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### 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work

- Posted by glen on March 26th, 2008 filed in [Organization](#), [Productivity](#)



*Post written by Albert van Zyl from the blog [HeadSpace](#).*

The lives of great people give us interesting clues about how to organise our days.

All of them attached great value to their daily routines. This is because they saw it as being part of 'becoming who they are', as Nietzsche puts it.

For the same reason they were also highly individual in their routines. They had the courage to go against popular opinion and work out often strange daily plans that suited them.

This is perhaps the first lesson that we can learn – that it takes courage and resolve to design and stick to a routine that suits you. But as Emerson reassures us: 'The world makes way for the man who knows where he is going'.

There are at least 10 other lessons that the daily routines of the great can teach us:

#### **1. Don't work long hours**

Despite the modern obsession with physical presence at offices (also known as 'presenteeism'), very few of the great worked long hours.

Philosopher Michel Foucault would only work from 9am to 3pm. Beethoven only worked from sunrise until the early afternoon. No 12 hour days here. Author Tom Robbins schedules



only 3 hours of writing at his desk per day.

## 2. Take breaks

Even during these short days, the great took plenty of breaks.

Socrates would sometimes simply stop and hold completely still for several minutes.

Beethoven was known to punctuate his mornings by running outside and walking around – he called it ‘working while walking’.

## 3. Take even longer breaks

The great all spent a single long period away from their desks every day to give their minds time to recover and regain its creative poise.

Beethoven started work at daybreak, but wrapped up by two or three in the afternoon which left him a good 14 hours away from work. Victor Hugo wrote in the mornings and took afternoons off entirely. Churchill would do nothing work-related between noon and around 11 at night.

## 4. Stop work and sit down for meals

Churchill would even have a bath and dress for meals. For us mere mortals, this injunction could simply mean sitting down with your sandwich away from your desk, on a bench in the park or somewhere else. Or resolving to chew and taste your food properly.

## 5. Don't work in the afternoons

There are some exceptions, but very few of our heroes did any serious work in the afternoon.

After writing in the morning, Victor Hugo spent his afternoons riding around Paris in double decker busses, watching his brethren about their work. For us this might mean blocking off afternoons for long tea breaks and non-essential tasks.

## 6. Mix it up

The days of the great contain a surprising variety of activities. It seems that we don't have to focus on a small range of things to succeed.

Even the grim German philosopher, Immanuel Kant went for afternoon walks and sat down for lunch with friends each day. Gandhi walked, spun, had a long bath and massage.

Churchill painted, fed his fish, played card games and constructed buildings all over Chartwell farm. He famously claimed that our minds don't need rest as much as they need variety.

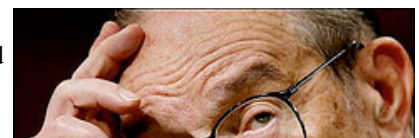
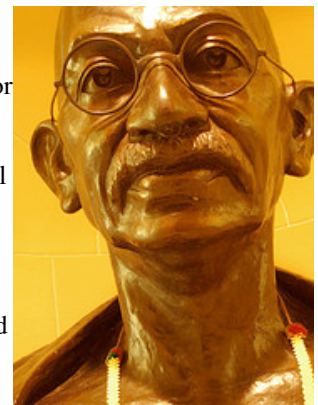
## 7. Aim low

Don't schedule every minute of your day. Leo at [Zenhabits](http://zenhabits.com) suggests that we have morning and evening routines, and leave the middle of the day open for completing key tasks and other things that come up.

Daily routines are supposed to make things easier, not more complicated. Micro managing every minute of your day does not work.

## 8. Take time to relax

The great all reserved time to relax. And this doesn't mean engaging in some semi-productive activity like reading a book or washing the dishes. No, they blocked out time to do nothing at all.



Gandhi would often spend time just staring at the horizon. Churchill would sit down to smoke a cigar after lunch and Beethoven would stop off for a few beers after his afternoon walk. In his recent autobiography, Alan Greenspan mentions that he too makes time to reflect each day.



### 9. Get up early(?)

This one is the subject of hot debate. Samuel Johnson, Churchill and Dylan Thomas got up late. Gandhi, Franklin and Mandela all got up early.

But whether they were early birds or night owls, the great all make sure that they had long periods of uninterrupted quiet time; whether late at night or early in the morning.

