Strategic Leadership Consulting

Day 1: Leading from Home - Routines

Estimated read time for this article is 3-4 minutes

During this week, you will find three overarching themes:
1. Make intentional decisions
2. Limit distractions and transitions
3. Engage fully (and healthily)

Every break in concentration requires refocusing. This is as true for scanning an email notification or news headline as it is for taking a phone call or interacting with someone in your environment. *A series of breaks creates a cascading effect that undermines your ability to engage thoughtfully and intentionally*. Read the research here.

Routines are the practices we engage in on a daily basis. Think about routines as being a set of dominoes. If you start your first routine correctly, the rest of them should follow as long as you've set them up well. When you execute your first routine, it becomes easier to do the second, then the third, and so on.

Why are we starting with routines?
- Your normal routines are likely obsolete
- Without routines, we become more reactive and less intentional
- Working from home carries increased distractions, and routines can help

There are four critical parts of the day for routines:
1. Transition to work
2. Morning productivity
3. Afternoon productivity
4. Transition from work

Transition to Work
This is the single most important set of routines due to the domino effect. If you stumble on the first step, it can make the rest of the day rocky. Here are some suggestions for routines to include in your transition from waking to working:
1. Turn off news sources, it will free your mind for more productive tasks. Set limits with others in your home to get current news at specific times (e.g. noon, evening).
2. Eliminate activities that suck time and clutter your mind. Anything that requires scrolling probably should be ditched.
3. Structure your routines so that they naturally take you from wakefulness to work. This might look like:
   a. Serving others in your home (partners and children).
   b. Taking care of physical needs.
   c. Mental care and preparation (praying, meditating, reflecting, reading). I'll talk a lot more about this in the video!
4. Enter your space ready to work.
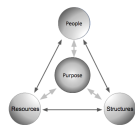
Morning Productivity
Have a set order for getting started. Some of the steps you may take:
1. Check your calendar.
2. Plan your day
    a. Identify ONE thing that must get done.
    b. Block your day in to general themes or specific time slots.
3. Check communications and respond only to the highest priorities.
    a. Your email is not your to-do list. Be intentional about what email (and other communications) you respond to and which ones you can address later.
    b. This might be your biggest challenge area – *be intentional*.
    c. You can download 14 tips for managing email [here](#).
4. Focus on your priority task (assuming this requires your peak performance).
5. Engage in important communications or other tasks.

Afternoon Productivity
One of the inescapable facts of leading from home is that there are more distractions. Being militant about sealing off blocks of work time is critical. If you need to do non-work things during the day, try and do them in a set block. Importantly, build a trigger at the end of the block that pushes you into your afternoon work. Accept that the afternoon block may be "squishier," but you can anticipate certain types of work.
1. Try and contain meetings to set time periods.
2. Attend to more tedious items that can be accomplished quickly.

Transition from Work
This is critical for your mental health. Your work may require you to do things in the evening, and if that is the case, build in an evening work block with its own routines. *It is imperative to create clean breaks between professional and private time* and to adhere to them to the greatest degree possible.
1. Plan your work for the following day.
2. Review the current day and reflect on your performance.
3. Shut down your communications.

Best practices for routines:
- Be explicit with yourself and others about your routines.
- Be consistent with the sequence.
- Be intentional. If you need to break a routine, know *why* you are breaking it.
- Build in triggers that signal a transition or remind you to get back on task.
- Limit interruptions and transitions!

You can take a deeper dive by watching the accompanying video [on my website](#) or on [YouTube](#).

Do good and be well,

Frederick