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**15 Surprising Things Productive People Do Differently**

I recently interviewed over 200 ultra-productive people including seven billionaires, 13 Olympians, 20 straight-A students and over 200 successful entrepreneurs. I asked a simple, open-ended question, “What is your number one secret to productivity?” After analyzing all of their responses, I coded their answers into 15 unique ideas.

**Secret #1: They focus on minutes, not hours.**

Average performers default to hours and half-hour blocks on their calendar. Highly successful people know there are 1,440 minutes in every day and there is nothing more valuable than time. Money can be lost and made again, but time spent can never be reclaimed. As legendary Olympic gymnast Shannon Miller told me, “To this day, I keep a schedule that is almost minute by minute.” You must master your minutes to master your life.

**Secret #2: They focus only on one thing.**

Ultra productive people know their Most Important Task (MIT) and work on it for one to two hours each morning, without interruptions. Tom Ziglar, CEO of Ziglar Inc., shared, “Invest the first part of your day working on your number one priority that will help build your business.” What task will have the biggest impact on reaching your goal? What accomplishment will get you promoted at work?

**Secret #3: They don’t use to-do lists.**

Throw away your to-do list; instead schedule everything on your calendar. It turns out only 41% of items on to-do lists are ever actually done. And all those undone items lead to stress and insomnia because of the Zeigarnik effect. Highly productive people put everything on their calendar and then work and live from that calendar. “Use a calendar and schedule your entire day into 15-minute blocks. It sounds like a pain, but this will set you up in the 95th percentile…”, advises the co-founder of The Art of Charm, Jordan Harbinger.

**Secret #4: They beat procrastination with time travel.**

Your future self can’t be trusted. That’s because we are “time inconsistent.” We buy veggies today because we think we’ll eat healthy salads all week; then we throw out green rotting mush in the future. I bought P90x because I think I’m going to start exercising vigorously and yet the box sits unopened one year later. What can you do *now* to make sure your future self does the right thing? Anticipate how you will self-sabotage in the future, and come up with a solution to defeat your future self.

**Secret #5: They make it home for dinner.**

I first learned this from Intel’s Andy Grove, “There is always more to be done, more that should be done, always more than can be done.” Highly successful people know what they value in life. Yes, work, but also what *else* they value. There is no right answer, but for many, values include: family time, exercise, giving back. They consciously allocate their 1,440 minutes a day to each area they value (i.e., they put it on their calendar) and then they stick to the schedule.

**Secret #6: They use a notebook.**

Richard Branson has said on more than one occasion that he wouldn’t have been able to build Virgin without a simple notebook, which he takes with him wherever he goes. In one interview, Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis said, “Always carry a notebook. Write everything down…That is a million dollar lesson they don’t teach you in business school!” Ultra-productive people free their mind by writing *everything* down.

**Secret #7: They process email only a few times a day.**

Ultra-productive people don’t “check” email throughout the day. They don’t respond to each vibration or ding to see who has intruded their inbox. Instead, like everything else, they *schedule* time to process their email quickly and efficiently. For some that’s only once a day, for me, it’s morning, noon and night.

**Secret #8: They avoid meetings at all costs.**

When I asked [Mark Cuban](http://www.forbes.com/profile/mark-cuban/) to give me his best productivity advice, he quickly responded, “Never take meetings unless someone is writing a check.” Meetings are notorious time killers. They start late, have the wrong people in them, meander in their topics and run long. You should get out of meetings whenever you can, hold fewer of them yourself, and if you *do* run a meeting, keep it short.

**Secret #9: They say “no” to almost everything.**

Billionaire Warren Buffet once said, “The difference between successful people and very successful people is that very successful people say 'no' to almost everything.” And James Altucher colorfully gave me this tip, [“If something is not a “hell, YEAH! Then it’s a “no!”](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.forbes.com%2Fsites%2Fkevinkruse%2F2016%2F01%2F20%2F15-surprising-things-productive-people-do-differently%2F&text=%E2%80%9CIf%20something%20is%20not%20a%20%E2%80%9Chell%2C%20YEAH%21%20Then%20it%E2%80%99s%20a%20%E2%80%9Cno%21%E2%80%9D%20-%20%40jaltucher%20on%20%40forbes)

Remember, you only have 1,440 minutes in every day. Don’t give them away easily.