### 10. Exercise!

Al Gore interrupts his work day at 3pm to go for a run. Emerson, Beethoven, Nietzsche, Victor Hugo and Gandhi all went for walks. Nietzsche said that he 'scribbled' notes while he took his walk and claims that some of his best thoughts came in this way.

Mandela's 5 am walks are legendary. The story goes that he once invited a persistent journalist to interview him during this morning walk - but she ended up being too out of breath to ask any questions.

*Albert's blog provides weird, insightful and funny bits that allow you to protect and enhance your [Headspace](#). Check it out or subscribe to his [feed](#).*



240

diggs

[digg it](#)

Mandela image credit: [rchoephoto](#)

Beethoven photo credit: [TaranRampersad](#)

Churchill photo credit: [monkeyvc.net](#)

Ghandi photo credit: [nilexuk](#)

Greenspan photo credit: [trackrecord](#)

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### 86 Responses to "10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work"

1. maxx Says:

[March 27th, 2008 at 3:17 am](#)

Hi

This site is interesting, could you plz advise on my site on how to write it more powerfully.

<http://spiritualfacts.blogspot.com/>

Maxx

2. [Brett McKay](#) Says:

[March 27th, 2008 at 7:22 am](#)

Excellent post Albert! Kant was also a big time walker. He left at the same time everyday. In fact, he was so mechanical about his daily walks, some people in the small village he lived in actually kept track of time based on what time he left for his walk.



3. [Dave Bullock](#) Says:

[March 27th, 2008 at 7:47 am](#)

Great tips. I've been trying many of these without even realizing many great thinkers and doers did them.

=]



4. [Hamilton](#) Says:

[March 27th, 2008 at 1:45 pm](#)

Great post on how to focus throughout the day! It is said that the variety Churchill speaks of is what inspired many geniuses. In fact, several great inventions were the result of a fusion of ideas from two very different fields.

Thanks for the great food for thought!



5. [alicia](#) Says:

[March 27th, 2008 at 3:46 pm](#)

Haha, very cool!

<http://no-effort-money.blogspot.com/>

6. [Headspace :: 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work](#) Says:

[March 27th, 2008 at 10:20 pm](#)

[...] There are at least 10 other lessons that the daily routines of the great can teach us. Read the rest here: <http://lifedev.net/2008/03/10-ways-historys-finest-kept-focused-at-work/> [...]

7. [Albert@Headspace \(http://thoughtsintime.co.za/\)](#) Says:

[March 27th, 2008 at 10:30 pm](#)

Brett, The old joke about Kant is that he was only late for his afternoon walk twice: once when his mother died and the the second time when he died himself!

Last night I stumbled on a description of Roald Dahl's working day. More of the same:  
He woke up and had breakfast and worked a morning session from 10.30 to 12 noon.

Then it would be time for lunch, a drink and a nap. And then a second round of work from 4-6pm.



8. [CO-ED Magazine » Anna Kournikova Is Sexier Than Ever!](#) Says:

[March 28th, 2008 at 10:04 am](#)

[...] 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work [...]

9. [ducksixty](#) Says:

[March 28th, 2008 at 12:25 pm](#)



These are great, and perhaps one can infer answers for my questions from them, but they leave me asking: where's the time for relationships and other people? Not just observing, like Hugo on his bus, but interaction. I can't get on with my own schedule unless I join my kids' worlds at least daily... And heaven knows my marriage requires that time.

What defines 'History's Greatest?' I'm not well-schooled, but might not Karl Marx say the collective working man, living man, loving man, the proletariat who break bread nightly with their loved ones the real center of our history?

You mention Nietzsche here. How about entertaining other bits of his thought: You've got a lot of Apollos here; where are the Dionysians?

10. [Contract Attorney Professional Development, Lifestyle, and Community - JDWired Blog » Friday Candy, 03.28.08 by Joseph Miller](#) Says:  
[March 28th, 2008 at 8:48 pm](#)

[...] 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work [...]

11. [imgriff.com » Blog Archiv » Wie die Großen der Geschichte ihre Arbeit schafften](#) Says:  
[March 30th, 2008 at 4:00 am](#)

[...] Done. Zen to done. Alles schön und gut für den Alltag. Aber wie schreibe ich Geschichte? Bei Lifedev hat sich Albert van Zyl die Mühe gemacht und nachgeschaut, wie historische Größen so [...]

12. [Albert@Headspace \(http://thoughtsintime.co.za/\)](#) Says:  
[March 30th, 2008 at 11:21 am](#)

ducksixty,

Those long breaks and short working days are designed to leave space for other things such as family and friends.

