

business
bitesize



business breakthroughs
in minutes



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Better use your business brain and achieve better business results...

Rarely do you hear a business owner or manager complain about how easy it is to run a business.

Quite the opposite!

Having too much to do has become our biggest complaint.

Because running a business is a full-on, wholehearted, over-the-top, rollercoaster experience, you get to the end of the day empty, shattered, wrung-out.

Being physically, mentally and emotionally worn out is the norm.

You're working your brain to the max.

Or are you?

Yes you're worn out, but have you used your brain in the way it was designed? Or are you just doing what you always do when you work?

In a nutshell

Better use your business brain and you'll achieve better business results.

But most of us constantly ask the brain to do what it can't!

How good are you at multi-tasking, really?

When trying to reverse park your car on a



busy road or park into a difficult space, have you ever turned your car radio off or stopped a conversation?

That's your thinking brain telling you to stop multi-tasking.

Given the busy, busy lives we lead it's

Here's a proven solution for you...

Your capacity to improve your results, your team's results and your business's results boils down to how well you use 4% of your business brain – your prefrontal cortex. It's not as hard as you think!

suggested we should all multi-task. But your business brain just doesn't like it.

For example, how accurate would you be if asked to press a left foot pedal when a low musical note sounded and a right pedal when a high note sounded?

You'd be 100% accurate.

How would you then perform if asked, at the same time, to add together two single-digit numbers (5 + 3) together?

You'd be just 50% accurate.

Or so say hundreds of experiments carried out by numerous researchers over three decades.

Overwhelming scientific proof shows that

when we humans do two 'thinking' tasks at the same time, our 'thinking' capacity drops from that of a graduate to that of an eight year-old (see the tools section on the back page for more evidence and the black-grey exercise to prove it).

Better manage the decision-making part of your brain and you make better business decisions. Don't leave it to chance.

You don't want to damage your car when making parking decisions; you don't want to damage your business when making business decisions.

Is this rocket science or brain surgery?

Neither.

Mastering what's considered the most complex thing in the known universe – your brain – is easier than you might think.

The world's neuroscientists agree.

Human evolution has already done most of the hard work for you.

One part of the brain has evolved to help you achieve more if you'd only use it in the right way.

Neuroscientists suggest that one small part of your brain, approximately 4%, determines how successful you are.

Your vital choice...

How **you choose** to use this small part of your brain determines how successful you are.

Learn how to better use the 4% of your brain that is your prefrontal cortex and you'll achieve better business results.

It's too risky not to...

When you don't learn how to make the most of the 4% that is your prefrontal cortex you are:

- Less able to make good decisions
- Less able to control impulses
- Less able to solve problems
- Less able to think creatively
- Less able to set goals
- Less able to plan

Fail to harness the power of your 4% and you're more likely to drift on autopilot, directionless, aimless.

More worryingly, if you stay on autopilot, you won't even notice you are wandering aimlessly!

Better Business Brain Insight 1:

1. Be a better stage director

30 leading neuroscientists, more than 300 research papers and more than a thousand brain and psychological studies have been brilliantly captured by David Rock in his book 'Your Brain At Work.'

David suggests a brilliant way to look at your 4% is to see it as a very small stage where your thoughts are the actors - for example:



More than 2 or 3 actors on stage and your business brain fails you.

Ask a group of children to act out a stage play with no direction or guidance – what would happen? A likely confused sequence of events with the strongest characters pushing to be on the stage as much as possible. The play would be poor, parents would not be pleased.

Your stage play – like your brain – works so much better when you **choose** the actors and **direct** the actors.

Direct well and you prioritise the most important scenes and bring the right actors to the stage at the right time.

By accident or on purpose?

Choose to 'direct' the actors on your small stage and you start to take control.

Take control and you can be more certain you'll achieve what you want to achieve.

Leave it to chance and you have no chance of improving your business brain or your business results.

Here's how you take control, here's how you become a better stage director.

Better Business Brain Insights 2, 3 and 4:

Your prefrontal cortex, your 4%, your stage, has some unavoidable physical and biological limits.

Better manage these limits and you'll achieve greater mental and business performance.

2. Your stage is tiny – your (4%) prefrontal cortex can only cope with 1, 2 or 3 actors at any one time – your job is to limit the number of actors (thoughts).

