

The **4PS**
of Optimal

PRODUCTIVITY

Steven Robert Young

The 4 Ps of Optimal Productivity

(from the book **ACHIEVE**)

Steven Robert Young



A New Perspective on Productivity

Productivity is the most misunderstood requirement for success. Whether it's completing a day's To-Do list, reaching a milestone, or advancing a project, productivity is about results – the results that are *required* for the success of a pursuit.

Productivity is often confused with activity—busyness. But busyness does not equate to being productive, nor is busyness the key to success. Productivity, by definition, is about progress toward and the achievement of something, such as a goal. With regard to achieving optimal productivity, we must consider the place and value of cornerstones.

Productivity, by definition, is about progress toward and the achievement of something, such as a goal.

STEVEN
ROBERT
YOUNG
— .COM —

What is a Cornerstone?

Cornerstones are the areas that are most essential to knowledge of a subject. If, for example, you were interested in physical fitness, the cornerstones of the subject would include nutrition, exercise, healthy lifestyle, etc. Each cornerstone, in turn, comprises specific topics or areas that are essential within the overarching subject of fitness. For instance, within the cornerstone of exercise, key aspects include cardiovascular conditioning, strength training, flexibility, and the importance of rest.

These individual cornerstones do not stand in isolation; rather, they converge to create a comprehensive structure of knowledge about fitness.

Through the synergy of nutrition, exercise, and a lifestyle, a comprehensive understanding of fitness emerges. This connection of cornerstones not only deepens our knowledge of a subject but can provide a complete and practical approach to achieving fitness goals.

The Cornerstones of Productivity

It is impossible to achieve a goal without being productive. Consider the scenario of taking on a pursuit without regard for productivity, as defined here. Your attention would center on time and effort without knowledge of what constitutes on-track progress. You would have little or no regard for the factors that impact progress, and, consequently, your investments would have a higher likelihood of yielding failure.

If, for example, you had a goal that required certain tasks to be completed by a particular time, and those tasks weren't completed as scheduled, then, no matter how busy you may have been, your activity must be considered unproductive. Why? Simply, the activity failed to achieve a required target.

Productivity only becomes productivity (as opposed to being *activity*) when efforts achieve what is required for an aim, whether the aim is a benchmark, completion of a task, or the arrival at a destination.



To achieve optimal productivity, it's important to understand each cornerstone of productivity, and to be clear about what objectives, or results, are required for a pursuit. Once you've determined the results necessary for your aim, consider these four areas: **planning**, **preparation**, **pursuit**, and **progress**. These—the four Ps—are the cornerstones of productivity. And they comprise the key to your being optimally productive.

Success and the **Uniqueness** of Productivity

Productivity is not a generic set of practices; productivity refers to a **standard of accomplishment for an undertaking**, and necessitates specific practices and considerations for a range of factors that can impact those practices. Given how people are unique and the diversity of factors with a pursuit, productivity will vary accordingly. Put differently, **productivity is defined by the circumstances and requirements of a pursuit relative to the particularities of an individual**. Attainment of optimal productivity, therefore, necessitates superior awareness of, and alignment with, the factors that bear upon one's pursuit.

Here are some of the primary factors to consider:

- Success is subjective and varies in its conception and value from person to person.
- Factors such as cultural background, socioeconomic status, geographical location, and personal circumstances all influence the course to success.
- Each individual has their own set of aspirations, skills, knowledge, and values that guide their pursuit.
- Every pursuit of success is subject to its own set of challenges and obstacles. The nature of these challenges can be influenced by numerous factors.
- Success often depends on conditions, resources, and available support. Resources can include financial backing, access to education, training, coaching, equipment, and more.
- The motivation that drives and sustains an individual's pursuit is distinct, and may be squelched for a variety of reasons.

Understanding **Your Course** to Success

What does "success" mean to you? If your answer isn't specific, **you won't be able to sufficiently define productivity**. On this point, consider your success and uniqueness as they relate to RAS considerations.

The RAS framework helps structure your approach to productivity:

Requirements: What specific outcomes, timelines, and standards must be met?

Agents: What tools, environments, and resources will you need?

Safeguards: What systems and accountability measures will protect your progress?

RAS considerations are broad based, and can include training, tools, materials, strategies, balance and consistency of work, and numerous other things that can directly and indirectly impact one's efforts to achieve something.

RAS helps transform abstract goals into actionable plans. For instance, a writer working on their first novel would define:

- Requirements: Complete 2,000 words daily, finish first draft in 3 months
- Agents: Writing software, research materials, dedicated writing space
- Safeguards: Daily backups, weekly outline reviews, writing group feedback

What is your goal?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Start a business | <input type="checkbox"/> Achieve a degree or rank |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase sales for a business | <input type="checkbox"/> Become physically fit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Master a skill | <input type="checkbox"/> Run a marathon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lead / Manage a team | <input type="checkbox"/> Publish your music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Become a subject expert | <input type="checkbox"/> Improve yourself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a book | |

Understand what success means in terms of activities and results to be achieved. Organize tasks according to priorities and/or a logical progression. Determine timeframes or benchmarks by which to assess your progress. Next, choose resources and strategies to support you. This work will help you recognize what productivity means for your goal. As you clarify the aspects of your expectations, you'll establish your *process*.