They also leave space for the chaos that allows us to give birth to a dancing star (as Nietzsche would have it).

I take the point about the definition of "history's finest". But I do think we have a few things to learn from these people, n'est ce pas?

13. [Life Coding: 9 Ways to Fight Feature Creep in Our Lives / Zen Habits](#) Says:  
[March 30th, 2008 at 7:25 pm](#)

[...] Everyone needs a time to reflect. If you don't have a quiet time built into your day, get one (I recommend the morning). Everyone needs personal time to reflect on what the day holds, or to just take some personal time to unwind. I'm not alone here, some of the greatest minds did this as well. Gandhi would often spend time just staring at the horizon. Churchill would sit down to smoke a cigar after lunch and Beethoven would stop off for a few beers after his afternoon walk (more examples here). [...]

14. [LivSimpl](#) Says:  
[March 30th, 2008 at 10:55 pm](#)

A wonderful post! Wish I could say more, but it's time for bed so I can get up early tomorrow. :)

15. [Kalyan Banerjee](#) Says:  
[March 31st, 2008 at 4:38 am](#)

Good points, but the key to it is implementation. I guess, 3 pm walks won't suit most of the office-goers. But yes, waking up early certainly would. Traditionally, I've been late riser but am trying to wake up early these days. Keeps me fresh. Steve Pavlina's site is really helpful in this context.

16. [Monday RoundUp - Finances, insurance, and that blasted email](#) Says:  
[March 31st, 2008 at 7:06 am](#)



[...] I love just about everything Glen at LifeDev writes, but this post is exceptional (I mostly wish I'd written it myself) and highlights the 10 ways hist.... [...]

17. [Albert@Headspace \(http://thoughtsintime.co.za/\)](http://thoughtsintime.co.za/) Says:

[March 31st, 2008 at 7:58 am](#)

Kalyan,

I agree with your point about implementation.

What I wonder about is when we reach the point where we look at the office set-up and its schedules and start making some changes there?

Surely the hours of wasted time, stress and heart attacks aren't practical either?

Thank you also for the lead to Steve Pavlina. His site looks excellent.

18. [Links - Mar 31 « roxomatic links](#) Says:

[April 1st, 2008 at 1:10 am](#)

[...] 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work | LifeDev [...]

19. [Eva](#) Says:

[April 1st, 2008 at 3:31 am](#)

This is a great post! And, actually, one that is very timely in my life. I have found myself trying to schedule every minute of my day and it has been driving me crazy, especially since I have been working hard on being a little more relaxed.

-Eva

<http://www.evaisawriter.com>

20. [Cesar R. Torres | Weblog](#) Says:

[April 1st, 2008 at 4:00 am](#)

[...] views on waking up early always contended with Churchill's theories on sleeping in [10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work—some of these will surprise [...]

21. [Spectre's Sayings » Blog Archive » 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work](#) Says:

[April 1st, 2008 at 8:47 am](#)

[...] has an article about 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work. They're [...]

22. [Scott Allen](#) Says:

[April 1st, 2008 at 12:25 pm](#)

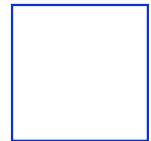
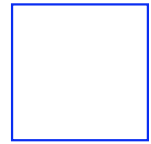
I hate to admit it, but at the moment I'm routinely breaking about 7 of these. The one thing I'll see is that I have a plan to change that pattern by the end of May.

Seems to me that the obvious key is being able to figure out how to make a whole lot more money in a whole lot less time.

23. [The Simple Dollar » The Simple Dollar Weekly Roundup: Seth Godin Edition](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 8:02 am](#)

[...] 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work Winston Churchill anecdotes are the best kind of anecdotes. (@ lifedev) Related Posts Review: The DipSlowing Down, or Starting on My DreamsThe Simple Dollar



Morning Roundup: Post-Super Bowl Edition  
The Simple Dollar Weekly Roundup: Crunch Edition  
Did you like this article? You can get the complete text of all the latest articles at The Simple Dollar in your email inbox each morning by entering your email address below. Your address will only be used for mailing you the articles, and each one will include a link so you can unsubscribe at any time. Report an unethical ad  
No comments yet. Be the first.  
Leave a reply [...]

24. [Sara](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 8:20 am](#)

Hi

I agree to this point "8. Take time to relax". We need time to relax or we will end up some where.

