



# Slay Your Schedule

kill distractions, optimize like a ninja, and delegate like a general... so you can build your product on the side

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30 x 500

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## **Buffy vs \$2.6 Million Dollars**

I have an important question for you that will determine a large part of the rest of your life. It may sound flip, but trust me, I'm deadly serious. Ready? Okay. Think fast:

*Would you rather watch Buffy the Vampire Slayer or lay the groundwork to earn \$2.6 million dollars?*

*(Stow the snark, Buffy haters — you're missing the point.)*

This is a real-life decision I once faced. You're facing it too, right now, whether you realize it or not. It's not the kind of dilemma that announces itself, *but it's there.*

If it's not Buffy, then it's Parks & Recreation or 24 or The West Wing or Scandal. Or it's crafting, or football, or arguing on Reddit or StackOverflow, or designing logos for companies that don't exist and certainly aren't paying. Or Twitter [#justsayin](#).

## **Time isn't money, time is an opportunity cost**

If you watch Buffy the Vampire Slayer end to end, all 7 seasons, averaging 21 episodes each, with each episode about 45 minutes long... that's 6,615 minutes. Or 110 and 1/4 hours. Or 220 hours, for two people.

Or... just 8 hours a week for 3 months, 2 weeks. **Almost the *same exact time* we spent building our web app, [Freckle](#).**

Freckle crossed \$2,608,516 in lifetime revenue just today (September 23, 2016) . And it's still growing. We've got a swanky downtown office and a staff of 4. All because we gave up the Buffster.

Of course, it took a while to get there. The very first version — the “Buffy Version” — of Freckle launched to less than \$1,500 a month in recurring revenue. Pretty good for a brand new app, but not crazy amazing. *Achievable*.

Naturally, it doesn't take much to pay more than watching Buffy.

Still, that \$1,500 wasn't anything like enough for us to live on, but that was okay. We didn't quit our jobs to build it and we didn't take need funding to keep going. We paid our bills with consulting, just as we had before. We kept the rhythm: 1 day, or 8 hours, every week. That's how we built Freckle. That's how we grew it. That's how we got here.

That's the power of juicing your wasted time.

## **It takes just 8 hours a week to build your future...**

*If I can find it in my schedule, you can find it in your schedule.*

That's exactly what this little guide will help you do.

*hey! let's get ready to for your*

# 3-Day Productivity Makeover

Here's your schedule:

**Monday** identify 3 hours of time wasters you can *eliminate*  
**Wednesday** identify 3 hours to you can save if you *optimize*  
**Friday** identify 3 hours you can recover if you *delegate*

For each day, you'll find:

- \* a mini lesson
- \* real-world examples, tips, and tools
- \* a homework assignment, for that same day...
- \* a brief plan forward, for the following days (so you're not overloaded)

I suggest printing the checklists & examples out for a visual reminder... and get ready to do some light calendaring! (*Ooh la la!*)

## FAQs

*Hey, that's 9 hours...* Yep, you got me, 3 days times 3 hours tots up to 9 hours, not 8. You'll win either way: If you succeed totally on all steps, you'll gain an extra hour. If you get a bit stuck on one, you can still hit 8 hours. Yay!

*There's homework?* Yes! If you just skim the guide and don't *use* it, you won't get the benefit. No matter how tempting it is to skip the actual work... don't!

**Ready? Awesome! Let's get started!**

# Monday — Eliminate

*It's time to patch your leaks!*

Your goal for Monday is to identify 3 hours per week of 'Buffy time.' That's my code word for stuff you do that you *don't have to*, from mindless enjoyment that's not really all that enjoyable, to things that *look* like work.

Below are just a few ideas for Buffy time that you can *eliminate* while still enjoying life:

## Leisure time that isn't all that fun

- \* TV watching beyond the occasional show, hours spent vegging out with games
- \* "news" & clickbait that doesn't inform or improve you
- \* hobbies you don't *absolutely love*, just something to do
- \* social obligations that you neither enjoy, nor value

## Make-work that doesn't achieve anything

- \* do you really need to redesign your blog or your code, right now?
- \* do you really need to learn that new language, new hobby?
- \* how many times do you have to rearrange your closet or your HD?
- \* and don't forget obsessive social media checking, "industry" blog reading, stats reloading...

## Your homework

Create your own wasted time inventory (like the one above!), and write up your own Stop Doing list. Hang it in a visible place. Vow to eliminate one of those bad habits per week for the next month. (That's only 4... don't worry, you can still have fun!)

# Wednesday — Optimize

*It's time to improve your throughput!*

Your goal for Wednesday is to find 3 hours of weekly tasks you can optimize!

