How to Get More Done, Even When You're at Capacity

Just when you are at your limit, people want more. Try these tips from Inc. columnists to add a little capacity without going crazy.

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Yesterday I had a very full day. I had blocked it all out with important things to do like write a new column, and do some client work as well as finish reading three chapters and a case study for my marketing course later that day. I timed out every task so I could get it all done. Then it happened, two calls came in needing immediate attention. I would have loved to push them off but they were important and urgent so somehow I needed find a way to get everything done. This happens to most people at some point. Below is my own solution to this conundrum and more insights from my Inc. colleagues.

1. Set a timer.
Even though I generally commit specified time to a task on a busy day. I generally have a little cushion to make sure I can relax through the process. When additional tasks get added I need to work to maximum efficiency. So I set time limits and clock the task. Often I end up finishing the task in almost half the time. For example I had originally given myself 90 minutes to read the school chapters and case study. With the timer set I was able to finish it all in 35 minutes.

2. Make it about you.
The best way to push through a limit is to turn someone else's request into something you really want to do for yourself. Finding the "What's in it for me?" is a great way to get motivated. (If that sounds selfish, one of the best WIIFMs is feeling good about helping someone out.) Turn what could feel like an imposition into a fulfilling and rewarding (financially or otherwise) mission and you'll be surprised by the additional bandwidth you can create. You can always do more--especially when you have a great reason to do more. Jeff Haden--Owner's Manual
3. Add a little time.
I used to have a bad habit. This bad habit was known as the all-nighter. When I had a big test--or a tough assignment to finish--the next day, I would push the pedal to the metal the night before and stay up as late as necessary to get the job done. I do the same thing now. If I have a big deadline looming, I think nothing of brewing a pot of coffee and staying up all night to get it done. I can't and don't want to do pull all-nighters on a regular basis. But when I need to up my bandwidth quickly, it's the easiest way I know to squeeze some extra time out of a 24-hour day. Peter Economy--The Management Guy

4. Try micro-slicing
My secret for doing more is a technique I call "micro-slicing". I intentionally recapture time throughout my day that is typically lost. I always have my laptop with me so that I can take advantage of meetings that start late or when I am waiting to pickup my daughter from an event. By turning on the accessibility features on my Kindle, I can have it read documents to me while I am driving. And I use my drive time between customer meetings to take conference calls and catch-up on phone calls. Micro-slicing allows me to carve out time to slip a new priority in to my queue. Eric Holtzclaw--Lean Forward

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