

Putting Pockets in Your *Professional* Life

*52 Tips
to Implement
Immediately*



Written By
Meggin McIntosh, PhD
The PhD of Productivity™

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*Pockets are the difference between calm and crazed.

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You Need this Booklet If You...

- Rush from meeting to meeting;
- Promise and then don't deliver;
- Say, "I'm completely buried right now;"
- Wonder if you'll ever "catch up;"

...all because you are operating with no "pockets."



Pockets are defined as the "the difference between calm and crazed." In our often-crazy world, I have found that this concept resonates with today's professional. Here's my belief:

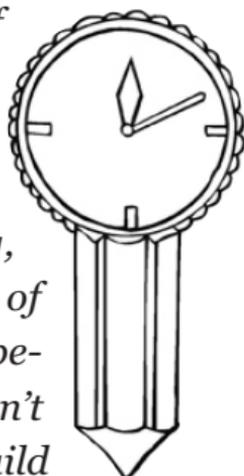
You can choose to put in pockets, i.e., ***some protected spaces and places***. This booklet gives you 52 ideas for how to do so.

Meggin McIntosh, author, speaker, consultant, and coach, works with groups and individuals who want to live the life they know they were meant to...so that they can make the difference they feel that they want to. To learn more:

Emphasis on Excellence, Inc.
Meggin McIntosh, PhD, President
PO Box 18390 • Reno, NV 89511
775.853.5510 (Ph) 775.853.5584 (F)
<http://www.meggin.com>

Put in Pockets of Time

If every second of every day, every day of every week, and every week of every year is as full as you can possibly make it, then you do not have any time pockets. Time pockets are daily, hourly, monthly, and yearly reserves of time. These tips are listed first because without time, you really can't accomplish anything. Tips to build in those time reserves include:



1 Use a planner. When you write in a commitment of *any* type, add time before and after that commitment. It might be 10 minutes or an hour on either side, depending on the type of commitment.

2 Coordinate all of your responsibilities and commitments in one planner. You do not want to find yourself at a meeting while your daughter waits for you to pick her up from soccer practice (an event that was scheduled on the home calendar).

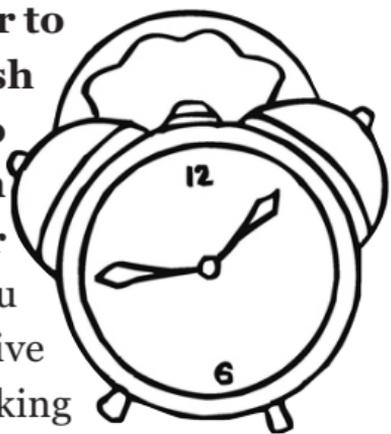
3 Leave space open in your calendar. Just because there is a space available on your calendar does not mean you have to fill it. Deliberately leave yourself some pockets.

4 Prepare physical or digital stickers or labels to put on your calendar that designate “pocket” time. Once the sticker is on that spot, call it an appointment and don't schedule on top of that time. You can get some of your work done during these pocket times.

5 Schedule “clearing” or “recover” days after you’ve been out of town. This is not a day off, by any means. It is a day to clear out the mail and email, get your wash done, return phone calls that couldn’t be returned while on the road, and get all your “stuff” put away.

6 Double the time you estimate that tasks will take. When you are creating your “to-do” list, estimate the time it takes to complete each task and then double that time. It may not take you twice as long as you thought, but it will definitely take you longer than your original estimate. If there is extra time, know that it is your pocket.

7 Set the alarm on your smart phone, tablet, or computer to remind you to finish what you are doing so you can leave for an appointment or other responsibility. If you have an assistant, give him/her the task of making sure that you head out the door in plenty of time for your next appointment.



8 Leave for all appointments (meetings, seminars, etc.) at least 10 minutes before it seems prudent to leave. This is one of the relatively simple ways to put in time pockets.

Consciously putting in time pockets is a good first step toward putting pockets back in the rest of your life.

Put in Pockets at Work If You Are Self-Employed

Unless you are a highly-disciplined individual who also has very clear boundaries, you may have difficulty separating your work and home life if you are self-employed. This is especially true if your office is in your home. Consider some of these ideas for putting in pockets at work when you are self-employed. **Note:** You may not be self-employed, but you likely complete tasks for work at home. These tips apply for anyone who does some or all of his/her work at home.

9 Evaluate the number of hours you work for yourself in a week. Determine if it is reasonable for your line of work. If not, hire help.

Note: You are the only person who can determine what is reasonable. For some people, 40 hours per week is reasonable while for others, 80 hours is reasonable.

10 Do work that only you can do. If you are doing work that someone else could be doing (instead of you), then you are not working to your full potential and you are pilfering your pockets. Surely you don't want to be known as a pickpocket!