3. Your stage uses powerful battery-powered lights – like any sizeable muscle your prefrontal cortex consumes lots of glucose and wears out fast – your job is to

use this glucose wisely and prioritise well.

4. The actors can play only one scene at a time – like a calculator you can't multiply and divide two numbers at the same time – your job is to **limit distractions** and **stay focused**.

Doing your best with a small stage...

You know you're working with a small stage when you park your car on a busy road and have to turn your car radio off or stop a conversation.

So why, when focusing on an important project, or complex task at work do you allow distractions?

You must choose your actors carefully, you must stop distractions (the wrong actors), you must prioritise your actors.

So make prioritising a priority...

It pays to prioritise your projects when your brain is fresh.

"Prioritising is one of the brain's most energy-hungry processes." – David Rock

"We have a limited bucket of resources for activities like decision making and impulse control, and when we use these up, we don't have as much for the next activity." – Dr. Roy Baumeister, Florida University

Batteries, muscles and brains wear out too...

When your prefrontal cortex is worn out, it finds making good decisions much harder.

A bit like a remote toy helicopter struggles to take off after it's been flown a few times. It's no longer powerful enough. It pays to respect your limitations rather than fight them.

TIME TO DISAGREE

“My competition aren’t concerned with a better business brain they just want to win my customers.”

Ignore the power of your business brain (and the business brains of your team) and you will be at the mercy of your competitors’ business brains.

Whoever makes best use of their business brain is most likely to succeed just as Steve Jobs did.

Apple, after all, was the brainchild of Steve Jobs – and he knew how to make the most of his business brain.

Jobs was a practitioner of ‘mindfulness.’ Mindfulness is another way to describe the ‘stage director.’ Check out the sections on mindfulness in David Rock’s excellent book ‘Your Brain At Work.’ You’ll also find more on this in the tools section of this edition of Business Bitesize.

The more you know about how to best use your business brain, the more likely you are to be the winner in your market.

“There’s just too much going on for me to change the way I work and the way I use my brain.”

Continue to do what you’ve always done and you’ll continue to get what you’ve always got (or maybe less).

Now that you know your business brain (the 4%) has severe limitations, why not simply manage your external distractions better?

Use the Business Bitesize Support Tools And Resources

to help you make the most of this edition of Business Bitesize – go here: www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands

Your feedback is important to us. We’d love to know what you think of this edition of Business Bitesize and how you use it or plan to use it. Also we’d welcome your suggestions for future editions of Business Bitesize. To give us your thoughts please use the simple feedback form here: www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands

Manage your distractions better and you improve the power of your business brain, improve the decisions you make and improve your business results.

Peak performance beckons: If, as research suggests, your business brain has one to two peak performing hours a day at best then create 2 x 1 hour chunks of time to do your most important work.

Switch your emails off, switch your phone off, put a ‘do not disturb’ sign up or go hide away and **do your important work for the day undisturbed.**

You can then do your other work in the other 6 hours of your working day the same way as you always did.

“It’s just so hard to know what to do and what not to do!”

You’re right it is difficult.

And these decisions about what to do, what not to do and in what order you do them determine your business success every day.

So do it when you’re fresh.

It pays to choose your actors and choose your focus carefully. Are you really better off doing emails first thing in the morning when your brain is fresh or should you be making decisions about the most important jobs of the day?

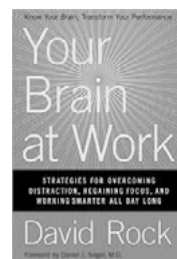
If the priority job of the day is obvious then use uninterrupted time to focus on the priority job and nothing else.

Your emails will still be there when you’ve done a priority job or two.

Please tell me more...

We cannot recommend David Rock’s excellent book ‘Your Brain At Work’ highly enough.

Rock shows how it’s possible not only to survive in today’s overwhelming work environment, but also to succeed in it – and still feel energised at the end of the day.



4 helping hands for you...

Because you have so many demands on your time and attention...

...because you want to succeed in business in an increasingly competitive business world...

...because it really pays to know much more about how to make the most of your business brain...