**Secret #10: They follow the 80/20 rule.**

Known as the Pareto Principle, in most cases 80% of outcomes come from only 20% of activities. Ultra-productive people know which activities drive the greatest results, and focus on those and ignore the rest.

**Secret #11: They delegate almost everything.**

Ultra-productive people don’t ask, “How can I do this task?” Instead they ask, “How can this task get done?” They take the “I” out of it as much as possible. Ultra-productive people don’t have control issues and they are not micro-managers. In many cases good enough is, well, good enough.

**Secret #12: They theme days of the week.**

Highly successful people often theme days of the week to focus on major areas. For decades I’ve used “Mondays for Meetings” and make sure I’m doing one-on-one check-ins with each direct report. My Friday afternoons are themed around financials and general administrative items that I want to clean up before the new week starts. I’ve previously written about [Jack Dorsey’s work themes](http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2015/10/12/jack-dorsey-productivity-secret/), which enable him to run two companies at once. Batch your work to maximize your efficiency and effectiveness.

**Secret #13: They touch things only once.**

How many times have you opened a piece of regular mail—a bill perhaps—and then put it down only to deal with it again later? How often do you read an email, and then close it and leave it in your inbox to deal with later? Highly successful people try to “touch it once.” If it takes less than five or ten minutes—whatever it is—they’ll deal with it right then and there. It reduces stress since it won’t be in the back of their mind, and is more efficient since they won’t have to re-read or evaluate the item again in the future.

**Secret #14: They practice a consistent morning routine.**

My single greatest surprise while interviewing over 200 highly successful people was how many of them wanted to share their morning ritual with me. [Hal Elrod](http://halelrod.com/), author of The Miracle Morning, told me, “While most people focus on ‘doing’ more to achieve more, The Miracle Morning is about focusing on ‘becoming’ more so that you can start doing less, to achieve more.” While I heard about a wide variety of habits, most people I interviewed nurtured their body in the morning with water, a healthy breakfast and light exercise. They nurtured their mind with meditation or prayer, inspirational reading, and journaling.

**Secret #15: Energy is everything.**

You can’t make more minutes in the day, but you can increase your energy which will increase your attention, focus, decision making, and overall productivity. Highly successful people don’t skip meals, sleep or breaks in the pursuit of more, more, more. Instead, they view food as fuel, sleep as recovery, and pulse and pause with “work sprints.”

2

**Five Simple Self-Help Steps To Succeed And Make 2019 Your Best Year Ever**

The holiday season is a whirlwind of activities leaving little time to relax and decompress. You’re more exhausted when you return to the office than before the holidays. Somehow, you need to summon up the strength to get back on track. It won’t be easy and you’ll have to push yourself. Start by fighting back against the temptation to say,  “I’ll gradually ease back into the swing of things. I’ll hang around the house and sleep all weekend, then I’ll be ready to start focusing on my career.”

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Let’s dispense with the procrastination and start right now. Since you are reading this piece, it's clear that you have drive, ambition and motivation. You should congratulate yourself,  as you’re far in front of everyone else who is currently nursing a hangover and complaining about how tired they are. You are taking bold actions while they are binge watching Bandersnatch and Bird Box on Netflix.

Here is what you can do to keep moving forward to make 2019 the best year ever:

**1. Create a growth mindset.**

Since you are reading this, you most likely possess a growth mindset, but didn't consider the need to pretentiously ascribe a fancy title to what you already do.  A growth mindset is a way of thinking and believing that you can create a better future for yourself—despite obstacles in your path and past baggage you’re burdened with.

A staggering amount of people possess a fixed mindset. This train of thought includes believing that you are predestined to be who you are and where you are in life. A fixed mindset person will resign himself to his fate.  Diametrically opposed to this line of thinking, having a growth mindset emboldens you to seek out solutions to your challenges. You believe that you can create your own future—no matter how difficult things are right now. No obstacle is unassailable with a growth mindset. You believe in yourself and have faith that you will overcome anything standing in your way. You commit to learning, growing, improving and developing.

This isn't easy or a miracle cure. It takes time, inner strength and determination. I personally view things in this fashion: if someone is going to be a successful recruiter, businessperson, writer or entrepreneur,  why shouldn’t it be me? Why shouldn’t I be the person who becomes successful just because I’m not a certifiable genius, I possess shortcomings and come from a modest background in Canarsie, Brooklyn? I look around at the people who are already in my field and recognize that—most often—they aren’t so great. Since I’m just as good as my competition, but possess a borderline obsessive drive, old school work ethic and am unafraid of failure, there is no reason or excuse. I will find ways to succeed!

