

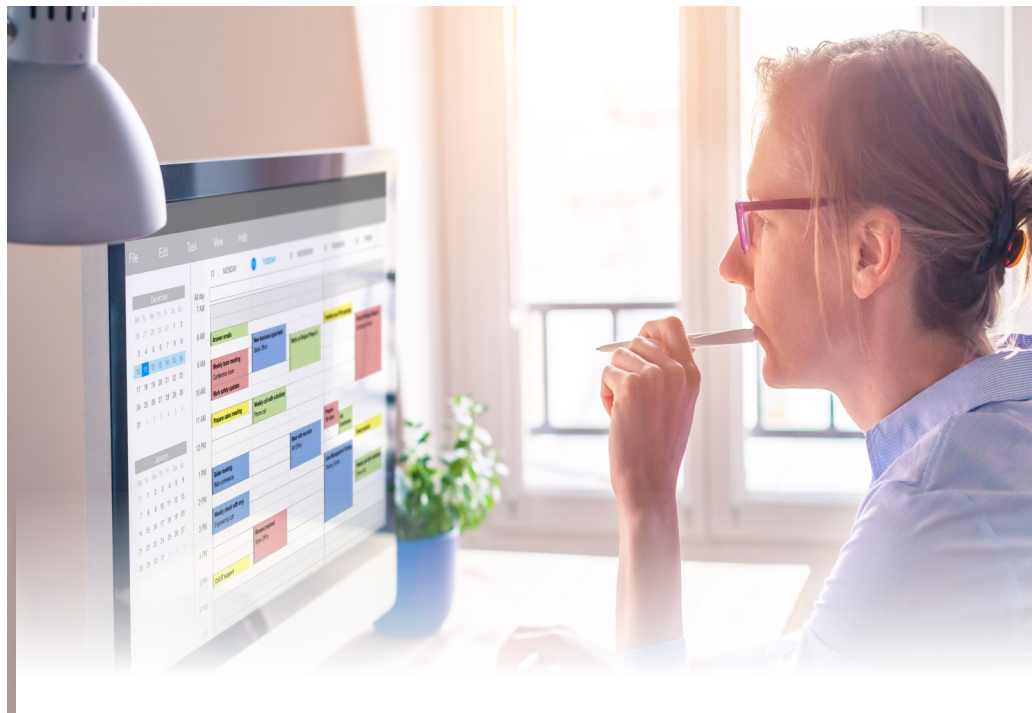
The Tech chronicle

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Work Smarter, Not Harder

Harness The Power Of Technology To Improve Productivity

In today's fast-paced world, it can be challenging to stay focused and productive. With constant distractions from social media, e-mail notifications and other online temptations, it's no surprise that many people struggle to get things done. Fortunately, technology can also be an asset to help you stay on task and reach your goals, regardless of whether you're trying to accomplish things in the workplace or in your personal life. By using the right tools and strategies, you can harness the power of technology to boost your productivity and stay focused on important tasks.

One of the most effective ways is to utilize the right apps and software. Countless productivity tools are available, each with unique features and benefits. Time-tracking apps like Toggl and RescueTime allow you to track how much time you spend on any given task. You'll quickly identify where you're wasting time and can make adjustments to reclaim it. Productivity apps like Asana and Trello can help you create to-do lists and track progress toward accomplishing essential company tasks and projects.

Focus apps like Freedom and SelfControl are also worth looking into if you are continually tempted by distractions. These apps allow you to block access to certain websites for a specified amount of time, which will help you avoid social media platforms and news websites when you should be focused on your work. Some apps and tools are free, while others require a subscription or a onetime fee. To determine the best apps for your situation, you should consider various factors, including your work style, goals and your budget.

In addition to the many apps that are available, another key strategy involves cleaning up and managing your digital environment. If you use a computer for work, it's not uncommon for it to become cluttered over time. Clear out applications and documents from your home screen that are no longer needed, and disable those pesky pop-up notifications. Doing so will often boost your computer's processing power.

Organization is a crucial part of tidying up your digital workspace. If you're not already using a cloud-based

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platform, like Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive, to keep your files organized, now is the time to do so. If you do use a cloud-based platform, when did you last go through it? Set some time aside every other month to go through your documents to ensure they're organized in a way that makes it easy to access them. Create subfolders and date everything to truly maximize your efficiency. These platforms will also allow you to share your documents with minimal effort. And if you're well organized, you won't get distracted while hunting for a specific document.

If you work remotely and find that your productivity suffers when you need to contact a co-worker, communication programs like Zoom and Slack allow you to facilitate real-time collaboration and better connect with your team. Be careful, though, since communication apps can be a double-edged sword. Yes, they can improve productivity, but they can also redirect your focus if you get pulled into conversations that aren't work-related. If you find yourself constantly distracted by communication from other team members, set specific times to check your notifications.

