

THE PRODUCTIVE LEADER

How to Achieve More,
Reduce Stress and
Gain 2 Hours Per Day

SALLY FOLEY-LEWIS



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*For Mum,
the most Productive Leader I know!*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sally Foley-Lewis has spent the past 20 years coaching and mentoring people to become more productive. She develops leaders' efficiency by building their people and team skills, improving their task management and nurturing their self-leadership. She works with middle managers and team leaders in large corporates and associations in Australia and overseas, as well as employers in small to medium-sized businesses.

Essentially, she is a productivity and leadership expert.

Obsessed with execution, Sally enables people to not only get on with their work, but with their peers, senior leaders and teams. The flow-on effect of this is profound: leaders witness an even greater level of engagement and productivity from their team members.

What makes Sally different to other coaches is that she, too, has been a manager and CEO. She knows first-hand the pressure of balancing your own workload, leading a team and delivering the required outcomes. Sally has experienced the struggle of life in the trenches, so she truly gets it!

Sally has also trained and developed managers and leaders across a diverse range of industries in Australia and overseas. Her unique skill-set and depth of experience means she knows how to make real, lasting improvements to productivity. It's more than a mere concept of time or people management. It's a journey.

As a leader, it's easy to identify the tasks you should be delegating. The challenge is knowing how to delegate these tasks and who

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to. Working with different people means managing, influencing and manoeuvring different personalities. You may be avoiding certain conversations that deep down you know should have, but you're not sure how to start or you're afraid of the ramifications. If you look at your week ahead it overwhelms rather than excites you, it can impact the way you lead your team. It can also impact how effective you are at achieving what's required. Your home life can be affected, too.

Sally understand this. She can help you begin the conversations you need to have so you can move forward. She can help you work through your fears, take control of your leadership and be excited about your work again.

Sally speaks, mentors, trains and coaches PRODUCTIVITY and LEADERSHIP. She does this through her workshops, presentations and mentoring for leaders who want to build their skills and confidence so they can lead their teams more effectively – by delegating appropriately, leading difficult conversations with confidence and giving feedback in ways that effect positive change.

Sally can help you understand the different team roles and behaviours at play and why conflicts arise. More importantly, she teaches you how to resolve them quickly.

One key change Sally helps leaders make is eliminating that constant, heavy feeling of telling and retelling and getting nowhere. You *can* feel lighter, more productive and less stressed. Sally will show you that through delegating, coaching and setting accountability, you can become an empowered, productive leader.

**To find out more about Sally and her programs, go to
www.sallyfoleylewis.com**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Ask for help. Not because you are weak.
But because you want to remain strong.*
– Les Brown

Distilling the experience, learning and thinking about *The Productive Leader* would not have been possible without the wisdom, guidance and support of many people.

While the notion of *The Productive Leader* only came to me recently, it has been slowly bubbling away for my entire life. As such, I must thank my early influencers – my family and my teachers. I want to thank Alan Nolan, an amazing teacher who empowered a class of 10- and 11-year-olds to step up and take responsibility: that overnight camp taught me about going for what I want, speaking up, working as a team, and what a sense of achievement feels like. Thank you also to Alkoomi, my Girl Guide leader, who saw so much potential in her patrol leaders and had that right blend of magic and wisdom that empowered us to shine and achieve.

To my professional family, who never settle and don't let anyone deliver less than their best. I owe so much to so many. I do want to say a special thank you to Jane Anderson, Jennifer Leone and Joanna Thumiger.

To the Thought Leaders Business School for giving me a phenomenally more thorough, elegant and unique way of thinking and sharing my experience and knowledge – thank you.

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To the clients I work with every day, your tenacity to be better and more powerful productive leaders is inspirational. To see and play a small part in the impact your leadership journey has on the people you lead and serve because you do the work on yourself, your task management and your people skills fills me with gratitude.

To Martin, who may not say a lot but thinks deeply and shows his love and devotion in patience and in deed. Thank you. Thank you for being you and encouraging me to be my best. I love you.

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WANT MORE?

INTRODUCTION

As a young girl, before I started school, I remember playing with an old typewriter. I wasn't old enough to know how to spell many words, but I knew that a typewriter produced documents of words. So, I would tap away on those keys pretending I was typing the most important reports, memos and letters. With head held high and chest puffed out with pride, I would pull pages out of the typewriter with gusto and stack the sheets neatly on the corner of my makeshift desk. I would then boldly walk – most likely stomp – around the front room (AKA my office), giving all my imaginary minions tasks to do. I was in my little happy place with order and a hint of bossiness.