You can check my ideas over here..

<http://spiritualfacts.blogspot.com/>

-Sara

25. [Dividends4Life](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 12:43 pm](#)

Excellent post! I had a perfect score! 0 of 10 :)

Best Wishes,

D4L

26. [How Some of History's Greats Worked \[Productivity\] · TechBlogger](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 5:47 pm](#)

[...] hour days, they took time to reflect, eat, nap, and socialize. We'd do well to do the same. 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work [...]

27. [K.](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 5:58 pm](#)

I'm a writer; this is beautiful.

28. [Time Management, Historical Style | Eric H. Doss](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 6:03 pm](#)

[...] found this post very interesting. It seems that generally accepted time-management skills are lost on some of the [...]

29. [anonymous](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 6:04 pm](#)

Al Gore? Does he really qualify as one of History's Finest?

30. [ringlerun](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 6:07 pm](#)

ah, all ye sheep... listen, don't question... just follow, just also remember that you will not become a leader by not applying your own brain!

i think there is a lot of merit to what is being said... the examples given are great, but anything can find a topic and then find 10 famous people who can be shown to have been following an example of that topic in a particular way.

lies, damned lies and statistics!

notice the presence of only artie-fartie people on the list... no scientists... einstein used to work through the night...

its horses for courses my friend, and when the article is portrayed as a universal truth rather than “what might work for you, or what works for me”, it becomes propaganda!

31. [Arasmus](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 6:12 pm](#)

The collective import of these observations is that these guys did very little work period, but the work they did do had great impact. This leads me to think of two reasons why maybe these rules do not apply to use today: (1) some of these guys (like Beethoven) lived at a time in which the general level of literacy (and therefore intellectual competition) was fairly low, (2) some of these guys (like Winston Churchill) got their positions in society because of the class into which they were born rather than by scaling the meritocratic heights. Perhaps basic competence was sufficient for those placed so highly by birth alone.

32. [ringlerun](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 6:17 pm](#)

hear ye, arasmus, hear ye! well said.

33. [How Some of History's Greats Worked \[Productivity\] » Lifehacker, tips and downloads for getting things done](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 6:45 pm](#)

[...] hour days, they took time to reflect, eat, nap, and socialize. We'd do well to do the same. 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work [...]

34. [Phil](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 6:47 pm](#)

They also didn't have the internet to fritter away their time nor did they have TVs on in the background. How many had telephones ringing endlessly or all that e-mail to sift through?

35. [The Nadir](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 7:07 pm](#)

So ... Great post for someone who is independently wealthy and barely employed.

I love the comment above:  
“I'm a writer; this is beautiful.”

Yeah. I'm sure you are; I'm sure it is.

I'm a production assistant; this is crap.

36. [How great men spend organised their time : ChrisGribble.com](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 7:08 pm](#)

[...] this post at LifeDev less is more is definitely [...]

37. [Kris](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 8:18 pm](#)

Al Gore?

Alan Greenspan?

Hmmmm...

38. [Dean](#) Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 9:15 pm](#)



Thomas Edison of course was known for working 20 hour days and sleeping 3 hours a night.

39. *ben* Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 9:31 pm](#)

Arasmus: are you suggesting that Winston Churchill was only basically competent? The last time I checked, Churchill was one of the most-respected (and, in my opinion, deservedly so) political leaders of the last century.

40. *Arasmus* Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 9:41 pm](#)

Ben - you may already know this but check out Churchill's handling of the Gallipoli campaign in World War One - often described as one of the greatest disasters of World War I. My vote for greatest political leader of the last century would go to Gandhi - but he too, as for most leaders in the last century, was born to comfort.

41. *Rebecca* Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 9:49 pm](#)

Nice post.

42. *ringlerun* Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 9:54 pm](#)

Arasmus, he might have been born to comfort, but he certainly did not stay in it - he did take substantial personal risks, more so than any person is willing to take today (no matter what circumstance they are in). Gandhi was a great guy and does deserve high praise, but having said that, the other side of his story is often left untold - the part where he did talk to his son till death because his son married "out of caste"!

Some of the people on the list are great... but most were born to a privilege that gave them that opportunity - money begets money type of thing!

Nothing wrong in being born into comfort i guess... i mean, not like you choose, but don't use those people as examples to those who might not have been born of high stature.

