

WAKE-UP TIME

Jordan Zimmerman is out of bed at 3:30 every morning for a 25-mile bike ride after less than four hours of sleep.



Jordan Zimmerman // // // Zimmerman Advertising

Plenty of time to catch up on his sleep—when he dies

How does the founder of an advertising agency with 22 offices and billings in excess of \$2.6 billion always know exactly what his clients want? Jordan Zimmerman, founder of Zimmerman Advertising, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, calls every one of them, every day.

Being in good shape gives me energy. I've lifted weights since college, so I get up every morning at 3:30, and I'm at the gym by 4. There are three gyms near my house, and I used to rotate through

all of them, because the angles on the machines are different: They work the muscles differently. Now I just alternate between two. By 5:30, I'm home and then out on my bike. I ride 25 miles

before breakfast—more on the weekends. We have four kids, ages 4 through 21. I eat with the three younger ones, and if I'm not traveling that day, I take them to school.

I have a very short window in which to plan. Everything I do is driven by my clients' sales numbers from the day before. We have 20 major accounts, many of them retailers with thousands of outlets, and we get overnight information that drills all the way down to their performance by store. I study those reports over four sessions of roughly 15 minutes each: the first when I wake up, the second between the gym and my bike ride, the third between my bike ride and breakfast, and the fourth just after I arrive at the office. I get a sense of the top-level trends and then forward the reports to the appropriate analysts, account directors, and media teams with my questions or suggestions. This holiday promotion for Party City is still paying off two weeks later; let's find out why. The numbers here are trending down; is it a market problem? A weather problem? An inventory problem? A management problem? Figure it out so we can improve the sales trajectory.

As I read through the sales reports, I assign each account a number, 1 through 10, reflecting the scope of its current problems or opportunities. I will meet with the account teams for most of those clients during the day, starting with those I've rated 10. I copy my assistant on all my predawn e-mail, and she sets up the meetings accordingly. I have at minimum 10 meetings a day, of about 15 minutes each. They're very focused. We all know the strategy for each brand. We know yesterday's numbers.

The other thing we know is what the client thinks. I call the CEO or chairperson of every one of my major clients every single day. These people are the brilliance behind the brand, and my job is to keep them in the loop, to make sure that as a team, we're making the right decisions for the brand. The calls last only about 10 minutes. We talk about the numbers—what we plan to

do, what they think of it. Even if things are going well, are there things they see that we might miss? Something to do with the competitors? I remember calling John Schnatter of Papa John's Pizza—I call him Papa—and he'd heard that Domino's was planning something big for *The Celebrity Apprentice*. Within a few days, we had placed an ad in that show to counteract the Domino's ad.

I generally eat lunch with the people working on that day's biggest problem or opportunity. Then they carry out what we've discussed in the afternoon.

I use 10,000 to 12,000 cell-phone minutes every month. All my client calls are cell to cell. I also carry my cell around the building, and my employees do as

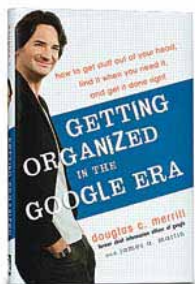
well: It's how we communicate. The office is 85,000 square feet on several floors, and my executives are located with their functions, so it's inefficient to chase after people. And if they're out of their offices, I don't want to wait until they get back. We have a rule: I answer their calls; they answer my calls. I like the directness of phone conversations. You don't miss things the way you do with e-mail. I use e-mail to alert people to issues and say, "Let's call to discuss."

There are two computers on my desk. If I'm working on something, and I have an unrelated idea, I turn to my second computer so I don't interrupt the flow. I also keep a mini tape recorder with me so I can capture ideas or leave myself

reminders. It sits on my desk while I work and later by my bedside, in case something occurs to me during the night.

I try to get home for dinner, and after the kids go to bed, I work a few more hours in my home office. I look at all the accounts and reprioritize them based on what happened during the day. I study the research that my staff has prepared. A few times a week, I'll work on my blog. I like to write when it's quiet. I go to bed around 11 or 12.

Sometimes I speak at universities, and I ask students why they sleep in on weekends. "Why would you sleep when that's your time to live?" I ask them. Sleeping isn't living. You sleep when you die.



The case for a cluttered inbox

In our struggle for productivity, limited attention spans, time, and memory are outflanked by limitless information, demands, and stress. **Douglas C. Merrill's** new book, *Getting Organized in the Google Era*, attempts to shift the odds in efficiency's favor. Merrill, the former CIO of Google, talked to *Inc.* about imposing order on chaotic lives.

Do business leaders have different organizational needs than people working in the trenches?

People in the trenches tend to have longer projects and work on one thing at a time. By contrast, in one day the leader of a small company might worry first about marketing, then pricing, then rent, and a host of other things. Each time he swaps from one task to another, he loses some effectiveness.

Consequently, business leaders should try to organize their days to minimize context shifts: clustering similar meetings or tasks so they can worry about one kind of thing at a time.

Should you impose your own organizational habits on employees?

Trying to strap employees into an organizational straitjacket is generally bad for them and a waste of your time. That said,

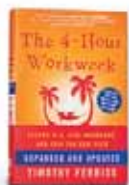
some general organizational principles work across people. Use Search instead of filing; store everything you can in the cloud; try not to shift contexts unless needed.

Which productivity practices are the most misguided?

The drive to file papers and e-mails as quickly as possible. You file information to be able to find it later. You retrieve information later to achieve some

goal. Filing information according to your goals will make you more successful at finding the information when you need it. But when you initially get an e-mail or document, you probably won't know which tasks it will be useful for, so you can't really know where to file it. Don't file anything. Leave it in your inbox or in piles on your desk. Use Search to find your e-mails when relevant, and reorganize your piles regularly.

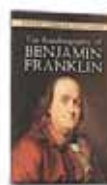
Here are **three other books** to help you get a handle on your personal productivity:



The 4-Hour Workweek
By Timothy Ferriss
Ferriss explains how to live more and work less by practicing "selective ignorance."



Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity
By David Allen
Productivity guru Allen prescribes an elaborate system for capturing, organizing, and acting on information.



The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin
By Benjamin Franklin
The grandfather of personal productivity describes his quest for a better life through meticulous planning.