11 Schedule planning time for your next project, client, sale, or other task. Effective planning helps you put in the appropriate pockets in many ways, and this is

certainly one of them. Projects are the lifeblood of your work. Put time in your planner to plan—rather than just react—to your projects and other responsibilities.

12 Determine the deadline for a project and then “back plan” from there. This gives you the opportunity to schedule the time to work toward the goal of the project.

13 Find a place for your planning or project files. You don’t want to squander your pockets by searching for paper. Consider a software program like Paper Tiger® to help you keep up with your physical files.

14 Figure out the amount of “discretionary” time you have in a given day. Consider time as discretionary if it is not scheduled for meetings, travel, appointments, etc. Knowing whether you have one hour or six hours makes a big difference in how you structure your day.

15 Plan for interruptions. You know they are going to happen, so just expect them. You will receive phone calls, drop in visitors, unexpected opportunities, etc.—all of which are interruptions. Prepare for this occurrence.

16 Schedule “home” and “personal” time. If you only have one hour of home time per week (excluding sleeping time), it is certainly not enough. Review tip #9. Part of taking care of business as a self-employed person is taking care of yourself—physically and emotionally—so please don’t ignore this part.

17 Wear just one “hat” at a time if at all possible. If your home “office” is a card table in the living room, you won’t get much work done when your family is watching TV. Even if you have to set up shop in the garage, this may be the best solution for your situation.

18 Be the boss. Would you let another employee dawdle away at a two-hour lunch when he/she should be working on an important project? Then apply the same guidelines to yourself. Don’t let yourself quit early on Fridays unless all appropriate work is finished.

19 Create systems to let others know you are “at work.” If you are self-employed and your office is in your house, then there are a whole set of “pockets” you have to put in place for yourself and your family. Because your work and home are not really separated by miles, you have to do something else to indicate that you are “at work” or “at home.” Your family needs that and so do you!

20 Know your limits. This is the only way you can build in pockets. Know what your time, health, relationship, money, client, product, etc. limits are. Be clear on those and then put in pockets so you don’t reach or even approach those limits.

The self-employed person has a natural tendency to ignore the limits and even to flaunt the fact that s/he is ignoring them. If this is true for you, such disregard for the limits is detrimental to you and your business, not to

mention your health and personal relationships. Think through the tips from this section. Apply the ones you need.

Put in Pockets at Work If You Are Not Self-Employed

*A*h, employment. To have pockets at work means that you have enough time to complete necessary tasks, plan for the future (and possible advancement) and still have time left to go home and have a life there, too. How do you do this? These tips help you answer this question—as you recognize which pockets you have and which ones you do not.

21 Keep often-used supplies nearby. Do you have enough envelopes, staples, a hole-punch, water, etc., so that whatever it is that you use on a frequent basis, is easily accessible? Or, are you using up any time pockets you have by hunting down a 3-hole punch or a piece of stationery several times a week? Multiply that by 52 weeks a year and it clearly shows what you're squandering, but could regain, with a few simple changes.



22 Get a planner and use it. Organize your tasks for the day, week, month, quarter, year, and build in pockets for accomplishing them. This planner should be the SAME ONE that you use for home/family planning.

23 Say “no” to non-essential tasks. While you might enjoy serving on the “Morale Committee,” it might do more for your morale to get your job done.

24 Work when you’re at work. Don’t be lazy and then claim that you don’t



have enough time (or pockets) to complete your job. Read Larry Winget’s book, *It’s Called Work for a Reason! Your Success is Your Own Damn Fault*. This is an in-your-face book

and it is worth reading and sharing with others.

25 Know yourself. Are you well-suited for the job you have? Does it energize you on a regular basis? If so, why? If not, why not? If you are approaching your limit of toleration for this particular job, industry, or career, then it is time to make a change. Really.

26 Ask (and answer), “Does this job have sufficient pockets for my comfort?” If yes, then maintain those. If not, then determine which pockets are missing (time, knowledge, advance notice, etc.) and begin creating those for yourself or with the help of your supervisor or colleagues.

27 Ask (and answer), “Do I worry that, despite my best efforts, I cannot complete my current tasks (let alone plan for future tasks)?” Some jobs are really meant for two people and no matter how hard you work or how dedicated you are,

the job is out of hand. Set up a time to speak with your supervisor.

28 Ask (and answer), “How well am I compensated for this job?”

Some jobs pay so well that employees are expected to put up with anything. Other jobs... not so much. If you are not as well compensated as you should be, demonstrate (and document) your value and ask to be paid accordingly.