**2. In addition to thinking about goals, write them down and hold yourself accountable.**

Everyone daydreams about winning the lottery, attaining a high-paying job or striking gold with a game-changing business idea. We all know someone like this. They talk endlessly to whoever will listen about what they’re going to do next. A few intrepid souls will even venture to dip their toes in the water: conducting research, taking online courses, listening to podcasts, seeking out mentors, writing, editing and rewriting business plans. However, they never act and execute their grandiose plans.

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You need to establish your goal, write down an action plan on how you will achieve that goal and then actually do it! The plan could be scribbled on a scrap of paper or napkin. The process of  writing it down makes it real. It transcends a dream to a viable way to achieve your desires. Writing helps you fine tune and focus your thoughts. It prods you to turn a concept into a road map. Having it in writing will serve to keep you committed and honest with yourself. The next part will be harder: you have to keep track of your daily progress and hold yourself accountable without excuses.

**3. Don’t stress about the enormity of the task. Simply start with small habits and build from there.**

You’ve been building your growth mindset and have a written action plan that you are religiously following. Now, take your audacious goals and break them down into small daily habits and routines that you can accomplish. Slowly and methodically grind away and make incremental progress. If your plan calls for procuring a new job, develop a habit and routine of spending at least an hour each day on a specific process or activity that will lead toward finding the new position. Write a résumé on Monday, enhance your LinkedIn profile on Tuesday, search for jobs online and submit résumés on Wednesday, network online and in the real world on Thursday and so on. By breaking these steps into a daily plan, it won’t seem so overwhelming.

**4. Daily affirmations aren’t only for Buddhist monks.**

Growing up in a hardscrabble and lower socioeconomic, working-class neighborhood, I would have never believed that I would be writing this. I’ve gone from eating pizza and Italian ice at Original’s Pizza on Avenue L in Brooklyn to having quinoa, kale, sun-dried tomato bowls with a Kabusecha tea. Affirmations, visualization and meditation were unheard of in my small world. I’ve learned that you need to be open and embrace new ideas that can help you succeed.

If you’re wired to have negative thoughts that hold you back from achieving your goals and leading your best life, it makes sense to get outside of your comfort zone and try something new.   Self-affirmations are statements that we tell ourselves to initiate change. They alter our beliefs about ourselves. Start with saying and repeating positive phrases. If you are interviewing for a competitive job, you may say to yourself, “I deserve this position. I will get this job! I have the background, experience and possess all the requirements. I will succeed in this role! It will happen!”

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Then, translate these thoughts into actions to manifest our intentions. When you first start saying your positive affirmations, they may not be fully grounded in reality. With repetition, they sink into your subconscious mind, you start to believe them and they eventually become your reality. They become a self-fulfilling prophecy and actually become true.

Affirmations are positive statements that can help you challenge and overcome self-sabotaging  and negative thoughts. When you repeat them often—and actually believe in them, you can start to make positive changes.

**5. See your future success with visualization.**

Visualization is the act of creating a picture in your mind of having already achieved your goal. You then play this movie in your head on a repeated loop every day. Use your imagination to see yourself as the end result of being successful.  Picture living in that beautiful new home. Visualize yourself driving your dream car. See yourself as the CEO sitting in a corner office.

You will attract what you focus on. It’s a mental hack to visualize that you already have what you desire. Rather than wishing you will achieve it (or hoping one day it will miraculously happen), live and feel it as if it is happening to you right now. The subconscious mind cannot distinguish between what is real and what is imagined. Your subconscious will act upon the images you create within—whether they reflect your current reality or not.

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Good luck in 2019! Wait, you don’t need luck. You set an audacious goal, wrote it down, will visualize success, build your growth mindset, use your self-affirmations, work daily on achieving your mission and will do amazingly well this year!

3

**Nine Lifestyle Changes For A Successful Career**

Looking to be the “best you” in your personal and professional life?

Some daily lifestyle habits obstruct the process of getting to the peak of our careers. These lifestyle choices need to be replaced with new ones and trained to guarantee a clear path to the success you desire in your career. The following are nine essential changes that you need to fit into your lifestyle to ensure a successful career.