If you asked my mum what's one thing she remembers about me when I was in primary school, she would tell you how bossy and organised I was. Mum loves to share the story of how I was one of the key instigators of the students' demand that my primary school provide softer, better-quality toilet paper. I don't recall much of the situation, but I, along with my comrades, organised a petition. Did we get softer, better toilet paper? I honestly can't remember. Being organised, wanting to improve a situation and being a bit bossy – those I do remember!

I aspired to work in a position of leadership. Back then, I thought to have a job title that included words such as chief, executive or manager meant I was the best, that I had made it! So, when I became the head of a youth organisation, my ego well and truly went into overdrive. I really thought I had made it.

That lasted all of a week – if that! I quickly discovered how

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challenging it was to go from working with my colleagues to being their “boss”; to manage multiple and shifting priorities; to make sense of, filter and translate broad strategic information (that changed so much your head would spin) into operational language; oh, and to grow the membership.

It was lonely and it impacted my life professionally and personally. I had to stop and re-think my approach to the way I worked, the way I led my team, and the way I led myself.

I had two saving graces. The first was the dedication of the team I had the privilege of working with. Was it all sweetness and roses? No, of course not. But overall, they were a great team. The second was the ultimatum I was given at home: it was a “something’s gotta give” situation. It was the toughest and best wake-up call I had ever received!

My involvement with youth leadership and service organisations as I grew up (even working for a few), and learning first-hand the role of the leader prompted me to blend my inner organiser with my love of service. This mix is no doubt a fundamental influence on my obsession with helping leaders be more productive. I don’t want any leader to feel what I felt or to go through what I went through. This is why I share my stories, learning and insights.

Today, I work with dedicated professionals who know that leadership is a behaviour. It’s a journey, and part of being a successful leader is constantly looking for ways to improve. Being a productive leader encompasses all this. I have the great privilege of working with thousands of managers across multiple industries, internationally and in Australia. I’m passionate about helping them to be successful leaders. No matter the geography or the culture, common productivity challenges face us all. No one can escape the reach of productivity.

I'm excited to share this book with you. It matters not what role you're in or what your job title is. *You are a leader.* A leader is not a job title – it's a behaviour. If you have a burning desire to be a better, happier and more productive leader in your life and for your team, business or organisation, then this book is for you.

When leaders are more productive, they confidently and consistently achieve top results. They are engaged and engaging. They are, quite simply, happier.

This book is for you if you know there's got to be a better way, but you're struggling to find it. This book is for you if you feel control slipping away. It's for you if you want to achieve more, reduce stress and gain two hours per day.

Enjoy.

PRODUCTIVITY IS NEVER AN ACCIDENT. IT IS ALWAYS THE RESULT OF A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE, INTELLIGENT PLANNING AND FOCUSED EFFORT.

- PAUL J. MEYER

CHAPTER 1

PRODUCTIVITY – IT’S NEVER JUST BEEN ABOUT TIME MANAGEMENT

Time management is a misnomer! Productivity is about focus – focusing on the effectiveness of your efforts.

According to a study by Priority Manager, the average manager is interrupted every eight minutes. Add to that the *Journal of Experimental Psychology*’s finding that error rates double after a 2.8-second interruption, and triple after a 4.5-second distraction! Time is slipping you by, most probably without you realising it.

Time and errors cost money – and your credibility.

When I think of the term *time management*, I envisage a stressed clock watcher: someone who is forever looking at and obsessing with the time, rather than focusing on the work they’re meant to be doing and the quality of that work.

I love Percy Whiting’s quote:

“Time is a fixed income, and as with any income, the real problem facing us is how to work successfully with our daily allotment. Plan each day down to the moment because once time is wasted, you can never get it back.”

To my way of thinking, Whiting is asking us to be vigilant with how we spend our time. We must plan it and use it wisely, rather than merely watch the clock.

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According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), managers work longer hours per week than any other occupational group, with the average manager working 43.3 hours per week. I suspect that is quite a conservative number. If you are averaging 43.3 hours or more per week, then something needs to change!

