

"Whatever happened to the
concept of 'less is more?'"

Niles Crane

"Ah, but if less is more, just think
of how much more 'more' will be."

Frasier Crane

Copyright Information and Disclaimer

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author. Copyright violation is a serious offense, and violators will be subject to prosecution.

While all attempts have been made to verify the information provided in this publication, the author assumes no responsibility for errors, omissions, or contrary interpretation of the subject matter herein.

This publication is not intended for use as a source of legal, business, marketing or accounting advice. The author wants to stress that the information contained herein may be subject to varying state and/or local laws or regulations. All readers are advised to retain competent counsel to determine what state and/or local laws or regulations may apply to the reader's particular business.

The reader of this publication assumes responsibility for the use of these materials and information. Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations, federal, state, and local, governing professional licensing, business practices, advertising, and all other aspects of doing business in the United States or any other jurisdiction is the sole responsibility of the reader.

The author assumes no responsibility or liability whatsoever on the behalf of any reader of these materials. Any perceived slights of specific people or organizations are unintentional.

Cover photo by [Bhernandez](#).

Table of Contents

Why We're Failing the 4-Hour Workweek	1
Copyright Information and Disclaimer	3
Table of Contents	4
Right Now	5
The 4-Hour Workweek	6
What's Wrong With Having a Job?	9
Being a Professional You	12
The Blogging Success Formula	14
The Life of a Pro Blogger	15
How to Justify Doing Everything	17
How to Justify Doing Nothing	21
The Solution	25
Find Your Warp Zone	29
About the Author	30

Right Now

As I write this, I'm looking at 315 unread posts in my [RSS reader](#). Good thing I unsubscribed from all the blogs I don't absolutely need, or this number could be in the thousands.

But anyway, what am I supposed to do about these 315 must-read posts? If I could read one post per minute, I'd finish them in just over 5 hours. Then I'd feel good about making sure my favorite bloggers didn't write in vain, and I'd know that I didn't miss anything I need to see.

But is that the best use of my time right now, spending 5 hours reading posts? Should I be working on something that pays the bills instead?

And who am I kidding? I can't read a post in 1 minute. Because for me, reading a post doesn't mean just moving my eyes across the words and getting it over with.

Instead, I have to pause every few sentences to think about the ramifications, then read all the comments and think about the ramifications some more, then get ideas for five 1,000-word posts I need to write. For the next few days, my [spirit guides](#) will download related ideas to me through [claircognizance](#), and I'll race to write everything down in my [todoodlist](#) before I forget about it.

That's what reading one post is like for me. Now multiply that by 315. I guess that's the curse of the [INTP](#), with their introverted thinking and extraverted intuition. Nothing is ever simple. Or finished.

No, everything is an onion fractal, and as you peel back each layer, you find a brand new onion that's just as important as the previous one, with more layers. And suddenly you absolutely have to write a four-post series on what you learned from a few episodes of [ThunderCats](#) twenty years ago. Or a simple exploration of positive thinking leads you to the prerequisite of diving headfirst into [Niels Bohr's Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics](#). Or you have to play The Legend of Zelda for 14 hours because you can't remember where you can get the screenshot you need of the old man saying "[Leave your life or money](#)."

Oh wait, before I get to these 315 posts, I have some comments to respond to. 7 people are offering insight on the "critic virus" idea I got from [I Am Legend](#), 16 people are providing terrific feedback on my [interview with Steve Pavlina](#) on the secrets of his truth/love/power triangle, and 23 people are wishing me a [Happy 1st Blog Birthday](#). They all deserve my attention.

Or is it time to start working on my next [ebook](#) or write another paid post, so I can actually try to make a living? Or is it time to read the ebooks collecting dust on my hard drive, or build up my social media profiles? Or is it time to clear out my inbox, temporarily winning that game of whack-a-mole? Or is it time to do something about the well-organized but overwhelming clutter that covers a good chunk of my living space? Or is it time to visit my cousin in Chile, thereby reaching my goal of visiting a majority of the continents? Or is it time to find a wife? Or practice lucid dreaming? Or become a vegan? Or fight global warming? Or save the whales?

And tomorrow is Wednesday. Everybody posts on Wednesday.

How am I supposed to do everything in just 4 hours a week?

The 4-Hour Workweek

"My child arrived just the other day
He came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it, and as he grew
He'd say 'I'm gonna be like you, Dad
You know I'm gonna be like you'"

- Harry Chapin, [Cat's in the Cradle](#)

The 4-hour workweek is a concept popularized by Tim Ferriss in his best-selling 2007 book called...well, [The 4-Hour Workweek](#). (He chose that title because it performed best in his pay per click tests.)

It consists of the mindsets and practices that form Tim's solution to the "deferred life plan." You know what I'm talking about; the idea that you'll put up with your 9-5 cubicle prison for now, and then you'll get to do what you really want to do...[someday](#). Only "someday" never gets here.

"We're busy all our life, then we die."

- Unknown

Tim's strategy, and one that he's actually putting into practice, is to brutally eliminate, automate, and delegate, hacking together a system that pays the bills while requiring only four hours a week to maintain.

By now we've had plenty of time to implement this. So why haven't we?

