THINK productive

The Way of the Productivity Ninja®

- Be inspired
- Form good habits
- Transform the way you work



The 9 Characteristics of the Productivity Ninja®



1. Zen-like Calm

Finding your focus and momentum



2. Ruthlessness

Making deliberate choices about what not to do to



3. Weapon-savvy

The right tools, working for you, not the other way round



4. Stealth and Camouflage

Managing your availability and environment



5. Unorthodoxy

Questioning the status quo and seeking fresh perspectives



6. Agility

Adapting quickly then getting back on track



7. Mindfulness

Developing the quality of your attention



8. Preparedness

Setting yourself and future you up to succeed.



9. Human, Not Superhero

Doing your best work through sustainable productivity

Improve productivity and wellbeing with ninja-style mindset, habits, tactics and tools

Action Plan:
My 'new ways of working'

Use these pages to capture your light-bulb moments and anything you might want to do differently for yourself or your team. There are extra pages overleaf to capture your ideas throughout the session!

My lightbulb moments (new/rediscovered!)

Ideas I'd like to experiment with:

Ideas I'd like to explore with my team:

How can I/we make the new behaviors stick?

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Appendix: Action Plan Inspiration



1. Zen-like Calm

Finding your focus and momentum

> You may not believe this, but it is entirely possible to have a hundred and one things to do and still remain absolutely calm.
>
> **Graham Allcott, 'How to be a Productivity Ninja**

That sense of calm and control, where your focus is fully in the moment. You know how productive you are when you have a deadline? Well, that's because it forces you to focus and be Zen-like. It's possible to experience that sense of focus, just without all the stress of the deadline!

The theory

- **Quieten the noise:** reduce distractions and competing demands.
- **Get it out of your head:** capture thoughts, tasks and information somewhere you trust: a "Second Brain" you don't have to hold in memory.
- **Separate thinking from doing:** decide in "Boss" mode, then focus in "Worker" mode; don't do both at once.

What might it look like in practice?

- **Boss → Worker:** Spend 5 minutes capturing everything in your head, deciding what matters, then focus on one task without re-planning as you go.
- **Boss → Worker:** Decide what a presentation needs to achieve, what to prepare and what "good enough" looks like, then switch to "Worker" mode to build it.
- **Writing a report:** Spend time deciding the key message and structure first, then switch to "Worker" mode and write without continually rethinking the whole thing.



2. Ruthlessness

Making deliberate choices about what not to do to

> It's about our ability to protect our time and attention, focusing only on the things that add the greatest impact.
>
> **Graham Allcott, 'How to be a Productivity Ninja**

Sounds scary. And sometimes it's not easy. But Productivity Ninjas use their Ruthlessness wisely, lovingly and with good intent. Sometimes we need to challenge, and to make difficult choices.

The theory

- **Be realistic about what you can do:** you can't do everything. Challenge expectations, including your own, about what really needs doing.
- **Saying no** doesn't have to be blunt or all-or-nothing - there are softer, more negotiable ways to protect your time, and AI can help you find the words.
- **Choose what's worth doing well:** spend your time and energy where it will make the biggest difference.

What might it look like in practice?

- **Individual:** You're writing a report. The message is clear and it meets the brief. You decide it's good enough, stop refining, send it out to the team, and move on to something that matters more.
- **Team:** A process or meeting keeps taking up time without enough return. Agree to stop, shorten or simplify it.
- **Organization:** A reporting requirement takes significant time but adds little value. Challenge whether it still needs to exist.

Appendix: Action Plan Inspiration



3. Weapon-savvy

The right tools, working for you, not the other way round

> The Productivity Ninja is skillful on their own but knows that the right tools make them even more effective.
>
> **Graham Allcott, 'How to be a Productivity Ninja**

Apps, gadgets and software can transform how we work, as long as they make work better, not just busier.

The theory

- **Know what you need:** be clear about the problem before reaching for a tool.
- **Don't let the tools be the boss:** choose how technology gets your attention, not the other way round.
- **AI as a co-pilot:** frame the task, let AI help with the middle, then review and decide. The judgement stays yours.

What might it look like in practice?