As a final tip, if you need additional support when it comes to staying productive and focused, utilize a digital assistant like



Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri. These assistants can be programmed to remind you about important tasks and deadlines before they get too close. They can schedule tasks, help you plan your day and even answer questions quickly.

We don't have to think about technology only as a distraction. Once you find the right apps and technological tools that fit your work style, you'll notice an immediate improvement in your productivity.

"Technology can also be an asset to help you stay on task and reach your goals, regardless of whether you're trying to accomplish things in the workplace or in your personal life."

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They'll Love Your Reflective Skills

How Reflective Listening Will Help You Accomplish Your Goals

How would you like to be 20% better at persuasion, improve your chances of landing your dream job and become more popular in social settings? All of this is possible by refining one simple conversation tactic: reflective listening. Reflective listening occurs when you show an understanding of what someone else is saying, feeling, aspiring to or worrying about.

For example, when your lunch partner says, "The energy stocks got hammered again today; my firm insists on staying the course, but I feel it's time to go in another direction," you could reflect by saying, "It sounds like you had a hard day, and you feel trapped on a boat that's going in the wrong direction." Your lunch partner will say, "EXACTLY!" and appreciate that you cared enough and were confident enough to explain their emotions.

Reflective listening is better than lecturing your friend by offering a premature solution off the cuff like, "Well, you should leave then." It's better than saying something competitive like, "Well, I have been predicting further declines in energy this past year, and I've been right." And it's way better than ignoring your lunch partner's turmoil and talking about something else on your mind, like "Cheer up - hey, did you catch the football game last night?"

Reflecting what you hear someone saying makes the other person feel like you are respectful, attentive, empathetic and willing to put yourself in their shoes. People who feel that you understand them and are an ally in helping them get what they want (in work and in life) are much more likely to listen to your persuasive idea, hire you for the job



of your dreams or want to spend time with you socially.

Reflecting is not asking new probing questions (which many strategy consultants, lawyers, accountants and other professionals do all too often). Probing questions are not at all related to what the person just said and are all about getting you the data you seek to advance your agenda. In contrast, reflecting is meeting the person where *they* are. It's furthering the conversation on a topic that is important to *them*. Reflecting is easier to do, extremely powerful and more about building trust and mutual understanding than collecting details.

I encourage you to dial up the reflective listening in your professional and personal conversations. You'll see how capable you feel when persuading someone to take action and notice how more people seem to gravitate toward you socially. They will love your skills of reflection.



Dr. Geoff Smart is chairman & founder of ghSMART, a leadership consulting firm that exists to help leaders amplify their positive impact on the world. Dr. Smart and his firm have published multiple New York Times bestsellers. He stays active in his community and has advised many government officials.

■ Authenticity In Action The Benefits Of Showing Vulnerability In The Workplace

Many business leaders believe they shouldn't show any vulnerability in the workplace. They think that it will come off as a weakness and cause them to lose the respect of their team. This couldn't be further from the truth. A recent study from Catalyst found that employees say they are more creative, dedicated and willing to go above and beyond when their leaders display vulnerability and openness.

In many ways, vulnerability can be a strength. When you're vulnerable, you show your employees that you're willing to admit your mistakes and ask for help when needed. You're less likely to get in over your head, and your employees will follow

suit. Vulnerability also improves trust among your team and will make them more comfortable voicing their opinions, concerns and ideas without fear of judgment.

So, how do you become more vulnerable in the workplace? It starts with how you talk with your team. Don't be afraid to share your feelings and any wins or losses you've experienced at work. Frequently check in with your employees so they can voice their feelings. And if they mention that something is bothering them about the workplace or your leadership style, take action and make some changes.

■ How To Turn Your Employees Into Leaders

It can become a difficult situation when a longtime manager or leader steps away

from your business or their role. You have to find a replacement for them, and while you might think it's best to hire someone outside the organization who comes with extensive experience, you may benefit even more from promoting within your own ranks. When you promote an employee, you're showing their co-workers that advancement opportunities are available, which can encourage them to work more diligently. You also don't have to worry about training your new leader on the nuances of your company since they'll already be familiar with your processes and systems.

It may take some strategizing on your part, to successfully develop your team member to ensure they're capable of taking on a leadership role. This starts by building a strong company culture so every employee values the business and knows what it stands for. You also need to reward success whenever possible. Offer raises and promotions to deserving employees, and when applicable, recognize their achievements in front of the team. Finally, don't throw anyone to the wolves by simply hoping for the best. Instead, develop a leadership training program to ensure the success of every leader.



"Well if you people can't fix my computer virus, maybe you can tell me what the heck the Center For Disease Control is doing with my tax dollars!"

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