...here are four helping hands to get you going and help you build a better business brain and build better business results:

- 1. Be a better ‘stage director’ of your business brain**
- 2. Use undisturbed ‘focus time’ whilst your business brain is fresh**
- 3. Prioritise prioritising before your brain gets tired doing other work**
- 4. Learn more about a better business brain and achieve even greater results**

ULTIMATE ARGUMENT: “How will I know I am using my business brain in a better way?”

You’ll get to the end of a working day feeling a sense of achievement and will still be energised for your friends and family.

Your ‘stage director’ will recognise and keep distractions at bay and control what you think about, rather than just letting it happen.

You’ll have a greater sense of certainty that your business decisions are good decisions.

STOP allowing anything, anytime to disrupt your most important work.

START by being a better ‘stage director’ of your business brain and create some uninterrupted time for yourself every day.



Your next steps:

It pays to better understand more about how your business brain works.

When you do you'll make better business decisions.

Make better business decisions and you'll achieve better business results.

Start by being better at limiting distractions and create daily peak performance time

Timing is of the essence – nip distractions in the bud. David Rock suggests:

“To avoid distractions, it's helpful to get into the habit of vetoing behaviours early, quickly, and often, well before they take over.”

But always remember you have limited and decreasing brain resources.

“Each time you inhibit something (stop a distraction), your ability to inhibit again is reduced”

More tools and information for you:

As well as the checklist here, you can use the exercises, checklists and tools in the online supporting material.

Together they'll help you make more of this bitesize business breakthrough.

Better business decisions come from using a better business brain...

Learn more about the way your brain works. Then apply your brain learning and you'll better use your business brain. Better use your business brain and you'll make better business decisions. Make better business decisions and you'll build a more successful business.

Don't be left at the mercy of your competitors' decisions, insights and innovations, build a better business brain...

1. BE A BETTER STAGE DIRECTOR: Recognising the physical limits of the 4% of your thinking business brain (your prefrontal cortex) is a great start. Being more mindful, more aware, more conscious of your decision making process, like Steve Jobs was, makes you a better business person.

Check out the tools and resources in the link below or read David Rock's brilliant book.

2. INHIBIT DISTRACTIONS: Internal and external distractions are constantly trying to get on your mental stage. Let them and you undermine your business brain and will achieve less than you could.

Staying focused means yes – turn off your mobile phone. It also means inhibiting internal impulses (read more about this in the tools). A better awareness of distractions means your 'stage director' can nip impulses in the bud before they turn into action and derail your day.

3. PRIORITISE YOUR PRIORITIES: It's so easy just to let yourself fall into the activities of the day as you always have done. It's time to make prioritising your number one process while your brain is fresh.

4. CREATE UNDISTURBED FOCUS TIME: Your customers demand your attention; your team demands your attention; many things demand your attention. But you now know you have up to two peak performing hours a day so plan them in. Make them totally and utterly uninterrupted, unbroken, undisturbed.

For more details on this step-by-step process please see the tools in the link below.

YOUR SUPPORT TOOLS ARE HERE: Go to the link below and you'll find a selection of practical support tools to help you work out more ways to use your business brain in a better way.

Find the support tools to help you here - www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands

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Better use your business brain and achieve better business results...

- What everyday tasks are sabotaging your 'most important work'?
- What is your first job of the day... every day?
- When do you decide what your 'most important work' is?

CONTENTS:

1. The 'Better Business Brain' question that will increase your productivity, your energy level, and your well-being...
2. David Rock's 'Everyday Email Overwhelm' story
3. The Brain Strain exercises – why multi-tasking doesn't pay
4. Better Business Brain Checklist
5. Better Business Brain Stories – Andy Green return from sea, The Sterile Cockpit rule and Dual Task Interference
6. The Book – 'Your Brain at Work' – David Rock
7. References

STOP allowing anything, anytime to disrupt your most important work.

START by being a better 'stage director' of your business brain and create some uninterrupted time for yourself every day.



1. The 'Better Business Brain' question that will increase your productivity, your energy level, and your well-being...

Where are you when you decide what your No. 1 most important job of the day is?

Where is the value in this question?

The value lies here...

You must decide EVERY working day what your No1 most important job of that day is AND then COMPLETE that one job.

If you do this you'll run a better business.

230 most important things get done in a working year (46 working weeks x 5 day week = 230).