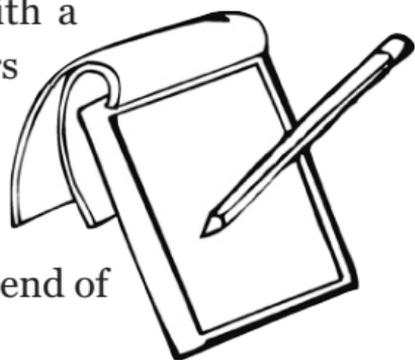
29 Ask (and answer), “Is the stress of this job within my tolerance?”

All jobs require periods of stress. Constant stress, however, due to lack of pockets, toxic environments, overly demanding physical expectations, and so on...creates an unproductive environment and an unpleasant life.

30 **Re-think your workspace.** Does it allow for (or even invite) constant interruptions? If so, is there any way to screen less-essential activity? Be proactive about putting in some pockets to get your work done.

31 Prepare for some uninterrupted planning time every day.

Some people can make do with a few minutes and others may need the better part of an hour. Put it in your schedule either before, during, or at the end of your work day.



32 **Expect others to do their work.** Are you (really) doing your job and also doing part of someone else's? Is that per-

son being compensated for the work that you are doing? If you have talked with the person whose work you have been doing and gotten no help, then go to your supervisor and say “enough is enough.” If the person whose work you’re doing is your supervisor, go up another rung on the ladder. Be prepared for consequences and repercussions, both positive and negative.

33 Ask for a job description review. Consider whether you are paid a salary or an hourly wage. Certainly salaried individuals are expected to work until the job is done, but that does not mean you are expected to work yourself into an early grave. Your job may have outgrown one person.

34 Ask your family and friends if they think you love your job. Their responses may surprise you. Listen and learn by what they say and then take any actions that would help you put pockets in your work.

35 Hire a coach. Many organizations will hire coaches for top executives and if your place of work will not, or if you prefer to hire your own, then do so. Professional coaches are skilled at helping clients put in the necessary pockets. It is worth the investment.

Some of these tips are a little “edgy,” but working month in and month out with no pockets will take its toll. Consider what applies to you, and push yourself to make some changes that may feel a little past what is comfortable. You have the ability to put in pockets at work.

Put in Pockets When You Travel

Traveling is mighty stressful, whether it is for work or even for pleasure. Use these tips to put in pockets that will reduce that stress.



36 Get to the airport at least 90 minutes ahead of your flight. If the lines are slow or there's an extra security check, then you can stay calm because you have the pocket in place. If you just whisk right through the check-in line and the security line, then you can sit and read, make phone calls, get a tasty hot or cool beverage, or just relax. Imagine!

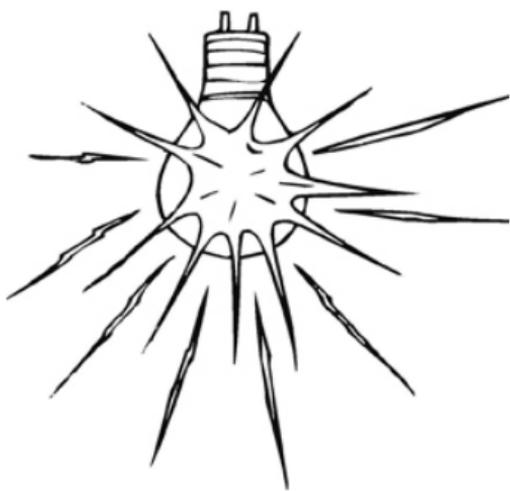
37 Check in online whenever possible. It speeds up the process at the airport and gives you the comfort of knowing that you already have your boarding pass.

38 Plan to arrive at your ultimate destination long before you need to be there. Things happen including traffic, weather, construction, and other "events." Make plans, especially when you are traveling by plane, to arrive hours and maybe even a whole day before your presence is required.

39 Take what you need for your trip. Start creating a list of what you need to take as soon as you are aware that you are going out of town. Then check items off as you pack. You can re-use your lists if you travel frequently.

Put in Idea Pockets

As a professional, you need as many ideas as you can possibly generate (or capture). Don't let the good ones get away or you won't have the idea reserves you need. To put in idea pockets, you must be ready to snag any and all ideas as they occur, because sometimes when you need a good idea, it doesn't come then. (Darn it!) At any given



moment (some of which are more convenient than others), ideas will come to you. Some of these ideas are major, some are minor, but when you don't capture the ideas, they whirl around in your head. This not only diverts your attention away from the other work or pleasure on which you need to be focusing, but it is also risky to ignore good ideas because they might not come back! Don't you hate it when that happens?!

Try one or more of these methods for capturing your ideas as they are occurring, so you have them for later processing (and don't miss the final three tips that are especially meant to help you generate loads of ideas!)

40 Write down ideas on pieces of paper when you are at your desk and drop them into your inbox. You can process the ideas later, i.e., you can decide what to do with each one. For now, just write down the idea so you have it.

