

How Successful People Work Less and Get More Done

By Travis Bradberry, Ph.D.

As co-founder of Hotwire.com and CEO of Zillow for the last seven years, 39-year-old Spencer Rascoff fits most people's definition of success. As a father of three young children, Spencer is a busy guy at home and at work.

What's the one thing that Spencer refuses to do on the weekend? Work—at least, in the traditional sense. Rascoff says:

“I never go into the office on weekends, but I do check e-mail at night. My weekends are an important time to unplug from the day-to-day and get a chance to think more deeply about my company and my industry. Weekends are a great chance to reflect and be more introspective about bigger issues.”



A new study from Stanford shows that Rascoff is on to something.

The study found that productivity per hour declines sharply when the workweek exceeds 50 hours, and productivity drops off so much after 55 hours that there's

no point in working any more. **That's right, people who work as much as 70 hours (or more) per week actually get the same amount done as people who work 55 hours.**

Successful people know the importance of shifting gears on the weekend to relaxing and rejuvenating activities. Like Spencer, they use their weekends to create a better week ahead.

This is easier said than done, so here's some help. The following list contains 10 things that successful people do to find balance on the weekend and to come into work at 110% on Monday morning.

1. They Disconnect

Disconnecting is the most important weekend strategy on this list, because if you can't find a way to remove yourself electronically from your work Friday evening through Monday morning, then you've never really left work.

Making yourself available to your work 24/7 exposes you to a constant barrage of stressors that prevent you from refocusing and recharging. If taking the entire weekend off handling work e-mails and calls isn't realistic, try designating specific times on Saturday and Sunday for checking e-mails and responding to voicemails. For example, check your messages on Saturday afternoon while your kids are getting a haircut and on Sunday evenings after dinner. Scheduling short blocks of time will alleviate stress without sacrificing availability.

2. They Minimize Chores

Chores have a funny habit of completely taking over your weekends. When this happens, you lose the opportunity to relax and reflect. What's worse is that a lot of chores feel like work, and if you spend all weekend doing them,

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you just put in a seven-day workweek. To keep this from happening, you need to schedule your chores like you would anything else during the week, and if you don't complete them during the allotted time, you move on and finish them the following weekend.

3. They Reflect

Weekly reflection is a powerful tool for improvement. Use the weekend to contemplate the larger forces that are shaping your industry, your organization, and your job. Without the distractions of Monday to Friday busy work, you should be able to see things in a whole new light. Use this insight to alter your approach to the coming week, improving the efficiency and efficacy of your work.

4. They Exercise

No time to exercise during the week? You have 48 hours every weekend to make it happen. Getting your body moving for as little as 10 minutes releases GABA, a soothing neurotransmitter that reduces stress. Exercise is also a great way to come up with new ideas. Innovators and other successful people know that being outdoors often sparks creativity.

I know that a lot of my best ideas come to me while I'm surfing. While you're out in the ocean, the combination of invigorating activity and beautiful scenery creates the perfect environment for an influx of creativity. Whether you're running, cycling, or gardening, exercise leads to endorphin-fueled introspection. The key is to find a physical activity that does this for you and then to make it an important part of your weekend routine.

5. They Pursue a Passion

You might be surprised what happens when you pursue something you're passionate about on weekends.

Indulging your passions is a great way to escape stress and to open your mind to new ways of thinking. Things like playing music, reading, writing, painting, or even playing catch with your kids can help stimulate different modes of thought that can reap huge dividends over the coming week.

6. They Spend Quality Time with Family

Spending quality time with your family on the weekend is essential if you want to recharge and relax. Family time on the weekend is so important to Spencer Rascoff that he flies home for the weekend, no matter how far away he is, even if he has to be in the same city the following week. Weekdays are so hectic that the entire week can fly by with little quality family time. Don't let this bleed into your weekends. Take your kids to the park, take your spouse to his or her favorite restaurant, and go visit your parents. You'll be glad you did.

7. They Schedule Micro-Adventures

Buy tickets to a concert or play, or get reservations for that cool new hotel that just opened downtown. Instead of running on a treadmill, plan a hike. Try something you haven't done before or perhaps something you haven't done in a long time. Studies show that anticipating something good to come is a significant part of what makes the activity pleasurable. Knowing that you have something interesting planned for Saturday will not only be fun come Saturday, but it will significantly improve your mood throughout the week.

8. They Wake Up at the Same Time

It's tempting to sleep in on the weekend to catch up on your sleep. Though it feels good temporarily, having an inconsistent wake-up time disturbs your circadian rhythm. Your body cycles through an elaborate series

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of sleep phases in order for you to wake up rested and refreshed. One of these phases involves preparing your mind to be awake and alert, which is why people often wake up just before their alarm clock goes off (the brain is trained and ready). When you sleep past your regular wake-up time on the weekend, you end up feeling groggy and tired. This isn't just disruptive to your day off, it also makes you less productive on Monday because your brain isn't ready to wake up at your regular time. If you need to catch up on sleep, just go to bed earlier.

9. They Designate Mornings as *Me* Time

It can be difficult to get time to yourself on the weekends, especially if you have family. Finding a way to engage in an activity you're passionate about first thing in the morning can pay massive dividends in happiness and cleanliness of mind. It's also a great way to perfect your circadian rhythm by forcing yourself to wake up at the same time you do on weekdays. Your mind achieves peak performance two-to-four hours after you wake up, so get up early to do something physical, and then sit down and engage in something mental while your mind is at its peak.

10. They Prepare for the Upcoming Week

The weekend is a great time to spend a few moments planning your upcoming week. As little as 30 minutes of planning can yield significant gains in productivity and reduced stress. The week feels a lot more manageable when you go into it with a plan because all you have to focus on is execution.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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Dr. Travis Bradberry is the award-winning coauthor of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* and the cofounder of TalentSmart® the world's leading provider of emotional intelligence tests and training serving more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries.

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