

# q performance: with ANDREW MAY

How to plan your ideal work week for optimal performance  
We all have the same number of hours in the week (168 to be exact). So why does that time look - and feel - vastly different to different people? Most of us are scrambling, like the proverbial hamsters on a wheel, we never feel like there's enough time and are never able to run fast enough to keep up with it all. Then there are those people who seem to have more space, achieve more professionally, fit in exercise, socialising, sleep and they don't even seem to break a sweat.

**What's their secret?** Many of the world's most successful people schedule their time with military precision – like Bill Gates whose long days are carved into “five-minute slices, with every meeting and handshake timed to the second”.

There is no need for us all to be this rigid, however a little planning can certainly help us move from the feeling of treading water to forward momentum and regaining control of our lives. As a result of this, we not only work smarter and improve our wellbeing, we create space to recharge and reconnect with ourselves and those we love. This enables both our productivity and the quality of our performance to increase.

Start by considering what your ideal day would look like and write it down. Be specific. Include everything from the glass of water you drink upon waking up, to coffee breaks, time for exercise, how you will spend transit time (listening to a podcast? Reading? Thinking?), when you would read your emails, how you will wind down and how you will spend time with friends or family. Consider how and when you would incorporate each of these elements into your day: Specific time to move; fuel; recharge; connect; think and play.

The process of writing down your ideal day gives you a framework and a vision. Think about your current day (non-controlled chaos) and then compare it to an Ideal Day (utopia). At the very least, meet me halfway and start taking control of your time, energy and attention.

Start by adding three or four simple activities to your morning routine. These can be as simple as a glass of water with a squeeze of lemon, a quick walk before work, a break for morning tea. These will then become performance habits – beneficial actions triggered automatically in response to contextual cues. Once you start to self-regulate and feel momentum from your new behaviours, add a few more. Then some more. Keep building upon this process over a period of weeks and you'll be surprised at just how much better your day can be. Once you know how much more time and energy, clarity and connection you can create in a single day, it's time to build a better week. This incorporates accountability and sets a clear vision for the future. Will it be ideal, even perfect? No. It's called life and 'stuff' invariably happens. But will it start to feel better? Absolutely.

## TIPS FOR CREATING YOUR BETTER WEEK

- Prioritise what is most important to you. This might be family time, or recovery time, or exercise – it depends on your what you want to achieve.
- Stop reacting to other people's demands and take control by locking in the activities that are most important to you. And remember to plan some time alone for yourself.
- Include permanent meetings and bookings but remember that your goal is to strip out some of these to free up capacity.
- Don't worry if you find it difficult to plan your Better Week – if you find you've forgotten activities, for instance, or not allowed yourself enough time. It usually takes a few goes to get it right.
- Once you're happy with your Better Week, open your diary and book in the relevant training sessions and so on for the next three months. When the dates are in your diary, you'll be more motivated to stick to them.
- Review and update your Better Week plan every quarter to ensure that it stays meaningful and relevant.
- Acknowledge that you will need to be flexible as you strive to live your Better Week but aim high – there's no point admitting defeat before you've even begun!

Your Better Week won't happen perfectly and completely. But if you can regularly achieve 70%, you will feel more content and in control.

*Andrew May is recognised as one of the world's leading strategists on workplace performance and wellbeing. He presents inspiring keynotes around the globe and is the author of the newly released book, MatchFit. Andrew is coach and confidante to a number of Australia's leading CEO's and executives, elite athletes and performing artists. [www.andrewmay.com](http://www.andrewmay.com)*