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Photo by Brook Lark Sourced from UnsplashBrook Lark

Some daily lifestyle habits obstruct the process of getting to the peak of our careers. These lifestyle choices need to be replaced with new ones and trained to guarantee a clear path to the success you desire in your career. The following are nine essential changes that you need to fit into your lifestyle to ensure a successful career.

## 1. Have self-confidence

Self-confidence is the necessary foundation for having a successful career, and the ability to believe in yourself is what separates a good career from a mediocre one. It is common for individuals who lack the required confidence to have stagnant jobs.

Having confidence in yourself gives you the freedom to find creative and effective solutions and opportunities that have a positive impact on your career. You can take steps for building your self-confidence by challenging yourself and constructing positive evaluations of what you represent as an individual.

## 2. Invest in yourself

The more you invest in yourself, the greater the dividends. Investing in yourself opens up limitless opportunities which bring a certain level of satisfaction while guaranteeing you success. When you invest in yourself, you develop your skills and ideas which make you more valuable and give you the capacity to achieve greater heights. Failure to improve ourselves makes it unlikely to achieve a different outcome in the future because we still remain unchanged.

Advancing your education by getting relevant degrees and certifications, expanding your knowledge through extensive reading, exploring your creative side by learning a new skill are ways you can invest in yourself to get the successful career you desire.

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## 3. Set long-term goals

In any field of work, it is very easy to lose focus when you fail to lay down the goals you wish to achieve within a period of time. Setting long-term goals provides direction, committing you on the task ahead. However, to meet your goals, it is essential to be specific about what you really want to achieve, as it enables you to measure your progress easily. Also, long-term goals are easily achievable when broken down into smaller goals, which allow you to tackle the tasks gradually.

## 4. Accept responsibility

Accepting responsibility is a lifestyle change that can boost your chances of having a successful career as it makes you accountable for whatever you do, say or think. You actually develop in your career when holding yourself to any liability that may incur. As no individual is perfect, there are bound to be shortcomings. The ideal reaction is to recognize your part in the mistake and work on actively fixing it and learning from it to avoid future occurrence.

## 5. Manage time effectively

Time is a limited resource, and however you manage it, it has a direct impact on your career. For your career to be highly successful, you need to use your time efficiently to accomplish your goals. Excellent time management helps to prioritize your work and get things done according to their level of importance.

Also, when your time is well managed, you become more productive in your career and accomplish more in less time. An excellent way to manage your time is by getting an early start which enables you to take advantage of the most productive times of the day.

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## 6. Be consistent

Often, having a successful career isn’t about talent or luck but by being consistent. Consistency simply means to stay fully engaged in your work without distraction, and it requires that you commit yourself to a sustained action over a long period. Being consistent, especially in your daily plan of action, leads to a disciplined routine which helps you get closer to attaining your set goals. Consistency helps you focus on achievable goals which enable you to measure your daily actions. The difference in having a successful and failed career is to continually repeat the same steps and habits that make you thrive.

## 7. Managing your finances

Managing your finances is probably one of the most vital lifestyle changes you need to adopt for your career to be successful as it affects every aspect of your life. A great way to manage your finances is by creating a budget. This allows you to create a balance with your income and expenditure which lets you focus your money on goals that will guarantee success. Once a budget has been made, it is imperative to stick to it as it prevents you from wasting financial resources on unnecessary things. Also, when your finances are well managed, it provides a certain level of financial security.

## 8. Plan ahead

The common saying ‘When you fail to plan, you plan to fail’ is especially true as planning gives us a clear perspective on what needs to be done, what resources to assign and what amount of time or money is needed to complete the objectives. When you plan ahead, it helps to increase productivity and efficiency in your career as you already have a guideline that will help you reach the goals you set. Also, planning prevents distraction and helps you stay focused on the task at hand.

## 9. Exercise and rest well

A good exercise regime is not only good for your overall health but it can also increase your chances of having a successful career. Physical activity leads to an increased level of productivity and performance at work. Also, your ability to think creatively is boosted by regular physical movement. Potential business partners or clients can also be made during sporting events which can increase your range of networks.