- **Seek out the geeks** and early adopters in your team to help you optimize your tech set-up.
- **Using tech to save team time:** Instead of endless back and forth emails and chasers to find a good date for a meeting, send out an Outlook date poll or use a personal scheduling link.
- **AI - the AI Sandwich:** When preparing for a client call, ask AI to come up with 10 insightful questions based on what's happened so far. Use your judgement to identify the one that makes you think "that's the real question." You'll walk in prepared, every word still yours.



4. Stealth and Camouflage

Managing your availability and environment

> One of the worst things you can do is always make yourself available. It's an invitation to some of your biggest enemies: distraction and interruption.
>
> **Graham Allcott, 'How to be a Productivity Ninja**

If you're always available, people are always going to want you. We need to balance team communication and collaboration with regular retreats off-stage to get our solo deep work done with attention and focus.

The theory

- **Protect focus time:** use calendar blocks to make uninterrupted work clear and defended.
- **Step away:** move somewhere quieter, or create your attention bubble with status messages, desk signals or headphones, when you need deeper concentration.
- **Go offline:** silence messages when they can wait (a Productivity Ninja permanently turns their pop-up notifications off anyway, where possible).

What might it look like in practice?

- **Deep Work:** Block out an hour to work on an important piece of work (and communicate this to your team), turn off your messaging, go somewhere quieter or put on some headphones.
- **Deep Work from home:** Make your unavailability visible to your remote team - a messaging status update or a "meeting for one" - so colleagues know without having to ask.
- **Team Norm:** Agree on a dedicated meetings-free morning every week for focus time.

Appendix: Action Plan Inspiration



5. Unorthodoxy

Questioning the status quo and seeking fresh perspectives

> What's important is the end result. It doesn't matter if you use the conventional route to get there or find an easier path.
>
> **Graham Allcott, 'How to be a Productivity Ninja**

Question the usual way of doing things, experiment and try something different – to help you get unstuck, get inspired or to create momentum.

The theory

- **Question the usual:** why do I/we do it this way?
- **Seek fresh perspectives:** borrow ideas from elsewhere, and experiment to see what happens.
- **Make it playful:** add fun, games or a challenge to shake things up.

What might it look like in practice?

- **Individual:** When you're procrastinating on a task, instead of beating yourself up, try a completely different way in - make it a game, set yourself a challenge or change your environment to somewhere unusual.
- **Team:** At your next team strategy meeting, pick a process or meeting that has become cumbersome, and ask, "If we were starting from scratch, would we design it this way?" Boldly test a simpler approach for two weeks and keep what worked well.
- **Organization:** As part of your onboarding process, encourage new starters to challenge any cumbersome processes they spot (before they become too indoctrinated to notice them!).



6. Agility

Adapting quickly then getting back on track

> A Productivity Ninja needs to be light on their feet, able to respond with deftness to new opportunities or threats.
>
> **Graham Allcott, 'How to be a Productivity Ninja**

There will always be surprises, crises & occasional firefighting. Productivity Ninjas stay agile and light on their feet, responding without letting it derail everything else. They don't let the 'small and now' get done at the cost of 'big and later'.

The theory

- **Notice the shift:** recognize when something urgent has changed what needs your attention.
- **Decide what moves:** pause, drop or push back - don't just add it to the list.
- **Batch, then shift back:** group reactive tasks together, and once handled, consciously return to the bigger work.

What might it look like in practice?

- **Individual**: Batch small requests into a couple of short windows, then focus on the bigger work rather than responding as things arrive.
- **Team:** If a deadline is brought forward, empower your team to agree what to pause or drop rather than trying to squeeze everything in.
- **Organization:** If the same problem keeps pulling people into crisis mode, make it safe to pause and fix the cause, not just the symptom.

Appendix: Action Plan Inspiration



7. Mindfulness

Developing the quality of your attention

> Our minds are our most important tool. Being emotionally intelligent and self-aware are important for so many reasons.
>
> **Graham Allcott, 'How to be a Productivity Ninja**

Mindfulness is noticing the quality of attention you bring to what you're doing - noticing your state, and choosing where to direct your focus.

The theory

- **Your state shapes your work:** what you bring to a task - rushed, tired, focused - affects how it goes.
- **Direct your attention:** wherever you focus becomes what you notice - use breathing, single-tasking and mindful transitions.
- **Know yourself:** work out where resistance is really coming from, rather than pushing through blindly.