Chances are you initially don't see much you can *totally eliminate* before your life starts sucking. There's still a lot of hidden slack in your schedule, in the form of *inefficiency*. Work expands to fill the time available. Especially creative work, and administrative work.

## Signs you need to optimize

What does inefficiency look like? Slow, distracting, repetitive, irregular...

- \* **You're slow to get started** started on certain tasks or at certain times of the day.
- \* **You're easily distracted** by things that generate notifications (think Twitter, Facebook, chat rooms, RSS, etc).
- \* **You do the same small task** many times over the course of the day.
- \* **You do a sequence of tasks often**, but not always in the same order, or the same way, or with the same tools.
- \* **You "react"** to client/customer requests immediately, switching tasks to address their needs.
- \* **You're manually processing** admin tasks that could be easily automated, like paying bills, filtering/sorting your email, buying groceries/supplies, etc.
- \* **You're fighting with, or running after, your tools**, feeling frustrated, going slow, or manually doing things that the tools ought to do for you.

# 10 Ways to Start Optimizing...

Once you've identified your optimization targets, it's time to attack! I've broken it down into stages for you. Use these checklists to set up your workspace, create new habits, and *make a plan*.

## First, tame your distractions

These are the easiest steps of all, but they *work* like the dickens. That's why I put them first. Go ahead, give yourself an easy win... it's the best motivator!

- ✓ **Put down the crack pipe!** When you're working, leave your phone in another room.
- ✓ **Block your muscle memory.** If you can't break the twitchy habit of hitting up certain web sites/apps (like Twitter), use a tool like [Concentrate](#) to simply block them for a set period of time
- ✓ **Batch distracting tasks.** For example, instead of doing email 10 times a day, make it twice a day at set times instead. If you go grocery shopping 5 times a week, try reducing it to one or two.
- ✓ **Set up a clean workspace...** on your computer. Create a new user account (hey, it's free!) and don't give it access to any of the things that distract you.
- ✓ **Invest in a good pair of headphones,** if you don't already have a pair.
- ✓ **Create a work soundtrack.** You may find that instrumental music or sounds like waves, falling rain, or ambient "cafe" noise works best. [Songza](#) and [MyNoise](#) have many ambient options.

### Your homework

First, make a list of which things distractions *you* the most. Then, try 2 tricks from the list above *today!* Put the rest in your calendar, on future Wednesdays, to set up and try. Don't forget the alerts!

## Next, create & manage efficiency

Now it's time to optimize everything that's left for you to do:

- ✓ **Design workflows.** Do things the same way each time, saving yourself all kinds of decision making. Create workflows from common sets of tasks. It can be as simple as a checklist! *Example: Have a client onboarding checklist, questionnaire, and contracts ready at all times.*
- ✓ **Create routine.** If you need to write a lot (or anything else you don't always *feel*), sit down and do it every day at the same time, or at least in the same place, with the same headphones and sounds. You'll be amazed at how much easier it is.
- ✓ **Set expectations.** Protect yourself from constant interruption; let clients and customers know you have certain times when you'll be available to respond to their requests. *Remember, if everything is urgent, nothing is urgent.*
- ✓ **Micro-optimize.** Configure bills to be paid automatically. Set up email filters. Consider getting various regular necessities, like vitamins and groceries delivered. If you send repetitive email or reply with the same answers more than once, use a tool like [TextExpander](#) or [Streak](#).
- ✓ **Design new habits.** A habit is an action you can take without consciously deciding every step of the way... which can save you a lot of mental bandwidth and time! Learn how to create new habits with the free [TinyHabits](#) course.

### Your homework

Today, tackle *one* repetitive task and *design a workflow*. Put the other skills & techniques on your calendar to try on future Wednesdays. Don't forget to configure alerts!



# Friday — Delegate

*It's time to improve your throughput!*

Your goal for Friday is to identify 3 hours of weekly tasks you can delegate!

You can't be best at everything — that's a given. If you run a serious freelancing/consulting shop or work a demanding job, you *already* outsource certain tasks to other experts.

But that's not the kind of delegation we're talking about today. Today, you're looking for tasks you perform *well* but that *you* shouldn't be doing. Things that are not the *best use of your time*.

## What does that mean, exactly?

The best use of your time is on tasks that are:

- \* value-producing
- \* unique / one-off
- \* enjoyable
- \* where your personal touch / skills / expertise are indispensable

In other words, tasks that shape your business or your career, and things that you especially enjoy. This seems obvious, I know — but even if you know this, and it's obvious, how many tasks are you actually delegating using this framework?

## Delegation is especially hard for creative people

We are so used to doing *whatever* the project at hand requires: Formatting blog posts, moderating comments, HTML/ CSS, little bit of code, server configuration, data format massaging / fixing, newsletter formatting,

research, phone calls, document prep, replying with templated emails, making tiny copy requests the client emails you about at 5:50pm... You get in the zone and you just *get it done*.

