

# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## Do More Better

### THE SUMMARY

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God calls you to productivity, but he calls you to the right kind of productivity. He calls you to be productive for his sake, not your own. While this book will emphasize tools and systems and other important elements of productivity, nothing is more important than your own holiness and your own godliness. No amount of organization and time management will compensate for a lack of Christian character, not when it comes to this great calling of glory through good—bringing glory to God by doing good to others.

*Define Your Responsibilities.* Each of us has areas for which we are responsible before God. I want you to create a list of each one of your areas of responsibility. You will need to think about all of life and create broad categories, asking the question, “Before God, what am I responsible for?”

Now here’s the challenge: You need to have every one of life’s responsibilities encompassed by a category, yet with as few categories as possible. I would suggest targeting five or six categories, with no more than nine. Once you have come up with those broad areas of responsibility, I want you to begin to bring greater definition to each of them. You will do so by listing the roles, tasks, or projects that fall under each.

*State Your Mission.* What I have found very helpful is preparing a limited mission statement for each of my areas of responsibility. I have five areas of responsibility, and for that reason have five mission statements. My mission statements are not fixed and unchanging. Their primary purpose is to guide me week by week as I schedule my time and make decisions about where to expend

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effort. So while I do not change them haphazardly or without good reason, I do have freedom to tweak them as my mission comes into focus and as it changes throughout life. The primary value of seeing these as “living” statements is that it frees me from the paralysis of defining a mission that needs to guide me today and twenty years from now.

*Select Your Tools.* To a large degree, your productivity depends on identifying and using the best tools for the job and then growing in your skills in deploying them. Effective productivity depends upon three tools and the relationship between them. The first essential tool is the one that is least familiar to most people: a task management tool. A task management tool enables you to capture and organize your projects, tasks, and actions. The second tool is for scheduling. A scheduling tool enables you to organize your time and notifies you of pending events and appointments. The third essential tool is an information tool. An information tool enables you to collect, archive, and access information.

Your productivity depends upon effectively and consistently using these three tools and managing the interaction between them. At this point I am going to introduce an important organizing principle that you will return to again and again. This principle extends to any area of life but is especially helpful in organizing your productivity system. Here it is: a home for everything, and like goes with like. When it comes to productivity, this principle is powerful. If you consistently apply it all over your life, your life will be and remain organized.

*Collect Your Tasks.* The first tool you need to master is your task management tool. This tool represents the heart of an effective productivity system, and you will use it to store and organize your projects, tasks, and actions. While each of the three tools is important, none is more crucial to the functioning of the system than this one. In fact, there is a sense in which all of the other tools are supplemental to it, because this is the one that will determine and propel your actions each day. I recommend Todoist as an exceptional tool for task management.

*Plan Your Calendar.* While there is still a lot of benefit in using a printed calendar, today’s electronic calendars have added powerful new features such as sharing and notifications, and this addition makes them indispensable to productivity. The calendar is the proper home for events, meetings, and appointments. If you need to remember something that happens at a certain time or at a certain time and place, it is an ideal candidate for the calendar. These are the only items that belong on your calendar.

*Gather Your Information.* With your events and information in their proper place, you are now ready to consider your information management tool. This tool is used to collect, manage, and access information. It is the home for life’s nouns—for the data, facts, documents, and information you may need to access in the future. It functions as your auxiliary brain. I recommend Evernote as a powerful tool for information management. No matter what tool you use, always ensure you follow the familiar dictum, a home for everything, and like goes with like. Also ensure that you do something with everything. There needs to be some way that every bit of information has a home and that every bit of information is stored with similar information. If you have twenty notes about a new car you are researching, put them all in the same notebook. If you have five notes about a vacation, put them all in the same notebook.

*Live the System.* Your day needs to have two phases: planning and execution. To manage your day effectively you need to know what the possible tasks are for that day, what the necessary tasks are for that day, and what time is available to accomplish them. Once you have that information available, you can begin to fit tasks into your day like pieces in a puzzle—you set tasks into time. This is what you do during the daily planning phase. The purpose of this phase is to consider all of your projects, duties, and appointments, and to prayerfully choose the tasks that will receive your

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attention that day. To do so you will follow a routine that spreads out all of your possible tasks before you so you can choose the ones that you will attempt to complete.

Your daily planning session is meant to be tactical: It has a limited purpose and a narrow scope. But where the daily planning is tactical, a weekly review offers a chance to be more strategic, to widen the scope and the purpose. This review offers the opportunity to set new plans into motion, to restart projects that have stalled, and to course-correct plans that are drifting. Where the daily planning takes only a couple of minutes, the weekly review requires a little bit more time—I find that I need to block off around 30 minutes for it. I schedule it for each Friday afternoon so that when a new week begins on Sunday, it is already planned and organized.

As humans created in God's image, and as Christians saved by God's grace, we have a remarkable privilege. We have the joy and the responsibility of stewarding our gifts, talents, time, energy, and enthusiasm for the good of others and the glory of God. This is your privilege and this is your purpose. So go and do. Do more better.