43. *3thelement* Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 10:17 pm](#)

hey, this article seem doesn't work for me as industrial slave in this 3rd development country. In this country you have to either work hard for 10 hours a day or get fired

44. *Saleem* Says:

[April 2nd, 2008 at 11:00 pm](#)

Do you have a link to the original Churchill quote about the mind needing variety? Was digging around and had trouble finding it.

45. *rob* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 1:41 am](#)

Maybe you've got this the wrong way round - perhaps all these people could afford such leisurely working habits \*because\* they were incredibly talented?

46. *ringlerun* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 1:48 am](#)

right for some people rob... but most of the ones listed were \*born\* into the lap of luxury

47. [» 10 maneras de estar en forma en el trabajo El Blog Boyacense: El sitio de referencia de todos los boyacenses](#) Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 2:12 am](#)

[...] de estar en forma en el trabajo Publicado el 3 Abril, 2008 por diana en Noticias / Historias Lean aquí las 10 maneras por las que grandes personajes históricos eran capaces de concentrarse en sus [...]

48. [Top Ten Hints on Working Smarter « KiwiBlogBlog](#) Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 2:59 am](#)

[...] Top Ten Hints on Working Smarter Here's a great post from LifeDev, 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work. [...]

49. [sameer gupta](#) Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 3:22 am](#)

I don't agree. Do you really think Churchill worked so less before he became Churchill?

i do not agree that you can succeed only by working 5 or may be 6 hours a day. Plus, those were different times and it is so competitive these days.

These extra-ordinary league of men who worked for so little time per day, could actually afford to do so only because they had made themselves rich & famous.

50. [David Saliba](#) Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 4:04 am](#)

Great stuff..

How would employers react if these things become laws ?

I think it's a great indication of how our brain is .. when you try too hard to do something it blocks you..

Thanks ..

51. [Cfer](#) Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 6:40 am](#)

I agree with some of the comments on here about this being a different era.

I would LOVE to be able to have those kinds of working hours and such, but in today's work environment I just don't see that as possible, unless you're good enough to be self-employed. Most of them were either in creative arts or were self-employed or both. And in that kind of situation you have a little more leniency with your schedule.

My job as an applications developer for a medium-sized company means I cannot employ this kind of schedule. They would just go out and find someone else if I started working on schedules like those mentioned in the article had.

It's all about productivity, profit and bottom line these days. Not about staff and employee relationships.

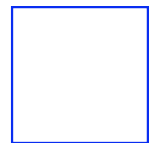
52. [Learn from the greats « m-squared](#) Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 7:17 am](#)

[...] (source) [...]

53. [Bill Jones](#) Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 7:26 am](#)



Good story until you threw in Al Gore's name. How do you justify putting him in this group of great thinkers, artists, leaders, and scientists? Al is a liar and soon to be proved a fraud.

54. *michael bierbaum* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 7:28 am](#)

Is this like Asperger's? Kind of sounds like it...

55. *Sanges* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 7:30 am](#)

Excellent post! I loved it.

56. *michael bierbaum* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 7:31 am](#)

Al Gore is not a liar. Rosina M. Bierbaum has her doctorate in Marine Biology, worked for Al Gore for 8 years in the White House, went to Oslo for his Nobel Peace prize, and now is Dean of Natural Resources at U of M in Ann Arbor.

57. *Ben Overmyer* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 7:42 am](#)

I am a web developer for a large contractor to the US government. I have some of the leniency described herein.

Certainly, we are encouraged to take regular walks and the occasional extended break.

Tim Ferriss (of Four Hour Workweek fame) works four or less hours per week, and still manages to pull five figures a month. This kind of productivity scheme is certainly possible, but it requires a number of factors to be in place before it will work.

Being self-employed tends to be MORE work than a 9-5. Owning a company, on the other hand, is less work. The art of delegation and outsourcing to free up the most important currency - time - is supremely important to this concept.

Were I to venture a guess, I'd say that only some people are suited to this lifestyle. Most aren't interested in, capable of, or qualified for the occupations that allow this.

That, at least, is my observation.

58. *grifo* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 8:03 am](#)

leta, leta...

la chuleta

59. *ohmygod* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 8:26 am](#)

AL Gore!? History's finest!? Ha ha ha ha!!!

60. *links for 2008-04-03 : Trader Eyal* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 8:36 am](#)

[...] 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work | LifeDev "sitting down with your sandwich away from you desk, on a bench in the park or somewhere else." I should do this more often. (tags: Work Productivity History) [...]

