

LEADERSHIP

Five Ways to Channel Your Inner Millionaire

Here's how to harness your brain power to maximize productivity.

Scott Halford

By nature, many entrepreneurs are inventors and good at solving problems. But how easily, or naturally, do these creative and practical processes come to most people? How can we harness the right frame of mind to make money and improve productivity?

The part of the brain that sets humans apart from the rest of the animal kingdom is our prefrontal cortex (PFC). It is the "executive" part of the brain -- the moneymaker. It regulates emotions, thoughts and ideas and makes success and fulfillment possible.

But the PFC must be coaxed into action. Vanderbilt University management professor Richard Daft [says](#) that the average human spends only about 2 percent to 10 percent of their time each day using the executive brain. The vast majority of our time is spent reacting reflexively, just like the other animals on the planet.

When it comes to landing your next big deal, which frame of mind do you think would be your better asset?

ANIMAL MIND

Jumps around

Automatic

Rote patterns

Reactive

Sees negative

90 percent to 98 percent of time

EXECUTIVE MIND

In the here and now

Intentional

Thoughtful

Reflective and measured

Sees positive

2 percent to 10 percent of time

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The better characteristics fall under the executive mind. Now, imagine what you could produce if you could add just one more percentage point to your own executive category. Consider these five ways to cajole your reluctant PFC into action and harness your brain power to maximize productivity:

1. Lead it. Direct your brain to focus on something. You decide what your PFC will attend to, as opposed to allowing it to scan the environment for something novel and interesting. This is a deliberate, executive-level function that requires your full effort. The more you focus, the more insights you get.

2. Weed it. Avoid messy thinking by moderating what's on your mind. If you don't, your brain might take the break it needs without asking your permission. When this happens, it will shut down and go into the reactive animal brain. This can lead to trouble.

One way to "weed out" the items on your brain's plate is to turn off every device that can contact or distract you for one hour each day, close your door and work on just one task. You'll probably get more work accomplished in that hour of focused time than you would in four hours filled with distractions.

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Also, tell your brain what you deem most important by prioritizing your to-do list. If you don't prioritize, your brain might go for what's easy, which may not be ideal.

3. Speed it. Give your memory a break and speed up your thinking. Instead of trying to remember all that you have to do, write it down. By redirecting this energy you will have more to draw upon to be creative and productive. Thinking slows down when you overcrowd your brain with disparate things to recall.

4. Rest it. We all know the virtues of a good night's sleep. But daytime rest is critical to fueling the brain as well. Taking regular quiet intervals to allow your PFC to do what it wants to in the first place -- wander and reflect -- helps to prime it for the more critical tasks of thinking and problem solving.

Take a walk or distract yourself with something completely off subject throughout your day. Creating deliberate distractions will prepare you for bursts of brilliance.

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5. Feed it. Your brain operates on glucose and oxygen. It eats up about 20 percent of your total body glucose. If you're a hard-charging person who skips meals, or eats foods that are high in fat, you're not giving your brain a chance to bring in the next really big idea.

Try complex carbohydrates and sugars found in potatoes, brown rice, grains, fruit and vegetables. Feed your brain well and it will more than feed you.