4

# Three Education Trends That Will Revolutionize The Workplace In 2019

[As we ring in the New Year, it’s key to look ahead and think about the ways in which learning will change in 2019, and how those changes will affect the workplace.](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.forbes.com%2Fsites%2Fanantagarwal%2F2019%2F01%2F02%2Fthree-education-trends-that-will-revolutionize-the-workplace-in-2019%2F&text=3%20Education%20Trends%20That%20Will%20Revolutionize%20The%20Workplace%20In%202019) In 2018 we discussed the increasing value of [soft skills](https://www.forbes.com/sites/anantagarwal/2018/10/02/data-reveals-why-the-soft-in-soft-skills-is-a-major-misnomer/); how the [skills transformation](https://www.forbes.com/sites/anantagarwal/2018/08/29/how-is-the-skills-transformation-impacting-modern-work/) is affecting the way we work; and the rise of the [non-linear career path](https://www.forbes.com/sites/anantagarwal/2018/10/31/why-todays-professionals-are-taking-the-career-road-less-traveled/). These topics merely scratched the surface of the changes we’re seeing in education and in the workplace, which we’ll continue to debate in 2019.

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These are some key trends to keep an eye on this year:

* **Education emphasizing hybrid skills.** The jobs of the future will require a hybrid set of skills from a variety of subject areas that will change several times over during our careers. This means that studying one subject at college for four years may not make sense for all - as such, higher education degrees must also adapt by creating flexible and customizable credential offerings. There will be growth in modular learning and education, due to its ability to allow students to personalize the skills and knowledge learned to suit their needs and career goals.
* **Education goes omnichannel.** In today's connected world, consumers expect to have anything they want available at their fingertips, and education is no different. Workers expect to be able to learn on-demand, getting the skills and knowledge they need in that moment, to be able to apply it as soon as possible. Moving fluidly between working and learning, without having to take time off to go to - or back to - school will become non-negotiable. In addition, learners will demand omnichannel experiences that allow them to combine in-person with online learning experiences. Online learning programs will be designed with this fluidity in mind, allowing learners to immediately put their knowledge to work on the job, while working towards a credential or degree.
* **Education underscoring soft skills remains critical.** The shelf life of hard skills will become shorter as technology advances more rapidly, and inputs become more automated. Soft skills, or power skills, including collaboration; communication; critical thinking; and the ability to make quick decisions from a set of information will remain essential for all employees and will also be increasingly sought out by hiring managers.

What trends or themes do you see on the horizon for education in 2019? How will they impact the workplace or how people learn? Leave your thoughts in the comments.

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# 8 Types of Investors for Startups

What different types of investors are there for funding your startup?

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There’s more than one type of investor to fundraise from. So, how are they different? Which may be a good match and when?

Below is a list with the different types of investors that you could approach for your startup. Once you know who to pitch, it’s all about perfecting the pitch deck to close your round of funding. For a winning deck, take a look at the pitch deck template created by Silicon Valley legend, Peter Thiel ([see it here](http://alejandrocremades.com/silicon-valley-legend-creates-pitch-deck-template-for-entrepreneurs/?utm_source=Forbes-pitch&utm_medium=Forbes-pitch&utm_campaign=Forbes-pitch&utm_term=Forbes-pitch&utm_content=Forbes-pitch)) that I recently covered. Thiel was the first angel investor in Facebook with a $500K check that turned into more than $1 billion in cash. Moreover, I also provided a commentary on a pitch deck from an Uber competitor that has raised over $400M ([see it here](http://alejandrocremades.com/the-400m-pitch-deck-that-got-this-uber-competitor-funded/?utm_source=Forbes-pitch&utm_medium=Forbes-pitch&utm_campaign=Forbes-pitch&utm_term=Forbes-pitch&utm_content=Forbes-pitch))

**1) Friends & Family**

The first type of investor entrepreneurs should be approaching at the very beginning are friends and family and close personal contacts.

At this stage there is very little hard evidence and proof to base a real investment or funding on. They are essentially investing in the idea, and far more importantly - you. These are the people that already know you, like and trust you and believe in you the most.

This type of investor may not provide a lot of money. It could be in the range of $1,000 to $200,000. Though if you can’t raise money from this group, other investors are probably going to ask themselves why.

**2) Banks & Government Agencies**

These aren’t true investors like the others on this list, but they can be sources of capital. Traditional banks are generally not an easy source of capital for early stage startups and small businesses. However, as you gain traction they may offer business credit cards, lines of credit and merchant advance loans.

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There may also be government programs providing grants for certain types of projects. That doesn’t mean that bringing in this type of capital will be any easier, and loans require repayment, often when you really need as much liquidity and slack as possible. They won’t require giving up equity in your company, but they can impact your profitability, which may show up when you try to raise money from other investors later.