In fact, far from making a living on four hours a week, we're constantly finding new ways to spend more time doing less, in large part due to the internet and its amazing ability to distract. Granted, these are often entertaining distractions, but they do place a huge burden on our time.

"Ten years ago, you had a shot of at least being aware of everything that mattered. Five years ago, you had to be really selective about what you took in, but at least it was possible to know what you didn't know. Today, it's impossible. Today, you can't even read every article on a thin slice of a thin topic.

You can't keep up with the status of your friends on the social networks. No way. You can't read every important blog... you can't even read all the blogs that tell you what the important blogs are saying.

Used to be, you could finish reading your email, hit 'check email' and nothing new would show up. Now, of course, the new mail is probably a longer list than the mail you just finished processing.

The internet isn't full, but we are."

- Seth Godin, [Warning: The internet is almost full](#)

Now Seth here is just talking about reading. What if what you read requires a response?

"For years now I've been receiving more feedback than I can possibly respond to. And now I've ramped that up to an even greater level. Now I can't even read it all. Logically I know that it's unrealistic for me or anyone else to expect I can personally follow up with everyone who contacts me. So why do I still feel like everyone deserves a personal response? Why do I feel like I should do my best to maintain every online relationship I have, even though that's totally impractical these days?

It feels rude to ignore people who take the time to keep in touch with me, especially those who genuinely want to connect or who offer encouragement and support. I think it's very nice that such people take the time to email me. So how can I respond by ignoring them?"

- Steve Pavlina, [Facebook and Twitter](#)

I only get a small fraction of the feedback the A-listers do, but keeping up with everything is still a huge challenge. There are times when I hesitate to publish a particular post because I know it will generate a flood of comments. That would be great, if I didn't feel obligated to give a respectable response to each one.

I have vague memories of being bored, when I would actually have to think of something to do. Those days are long gone. Now, we're drowning in demands and never get to come up for air.

I remember reading something about ten years ago that said it would take you three years to read every page on the web. That seems laughable today. It would probably take you three years to empty your inbox.

I don't think people are meant to live this way. I think we're supposed to have lots of free time and not worry about being as productive as we can with every

second. Sometimes I wonder if we're any happier than the Neanderthals were.

If only there were [30 hours in a day](#)! But would that really change anything? 30 hours in a day would just mean 30 hours for other people to write stuff for you to read. No, the solution can't be a way of trying to deal with these ever-increasing demands. It has to be a way of eliminating them.

And that's exactly what Tim Ferriss does: he refuses to play the game of keeping up with everything under the sun. For starters, he doesn't use an RSS reader, and he doesn't follow anyone on [Twitter](#). Depending on your habits, those changes alone could save you several hours per day. So why not just do what he does?

Well, Tim Ferriss is the real deal, no question about that. But you probably can't be like him. (And those who can probably know who they are already.) The odds are heavily against you, no matter how good your virtual assistant is.

But that's OK. I don't think the point of the 4HWW is really to work only four hours a week, so much as to spend most of your time doing what you want. What if there was something we did to make a living, and it was the same thing we chose to do in our free time? In that case, wouldn't it be OK if we were "working" more than full-time hours?

Maybe we need to strive not for eliminating all work, but for doing work that fulfills us.

What's Wrong With Having a Job?

"Now John at the bar is a friend of mine
He gets me my drinks for free
And he's quick with a joke, or to light up your smoke
But there's someplace that he'd rather be

He says 'Bill, I believe this is killing me'
As the smile ran away from his face
'Well I'm sure that I could be a movie star
If I could get out of this place'"

- Billy Joel, [Piano Man](#)

Not that long ago, I was a software developer. I could do it just fine, and at times I even liked it. But as the years went by, I often found myself wondering, "Is this really what I'm supposed to be doing with my life, or is it just a joke?"

What's wrong with having a job? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Unless your boss's plan for your life is different from yours.

Because when you accept a job, your boss owns you. Your purpose is to serve them, and do what they say. You've handed over a huge chunk of your life in exchange for money. The best you can hope for is that you get paid a good rate for your life.



Image from [The Legend of Zelda](#) (1987)

Let's face it. Handing over control of your time for too little money is a terrible

way to spend your life. If anyone wants to challenge me on this, I invite them to work as my personal assistant for free.

Why does the money matter? Some people like fancy toys, but for me the main reason to accumulate money was to eventually buy back my life (retire). No longer having to prostitute myself (have a job), I could be freed up to pursue [creative self-expression](#).

Is it possible that you could exercise creative self-expression in a job? Sure, it's possible. But how often does someone get the chance? It's rare to even be treated like an adult.

Instead, we punch our time cards, shuffle paper, pretend to ask useful questions in meetings, and ask "Sir, may I go to the bathroom?" We go through the motions of getting work done and being a good employee because really, the only things we're judged by are seat time and compliance with the rules.

I often hear people saying they're generally happy in their job. Really? You're happy to let someone else run your life? You must be very easy to please.

"A job is just a monstrous distraction. In many ways it's a modernized form of slavery.

Homelessness is a huge upgrade from traditional employment. Have you ever talked to a homeless person? Some of them find the idea of having a job insulting — it represents a loss of freedom. Sure you smell better and can get a nicer place to live, but you lose your humanity in the process. Perhaps such people realize something you don't.

Employment is the ultimate form of destitution."