After media consumption, this is the richest vein of time you can mine to *build your business*.

## Delegating Personal Tasks:

How much time do you spend cleaning your home or office? If you can bill at \$100/hr, does it make business sense for you to do tasks that somebody else does for *anything substantially* than \$100/hr?

(Not to mention contributing to your local economy!)

What if you're often running errands to pick up/drop off things, or make phone calls? Maybe buying online would be a more efficient use of your time and possibly even less gas, if you'd be driving out in the burbs. Perhaps you could use either a grocery delivery service, or your local store may offer delivery. Maybe you could use a courier, or a local friend of a friend who needs to pick up an odd job here and there, instead of breaking up your valuable work time.

It costs time and effort to set up, yes — but in the long run, it *saves* time. That's Delegation Math at work.

## 7 Questions to Help You Delegate

The following 3 sections, 7 questions, will help you identify what you can delegate. Then it'll be time to talk about *how*.

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# 1. Delegating decisions and decision-making

Ah, decision making — the hardest to let go of, psychologically, but the easiest to hand off, managerially. Chew on this:

- \* **Do you do research before making a decision?** Imagine you need to hire a plumber, book business travel, or buy a new piece of equipment for your business. With lots of choices out there, and you want to choose correctly. Could someone else can do the research to find the best rated options, the best priced options, and even seek out the specific differences between options? (And could they make an appointment for you?)
- \* **Do you have a consistent method for making decisions?** If you can anticipate decision options (ALWAYS do x, NEVER do y), someone else can live on the front lines. You don't need to worry about edge cases — even if they have to "escalate" 50% of the issues to you for verification or "final call", the other 50% never hits your workload.
- \* **Do you schedule your own availability?** It's easy to lose time doing the "dance" of scheduling your time against other peoples' day planners. Could you could pre-determine a set of rules / open times ahead of time, and have someone else do the back and forth to get appointments on your calendar?

Delegating decisions can be a real challenge to do, but well worth it.

## *An important note*

Before you say "No! No way!" to the prior 3 questions, think baby steps. After all, you can always ask your *delegee* to give you a brief report of the 3 best options, along with supporting details. Then you can make the final call quickly & painlessly...

## 2. Delegating unavoidable repetition

Sometimes you can't avoid repetition. The good news is: Once you turn it into an optimized workflow, it's even easier to share the load...

- \* **Do you do the same thing repeatedly?** Automation with software & workflows isn't always the most efficient way of turn high-repetition tasks into available time. Some tasks will be easier to delegate to a human, and cheaper, too. Example: Prioritizing emails in your support inbox; generating special request invoices; formatting blog posts or digital books, removing refunded customers from your email list.
- \* **Can you teach or templatize the work?** Breaking your work into smaller, easy to follow steps can be a valuable exercise in examining your own work... and it makes it easy to share work, too. Example: If somebody wants to interview you, you can have a set of questions for them. (Or you want to interview them.)
- \* **Do you review/process/clean up raw data?** If data cleanup can't be automated and needs human attention, try breaking the cleanup into smaller steps. The simpler and more specific steps are likely candidates for delegation.

## 3. Simply letting go

No matter how you delegate, you'll have to let go. But sometimes *just letting go* is all the delegation you need:

- \* **Is there more than one "right" way to do it?** Surprisingly few tasks require in-the-moment, critical decisions. You might have to swallow your pride to admit that the way you would do it isn't the only right way... an equally good but different way will get the job done. (We creative people also tend to be control freaks. Oops!)

# Delegating Techniques

Here comes my bag of tricks, too. Delegation is a real skill, and like any skill, newbies usually start off by sucking at it. I know I did.

Here's what I've learned the hard way about making delegating easy...

## Training is crucial, but doesn't have to be hard

- ✓ **Make screencasts for repetitive tasks.** Use these screencasts to train junior team members or a VA to use software, run reports, identify people to contact, massage data, etc.
- ✓ **Design a filter flow diagram.** Does every email in your inbox, every potential client contact, every business card, every offer you receive, every piece of paper mail merit your personal attention? Some if it surely does, but all? Come up with some workflow rules... and let somebody else handle the low-hanging fruit. (Example: "If they mention 'Build me an app like Facebook, but' — politely tell them 'No.'")
- ✓ **Let go of your "perfect" ability to choose.** Do you have a special ability to hire the perfect plumber, copyeditor, or PSD slicer? Or will your personal attention make an economy flight better somehow? Probably not. Let a junior team member or VA do the research for you and report on their findings. (Then, when you understand each others' preferences, let them go ahead and set it up, too, saving you the trouble!)