About Process

Our successes and failures in life do not occur spontaneously; they unfold across **a series of steps or sequence of events that collectively, and, often in connection with other processes, render what we call "success" or "failure."** While there are countless processes at work in our lives—biological, social, environmental, professional, educational, etc.—, those we apply to achieve something important to us should factor-in two conditions that apply to all definitions of *productive*. These conditions are as follows:

1. **Productivity is specific to something that is intended.** Productivity is not incidental; it's deliberate. You cannot be productive without an intention to achieve something specific.
2. **Productivity involves verifiable or measurable results that do not jeopardize the success of an aim.** If your goal demands a daily productivity level of 'X' and your progress cannot be confirmed or falls short of 'X,' then, if these cannot be compensated for in the time remaining for the goal, your efforts must be regarded as *unproductive*

However you approach being productive, your process for "success" must have a clear aim and/or clear benchmarks by which to assess whether or not the progress you attained is sufficient. **Process is the transformative means that empowers productivity.**

As previously mentioned, productivity encompasses various factors, both direct and indirect, that are related to a pursuit. These factors can be categorized using the four Ps, or cornerstones, of productivity: planning, preparation, pursuit, and progress—the elements that contribute to enhancing one's productive capability.

This concept of productivity embraces all these aspects within the context of a specific endeavor. Since productivity is inherently unique, tied to one's individual goals, abilities, knowledge, circumstances, resources, and more, reflecting on these aspects can be valuable for identifying potential limitations on your ability to be productive.

Now that we've established a useful way to understand productivity, let's consider how the four Ps contribute to its optimization.

The 4 Ps:

① Plan

Productivity is unique for each goal, whether it's as straightforward as completing a daily to-do list or as intricate as fulfilling the demands of an important project. Regardless of the undertaking, your best effort to be productive necessitates having a plan.

Plan = a **structured process** and strategy by which to address an endeavor for success.

Based on the undertaking, the plan addresses RAS considerations with regard to the results that must be achieved. Since a plan is rarely optimal at the start of an endeavor, learning and adapting are essential for your best effort to succeed. In other words, a plan is dynamic; **be open to making revisions as you discover how to improve.**

A plan clarifies a process for success. Although plans vary, there are commonalities among them. These commonalities might explain how to:

- (a) bridge a gap between a start point and the achievement of a goal;
- (b) effectively and efficiently cross that bridge;
- (c) address potential threats to productivity;
- (d) measure productivity; and
- (e) coordinate activities and other factors related to goal attainment.

As a plan identifies the requirements, agents, and safeguards of productivity, it serves as a record of your thought-process, which can be a valuable reference resource for future decisions.

While it's possible to achieve a goal without a plan, having a plan can significantly enhance your chances of success. A plan provides essential support, including clarity, direction, actionable steps, and safeguards. Without a plan, you are unnecessarily vulnerable to a range of factors and more probable deviations from your course to success. A plan can also serve as a useful framework by which to assess experiences and opportunities, and make wiser decisions.

Benefits

Among the benefits of having a plan:

- Accelerates progress toward achievement;
- Establishes accountability and performance standards;
- Supports preparation (to be productive);
- Establishes useful records for future reference;
- Promotes optimal performance;
- Clarifies a process—the steps—by which to reach a goal;
- Defines standards by which to assess—situations, opportunities, etc.;
- Guides personal and professional development.

Take Action

1. You may have a project or several things to do over the days, weeks, or months ahead. Don't get ahead of yourself; **plan one day at a time**.
2. At the end of each day, **write down** what—specifically—you'll accomplish the following day. This way you start each day with focus, ready to be productive.
3. Each item on your action list should either be measurable or verifiable.
4. Prioritize your list and schedule a dedicated period of time for each activity.
5. **Record progress**.



Get support with optimizing your productivity!

Coaching and courses are available through [StevenRobertYoung.com](https://www.stevenrobertyoung.com)

The 4 Ps:

② Prepare

Preparation is not an attitude or an emotion; **preparation is a response to your plan, and accounts for *all aspects*—mental, material, spatial, etc.— that contributes to your productivity.**

As per your plan, preparation is the work to complete a checklist of tasks that, as accomplished, will auspiciously equip you to make meaningful progress.

Take a moment to consider this: most goals fail for lack of proper preparation. The lack of preparation is an unnecessary pitfall to success. Imagine a scenario where execution lacks the support available thorough preparation. The results achieved are insufficient for success, and, subsequently, timelines waver, resources deplete, and the intended goal becomes elusive. In order to safeguard and optimize chances for the success of your endeavor, prepare properly – according to *all of the needs* of your plan.