- Steve Pavlina, [How to Make Lots of Money During a Recession](#)

In theory, employment could easily be a lot better. A big step in the right direction would be the [Results-Only Work Environment \(ROWE\)](#) that's been tested at Best Buy for a few years now. The idea is that employees can do whatever they want, whenever they want, as long as the job gets done. Not only does it give employees their lives back, but it has been found to boost productivity an average of 35%.

For now, people argue that ROWE wouldn't have worked on a Model T Ford assembly line, so therefore it can't work today in a knowledge-based, web-connected, global economy. Maybe these people will eventually become less resistant and ROWE will catch on, but until that happens, you'd have to be [crazy to want a job](#).

Here, take a look at the results of this personality test I took a few years ago. It's interesting because it compares your actual personality against the personality that would be ideally suited for your current job. Take a look—is this a match made in heaven, or what?

Trait	Actual	Ideal	Compatibility
-------	--------	-------	---------------

Autonomy	6	0	HORRENDOUS
Extroversion	2	1	EXCELLENT
Patience	3	1	GOOD
Detail	7	2	TERRIBLE
Emotional Control	6	10	AWFUL
Creativity	10	1	DISASTROUS

Oh wait, it gets better. This is what they say about my responses on the second half of the test, the part where they ask questions about what your job is like:

"THE EXTREMELY LOW RESPONSE TO THE JOB BEHAVIORS SECTION OF THE SURVEY MAY INDICATE ILLITERACY, AVOIDANCE OR FAKING AND BE OF QUESTIONABLE ACCURACY."

I wonder if that's a common problem—people suddenly becoming illiterate halfway through the test.

But then they elaborate:

"This person may not understand the instructions or many of the words, or may be very hesitant about recording his/her true opinions about the job demands, or is very new to the position and has not yet defined perceptions. If accurate this extremely low Versatility Level in Job Behaviors describes the individual as perceiving his or her job responsibilities as being **very undemanding, often to the point of being boring and unmotivating.**" (My emphasis.)

(Now isn't that a better assumption to make, rather than accusing the subject of illiteracy or faking?)

The sad thing is that this was one of my best jobs. A job is often undemanding, boring, and unmotivating. If not that, then it's probably overly demanding, boring, and unmotivating, which is worse.

It's a shame that we have to spend so much of our lives in soul-sucking jobs just to survive. I find it interesting that we enjoy far less freedom than our pets.

Here's a simple test to see whether you like your job. If they weren't bribing you with a salary and benefits, would you still do it?

Being a Professional You



Image from [Iron Man](#) (2008)

In the song [My Rollercoaster](#), Kimya Dawson recalls the time her mom said to her, "[I hope someday you get paid for being Kimya Dawson](#)." Is there any better thing a parent could say?

"I've had this itchin' in my shoes since I was just a little kid
and before I had a minivan I road the Greyhound bus
my mom would say 'I hope someday
you get paid for being Kimya Dawson'
and now I do and it's not much, but it's enough
I've got my Scrabble game, food on my plate,
good friends and family
and now there's you understanding why I do the things I do
knowing that you do them too makes me really happy"

- Kimya Dawson, [My Rollercoaster](#)

Tim Ferriss says, "I'm not a multimillionaire, nor do I particularly care to be." Some people say that he isn't rich, but he just decided that money doesn't matter, and he was going to enjoy life anyway. This is missing the point.

The only reason Tim can do whatever he wants is because he found a way to create the passive income of a multi-millionaire without working. (OK, fine, working four hours a week.) But if you don't have passive income, you have to generate active income.

There's nothing wrong with active income though, as long as you like what you do to earn it. What if there was no separation between work and play? That what you did to make money was also what you did to fulfill your highest purpose?

That's the idea of being a professional you. Gracing the world with your talents on your own terms. Getting paid to be Kimya Dawson.

It's true that there are [major downsides](#) to being an entrepreneur. I have to admit that [the 9-5 does have its benefits](#). But there are people who know it's just not for them, and decide they have to try to [find their own way](#), despite the costs.

Blogging is a popular medium that people use to find their own way. But popular and easy are two different things. Sometimes I see people saying, "You know, I tried blogging, but I found that I can make way more money from [insert job here]." Well yeah, that's the tradeoff. Your life or your money.

No one is saying that blogging is the easiest way to make money. In fact, it's one of the hardest. If it were easy, there would be no question about whether it compares favorably to a job. You'd just have to decide whether you'd rather do whatever you want, or whatever you're told.

But that's not the case. Making money without having a system already set up for you is very hard. And yes, the money is very important. Because without money, it won't last. It takes money to live, so if you can't make money some other way, you'll have to go back to the job. No soup for you. You are the weakest link, goodbye.

Making money is easy (just get a job). Doing what you want is easy (just quit your job). But making money from doing what you want is a huge challenge. If it weren't, then everyone would do it.

Maybe we can't make a living in just four hours a week (or forty, for that matter). But if we're doing something that makes us come alive, isn't that a victory regardless of the hours? Standing up to the man has a high cost, but isn't it sometimes worth it?



Photo by [Jeff Widener](#)

The Blogging Success Formula

2008 marked an historic moment for the blogosphere, when it was discovered that a blogger's success could be modeled by using partial differential equations on certain curved manifolds in n-dimensional space, where n is the total number of posts the blogger has published.

