



Creating Your Own "Productivity Guidelines" for 2005

As you start a new year, it's only natural to reflect on the previous year and to review what you've accomplished. I recommend you do this process in a very conscious way; otherwise it's easy to overlook your successes as well as the valuable lessons that you've learned. When you recognize these lessons you can apply them as you implement your 2005 goals, thus resulting in even greater personal productivity.

Creating your own "Productivity Guidelines" (PGs) involves answering four questions. I suggest that you answer these questions in a Microsoft Word document, writing the four questions with the answers underneath.

1. What did you accomplish in 2004?

Write a list of all your personal and business accomplishments and completions for 2004. This process will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. It might feel like pulling teeth at first, however once you get a few things written down, your list will start to flow more easily. You can review your 2004 calendar to jog your memory of completions and successes if needed. Keep writing until you exhaust all the possibilities.

Once you're done, I think you'll be surprised by how much you've completed and what you've accomplished. Next, allow yourself a quiet moment to sincerely acknowledge what you got done. (Or maybe a not-so-quiet moment -- you might find that

Quick Tip: Putting New Categories in Your Master Category List

To open the Master Category List so you can enter new categories, follow these steps:

1. Open the Task list.
2. If necessary, click the plus sign to the left of Categories: (none) to expand the category and see its tasks.
3. Right-click any task.
4. On the shortcut menu, click Categories to open the Categories dialog box.

In the Categories dialog box, click the Master Category List button. The Master Category List dialog box opens, and you'll see a list of default categories. Before you add the new Categories to your Master Category List, delete any of the default categories that you don't consistently use. (A quick way to delete unused default categories is to click one of the categories, press and hold down the Ctrl key, and click additional categories. Release the Ctrl key, click the

you got so many things done that you want to whoop and holler!) Most of us are moving so fast that we rarely stop to acknowledge and celebrate what we've accomplished. In fact, it's often easier for us to judge what we didn't do and what we could have done better, than it is for us to acknowledge what we did complete and what we did achieve. It's so important to celebrate these completions and successes because acknowledgement is what motivates and inspires us to move forward.

2. What qualities and strengths helped you to achieve these goals and activities successfully?

Most of us are so busy moving forward with our lives that we rarely take a moment to look back and identify what we did that worked. Once you know what you did that worked, however, you can focus on those skills and use them to help you move forward more effectively.

Take a moment and review your completions and successes and ask yourself: "What qualities or strengths did I use to complete these activities?" Identify exactly what it was that you did that worked. For example, was it your focus, a particular skill you practiced, enrolling the assistance of others, effective strategy, pre-planning, or your enthusiasm? Be sure to write them down.

Here are a few examples of personal and business PGs from clients:

- Be accountable and focus on Meaningful Objectives consistently
- Book time on my calendar to complete important tasks and honor it
- Be strong and say "no" to activities that don't link to my Meaningful Objectives
- Preplan outdoor adventures on my calendar
- Get a massage twice a month

You'll notice these statements are written in a

Delete button, and click OK.) If you're using categories you've already created, be sure to keep them.

MPS Tips and Tricks on Microsoft.com!

Microsoft invited us to provide some easy-to-use tips and tricks for e-mail management posting in the Information Worker section of Microsoft.com. You can review these six key skills by following these links:

[Format e-mail messages for clarity](#)

[Create an effective reference system](#)

[Set up folders for an e-mail reference system](#)

[Process and organize your e-mail to increase productivity](#)

[Write e-mail messages that get attention](#)

[Respond effectively to e-mail messages](#)

To discuss how MPS strategies can help you reach your objectives more effectively, just [e-mail us](#) or contact us any time from our

positive format, reminding you of the specific qualities and strengths that can help you to achieve your goals productively. The more aware you are of these behaviors the easier it will be to practice them and reap the benefits from honoring them. It also enables you to keep acknowledging what you're doing that's working which is extremely motivating.

3. What were your biggest disappointments in 2004?

Nobody likes to review their disappointments; however there are fabulous lessons hidden in these regrets. Some of my greatest insights have come from my disappointments. These insights have helped me to create my greatest successes. I encourage you to dig for these pearls for they're hidden in these disappointments! Take 5-10 minutes and list your disappointments from 2004. Some areas you could explore include:

- Things you wanted to do and didn't
- Things you could have done better
- People you let down (and why)
- Times you didn't take care of yourself or your family
- When you lost control of your work/life balance
- When you weren't being honest quickly enough
- Commitments you should have renegotiated

Be sure to capture this in your document.

4. What could you have done differently to avoid these disappointments?

Take 5-10 minutes to list the lessons you learned from these disappointments. Here are a few examples from clients:

- Make hard decisions quickly, despite the risks
- Celebrate my successes
- Only agree to activities that fit onto my

- calendar
- Book an hour of uninterrupted time a day to do e-mail and stick to it
- Leave 2 weekends open a month with no commitments

Once again, put these into your document.

You've now written down the lessons you've learned from both your disappointments and your successes. These become your personal Productivity Guidelines. It is useful to read them once a week to keep reminding yourself of what you did that worked, so that you can continue to practice them and increase your productivity. I recommend that you transfer these guidelines from your document into a place where they're readily available. I would suggest opening a Task in the TaskPad to do this. Enter the title 'Personal Productivity Guidelines' into the subject line and then cut and paste the actual guidelines from the document into the Task. This way you can retrieve them more easily and they are in front of you more consistently.

Although these guidelines are simple they are powerful and you've already proven that they can help you to increase your effectiveness and success, and they will continue to do so if you use them. There is no need for you to reinvent the wheel - learn from your own successes and disappointments and take to heart what you do that works.

Happy New Year and have a fabulous and productive 2005.

"Success is nothing more than a few simple disciplines, practiced everyday." — Jim Rohn

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