61. [\*10 hábitos de trabajo de grandes celebridades que debemos imitar\*](#) Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 8:53 am](#)

[...] artículo, escrito originalmente por Albert van Zyl de HeadSpace, y postado por Glen de LiveDev explora a estos célebres personajes, en sus hábitos de trabajo. Y luego de [...]

62. *Sally J.* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 9:11 am](#)

Many lived in a different era - did Beethoven have electric lights to work with at night - nah. That's why he worked in the morning. (Sure, they had candles, but you ever try working by candlelight.)

And Churchill only worked in the morning? I doubt it - the man was Prime Minister of England for a while, plus worked in Parliament before that. Did all of the British govt. take off at noon?

And I surely would not include Al Gore with this group of talented intellectuals.

63. *Dan The Man* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 9:15 am](#)

Even on a super busy workday I take many breaks. I think most people do, although they don't like to admit it, and there is this weird sense that waking up early is somehow superior...but I've never agreed with that. It annoys me that the old school work mentality insists I spend 8 hours at my desk...no way! Once I have proven myself at a job, I'm taking walks, spending more time chatting with other employees...even sleeping under my desk. No one cares, if you keep producing great work! And I think you're more likely to produce great work if you're taking breaks and getting your quiet time...ZZZZZZZZ... :)

64. *G* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 10:44 am](#)

How did Gore's name work its way into this piece? The others are generally acknowledged greats, but Gore?

65. [\*Shorter Work Weeks, Offices and Productivity » resist - cleveland web design\*](#) Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 11:15 am](#)

[...] came across an article via Lifehacker about historical figures and productivity. I wasn't surprised to see number one on the list is don't work long [...]

66. *JJB* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 12:02 pm](#)

I agree with G. Al Gore's name belongs along side the names of these others only in Al's own mind. Grouping him with the others is like grouping SPAM (the meat-like stuff in a can) with prime rib or filet mignon.

67. *Ryan* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 12:30 pm](#)

I'm surprised that Thomas Jefferson hasn't been mentioned. From a productivity standpoint, many of his methods are quite remarkable. For instance, he developed a revolving stand to hold several books open at once (tabbed browsing, anyone?) and his time spent away from his desk and in his garden yielded some of his more creative solutions in agronomics. Not only did Jefferson manage to be effective, but improving his personal productivity was one of his lifetime goals.

68. *wbrproductions* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 1:48 pm](#)

I like to get up early so I have plenty of time to rummage thru Google's dumpsters for unwanted c-notes. Then, if I find one, I get rip-roaring drunk like Beethoven did. Does this count as down-time?

69. *Bernd* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 1:48 pm](#)

@Ryan:

I would like very much to learn more about Jefferson's productivity methods. Any pointers?

70. *Focus on Routines « step forward.step out.step closer* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 2:17 pm](#)

[...] on Routines 3 04 2008 I have been reading alot of good posts lately. I came across 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work and thought it would be good to send you all to LifeDev.net to check it out. This will apply to [...]

71. *Ryan* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 3:07 pm](#)

@Bernd:

Much of my [limited] knowledge on Jefferson's productivity comes from site visits to Monticello and my readings, but unfortunately, I can find very little online. I found this informative thread on 43Folders (<http://www.43folders.com/2005/08/11/ye-olde-hipster>) - it looks like Jefferson even carried a Hipster PDA! A post here makes a reference to his "turntable writing box". Perhaps this design is similar to the book stand? An interesting topic indeed!

72. *John* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 3:51 pm](#)

The list of intelligent greats and their habits is quite intriguing.

But how does Al Gore end up in #10?

Runs in the afternoon?? - he is as fat as a house and his global warming scam certainly proves he is a non-thinker!

73. *Ian* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 5:01 pm](#)

Arasmus, let me guess your an Aussie? You have to be to be banging on about Gallipoli..

Churchill was an insomniac thats why he did nothing between noon and 11 at night. But he was the greatest political leader of the last century alongside Rosevelt.

74. *Pablo Barrientos* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 5:45 pm](#)

Thanks for sharing these information. They all help to organize our time and achieve the goals we have set.-



75. *Dan* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 5:47 pm](#)

Chicken Little runs in the afternoon - remind me not to run in the afternoon anymore - I might end up believing all sorts of things...

I mean that is proof - running in the afternoon makes your brain soft - correlation = causation right?

76. *Zeus* Says:

[April 3rd, 2008 at 6:33 pm](#)

Wait, Leo at Zenhabits is one of "History's Finest"?