The closed-form solutions to the equations describing a blog enabled us to give a definitive answer for the first time to the question: "How long does it take to make a full time income from blogging?"

Instead of waving our hands and muttering platitudes like "It depends on how good your content is," we can now state that a blogger's success is given by this formula:

$$B = cm(Rnd^{1/t}, L + ?s)$$

where

B is the blogger's success,
c is the speed of light in a vacuum,
m() is the mojo function,
R is the [Rowse](#) constant,
n is the total number of posts published,
d is the average number of posts published per day,
t is the standard deviation of the number of posts published per day,
L is the net incoming link juice,
? is the golden ratio, and
s is the social media boost factor.

Surely the world is a better place now that we know this.

(This concept is gratefully used with permission from [Andrew Conway](#), whose [juggling difficulty formula](#) I read in 1995, and knew I would use someday.)

The Life of a Pro Blogger



Image from [Superman](#) (1978)

I've been a [pro blogger](#) for two and a half months now. The company I worked at as a software developer warned us that they might be shutting down because they lost their biggest client, but I wasn't motivated to find another job. When the axe came down, I was on top of the world. I was on my mini-retirement.

I'm not thrilled with the definition of "pro blogger" that seems to have caught on, which is simply that you're a blogger without a job. It seems that it should be defined by reaching a certain level of blogging, not eliminating something unrelated to it. But anyway, I'm a pro blogger in that I don't have a job (though I don't have much of an income either).

Is being a pro blogger really all that great? Yes, it's wonderful. No longer are you chained to a desk or a schedule. In fact, you can ditch the alarm clock altogether. And you spend your days doing things you'd be doing for fun anyway. What more could anyone want?

But people might find that pro blogging is a lot more work than they think. Let's be clear that while I'm calling this stint a mini-retirement, it's not a "Tim Ferriss going to Japan to shoot a TV show about his crash course in Japanese horseback archery" kind of mini-retirement. There's a lot of work to be done.

When I had a job, I never had time for all the blogging activities I wanted to do, but I also didn't feel a lot of pressure to do them. If I came home and just needed to unwind, I didn't feel guilty about not doing much for my blog. But now that I'm supposedly a pro blogger, I have to hold myself responsible for using my time wisely.

Actually, I don't feel like I have tons of free time at all. For one thing, I'm now taking the time to get enough sleep every night. About eight hours now, compared to about five hours before. I love sleep, but it takes time.

Plus I'm spending more time working as a blogger now than I used to spend on my job and blogging combined. You can only work at your peak level of creativity for about four hours a day, but I'm going way past that now as I'm writing this. I

try to keep a good balance between creative work and more routine work.

It's hard to put a number on the hours I work, because there's not a very clear distinction between work and play. However, "pretty much all the time" would be a good way to describe it. I would definitely [burn out](#) before too long at this rate. And I do take some time to relax, but not nearly enough.

Recently I was up past 5 in the morning writing a 776 word comment on my blog. No, not a 776 word post, a [776 word comment](#). I don't have nearly as many readers as the A-listers, and I can't imagine how hard it is for them to keep up with everything. It bothers me that I can't give my readers the attention they deserve by responding to all their emails and comments, and reading their blogs.

It also bothers me that I can't even remotely keep up with all the ideas I'm generating. I have one todo list specifically for my blog, and it's now up to 1,120 lines. That doesn't mean 1,120 separate post ideas because some ideas have details on multiple lines, and I have some blank lines between groups of ideas. Still, it's a lot, and it's growing faster than I can keep up with. I can't imagine how I made any progress at all when I was doing this part time.

If I was making enough money, it would be fine. I'd simply choose to take it easy and not try to do everything. But it's very different when you're thinking "I'm not making enough money, and I won't until I do this and this and this..."

At the same time, despite my efforts, I sometimes wonder what I'm actually getting done. I feel like I'm doing a lot but not seeing a lot of output. Where does the time go, and what am I actually doing? Let's take a look at some of the things a blogger does, and see what's necessary and what can be cut.