One thing to note about government programs is that in many instances the come with certain restrictions and limitations which may be burdensome for startups. With this in mind founders should review very carefully what those expectations are.

**3) Angel Investors**

Professional angel investors are normally approached when it comes to the seed round and beyond. They are willing to fund smaller operations than VCs, may be more flexible in terms, and can offer a lot of value in wisdom and connections.

Angel investors can be approached directly online, at live pitch events, and through introductions from other startup founders.

**4) Angel Groups**

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Angel groups have been increasing. They have become more popular and more organized. These are groups of angel investors who band together to make investments in startups. This enables them to invest with more confidence, with larger check sizes, and with lower exposure to risk.

**5) Accelerators & Incubators**

These vehicles can ultimately be a gateway to a variety of the types of investors on this list. If accepted into one of these programs you may receive anywhere from $10,000 to $120,000 in seed money to cultivate your idea and gain traction, while benefiting from additional knowledge and resources. If everything is going well, you’ll be pitching larger investors and be introduced to funding sources during their demo days that can help take you to the next level. Just be ready to hustle, these programs want to speed you on the way to the next stage quickly.

**6) Family Offices**

Family offices are increasingly being drawn to the advantages of investing in startups. However, as some of the most successful entrepreneurs that have appeared as guests on the [DealMakers Podcast](http://alejandrocremades.com/blogs/) have pointed out, as investors, family offices can have quite different interests and game plans. Each can be very different.

Working with them can be very different depending on who is managing the decisions and process. Taxes, long term multigenerational investing, prestige and income may be more important for these investors than others on this list who are pushing to an earlier exit.

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**7) Venture Capital Firms**

VCs are the holy grail of investors for fundraising entrepreneurs. They come with the biggest checks, the most power to fuel success and gaining market share, and most juice when it comes to achieving more credibility and visibility.

More venture capital firms are looking at and are participating in earlier funding rounds. Though it is much more likely these investors will show up and be secured in Series A, B and C fundraising rounds than earlier.

Do note that not all of these firms are created equal. The best match can be influenced by location, the timeline of their funds, their interest and expertise in a certain field, their power to help you get to the next stage and of course, how they treat their founders.

**8) Corporate Investors**

Investing in startups carries a variety of benefits for big corporations. Including supporting their own growth numbers, diversifying assets, and identifying talent and technology which can help them fend off industry changes and fuel revenues and profits. Some have funds to invest in outside startups. More are launching their own accelerator and incubator programs and ecosystems for cultivating these opportunities.

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These investors can be great allies in taking your business to the next level. Though they can be quite different to work with, and any integration or collaboration on sales channels, systems and customer bases needs to be approached carefully and with a lot of patience.

Founding entrepreneurs and corporate investors often have completely different styles and perspectives. It’s going to be vital to learn to understand each other and have some boundaries set up when going in, if this is going to be an enjoyable relationship.

**Summary**

As you can see from this list, there are a wide variety of very different types of investors for funding startups. Some are very specialized in the stages and funding rounds they will invest at. Though these lines are increasingly blurring. Think of this as a ladder, not an A or B menu list.

As your startup grows different sources of capital will be more advantageous and valuable to fueling that next level of growth. Understanding these differences will be invaluable for an efficient fundraising campaign and targeting the right investors at each raise.

6

# Six Strategies To Stop A Negotiations Shutdown

Have you hit a wall in your negotiations?

When two sides can’t come together on an issue, it’s easy to get into a stalemate. Communication collapses, and "no deal" looks like the only real choice.

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Seeing the world through uncompromising eyes can lead to shutdown. Viewing a negotiation as a competition - with a winner and a loser - means nobody really wins. As a team leader, you know that the best negotiations are mutually beneficial.  [When we focus only on what we want - in an unyielding way - we aren’t being tough, we’re just limiting our choices.](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.forbes.com%2Fsites%2Fchriswestfall%2F2019%2F01%2F03%2Fsix-strategies-negotiations-shutdown%2F&text=When%20we%20focus%20only%20on%20what%20we%20want%20-%20in%20an%20unyielding%20way%20-%20we%20aren%E2%80%99t%20being%20tough%2C%20we%E2%80%99re%20just%20limiting%20our%20choices.)