- Decide on the most important job of the day
- Outlaw, prohibit and forbid distractions when doing the most important job of the day
- Complete the most important job of the day whilst you and your brain are fresh – before you do, read or engage with anything else



2. Everyday Email Overwhelm – beware of the consequences

As soon as you open your inbox every email that you see requires the following attention before you can move on to the next one.

Understand – who the email is from and what the content is about

Decide – whether to deal with it now or later; decide who else needs to be consulted; decide how important and urgent the email is

Memorise – the information in the email for another time

Recall – other information that relates to this email so you can decide or prioritise it

Inhibit – choose to ignore some emails or even delete them

These 5 brain processes are like the actors on the stage of your brain – they put themselves in the spot light, use your brain energy up and impact your ability to carry out your next task effectively and in a focused way.

Tackle your email overload before you tackle the 'most important work' of your day and you'll struggle to get that 'most important work' done... also you will not do it as well as you could.

Like it says in the Business Bitesize report '**prioritise prioritising**' and do the most important work of the day while your brain (your prefrontal cortex) is fresh.

The No. 1 most important job of the day or your emails?

You arrive early to work to tackle an important piece of work that must be completed today. Turning on your computer results in nearly 100 emails being downloaded and a wave of anxiety washes over you.

Answering all these emails could take all day, but you also have the important piece of work to prepare and two other meetings later on in the day...



You begin to respond to the emails but after half an hour you realise you aren't even 1/5th of the way through them and you need to speed up. You are now listening to voice mail while trying to read emails.

Then you remember that you can't be late home this evening because you are picking the kids up from the childminders and you start to think about how you wish you could spend more time with your family.

Lost in thought you delete a voicemail from a customer. You had already played the voicemail but hadn't registered the actual content so needed to listen to it again.

You turn your attention back to the emails which must each be considered in turn, responded to, ignored or simply read and filed.

3. The Brain Strain Exercises or Why Multi-Tasking Doesn't Pay

Here are two exercises that you can do for fun with your team or as an icebreaker (you will also be demonstrating the limits of the pre frontal cortex in everybody's brain)



- a) Ask everybody to rub their belly and pat their head at the same time
- b) Now ask everybody to rub their belly, pat their head and do a simple addition sum (5+3)

Probably this was no problem for most people, with a bit of focused attention they can do this. Children have been trying to rub their bellies and pat their heads simultaneously since time began.

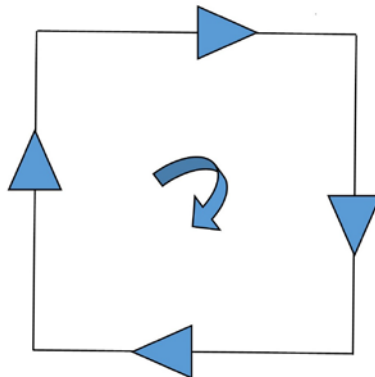
Chances are this action is largely 'hardwired' to most people. The only thing they have to really 'think' about – 'use their 4% prefrontal cortex' is when they do the simple sum. Make the maths harder and they may start to slow down or be less accurate with the belly rubbing and head patting.



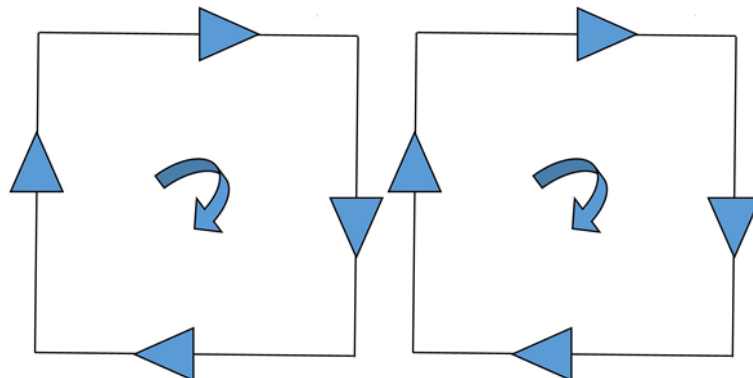
Here's another exercise -

(turn this into a day to remember and get yourself 4 indoor sparklers per person)

- a) All of the participants must now move into pairs. Ask each pair to allocate one person as a 'counter' and one person as a 'doer'.
- b) Access an online metronome here <http://a.bestmetronome.com>. Set it running at 100 beats per minute.
- c) Set the metronome to beat for a minute. To the beat of the metronome the 'doer' must trace out the shape of a square in the air with one hand while the 'counter' counts the number of squares traced out. The 'doer' must trace one side of the square for every beat. So a minute of tracing at 100 beats per minute will give a count of 25 squares. Fill in the table below (section f).