How to Justify Doing Everything

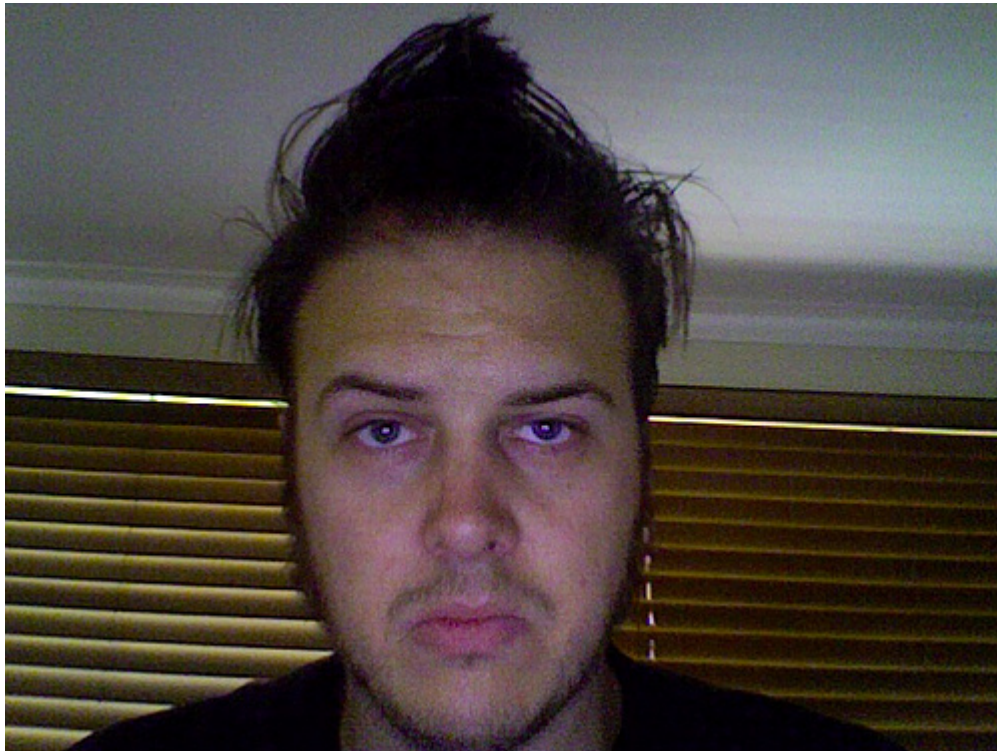


Photo by [Lachlan Hardy](#)

What activities is a pro blogger supposed to cut? There are so many critical things that will sabotage your growth if you don't do them. Here are 15 of the tasks a blogger faces, and why you have to do all of them.

1. Posting on your blog

Every post is something else for the search engines to index. It's another chance to be dug or stumbled. It's another reminder to your readers that you crank out content on a regular basis, so they need to keep coming back. One reader told me that she gets annoyed when she gets to work in the morning and doesn't see a post from me. As you build up your archives, you also build up your reputation. You need to write as many posts as possible.

2. Responding to comments

When someone leaves a comment on your blog, it's just common courtesy to respond. If someone compliments you in person, would you ever just say nothing? Of course not; that would be rude. Without a proper response, you'll turn a fan into a hater. You need to respond to as many comments as possible.

3. Responding to emails

Emails are even more important than comments. An email is a message important enough that the sender wanted to deliver it to you privately. Not giving

a thoughtful reply would be a slap in the face. You need to respond to as many emails as possible.

4. Writing guest posts

How are people supposed to find you on their own? You need to go to where they hang out and get their attention. A guest post on a well-chosen blog gives you the attention of lots of people who might not have ever heard of you. With lots of guest posts on many of the popular blogs in your niche, you can get a lot of people to notice you. You need to write as many guest posts as possible.

5. Writing paid posts

Guest posts are nice for giving a blogging friend a day off, but they don't exactly pay the bills. While you're waiting for your traffic to build up, you still have expenses to take care of. You can't be so focused on your future aspirations that you neglect your present responsibilities. You need to write as many paid posts as possible.

6. Reading other blogs

Other bloggers aren't just writing posts for their health. They want people to read them. How would you feel if you put a lot of time into a post that no one bothered to read? Why should they visit your blog if you don't visit theirs? And what if you miss an important insight or bit of news? You need to read as many blogs as possible.

7. Commenting on other blogs

Leaving a comment on a post you read shows that you appreciate it, and builds a relationship with the blogger. It also lets other people see that you might be a good person to check out. Commenting is one of the best ways to show your support and promote yourself at the same time. You need to leave as many comments as possible.

8. Posting in forums

Forums are a great place to meet lots of important people in your niche. They provide a great chance to demonstrate your expertise by answering questions. Become well known in forums, and it will take your reputation to new heights. You need to post in as many forums as possible.

9. Using Twitter

Twitter has taken the social media world by storm. Practically everyone who's anyone is on [Twitter](#), and you can't miss out on this great opportunity to build traffic and relationships with microblogging. It allows you to interact with people

in a completely different way, letting you promote yourself between posts. You need to be on Twitter as much as possible.

10. Building up your other social media profiles

Twitter is getting a lot of buzz now, but don't forget about Digg, StumbleUpon, Mixx, Reddit, del.icio.us, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and all the others. You never know where your next reader will come from, so you need to be active on all of them. Build up great profiles, and people will flock to you. You need to be as active in social media as possible.

11. Creating products

Just writing posts isn't enough. You need to do better than that by creating products like ebooks and courses. Not only do products make much more money than posts, but they let you deliver a much higher level of value. When you produce outstanding products, you rise to the top of your niche. You need to create as many products as possible.

12. Promoting affiliate products

When someone comes out with a quality product that's relevant to your readers, you need to make sure they know about it. You have to test out all the products in your niche, discover the good ones, and do affiliate promotions. As you build up your reputation for being a fair and balanced reviewer, your income will grow accordingly. You need to promote as many products as possible.

13. Creating backlinks

You don't want to have to work so hard at pulling in traffic forever. Eventually you want the search engines to bring most of your visitors to you. To do that, you need to create backlinks to your blog from high PageRank sites using keyword-rich anchor text. There are many ways to do this, from article marketing to Squidoo. You need to create as many backlinks as possible.

14. Building niche sites

While Google doesn't let us talk about AdSense earnings, I think we can say that an ad on a page targeting the right keywords can earn many, many times more than an ad on a page that's less focused. There's lots of money to be made by building pages that are a good match for the right advertisers. You need to create as many niche sites as possible.