You can achieve more in the time you have with a lot less stress when you pay attention to your productivity. It's not only your personal productivity. It's also your task productivity, the way in which you get your work done, and the way in which you help your team get their work done. It's your interactions with other people. All these factor into improving productivity. Ignoring one element will cause an imbalance in your day-to-day life. You might be able to cope with and sustain that imbalance in the short term, but in the long-term, problems will crop up. And those problems can be costly.

To give you a picture of what this might look like, consider these two real scenarios:

In the short term, you might be able to work a few extra hours per week. But in the long term, you will become exhausted, miss out on other life events, and your physical and mental health may suffer.

You might be able to ignore some minor conflict going on between two of your team members because they "should" be able to work it out. Short-term nothing might not seem too serious, however, if the conflict isn't resolved, it may escalate into something toxic, resulting in bullying claims, stress leave, turnover ... it all adds up and can cost you and the business dearly.

CHALLENGES THAT IMPACT PRODUCTIVITY

So, what happens to us? Why do we have problems with our productivity? Here are some common challenges and fears that leaders face.

CHALLENGES:

- **Shifting Priorities**

Change is the only constant in our world today. Leaders sometimes struggle to be agile enough to adapt at the right pace and in the right direction. They also need to bring their teams along, so the ability to influence and guide people through fast change is vital.

- **Driving Performance**

Achieving more and better results with a leaner workforce means leaders must be able to drive performance effectively while keeping turnover levels low. They also must keep the workforce engaged, develop individuals in line with new technologies and processes, and maintain a high-performing and functioning team.

- **A New Generation**

As baby boomers retire, so, too, is their experience. This means that organisations are losing cost-effective, reliable on-the-job training and in-house mentors. The challenge for leaders is to find new ways to rapidly equip younger leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge to productively lead.

- **Emails, Emails, Emails!**

Inboxes are clogged with emails demanding attention. Leaders struggle with inbox and task management while

dealing with other jobs and projects appropriately and timely. The overwhelm of email won't stop. By 2019, we'll receive, on average, 260 emails per day with at least 75% of those emails requiring specific action. So, it's crucial that leaders find a way to manage their inboxes without overwhelm, and to help their teams to productively handle their own emails.

- **Communication and Culture**

Fundamentally, the key to a productive workforce is how individuals communicate through and across the organisation. Communication significantly impacts the culture of the organisation, which in turn impacts productivity. Leaders must ensure effective, open and respectful communication. Refereeing, fire-fighting and getting caught up in interpersonal conflicts distract everyone from getting their work done.

- **Long Hours and Missed Moments**

In this constantly connected world, accessing emails and texts and taking calls at all hours of the night, day and weekend leaves leaders and their workforce exhausted. Keep in mind the ABS's finding that managers work longer hours in a week compared to any other workforce category. Staying at work late and bringing work home creates tired leaders who take longer to complete tasks. This means leaders can be less present for family and personal pursuits.

FEARS:

- **Imposter Syndrome**

Leaders often wonder if they are truly cut out for their role. They question whether they are good enough to be an effective and productive leader. This is known as "imposter syndrome". If not dealt with, imposter syndrome can impede the success of anyone, especially leaders who question the validity of how they got their leadership role in the first place.

- **Failure**

With the pressure to get more done with better results – and often with less resources – leaders do not want to be perceived as failures. Their need for success, through the team they lead and the outcomes they achieve, is often driven by high expectations and standards that can stifle and inadvertently hinder productivity.

- **Ownership**

Leaders can be consumed with the fear that they aren’t making the right decisions. They agonise over whether they are driving team performance the “right” way and can hold back from speaking up for fear of saying the wrong thing. This results in a lack of ownership of their leadership role.

- **Backlash and Bullies**

Leaders often avoid difficult conversations because they fear they’ll be called a bully. The real and perceived ramifications of this label become too high. The stress of avoidance impacts the whole team, which makes the leader even more ineffectual.

- **Contributing**

Leaders may decide against speaking up or contributing in key meetings for fear it will reflect on them poorly. They may also be concerned that they’ll be challenged by others. Their fear of not having all the answers means they fail to meaningfully contribute.

- **Being Good Enough**

Being a good provider for the family often drives people into higher management or leadership roles, despite personal career desires. This can lead to the wrong person being in the wrong role.