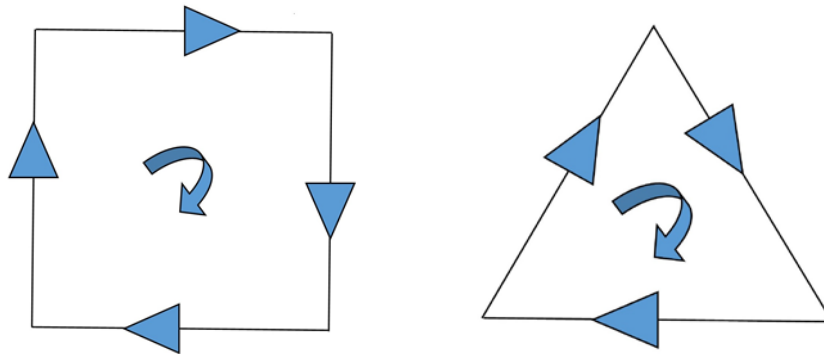


- d) Repeat the same exercise, this time the 'doer' must trace out squares with both hands at the same time. Fill in the table below (section f).





- e) Now try this: ask the 'doer' to trace out a triangle with one hand, and a square with the other. Two different thinking tasks at the same time. Multi-tasking. Fill in the table below (section f).



NB: Each side of each shape is drawn to a single beat – so a triangle is completed in three beats and a square is completed in four.

Set the metronome going and ask the 'counters' to count out how many correct squares are traced out by the 'doers' while the triangles are also being traced out. Collect the results after a single minute.

f) Results table:

| Shapes Traced (in 100 beats) | Number of complete shapes |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| One square with one hand | |
| Two squares with two hands | |
| One square with one hand, one triangle with the other hand | |

What does this tell you about how effectively your brain performs when being forced to think or focus on more than one thing at a time?



4. Better Business Brain Checklist – or how to be a better stage director

- Prioritise your priorities as your very first job of the day

Prioritising involves making decisions – decisions are better and more easily made when your brain is fresh. Make the prioritising decision, then get everything else ‘off your mental stage’.

- Check emails **after** you have done your ‘most important work’ – your priority work of the day.

Email is an enormous energy sink – save them for later after you’ve got your priority work done first (see section 1).

- Plan your work to conserve decision making energy.

Make the best use of your time. If you know you feel fresher after a lunchtime walk and some food – plan your work accordingly. If you are always at a low ebb at 3pm - plan your undemanding, more routine and mundane activities for then.

- Find and protect your quality thinking time – your best time of the day for focused work.

What is your best thinking time of the day? Early in the morning at home before anyone else is up? After you’ve done some exercise? When you’ve had a few days break over the weekend? Prioritise your workday activities to optimise that time.

- Choose your meeting times to fall into your ‘low focus’ time – or you will run your battery down before you get to your ‘most important work’.

Set up a plan so that you avoid meetings at times that are usually your ‘best time of day’ for thinking.

- Do one conscious mental task at a time – if accuracy is important, don’t divide your attention.

Multi-tasking is good if you are doing a number of routine ‘automatic tasks’ –often physical at the same time. If you are working on more than one **mental task** at the same time it will take your longer overall to complete them. You will not carry them out as accurately as if you do them individually, one after the other. It has been scientifically proven – see David Rock’s book in the book review.



5. Better Business Brain Stories

Deep Sea Discovery

Andy Green is a no nonsense, plain speaking Scot. Apart from the fact that Andy is a world renowned Oceanographic Scientist he is also renowned for getting things done.

Andy spends up to 8 weeks at a time (several times every year) at sea in research vessels surveying the world's oceans. During any research cruise he can be challenged every day by rough seas, sea sickness, freezing temperatures, extreme heat, equipment problems and of course spending time away from his friends and family.