If you say so.

77. [Very.FM » Blog Archive » How the Good Got Great...](#) Says:  
[April 3rd, 2008 at 7:57 pm](#)

[...] Donald Trumps of the world, and honestly, I'm not sure I share his values. But leave it to LifeDev to deliver some talents worth [...]

78. [Mohan](#) Says:  
[April 3rd, 2008 at 9:04 pm](#)

Good one!

79. [Jorge](#) Says:  
[April 3rd, 2008 at 9:26 pm](#)

Have you noticed that those guys lived in an era where aristocracy was more important than everything. In the 21'st Century companies are groing faster than ever. Why because there is work time in it. If we sleep our company is going to be eaten bye others. Beethoven, Nietsche, Churchill were unique people, and their products (or work in Churchill's case) were unique, that is what took them to success, after success they could take all the breaks they wanted to have. Before that Beethoven was working as a child to be "like Mozart" and he would spend hours and hours trying to be like him, "because Mozart at age 4 had composed his first symphony", so the point is, all those guys had a privilege to rest all the time they wanted to, because they worked very hard studying and working to be recognized. I dont mind telling you all that I would like to work less than 12 hours a day, but if I do, it will be reflected on my area's productivity.

Regards

80. [What's New in Publishing Blogs This Week « Purple Hearts](#) Says:  
[April 4th, 2008 at 5:32 am](#)

[...] only 3 hours of writing at his desk per day. I walked away thinking, I can do that. For the 10 WAYS HISTORY'S FINEST KEPT THEIR FOCUS AT WORK, click on this post at the Life [...]

81. [Variety Is the Key to Productivity « The Paperweight](#) Says:  
[April 4th, 2008 at 6:51 am](#)

[...] Zyl. It's called 10 Ways History's Finest Kept Their Focus at Work. I encourage you to go read it for yourself, but I'm also going to summarize some of the best points [...]

82. [aaron c beals » Blog Archive » getting things done, Beethoven-style](#) Says:  
[April 4th, 2008 at 7:32 am](#)

[...] stumbled across this article on the habits of productive, creative people, and found it inspiring: 10 ways history's finest kept focused at work. how are you spending your afternoons? Posted by aaron Filed in [...]

83. [Marco's Blog » Blog Archive » Do we need an 8 hour work day?](#) Says:  
[April 4th, 2008 at 8:09 am](#)

[...] van Zyl, posted an interesting blog entry that talks about this in more details. Basically, the post says that we can learn the following items from some of the great [...]

84. [10 Ways some of the worlds finest got their work done... « Blog of Michel Thigpen](#) Says:  
[April 4th, 2008 at 1:25 pm](#)

[...] <http://lifedev.net/2008/03/10-ways-historys-finest-kept-focused-at-work/> [...]



85. [wonky donky](#) Says:

[April 4th, 2008 at 7:30 pm](#)

Gore is a Self-Important Poser Tool and will soon be having an affair with Silda Spitzer, once he finishes inventing the internet.

[http://www.wonkydonky.net/archives/2008/04/chris\\_rock\\_says.php](http://www.wonkydonky.net/archives/2008/04/chris_rock_says.php)



86. [Have a cuppa « Otterman speaks...](#) Says:

[April 5th, 2008 at 10:44 am](#)

[...] of discussions. And it still profits from the passing biologists. Its just that they aren't strolling much [...]

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### LifeDev Resources

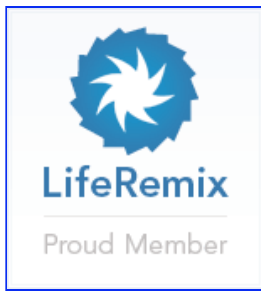
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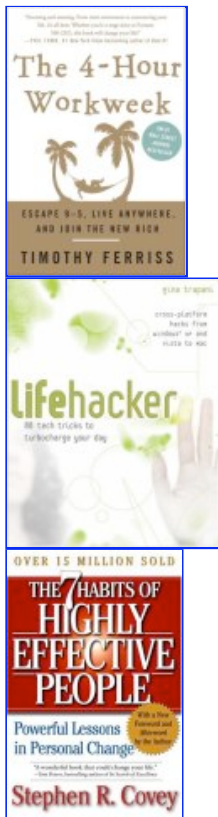




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## Recommended Reading



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-  [Biz Chicks Rule](#)
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