15. Developing yourself

With all this talk about content creation and promotion, don't forget to work on yourself. You haven't already learned everything you need to know, or maxed out

on your abilities. As a pro blogger, you need to be constantly expanding your knowledge and skills. Read books, learn new techniques, experiment, brainstorm, and so forth. You need to develop yourself as much as possible.

How to Justify Doing Nothing



Photo by [riot_jane](#)

Since a blogger can't do everything, you need to make sure you're not wasting time on activities with a low return on investment. Here are 15 completely unnecessary activities that can be cut.

1. Posting on your blog

Ironically, writing posts is one of the most overrated blogging activities. Of course you need to do some posting, but not nearly as much as people think. When you write a post, who sees it? Other than the social media traffic that doesn't stick around long anyway, your posts are mainly seen by people who are already subscribed. Your posts can have no positive effect on them, because they can't subscribe twice. But your posts can have a negative effect on them, because they can unsubscribe if you overwhelm them with too many posts. Pro bloggers sometimes forget that the average person doesn't want to spend too much time on the internet. One post a week might be plenty for them. Posting too much means putting in more effort for less results. You need to write as few posts as possible.

2. Responding to comments

When you respond to a comment, you have no way of knowing if the person will even come back to see what you wrote. People who are reading your blog in their email or RSS reader won't see the comments anyway. Answering comments on your own blog is just about the least productive use of your time. You need to respond to as few comments as possible.

3. Responding to emails

When was the last time you had an empty inbox? It's been a while, right? Now if you respond to all your emails, do you think that's going to help you empty your inbox? No. It takes up time, and only invites more email. You need to respond to as few emails as possible.

4. Writing guest posts

People have written guest posts for blogs with tens of thousands of subscribers, only to check their stats and find that they just got a handful of visitors. It's bad enough when you write a post and don't make much money from it. It's much worse when you don't even retain ownership of your work. You need to write as few guest posts as possible.

5. Writing paid posts

Pulling in a few bucks is nice, but is that really the direction you want to go in? The point of being a pro blogger is that it lets you be an entrepreneur, calling your own shots and taking back your life. If you're writing posts for somebody else, that's a job. Why did you quit one job, only to replace it with another job that pays a lot less? You need to write as few paid posts as possible.

6. Reading other blogs

There are lots of things a blogger can be paid for, but I'm pretty sure that reading isn't one of them. Check your income from last month, and see how much you pulled in from reading. You need to read as few blogs as possible.

7. Commenting on other blogs

If you have to read another blog, at least don't waste time commenting on it. I know people say that it doesn't take long to leave a comment, but it does. First of all, if you know you're going to leave a comment, you have to slow down and read the post carefully to make sure you understand it well. Then you have to read all the other comments to make sure you don't repeat anything. Then you have to think of something interesting to say that hasn't already been said. Then you have to check back later to see if anyone replied to it. And for what? A chance that someone might click through? You need to comment on as few blogs as possible.

8. Posting in forums

Most of your potential readers don't hang out in forums. They don't even know what forums are. They're not going to bother to create an account when they can just go someplace that doesn't require one. The people you see in forums are not potential readers. They're bloggers like you, and they're only there because they heard that they can find readers in forums. Forums are filled with all wolves, no

sheep. You need to post in as few forums as possible.

9. Using Twitter

Do you really need to receive real-time notification that someone's [sitting on the toilet](#)? Studies show that every interruption requires a 4-5 minute recovery period to get your head back into what you were doing. If you're deep in thought when it happens, you may have lost that thought forever. So how does it make sense to deliberately set up a constant flow of interruptions? You need to use Twitter as little as possible.

10. Building up your other social media profiles

There's always going to be another thing to sign up for, and another way it can place demands on your time. StumbleUpon is one of my favorite social media sites, but it's still no picnic. People always ask for "a quick stumble," as if that's so much easier than a regular stumble. Now they're starting to ask for stumbles with a review, because they've heard that helps. Reviews are often just "From the page:" followed by a quote from the post, so they require time, but at least they don't require thought. But sometimes people want thoughtful reviews, and that takes a lot longer. If you're the first one to submit a post, you have to search through their enormous list of categories to find the best one. (For some reason, "personal development" is never a category anywhere, but thankfully, StumbleUpon does have a "self improvement" category.)

You need to add people as friends, so they can send you things to stumble. But when you reach the maximum number of friends, you need to remove some friends so you can replace them with better friends. Fortunately, StumbleUpon now has an indicator of how compatible you are with someone, in case you want to be more than just stumble friends. Oh, and don't forget that you can't keep stumbling your favorite blogs over and over. You have to go find different blogs to stumble in order to have enough diversity to boost your stumble juice. And by now you've forgotten why you wanted to be a blogger in the first place. You need to spend as little time on social media as possible.

11. Creating products

Do you have any idea how much time and effort it takes to put together a quality product? Even writing a simple ebook is much harder than writing a post. It seems that the difficulty of writing something increases exponentially with its length. Audio and video are nice options, but they bring their own headaches. And no matter what price you put on it, somebody will complain that it's overpriced. How dare you charge \$27 for this ebook when there's another one on a similar topic for \$25? (Never mind if the \$25 one is any good, it's cheaper!) People will ask you why you can't release it for free like all of your posts. Isn't the internet meant to be free? And you could go through everything just to find that you only get a handful of sales. In that time, you could have promoted a bunch of affiliate products with a fraction of the effort. You need to create as few products as possible.