On returning from an 8 week trip away Andy walks into the office on a Monday morning. He switches his computer on. He leaves his computer to download the emails while he goes and makes a coffee. With a coffee in his hand he is ready to face the day and opens his emails and hits '**delete all**'.

By 9.30 on his first day back after 8 weeks away from the office Andy is working on the data that was collected on his trip. He is doing his 'most important work'.

Andy is confident that if he has deleted anything that needs his attention immediately he will hear about it. He knows that he can harness the energy and inspiration from the cruise while it is fresh in his mind and do his best work in the few days after the trip.

By Wednesday of that week the rest of the team that were on that same 8 week cruise have just about cleared their inboxes.

Do you spend Monday morning 'clearing the backlog' or doing your 'most important work'?



The Sterile Cockpit Rule

On the morning of September 11, 1974, while conducting an instrument approach in dense ground fog into Charlotte/Douglas International Airport, North Carolina, Eastern Air Lines flight 212 carrying 78 passengers and 4 crew crashed just short of the runway, killing 72 on board.



Investigations by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) into this and a number of other accidents around that time revealed the probable cause of the accident was distraction due to idle chatter among the flight crew during the approach phase of the flight.

The pilot had in fact landed on a different runway because he had missed the detail of the runway number from the air traffic controller. The runway was shorter than the DC-9 required to land safely and it overshot.

But why did this accident and other accidents like it happen?

In the early days of aviation, pilots had little chance to engage in non-essential activities. Flying demanded constant attention, and the wind and engine noise in an open cockpit all but drowned out normal conversations.

In the early years of instrument flying, the effort involved in navigating through the traditional headsets to a scratchy audio stream of "dits and dahs" **forced** pilots to **concentrate** 100% on flying duties during instrument meteorological conditions.

By the 1960s comfort and sound levels gradually became more office-like and hence more conducive to distractions. Multi-person flight and cabin crews, autopilots, in-flight meals, newspaper service and other comforts further increased the levels of non-flight related activities for flight crews during flight time.

In the case of Eastern Airlines Flight 212 investigations by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) revealed the probable cause of the accident was distraction due to idle chatter among the flight crew during the approach phase of the flight.

As a result of this the FAA (Federation Aviation Administration) introduced the 'Sterile Cockpit Rule' summarised here:

- a. No flight crewmember may engage in, nor may any pilot in command permit, any activity during a critical phase of flight which could distract any flight crewmember from the performance of his or her duties or which could interfere in any way with the proper conduct of those duties. Activities such as eating meals, engaging in non-essential



conversations within the cockpit and non-essential communications between the cabin and cockpit crews, and reading publications not related to the proper conduct of the flight are not required for the safe operation of the aircraft.

- b. Critical phases of flight includes all ground operations involving taxi, takeoff and landing, and all other flight operations conducted below 10,000 feet, except cruise flight.

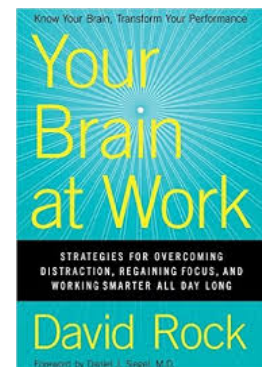
The everyday equivalent of the 'Sterile Cockpit Rule' can be heard the length and breadth of the country in cars outside schools every single day
"Be quiet kids! I'm trying to get into this parking space"

- What would be the 'Sterile Cockpit Rule' you could implement in your workday, with your team, throughout your organisation?
- What would the 'Sterile Cockpit Rule' be that would ensure the protection of your 'most important work'?

6. THE BOOK: Your Brain at Work – David Rock

We cannot recommend this brilliant book 'Your Brain at Work' by David Rock highly enough.

30 leading neuroscientists, more than 300 research papers and more than a thousand brain and psychological studies have been brilliantly captured by David. He cuts through the technical jargon, and using his main characters Paul and Emily shows how with an increased awareness of how your brain works ... at work it's possible not only to survive in today's overwhelming work environment, but also to succeed in it – and still feel energised at the end of the day.



7. References

Ten Tips For A Better Business Brain

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/laurashin/2014/01/15/how-to-perform-at-your-peak-every-day-10-tips-for-working-smarter-in-2014/3/>