science to this.

So get ready, because in part I, we change your current meeting mindset from 60 minutes or more to just 25.

CHAPTER 1

Meetings are painful

Think of the last meeting you ran or attended.

Would you say it was purposeful, mindful or even useful?

Did you leave feeling energised?

Could you say it was a good use of your time?

If you answered ‘yes’ to these questions, then you are among the lucky 10 per cent of those who say meetings make a positive difference to their work—but wait! Before you throw away this book with a satisfied smile, let me ask you: Why did you pick it up in the first place?

If you’re reading a book on how to improve your meetings then I’d say those meetings you say are useful may still not be up to scratch.

Most of us will find ourselves in with the other 90 per cent who say that meetings are frequently wasteful, woeful and painful. One study by Clarizen, a software company, even found that people would rather take a trip to the department of motor vehicles (DMV) or watch paint dry than attend a workplace meeting. Apparently, 8 per cent of responders said they'd rather endure a root canal!

The status quo

I once heard a very senior leader in a global organisation remark, 'You can have a long career here by going from one meeting to another and never actually doing any real work'.

In most organisations, an employee's success (or failure) is measured against key performance indicators (KPIs). I have yet to see a KPI that says, 'attend heaps of boring and ineffective meetings'.

And yet there is an expectation that people will do just that, on top of getting their task-driven KPIs done.

This requirement to attend poorly executed meetings while also managing to get stuff done is what drives down employee engagement scores and drives up feelings of discouragement.

Much of the data available says that between 25 and 67 per cent of us say meetings are a waste of time.

For example, a Harvard survey of 182 senior managers in a range of industries found:

- » 65 per cent said meetings keep them from completing their own work

- » 71 per cent said meetings are unproductive and inefficient
- » 64 per cent said meetings come at the expense of deep thinking
- » 62 per cent said meetings miss opportunities to bring the team closer together.

We sit through meetings, wishing we were somewhere else, doing something else.

A meagre 33 per cent of meetings are actually useful, mindful or purposeful.

What kind of meetings are you having now?

Let's do a quick check-in on the kinds of meetings people have. Figure 1.1 on page 7 shows how often each kind occurs.

1. PAINFUL

I don't even know why I am going.

There is rarely anything useful accomplished; participation is constrained by lack of purpose and/or process. I don't think I should even be in the meeting because nothing relates to me.

2. WOEFUL

I only go because I feel obliged.

These meetings are destructive and counterproductive to getting any work done. They have a negative return on the investment of attending, yet still I feel like it's my job to go.

3. WASTEFUL

I go even though I know it will be a waste of time.

There is wanton and flagrant misuse of people's time, effort and the organisation's resources. I try to avoid these meetings at all costs and make all kinds of excuses to miss them.

4. USEFUL

I don't complain about going, but I don't like them either.

Sometimes, I get a return on my time investment with one or two things. Maybe half of the contributions are relevant.

5. MINDFUL

I go and cooperate; for the most part the time is well spent.

Thought has been given to the agenda and attendees and for the most part good work is done. On many occasions, I am pleasantly surprised by these meetings.

6. PURPOSEFUL

I walk out feeling energised — and surprised!

All of us bring energy into the space, and we communicate well. Ideas spark off each other. There is genuine collaboration providing 100 per cent return on the time investment (if not more). Dare I say it, they are often even fun.

Meetings are painful

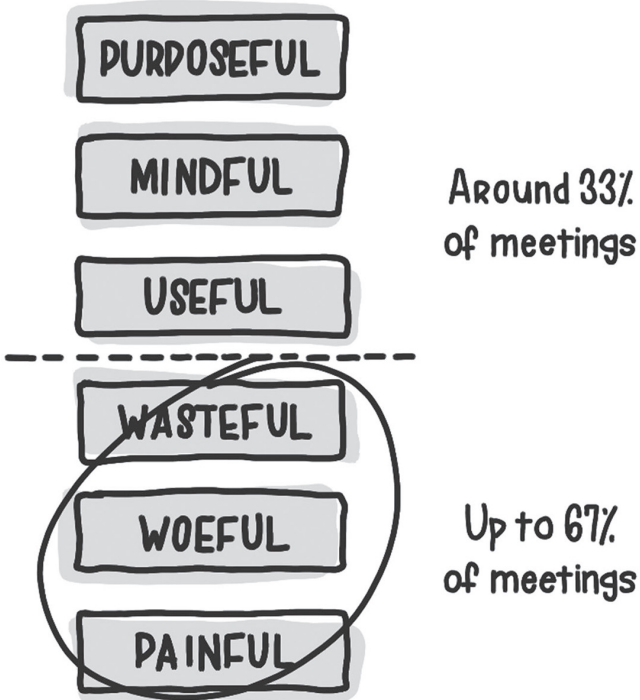


Figure 1.1: the kinds of meetings

Now, which type of meeting would you rather sit through?

Great! Me too.

So, the first step to running a purposeful meeting is to remember that we as humans are social creatures. We put a lot of importance on team work, team spirit, and how we feel about our colleagues. We want to like our work mates, and therefore the way we meet with everyone in our organisation should not only reflect that, but encourage it.

