

# Top Ten Productivity Concerns for Freelancers

by Dorothee Racette, CT

Thank you for your interest in my presentations at the recent NMTIA conference in Albuquerque. Below are my best tips on the productivity concerns we discussed. [Get in touch](#) to find out more!

## Planning and Goal Setting

1

- Goals should help guide your decisions, not create unnecessary pressure. Manageable and adjustable goals are the key to creating success.
- Our brain resists vagueness. Defining next steps reduces friction and builds momentum. Even very small steps count.
- Plans reflect your capacity at a moment in time. Updating them is a responsible action, not a failure.

## Handling Motivation and Burnout

2

- Motivation doesn't have to be constant. Good systems and habits carry us through low-capacity days.
- Burnout often shows up as friction before exhaustion sets in. Noticing signs such as irritation and negativity gives us more options to respond.
- When energy drops, simplifying can be more effective than pushing harder.

## Maintaining Focus on High-Priority Work

3

- Reducing priorities isn't lowering standards. Rather, it is reducing cognitive load so we can actually do the work.
- Focus is often an issue of work environment, not motivation. Small adjustments such as fewer tabs, clearer workspaces, or better timing can do more than push ourselves harder.
- Interruptions are part of work. The goal isn't to avoid them, but to return to full focus as easily as possible. A "restart" note can save a lot of mental energy.

## Efficient Client Management

4

- Establish clear boundaries with new clients from the beginning. Systems and rules reduce emotional labor for everyone.
- Being professional doesn't mean being constantly available. Your availability boundaries set you up for a better work relationship.
- Good systems support the way your brain works, not how you think it should work.

## Building Manageable Habits

5

- A habit that's too demanding or complex will quietly disappear. Designing habits for low-energy days makes them more achievable.
- It takes about 30 days to establish a habit.
- Treat yourself with patience in the process.

Notes:

- 6
- Task Overload**
- A sense of urgency about everything can be a sign of feeling overloaded. Having fewer choices helps the brain prioritize.
  - A trusted place to hold tasks (e.g. an app or notebook) lets us stop carrying them mentally, without forcing immediate action.
  - Not doing something (for example, delegating or postponing) can be a strategic decision. Completion isn't the only measure of productivity.

- 7
- Perfectionism**
- Perfectionism often starts as a shield against judgment or uncertainty.
  - Clear standards help us stop earlier. Professional quality shouldn't require personal overextension.
  - Stopping points defined ahead of time reduce endless tweaking.

- 8
- Effective Time Management**
- Time management is often framed as self-control, but it's really about self-knowledge and awareness. It is normal for different tasks to take more or less time.
  - We usually plan for each specific task, but forget about transitions. Always remember the buffer time you will need.
  - Keep your biological clock in mind when planning.

- 9
- Maintaining Work/Life Balance**
- Balance is a series of small adjustments over time. It's not an issue you can fix once.
  - Our brains need clear cues to stop working. Gentle rituals often work better than strict rules.
  - Don't treat rest as a reward you must earn. Without regular relaxation and rest, our productivity quietly declines.

- 10
- Addressing Irregular Workflow**
- Uneven workload is a part of self-employment. Treating it as a personal failure just adds unnecessary stress.
  - Busy and quiet periods need different strategies. Not every moment has to be optimized.
  - During intense periods, simpler systems are better, even if the simple solutions are temporary.