Here are six leadership communications strategies to stop a shutdown in your negotiations, by introducing  [the insight that’s missing](https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/12/04/keeping-your-team-innovative-requires-leadership-finesse/).

**1. An Invitation To Innovation:** Is there only one way to win? In every sport, the teams and individuals you admire most are the ones who realize that there is always more than one way to win. There’s never just one path to the basket, or the end zone, or the finish line. When both sides see only one solution, negotiation becomes an angry battle. Clear leadership vision is blurred by fury. Contain your anger, and find new solutions, using YAHOO (not the search engine, but the strategy). YAHOO stands for “you always have other options”.  By definition, innovation doesn’t come from what you already know. How are you inviting discovery, options and innovation into your dialogue? Does your negotiating partner realize that innovation is necessary for you to overcome the shutdown that’s gotten you stalled?  Remember the old maxim: [Speak when angry and you'll make the best speech you will ever regret.](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.forbes.com%2Fsites%2Fchriswestfall%2F2019%2F01%2F03%2Fsix-strategies-negotiations-shutdown%2F&text=Speak%20when%20angry%20and%20you%27ll%20make%20the%20best%20speech%20you%20will%20ever%20regret.)

**2. Consider The Empty Chair:** In my [leadership consulting](https://westfallonline.com/consulting/leadership/), I often talk with clients about the “Empty Chair.” The empty chair is a seat at the table for someone who’s not in the room, but who will be personally and profoundly impacted by your decision. Consider the patient who will go through the MRI machine next year: she’s not in the room when the hospital administrators make a seven-figure investment decision. And yet, it's easy to see that she will be personally and powerfully impacted. [The empty chair](https://youtu.be/6o6CKXG7zmI) points negotiators away from agendas, and towards the people (and objectives) that really matter. Leaders look at impact; a shutdown stalls at a personal agenda. Who sits in your empty chair?

**3. Call On Juliet:** In the video above, [William Ury](https://www.forbes.com/sites/keldjensen/2013/02/05/why-negotiators-still-arent-getting-to-yes) talks about the idea of "going to the balcony" - one of the key tenets of his classic best-seller, [*Getting to YES*](https://www.forbes.com/sites/nickmorgan/2010/12/14/we-can-negotiate-anything-even-peace-10-william-ury/)(co-written with Roger Fisher)*.* Imagine yourself on a balcony, overlooking the drama of your negotiation. This "balcony" can offer you the one thing needed to open up a shutdown: a fresh perspective. A well-timed pause, especially before you react to what the other side has just said, can help you to see new choices.  As Juliet shared from the most famous balcony in the world, “A rose by any other name would still smell as sweet.” Stop and smell the roses, before you say (or do) something you'll regret.

**4. Face-Off:** If your negotiation is stalled, despite your intentions to the contrary, there could be another negotiator at the table. The Japanese call this silent obstacle *mentsu wo ushinau* - otherwise known as “losing face”.  Have you considered the egos sitting around the negotiation table? Let's face it: saving face is an ego game, and it can quietly sabotage your best ideas. Face off with this silent negotiator by considering exactly what's at stake for the egos in the room.

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**5. Hidden Heroes:** Overcoming ego requires a change in the narrative - a new kind of leadership language that casts a different hero into the story. Can you find an innovative solution where someone (other than you or your agenda) is the true hero? Could you make your adversary the hero?  If you can't seem to find a solution, look across the table and find someone who can. Because negotiation succeeds when two opposing viewpoints discover a single solution.

**6. Satisficing:**The [economist Herbert Simon](https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2018/03/22/weeding-through-the-decision-making-process/) first coined the phrase “satisficing” - a combination of “satisfying” and “sufficing”, that describes a solution that may not be optimal but it certainly is adequate. When faced with a shutdown in negotiations, it can be useful to see what is ‘satisficing’ to both parties. What is it that would satisfy you? What would suffice? Satisficing is a familiar destination if you're in a long-term relationship. Can you really ask, “Who’s winning this marriage?” Find the satisficing option: It may require some sacrifice, but isn’t it better than a shutdown?

Powerful leadership communication requires a fresh perspective. Does your story need a new hero? Find a solution that satisfices to break the stalemate - and save face along the way. A fresh perspective leads to new solutions, and the kind of innovation that a shutdown negotiation desperately needs. Can you discover a new way to win, so that everyone does?