What might it look like in practice?

- **Mindful mornings:** Instead of opening your laptop feeling scattered, pause for ten seconds, take a breath, and choose to start the day calm and clear instead.
- **Deliberate presence:** If you're in a meeting and notice your mind's already on the next one – gently bring yourself back.
- **Diagnose your procrastination:** If you keep putting off replying to a particular email, identify why by using DUST so it's easier for you to start.(DUST: Difficult, Unclear, Scary, or Tedious?).



8. Preparedness

Setting yourself and future you up to succeed

> This underpins and strengthens the other Productivity Ninja characteristics. It's about practical as well as mental preparation.
>
> **Graham Allcott, 'How to be a Productivity Ninja**

Being organized, rested and ready for what's ahead. It's about setting yourself, and future you, up to succeed.

The theory

- **Use checklists:** Don't rely on memory for things you need to do repeatedly - capture the steps once and reuse them.
- **Review and reset:** Look ahead, spot what's coming and adjust before it becomes urgent.
- **Rest is preparation:** Protect time each day to switch off and recharge.

What might it look like in practice?

- **Individual:** Add key contact details or context to the calendar so you're not searching for it five minutes before the meeting.
- **Team**: People keep solving the same problem in different ways. **Capture what works and make it reusable.**
- **Organization:** Build in default **10-minute breaks between meetings,** giving people the time to step away, recover and reset.

Appendix: Action Plan Inspiration



9. Human, not Superhero

Doing your best work through sustainable productivity

> Productivity Ninjas are not superhuman. Although, they sometimes appear to be so!
>
> **Graham Allcott,**
> **'How to be a Productivity Ninja**

To do our best work, sustainably, we need to remember we're human. We sometimes screw up (so make that ok) and we have limits (so listen to your body).

The theory

- **Look after the body you are in**: Pay attention to your breaks, nutrition, hydration, movement, rest, recharging, sleep and fun.
- **Don't beat yourself up when you make a mistake:** we're all fallible. Mistakes are an opportunity for growth, so learn from them, then get back to the work.
- **Make space for life:** Work is part of being human, not the whole of it.

What might it look like in practice?

- **Individual:** If you're feeling stretched, instead of quietly soldiering on, talk honestly about capacity (or sustainable productivity) with your line manager and work out what needs to change.
- **Line Managers:** Normalize taking breaks - proper lunch breaks, micro-breaks through the day - and don't expect yourself or your team to work overtime.
- **Organization:** Nurture a culture where it's safe to make a mistake, so that when something goes wrong, people ask "What made this mistake possible?" rather than simply "Who made the mistake?"



Be a Productivity Ninja

Be a Productivity Ninja

Today is about finding the changes that work for you, & helping them stick.

- **Choose what matters:** Pick one or two things you'd like to try **straight away.**
- **Make it yours:** Adapt the habits, tools and techniques to suit **you, your work and your environment.**
- **Experiment and adjust:** Try something, see what happens and tweak it until it works.
- **Keep it going:** Use the Productivity Ninja Self-Reflection Guide to keep checking in, reflecting and making changes beyond today.

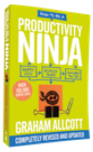
Today is just the start.

Capture what you want to try in this **Workbook.** Then come back to your **Self-Reflection Guide** to keep the conversation going, individually and as a team.

Challenge. Experiment. Notice. Adjust. Have fun!

What's next?

Head over to the Productivity Ninja Academy from today, where you'll find your slide deck and this workbook to help achieve your personal action plans. (You'll gain access as soon as you complete your Survey at the end of this Workshop).



Deep dive into Graham's "How to be a Productivity Ninja" book (your eCopy is waiting for you in the Academy).



Start a conversation in your team about how you can support and keep each other accountable with your action plans.. Your Productivity Ninja can come back to help facilitate this.



Last but not least, find a way to celebrate you sticking to your new habits and tactics. Really savor the feeling of having made space for what matters and shout it from the rooftops to inspire others (and yourself!).

Connect with Think Productive on LinkedIn for human, practical inspiration.

You've got the tools. Now make them yours!

Your local Think Productive Team

THINK productive

Make Space for the Culture Work

Want to explore more ways to work better together?

Contact your local Think Productive team for a discovery call:

www.thinkproductive.com