12. Promoting affiliate products

Can we say "spammer?" Why are you hawking someone else's junk instead of writing free content? People will recall the golden days when bloggers wrote posts without trying to make money, making no mention of the fact that the content was awful because there was no income to subsidize it. People will complain that they have to see the same product promoted on different blogs (even though they don't complain about seeing the same TV commercial on different shows). So you get complaints about your sales pitches, and most of the sales go to the big bloggers with all the traffic anyway. You can annoy a lot of readers, hurt your reputation, and not make much money. You need to promote as few affiliate products as possible.

13. Creating backlinks

Most of the techniques for deliberately creating backlinks are grey hat at best, meaning that Google doesn't exactly approve but they won't penalize you, until one day when they decide that it's black hat. Because we know that Google doesn't want people to rank highly by creating their own backlinks; it's a clear manipulation of the search engine results. One day, content quality will be a much more important ranking factor than it is now, and all these artificial backlinks will be useless. And anyway, do you really want to devote your life to stuffing all the article marketing sites full of [spam](#)? You need to create as few backlinks as possible.

14. Building niche sites

Good luck trying to rank for a broad keyword that perfectly matches what you like to write about and also has lots of searches and a high cost per click. It's much too late to register mesothelioma.com and dominate the search results for this favorite cancer of SEO types. Of course, you've always dreamed of writing about mesothelioma since you were a little kid, right? What, you want to write about baseball instead? Sorry, no money there. What about finance, you say? OK, there's money there, but you're going to have to be a lot more specific to avoid all the competition. Maybe you can target "credit card after bankruptcy New York." Get the #1 ranking for that, then lather, rinse, repeat. Does this appeal to you, or do you want to do something useful with your life? You need to build as few niche sites as possible.

15. Developing yourself

Are you crazy? You're way too busy blogging to even think about working on yourself. You don't need to be the best you can be, you just need to have decent skills and do a lot of promotion. You need to develop yourself as little as possible.

The Solution



Photo by [rick](#)

I wish I could say I have a good solution for the problem. I wish I had a straightforward, paint by numbers plan for making \$10,000 a month just for being you, without taking up huge amounts of time. But I don't.

However, I can say that the solution must include these two elements:

1. Determining which tasks are essential, and which are not.
2. Being willing to disappoint people who want you to spend time on the latter.

One of the worst mistakes people make is working on the wrong things. They think they're doing a great job, but they're not doing what matters most. They're being efficient but not effective.

It's hard enough just making time for the critical things. James Chartrand recently wrote about the all too familiar challenge of balance, but from a different perspective. Striking the right work/life balance isn't enough, because you still have to balance the activities within these areas. You can't do everything in the "life" category at the same time, nor can you do everything in the "work" category at the same time.

"If you set aside that ebook, the cost may be your interest in its completion when you come back to it. You might have forgotten some points you wanted to cover. Maybe the ebook doesn't even seem like such a good idea anymore.

If you stopped marketing, the cost is clients. Now you have to find them and spend extra time trying to get customers to your door. You probably also aren't working while you're doing that, so you take an income hit, too.

That's why balance in business is important. Your focus needs to touch on all areas that need attention and in proper proportions to make sure everything runs smoothly. Spend too much time on one area, and the other suffers."

- James Chartrand, [Balancing Work and Work](#)

You've got to do enough of the right things, but that makes it critical to know what the right things are. One question I find useful to ask myself is "Will I die if I don't do this?" Not "Would this be beneficial?" because everything would be beneficial, and we don't have time for everything. The question is "Will I die if I don't do this?"

Of course, the answer to that is almost always going to be no if you take it literally. What could really be so important? But when asking yourself this question, you need to pay attention to the conviction of your answer. If you laugh off the question, that means the task is merely a "nice to have." If you find yourself trying to make the case that it really might kill you, that means the task is essential. Focus on the essentials.

Of course, that's easier said than done. For one thing, you might need to try a whole bunch of ideas before you find what's going to take off. And then you might need to try a whole bunch of ways of promoting it before you find what's effective.

The hardest part about eliminating non-critical tasks could be the emotional attachment you have to them. If you're comparing two traffic sources to your blog, and you find that one gives you 100 times as much traffic for the same effort, you should dump the less efficient one, right? Logically, yes. But what if that means abandoning your friend's blog? There's a conflict between what you want to do and what you need to do.

The fact of the matter is that if we want to get our life back, we have to be willing to disappoint some people. It's really hard to do that, but with the severe limitations on our time, we have to make some tough choices.

Tim Ferriss acknowledged this in his post [The Art of Letting Bad Things Happen](#), where he talked about how deliberately allowing bad things to happen freed up time for him to do what he wanted. While he could have stayed on top of his email and voicemail, he decided to ignore it, do what he wanted to do, and pick up the pieces later. If he couldn't have allowed himself to disconnect, he would have missed out on some great experiences.