7

# Ten Questions To Ask In Your Personal Year-End Review

The new year 2019 is right around the corner. Many of us are setting goals for 2019. Before you do that, take time to step back. Get a new perspective on 2018 so you can set more authentic and meaningful goals for 2019. Here are the self-reflection questions I am asking myself and sharing with my executive coaching clients.

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**The 10 Questions**

**If this year were a movie, what happened?**

The idea of this question is to help you get yourself out of your usual perspective (the main character) and watch what happened as an observer. Describe the year as you would if you were sharing the story of a movie. Describe the characters in the movie (including yourself) and what happened from their perspective. You might even engage them in the exercise. It helps you get a meta view and notice things that you hadn’t seen before.

For example, as I wrote this movie narrative, I realized that life has been messy, challenging, and full of change this year. I come away with a greater appreciation for my resilience in dealing with change and challenge than I had before. I also have a better perspective on how important people in my life experienced this year.

**What worked well that I’m grateful for?**

As I asked this question of a friend, he realized that he hadn’t taken the step back to recognize all that had gone well, what he had created, and how he had grown. When you ask yourself what you feel grateful for, you discover more deeply what matters to you. This helps you set more authentic goals for the coming year. As you do this, take the time to actually savor what you feel grateful for.

**What was challenging or disappointing?**

This question helps you acknowledge what was hard and be in touch with any emotion associated with it. For example, when I asked an executive coaching client this question, she realized that one of the most challenging aspects of the year was negative feedback from her boss. She’s a top-performer and felt frustrated: “No matter how hard I try, I’m never good enough!” As she said this, tears welled up. She got in touch with her anger and hurt. This resentment she had felt toward her boss had eroded trust in their relationship.

After she processed the emotion, in our next session she was able to get a more balanced perspective: she has development opportunities, she also has strengths that help her be successful, and she had taken her boss’ feedback too personally. She realized that in 2019 she wants to work on growing her confidence in herself. If she had avoided getting in touch with emotion, she would have missed the opportunity for greater insight about herself. As you do this exercise be sure to be compassionate with yourself.

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**What were my most meaningful moments?**

Getting in touch with what is meaningful and re-living the moments that mattered this year helps you bring into greater focus where you want to spend your time and energy in the coming year.

**Where did I spend my time and energy?**

As you review the year, take a look at where you spent your precious time and energy. Does this reflect what matters to you? Many of us spend our time in distraction. As you look to next year, what do you want to spend more energy on and what less?

**Where did I fail? What did I learn?**

Acknowledging our failures without letting them define who we are is a great act of courage. It helps us fully accept ourselves as we are, see ourselves more clearly, and be more open to feedback from others. It helps us learn and grow. My friend and colleague [Whitney Johnson](https://whitneyjohnson.com/) asks “Did I do my best?”. We often have lots of goals we want to pursue and simply asking ourselves did we do our best helps us acknowledge our failures with compassion.

**Looking back overall, how do I rate my happiness on a scale of 1-10?**

This is a question that my friend [Dorie Clark](https://dorieclark.com/) asks every month. She recommends digging deeper to ask yourself what’s contributing to the rating, and continuing to dig so you understand what habits or choices (often unconscious) may be contributing. For example, when I asked myself this question, I gave myself a seven. As I dug deeper, I realized that I undermine my satisfaction when I over-commit myself, often thinking about what’s next, and don’t take the time to pause and appreciate what’s here. As I set goals for 2019, I am deliberately making a list of projects I will let go of.

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**As I look to next year, what will be the highest use of my talents?**

This is a great question to take stock of your talents and take a step back to notice where they can be most useful. The question invites us to choose where we will spend our energies in the coming year that will serve the purposes that matter to us.

**What is an area where I will exercise courage to stretch, grow and learn next year?**

This is a great question my friend [Kathy Caprino](http://kathycaprino.com/) encourages us all to ask. She is passionate about helping us all “find brave”, and set goals that will inspire us to move beyond our comfort zone.

**What does success look like to me next year?**

As you review meaningful domains in your life (e.g. professional, personal relationships, health & well-being etc.) create a clear vision of what success is in each domain. Prioritize what’s important. And (mostly a reminder to myself), don’t bite off more than you can chew!

Whether you start with one question or attempt all ten, I recommend you take the time to jot down your own answers so 2019 can be a year of greater purpose and fulfillment for you.