NOTE:

A major challenge to productivity is not one's lack of preparedness to work, but, rather, one's lack of preparedness for why one *won't work*. Your preparation to succeed should include safeguards against how you could fail, not merely safeguards that protect and support your progress.

Benefits

Being prepared supports your success by **optimizing your process for productivity**. Here are some, among the many, benefits of being prepared:

- Makes success more profitable;
- Increases efficiency;
- Improves effectiveness;
- Sustains motivation.
- Promotes your best effort to succeed;
- Saves time; succeed sooner;
- Minimizes opposition, difficulties, delays, etc.

Take Action

1. Evaluate the requirements of your goal in order to identify areas that need some kind of support—materials, equipment, training, etc.
2. Think broadly, take into consideration any supplemental activities (like shopping, creating accounts [for access to resources], etc.) that need to be done prior any effort to be productive.
3. Consider the needs of activities, strategies, and motivation.
4. Apply safeguards to promote success and prevent failure (recognize how these are distinct).

The 4 Ps:

③ Pursue

Once you have planned and prepared, it's time to realize what you intend; it's time to pursue your goal. **When you pursue, you put your knowledge, skill, and how you've prepared to the test with action.** The pursuit aspect of productivity should be engaged with confidence that certain actions will yield specific results. Without such confidence, the point of your pursuit can only be to **discover** what is and is not useful to your ability to achieve progress.

How will you approach your success? Whatever your course, here you do your best to bridge the gap between where you are now and the success that you seek. Trial and error may be required. That is, the course you choose to follow may not be your course to success; it may be your course to learning how to succeed. So learn.

Once you've engaged a course, it must *prove* itself viable. The steps and objectives (comprising your process) must generate the outcomes necessary for your goal. Your efforts should be measured by a preset standard that, as maintained, prevent your goal from being in jeopardy of failure. Actual productivity achieves *adequate*, or *on-track*, *advancement* toward your goal.

Benefits

The benefits from efforts to achieve a goal are diverse, and certainly include:

- Discovery** of how to improve;
- Advancement** toward your goal;
- Validation** of your plan and preparation;
- The potential of success**;
- Development** of new opportunities.

Take Action

1. Orient: get mentally ready to be productive
2. As possible, minimize or eliminate distraction. Create an environment that is

conducive to productivity

3. Consider the use of productivity blocks, periods of time dedicated to a specific task. During each block, attend only to a scheduled activity. Work as if you were in an important meeting (i.e., refrain from looking at your phone, checking email, etc.).
4. Strive for a respectable minimum accomplishment, if you can't meet a larger targeted goal.
5. Assign any shortfall to the next day's schedule.

STEVEN
ROBERT
YOUNG
____.COM____

The 4 Ps:

④ Progress

The Greeks had a word for what is perhaps the most important kind of progress that we can make in life. The definition of the word (pisteuó [a verb]) involves taking **action in accordance with one's beliefs and values**. Throughout life, as we learn, in order to make meaningful progress, change (evidenced by action) is required. **Failure to change, as beliefs and values develop, constitutes a failure to progress in life.**

In terms of your goal, progress is either alignment of results with the requirements for productivity or making appropriate change in order to achieve that alignment. As you pursue a goal and learn how to improve productivity, adapt your plan, preparation, and effort. Failure to recognize and address limitation—whether in knowledge, ability, resources, etc.—can be detrimental and undermine your ability to succeed.

Progress stands as a cornerstone for its contribution to personal and professional growth. It is through progress that we advance, become our 'best' selves, and achieve our potential. Progress enriches life, leading to wisdom and peace. It is through our discoveries and applying lessons learned that we shape a meaningful and rewarding life.

Benefits

Progress is the cornerstone through which we may achieve our most meaningful successes. The benefits of progress are numerous, and can include:

- Self-development;
- Empowerment;
- Richer relationships;
- Development of wisdom;
- Enjoyment of a more meaningful life;
- Increased peace;
- Security;
- Greater awareness and resourcefulness.

Take Action

1. Review achievements and shortcomings.
2. Identify areas for improvement.
3. Research new tools to enhance productivity.
4. Evaluate strategies for enhancing environment, accountability, and motivation.

Wrap Up

Productivity isn't a mere buzzword; it's the driving force behind achievements. It's not about filling time with busyness but about results, making wise use of time to advance toward a success—a goal.

Your greatest chance for success—be it with a day's To-Do list or something more complex—starts with a plan. As you move forward, remain open to making refinements, since it's rare to create a perfect plan the first time around. Remember, "success" isn't confined to crossing finish

line or reaching a pinnacle; it may your ability to learn and adapt – to improve, for future successes. So, plan, prepare, pursue, and progress. Apply these cornerstones for your best effort to be productive, and succeed at what’s important to you—*sooner*.



StevenRobertYoung.com

Copyright © 2023 Steven Robert Young. All rights reserved.