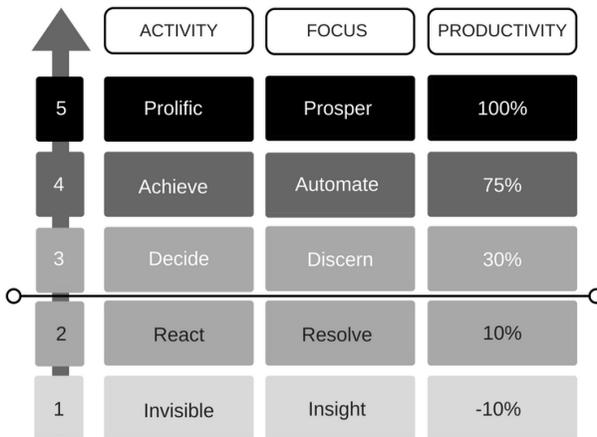
CHAPTER 1

How often do you wish you had more hours in the day? How often do you hear your team members say they want more time to get their work done? “*If only I had an extra hour every day.*” You know that’s not possible, yet it’s so common to hear. Thinking about it doesn’t help. It’s a waste of energy.

With these challenges and fears, it’s understandable that productivity is impacted. It makes sense that you think pushing hard will make you more productive. “I just have to work harder,” we often tell ourselves. But do you stop to think about whether it’s the right kind of push? Is it helping or hindering productivity? Have you ever done something you thought was going to have a great outcome, only to find it blow up in your face? You can be working long hours and working hard, but feel as though you’re getting nowhere.

It’s clichéd, but it’s true: you can work harder or smarter! I’ve put my own little twist on that: you can work harder or work smarter *and calmer!*

To make sense of why your productivity may not be where it should be, refer to the productivity value model:



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Read through the model’s level descriptions. At what level do you see yourself?

LEVEL ONE: INVISIBLE > INSIGHT

One step forward, two steps back!

At this lowest level, the activity you’re engaged in feels virtually invisible. It’s not that you’re not doing anything, it’s just that it’s not seen by others, or not enough of it is seen. Its impact fails to progress your productivity. Everything you do seems invisible in the eyes of everyone around you, especially those you want to be seeing you.

It feels as though you’re taking one step forward and two steps back. It’s not good for your confidence. Instead of giving you a sense of achievement, it gives you a sense of chasing your tail. It’s busier than busy. It’s not being lazy – it’s simply being ineffectual. You’re not getting the results you deserve.

To shift up from this level, you need greater insight. With that insight, you can stop doing the “wrong” things and start doing the “right” things. You can start thinking about the sequence of activities you’re doing. Insight is essential for working out what to stop, start, change or continue. It’s self-awareness. It’s conducting a self-audit. It might be tough to face the reality of the situation, but it’s truly liberating to let go of what’s not working.

LEVEL TWO: REACT > RESOLVE

You’re a fire-fighter – all you can do is react to the noise and sirens.

Every minute of every day is spent in reaction. At this level, you are a fire-fighter. You constantly respond to calls and put out fires.

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Rarely do you get the chance to catch your breath and get on top of your workload. You might end each day saying something like, “It must have been a good day – no one died.”

Everything you do amounts to only just covering yourself and your team. When something lands on your desk, you react and act immediately. You don’t feel as though you’re behind with your work, but you certainly don’t feel that you’re ahead of the game.

You must acknowledge that some tasks or projects have to go. Ask yourself, “What am I doing that results in me only ever reacting? What am I doing that stops me from being proactive?” You need to understand that not everything can happen at once. Sequences and the ability to prioritise are required.

At this level, it’s common to say “yes” most of the time and “no” only some of the time. Because you feel the pressure to say yes to everything, you give the impression that you lack clarity. You lack the confidence to stick with what you know is right. You feel obliged to say yes because you can see the merit in everything.

LEVEL THREE: DECIDE > DISCERN

You’ve got brand-new glasses to see more clearly.

You’re above the line and making progress. At this level, you make quality decisions and have learnt to say no to the tasks, ideas and projects that don’t merit immediate attention. Prioritising is starting to pay off for you. You might still get excited by some ideas and tasks. You might even be afflicted with “shiny new object syndrome”, where something comes across your path and you think, “Oh, this would be such a great activity for the team to get into.” However, it doesn’t serve your purpose or it doesn’t get decided upon without some level of discernment, such as, “Will this add to or dilute what we’re here to do?”