*Psst... VA means "virtual assistant." I recommend you start with a service, like Zirtual or one of the many other firms, simply for ease and fixed during your learning curve.*

## Templating & rules ease the way...

- ✓ **Provide email templates or (rough) conversational scripts.** Half-training, half-templating — write up how you want your delegee to communicate, teach, or negotiate, based on your experience. Then show them why you included each part, and why you left out what you left out.
- ✓ **Set aside calendar blocks for scheduling.** Do you get a lot of interview requests or client meetings? Do you need to have a lot of people come to your home for cleaning or fixing? Do you have many doctor's appointments? Set up specific blocks and let somebody else fill them.

## On the personal side of things...

- ✓ **Make people come to you.** Travel, even short distance, can be a major time & energy sink. When in doubt, try to meet multiple local clients nearby each other... or have them come to you.
- ✓ **Make things come to you, too.** Get your groceries, vitamins, regular household items delivered. Set it up once, reap the rewards forever. (Especially anything you "run out to get" regularly — toilet paper, batteries, shampoo...)
- ✓ **Get a little personal help.** If your business or career is currently doing well, hire out some of your household tasks. Cleaning help can be had for \$30-50 an hour from interchangeable services like Merry Maids or the local equivalent, and less if you do the legwork of hiring a friend-of-a-friend or other local. In the some cities, you can use a courier or Postmates to pick up or drop off packages, etc.

*Outsourcing rule of thumb:  
The more of a relationship  
you have, the less you have  
to pay. A repeat  
housekeeper you  
personally hired will cost  
much less per hour than a  
service. Usually true of VAs  
as well.*

# How to Start Delegating

You could spend *weeks* implementing all of the delegation targets & delegation techniques you just read about it. And hopefully — soon! — you will. But first, baby steps.

## Your homework

1. Identify 3 *work* delegation targets, and 1 *personal*.
2. Apply a technique to it: set up a delivery order, identify a task around the home, make screencasts or process diagrams.
3. Then spend at least 30 minutes seeking assistance: a VA firm is a good first bet, a landscaper, a cleaning service... ask your friends for recommendations!

## And how to keep delegating...

It would be an *excellent* idea if you spent half an hour every Friday, reviewing the kinds of things you did over the week that could (and should) be done by somebody else, and then figuring out how to make that happen.

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# Yay! You made it!

**That's it.** It was a fair amount of work but if you're like most creative professionals (and regular all around human beings), you probably had no problems identifying 16 blocks of 30 minutes to eliminate, optimize or delegate...

That's a full work day, per week, you can use to build a product empire. You can turn those into to-do's and get started next week, after a well-deserved rest!

If you *didn't* manage a full 8 hours, don't fret. It's hard to sit down and wrack your brain for *THINGS TO DO*. Sometimes you just have to wait for them to emerge. Try again next week.

**Remember: you're freeing up 'Buffy time.'** It's *all* gravy. You can use this time to build your first product, make sales, start crafting a totally different life for yourself... without *any* major sacrifices, without saving for years, without taking on huge risks like quitting your job or consulting.

**And once you get started, it's easy to keep going.** So get started.

## Pace yourself & keep it going

- ✓ Do the homework.
- ✓ Calendar out the next 30 or 60 days with new techniques to try, new targets to eliminate, optimize, or delegate.
- ✓ Track your time with [Freckle](#), manage your progress with [Trello](#) or sticky notes, use that bare bones new user account and the screencast software and your new work soundtrack.
- ✓ Schedule a monthly review with yourself. *Just how are you faring on your tasks to eliminate, optimize, and delegate?*



# What do you do with all your new Buffy time?

You can do a *lot* in 8 hours a week. You can build your business.

If you play your cards right — efficiently, intelligently.

Our new 30x500 is designed from the ground up to help you do exactly that, based on over 5 years of teaching students to Safari, market, build, ship, sell. Whether you enroll in the *intensive, live* Bootcamp or study entirely at your own pace... 30x500 will help you squeeze the absolute most out of every second of Buffy Time you make.

## 30 × 500

Market, build, launch, sell... without wasting your precious, precious time

Time is running out before we close the doors again!

And perhaps more importantly, the sooner you start the sooner you'll be making your first sales. Don't skip this chance.

[Get all the details and secure your spot...](#)  
[before it's too late!](#)

# Talk to me

I'd love to hear how you're using this guide to generate Buffy time and kick ass at whatever it is you *really* want to be doing.

Tweet me: [@amyhoy](https://twitter.com/amyhoy)

Email me: [amy@stackingthebricks.com](mailto:amy@stackingthebricks.com)

Til next time!

*Amy*