41 Have an “idea” tab in your planner (or your smartphone or other digital device). Write down or otherwise capture incoming ideas in a designated spot. Decide later if the ideas are worthwhile or not. For now, just capture them.

42 Keep a file folder labeled “Ideas.” As you think of an idea, even though you have NO IDEA when you will need it, write it down and drop it in the folder. When you are feeling devoid of ideas, flip through the folder and prepare to be surprised by what gets you started again.

43 Call and leave yourself voicemail messages. Great ideas arrive, unbidden, when driving and you don’t want to risk losing them—so call yourself (using a hands-free device, of course).

44 Record ideas on a voice or digital recorder.

There are tiny ones available and many cell phones also have this feature. Doing this in the car or while on a walk is much



better than trying to write. Just talk.

45 Send yourself email. When an idea pops into your head as you are working on email, just send an email to yourself with that idea. You can then move on with whatever else you were doing but your idea will be there waiting for you in your inbox.

46 **Snag one of the omnipresent Post-it® notes around—or keep a small packet of them in a pocket or pouch.** When an idea hits, get it written down and then later, you can flesh out the idea.

47 **Keep a pad nearby that you love to write on.** You can delight in jotting down thoughts and ideas as they come to you.



Because ideas can arrive anytime and anyplace, you'll want to keep great pads in many places. Note: I happen to love www.Levenger.com as a

source for great paper and pads.

48 **Invest in a fabulous pen so you will have a positive feeling about writing down your ideas.** If you love writing implements, then you'll want excuses to use them and capturing ideas is a perfect time.

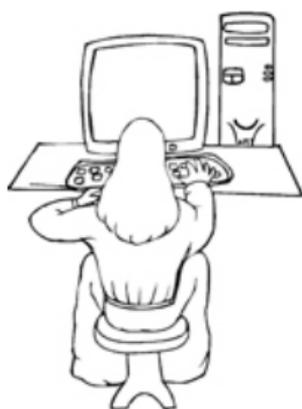
49 **Provide enough detail when capturing ideas—so you know what your jottings meant.** It is frustrating to look at a domain name you wrote down, a symbol you drew, or listen to the voice mail message you left yourself and wonder, 'What in the heck was I thinking?' Give a bit more detail to avoid this frustration.



Now what if you need to generate an abundance of ideas? Here are ways to do just that, thereby expanding your idea pockets:

50 **Number a page of fresh paper from 1-30.** Write a question at the top of the page. Start writing possible solutions or ideas that will address the question you started with. Don't edit, don't censor, and don't worry about plausibility. Just write. **Note:** The first 15 are likely to be fairly run-of-the-mill ideas. But you have to clear those out first. On about idea #15 or 16 or so, new and different ideas will emerge—and you couldn't have gotten to those until you cleared out the old ideas. Feel free to blast right past #30, but at least get to 30. You will surprise yourself.

51 **Open up a new document on your computer.** Write a pressing, nagging, befuddling question at the top of the page and then next to number 1, write an answer, idea, or solution. Hit enter and your word processing program will go right to #2. Keep writing until you have 30 ideas at least. You'll amaze yourself.



52 **Write an issue, question, or word prompt in the middle of a large (at least 11 x 17") piece of paper.** Then draw spokes out from the center node and start writing (or drawing) what comes to you. Keep going. You will delight yourself. For a webinar on mindmapping, take a look: <http://meggin.com/classes/mindmapping/>.

Whew! You are chock-full of ideas. And you've captured them so they are ready for you when you need them. You have pockets of ideas! Hooray!



So now what? You have read through and found ways to put in pockets. Which of these have you already implemented?

And what's next for you?

I'd love to hear your success stories. Please email me at meggin@meggin.com and let me know!



Possible Ways to Share These Ideas:

Note: This booklet can be printed and shipped to you in hardcopy, if you are interested.

- Order copies of the booklet for all members of your staff and/or family.
- License copies of the booklet to give as gifts to customers, clients, community members, or others.
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- Have copies of the booklet available to package with other products or materials that you distribute.
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- Collect business cards and promote your organization by sending copies of this booklet to those who give you cards.
- Purchase and donate copies of this booklet to a local charity or non-profit who can use them in one of the aforementioned ways.

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Resources & Ordering Options

To learn more about how to put pockets in place in your life and/or to share this information with others, do one or more of the following:

Order copies of:

- Put Pockets in Your Professional Life: 52 Tips to Implement Immediately
- Put Pockets in Your Personal Life: 52 Tips to Implement Immediately
- Put Pockets of Time and Energy into Your Life: 52 Tips for Teachers
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Meggin McIntosh, PhD, President
PO Box 18390 • Reno, NV 89511
775.853.5510 (Ph) 775.853.5584 (F)

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