This is not about saying no to everything. It's about being discerning. It's more than okay to get excited about a new initiative or project. But make sure it's helping rather than hindering. If it hinders, it costs time, productivity and money.

At this level, you become a better and more confident decision maker. You are learning what factors are most important in ensuring your decisions are productive for you, your work and your team. It also means helping the team become more discerning about the way they work so they can be more productive.

Once you are more discerning, you are a role model for your team. You empower and teach your team to be discerning as well, and their productivity increases.

LEVEL FOUR: ACHIEVE > AUTOMATE

It's like trying to put the hose back onto the tap while the water is still running at full pressure.

You are achieving a great deal. You often feel as though you are on top of your workload and the team is functioning well. You have far more wins than you have losses, but you are still working harder rather than smarter or calmer.

It's time to re-evaluate your work and determine what can be automated, outsourced or delegated. It's the difference between knowing versus actually turning the tap off first, then re-attaching the hose. You've brought your team along this journey, so they, too, will be ready for you to delegate more. At this level, you are looking for ways to systemise processes and involve the team in creating standards and processes that can be easily handled by anyone in the team. You are delegating full projects or parts of projects to the high potentials in your team, freeing up your time to be more a strategic leader.

LEVEL FIVE: PROLIFIC > PROSPER

It's like a gentle, cool breeze sweeps over you on a hot, sunny day.

At this highest level, you've got resolution, discernment, delegation and automation to back you. This means you're better placed to say yes to the right ideas, projects and opportunities. You are being prolific for your organisation or business. There's a sense of space in your day and there's capacity in the team, which gives you the opportunity to investigate how you can add more value to help yourself, your team and your department or organisation prosper.

So, where do you see yourself in the model?

Most leaders say they fluctuate between just above or below the line. Some say they have *happy moments* at level four, but they're not permanent.

It's important to understand where you sit in this model right now, because it can help you work out and sequence the action steps you need to take to move up and become more productive. It will enable you to *sustain* a productive approach to your leadership.

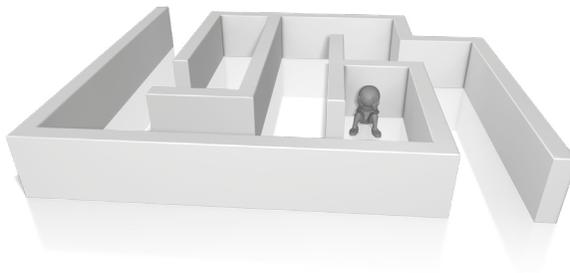
Levels one and two require leaders to focus on personal productivity. As you work up the levels, you focus more on task productivity and people productivity. This makes sense in so many ways. If you've ever caught an aeroplane, you know that the safety announcement always demands that in case of an emergency, you must put your oxygen mask on first. You already know why: you must look after yourself before you can look after anyone else. The same concept applies to the Productive Leader. Get your oxygen mask – your personal productivity – in order first.

PRODUCTIVITY - IT'S NEVER JUST BEEN ABOUT TIME MANAGEMENT

I have an oxygen mask hanging over my desk to constantly remind me of this very concept.



No matter where you currently sit in the productivity value model, the goal is to be at level five: prolific. Being trapped in the lower levels is a lot like being trapped in a maze. It's a struggle to find your way out. And the lower you are, the more trapped you feel: just when you think you're out, something comes up and you get diverted to another direction. Just when you think you are on the right path, something changes. You chase your tail and nothing you do seems to make an impact. You're not lazy, you're exhausted, and you (and your family) can feel the pressure mounting. Your personal productivity and your approach to tasks and people productivity need an overhaul.



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Conversely, when you have a plan, when you take action and move up to the higher levels so your focus and activity match your boosted productivity, it feels as though you're escaping the maze and jumping into a convertible! You're zooming up an open motorway, the top's down, the wind's in your hair, the sun kisses your face and you feel as light as air. You're on top of the world. You are super achieving.



That's what this book, *The Productive Leader*, is all about. The aim is to get you unstuck and out of the maze so you can move from being invisible with your productivity to being prolific. You *can* gain two more hours in your day. You can achieve more in the time you have – and with a lot less stress.

YOU DON'T NEED MORE
TIME IN YOUR DAY.
YOU NEED TO DECIDE.

– SETH GODIN

WANT TO READ MORE?

To pre-order a personally signed copy of
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