

# Slow Productivity

**The Lost Art of Accomplishment without burnout**

**Cal Newport**

**Cal Newport is the Professor of Computer Science at Georgetown University. Newport is a bestselling author of 7 books**

**Between the spring of 2020 and summer of 2021, four major books were published that took direct aim at popular notions of productivity.**

**Knowledge workers are exhausted, burned out from increasing busyness.**

**Wouldn't it be nice to have a job that didn't have to worry on productivity?**

**Slow productivity is a philosophy for organizing knowledge work efforts on three principles:**

- 1. Do fewer things**
- 2. Work at a natural pace**
- 3. Obsess over quality**

**Its hard to overemphasize how an economic sector as large as knowledge work lacks a standard definition of productivity.**

**Early uses of productivity can be traced to agriculture where it is simply an output to input ratio.**



**The story of economic growth in the modern world is a triumph of productivity thinking.**

**Peter Drucker said in 1967 :**

**A knowledge worker cannot be supervised closely. He can only be helped, he must direct himself.**

**Today we use visible activity as a crude proxy for actual productivity**

**A study by software company Rescuetime of log data from 10,000 knowledge workers showed that the average knowledge worker checks his e mail inbox every 6 minutes.**

**Slow food, slow cities, slow medicine, slow schooling are concepts that are catching on.**

**The advantage of doing fewer things is that the quality of the things done improves.**

**Doing fewer things is not to be  
misunderstood as achieving fewer things.**

**If you turn down a zoom meeting request, then there is a social capital cost.**

**How does a knowledge worker say NO to a stream of bombardment of incoming requests?**



**Slow productivity requires that you free yourself from the constraints of the small so that you can invest your time more meaningfully on the big.**

**Separate work from the ad hoc conversations around it.**

**Don't rush your most important work. Allow it instead to unfold along a sustainable timeline, with variations in intensity, in settings conducive to brilliance.**

**Most people restrict their long term planning to cover something like the next few months.**

**Your planning time horizon as an individual must include a few years and you must revisit the plan regularly.**

**Simplify your work day. If you have a set of things to do, reduce that by 25 to 50 %. The simplest way to do this is to dedicate certain hours to be protected.**

**Obsess over the quality of what you produce , even if it means missing opportunities in the short term.**

**‘Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do’ Steve Jobs**



**Slow productivity more than anything else is a plea to step back from the frenzied activity of the daily grind.**

**Knowledge workers have tried the fast approach for the past 75 years, its not working. The time has come to try something slower.**