In many cases, we know what we have to say no to, but we don't want to. We don't want to be mean, or snobby, or selfish, or unsupportive. So we respond to all the people who just need [two seconds of our time](#). And we find that because

we were too generous with our time, there's not enough left over to do what we really want to do.

Darren Rowse might decide that he needs to stop writing on [ProBlogger](#) and outsource it entirely. (This is purely hypothetical and only meant to illustrate a point.) Would people get angry? Of course. But if he really needs to cut back and has alternative income streams that pay better (such as [Digital Photography School](#)), does his duty to his readers surpass his duty to himself and his family?

Steve Pavlina might decide that he needs to stop responding to his flood of emails, and only give advice to people willing to pay a minimum of [\\$500 an hour for consulting](#). Would people get angry? Of course. But sharing advice with all these people one on one means he has much less time available to share advice with many people at once, such as with books, speeches, and blog posts. Don't the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few?

When preparing to make a decision that you know will piss people off, I find it helpful to remember that you'll piss people off no matter what. When Naomi Dunford released [Ninja SEO School](#), someone returned it because it contained too much profanity. When she released [Online Business School](#), someone returned it because it contained too little profanity. Having read an early copy of her next ebook, I have to wonder if someone will return it because the profanity level is too moderate, not taking a clear enough stand on either side of the line.

If you keep in mind that you can't make everyone happy no matter what, you'll feel better about making the decisions that you know are best overall in the long run, and avoid being swayed too much by the people who stand to lose something.

You'll find the focus to pass up interesting items on your [todoodlist](#) in favor of critical ones. You'll find the wisdom to say no to opportunities that are good but not the best you can do. You'll find the courage to tell people that you'll be happy to help them, and your rate is listed on your consulting page.

So here we have the key to creating a significant income stream from blogging or whatever other pursuit you intend to let you ditch the 9-5. Figure out what tasks are essential, do the ones that are, and say no to the ones that aren't.

I know that everyone already knows that. I also know that most people aren't even attempting to do it, and that's why they're miserably failing the 4-hour workweek. Many people are even failing the 40, 60, or 80-hour workweek. It's not that they're awful people, it's that the challenge is nearly insurmountable.

Simply earning a living from blogging is incredibly hard. Doing it without consuming your life is even harder. But the good news, if you want to call it that, is that everyone has the same handicap. We all live in the same hectic, uncertain world, and no one else has an unfair advantage. That presents a great opportunity for those who can manage the problem.

Some people will try to be a hero and do everything they can to serve the man. Just let them. It doesn't make you a heretic to want to follow your own life purpose, and it doesn't make you lazy to want to do more with less. Pro blogging really feels like the natural state of things to me, like this is what life is supposed to be, and having a 9-5 was the anomaly.

I want to do whatever maximizes my chances of being able to do this permanently (if not on this stint, then someday). If that means I have to disappoint some people and pass up some things I'd rather not, then that's what

I have to do. As I get more experience, I get a better idea of what the most effective use of my time is.

The path will be different for everyone, and it might take a really long time to figure out yours. But when you know what you need to do, and have the strength to ignore what you don't, that's when you've found your path.

And that, my friends, is how you live the 4-hour workweek. If not in fact, then at least in spirit, and that's what really matters anyway.

Find Your Warp Zone

"you were on my mind at least nine tenths of yesterday
it seemed as if perhaps I'd gone insane
what is it about you that has commandeered my brain?
maybe it's your awesome songs, or maybe it's the way
you go straight to the top, you're not scared of getting squashed
you know just when to jump off, you are so brave
and then you run to the right, it seems like there's no hope in sight
and you drop down to the tube that takes you right to level eight"

- Kimya Dawson, [My Rollercoaster](#)



Image from [Super Mario Bros.](#) (1985)

About the Author

Hunter Nuttall writes about many personal development topics on his blog [Hunter Nuttall . com - Stop sucking and live a life of abundance](http://HunterNuttall.com), which was featured in Randy Pausch's *The Last Lecture*.

Visit and subscribe for free tips on how to improve your life and your income.

Also check out his other great ebooks on the next page!



[Greatness Without Genies: The Law of Attraction for Realists](#)

"I have believed in the Law of Attraction, although not in the simplistic way it is portrayed in *The Secret*. I think Hunter's book is a great way for folk who don't have great spiritual beliefs to take advantage of the positive benefits of the Law of Attraction."

- Cath Lawson, CathLawson.com



[The Personality Puzzle: Understanding What Makes People Tick](#)

"Hunter has put a lot of effort into making this book fun...but it could also help save a marriage or avoid conflict with a co-worker...If you are like me you will find the book fascinating...I certainly wasn't disappointed with the insights this gave me about myself."

- Peter Clemens, PickTheBrain



[Memoirs of a Gaijin](#)

"I thought I knew quite a bit about Japanese culture, but learned a lot more details from this book...Thank you for sharing this wonderful adventure with us."

- Sterling Okura, Bizlift

"I loved it. It was informative, yet entertaining. When I visit Japan one day, I'm going to be sure to upload it to my laptop and read it on the plane."

- RL David, Taekwondo Happiness



[The Zen of Blogging](#)

"Utterly and inimitably perfect."

- Naomi Dunford, IttyBiz

"What a phenomenal ebook. You are definitely meant to be a writer."

- Barbara Swafford, Blogging Without A Blog