§ § §

Before we head on to chapter 2, let's assess how you're running your meetings now, and what needs to change to improve them.

Wiley 2022 ©



Be playful

Purposeful doesn't have to mean serious or boring.

Getting carded

Why do we expect and accept that meetings will be dull?

A client once told me, 'That's just the way it is. It's the nature of our business. Our stuff is dull'.

So I challenged him to think of ways to make them more fun and enjoyable.

He introduced yellow cards and red cards to his meetings (he's a big soccer fan). Each team member was given a set of coloured cards and they could flash them at any time. A yellow card signalled, 'We have spent enough time on this, let's move on', while a red card meant, 'Out of order'.

In the past, most people would sigh, have side conversations, or check their email when things weren't moving along. But the cards empowered them to let everyone know the meeting was veering off course without seeming rude or confrontational. By about the fourth meeting after implementing the card system, they had got over all the card flashing and laughter of the initial few meetings, and settled into a routine.

But the jovial nature of the meetings remained and the constant threat of being 'carded', plus the shortened time frame, made for fun, engaged, productive and purposeful meetings.



EXPERIMENT 1

Draw table 1.1 in your notebook and quietly score the meetings you attend over the next week or two.

Score as follows:

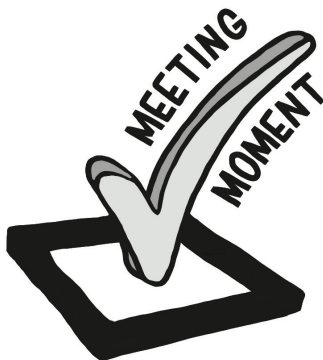
1. if the meeting was Painful
2. if the meeting was Woeful
3. if the meeting was Wasteful
4. if the meeting was Useful
5. if the meeting was Mindful
6. if the meeting was Purposeful

Revisit the bad meeting habit checklist on pages xix–xx. How many of these habits did you see? How did they contribute to your score?

As you begin to implement the 25-minute meeting strategies, tools and techniques, revisit this exercise and notice how these numbers start to improve.

Table 1.1: meeting scores

Meeting information (title, who was there, date, etc.)	Score out of 6 & reason
<i>E.g. WIP meeting, marketing team, 03.05</i>	<i>E.g. 1, The topic of discussion was on a project I have no involvement with.</i>



Begin to think about how you might transform bad meetings to good.

- » **Pay attention to what percentage of your time is currently spent on each of the meeting types: painful, woeful, wasteful, useful, mindful, purposeful. Use the experiment worksheet to help score your meetings over the next few weeks.**
- » **Notice how much of this is within your control (or not).**
- » **Think about what you could change right now to make your meetings more purposeful and playful.**

IT'S ABOUT
TIME



Get on top of busyness

Donna McGeorge's *It's About Time* series will change the way you think about time, forever!

With *The 25-Minute Meeting*, you'll learn to give your meetings purpose and stop them wasting your time; with *The First 2 Hours*, you'll find the best time of the day to do your most productive work; and with *The 1-Day Refund*, you'll discover how to give yourself the extra capacity to think, breathe, live and work.

It's time to get your life back—one minute at a time.

Wiley 2022 ©



First published in 2018 by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd
42 McDougall St, Milton Qld 4064

Office also in Melbourne

Typeset in 12/15 pt Bembo Std

© John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd 2018

The moral rights of the author have been asserted



**A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia**

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the *Australian Copyright Act 1968* (for example, a fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review), no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, communicated or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All inquiries should be made to the publisher at the address above.

Cover design by Wiley

Cover image © Barks/Shutterstock

Internal illustrations by Donna McGeorge

Printed in Singapore by C.O.S. Printers Pte Ltd

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Disclaimer

The material in this publication is of the nature of general comment only, and does not represent professional advice. It is not intended to provide specific guidance for particular circumstances and it should not be relied on as the basis for any decision to take action or not take action on any matter which it covers. Readers should obtain professional advice where appropriate, before making any such decision. To the maximum extent permitted by law, the author and publisher disclaim all responsibility and liability to any person, arising directly or indirectly from any person taking or not taking action based on the information in this publication.

MAKE EVERY MEETING QUICK, RELEVANT AND PURPOSEFUL

Meetings have become the *de facto* way of doing business, but too often they do nothing more than eat up our days and waste our resources. With *The 25 Minute Meeting*, you can change that.

Learn how to:

- conduct short, useful meetings
- encourage attendees to participate
- boost impact through visuals
- get more done in less time.

Don't waste another second in a fruitless meeting. *The 25 Minute Meeting* will help you reclaim your time and energy and transform your meetings from painful to purposeful.

DONNA McGEORGE is a speaker, author and mentor who helps people make their work *work*. Using a creative, practical approach, she improves workplace effectiveness while challenging thinking on leadership, productivity and virtual work.

www.donnamcgeorge.com

Cover Design: Wiley
Cover Image: © Barks/Shutterstock

www.wiley.com

WILEY

 Also available
as an e-book

PRODUCTIVITY

ISBN 978-0-730-35923-4



9 780730 359234