

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a light-colored blazer over a blue button-down shirt, is sitting in a white chair in a waiting area. She is looking off to the side with a slight smile. The background is a blurred office or airport setting with other people and blue chairs.

# Why Doing Nothing Will Allow You to Do More

[Originally published in Inc.com](#)

**By Peter Economy**

**D**on't you just wish there were more hours in the day? Surely you may want an extra hour or two tacked onto the normal 24, if only to cross off a few more important things from your daily to-do list. But what if you used these hypothetical extra hours to do something completely counterintuitive? That is, what if you prioritized doing less over doing more?

Surprise--in the 24 hours that you are given, doing nothing may actually be the secret strategy that boosts your productivity.

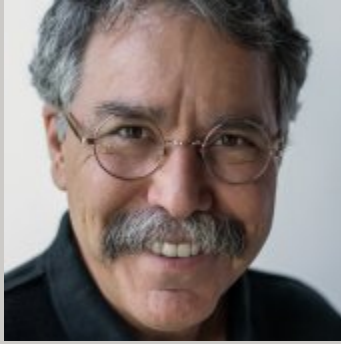
Admittedly, the mere idea of doing nothing seems incredibly blasphemous and taboo. American work culture appears to celebrate the workaholic, the leaders and business titans who do everything, and do everything all the time.

In "The Case for Slacking Off," an article in the Harvard Business Review, we learn that yes, nothingness isn't necessarily acceptable in today's society. "For most of us," writes Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries, professor of leadership development and organizational change, "doing nothing is associated with being irresponsible, with being on the wrong track, or even worse, with wasting our lives." As we get conditioned to be busy, "silence and stillness terrify us," and we thus "protect ourselves from these terrors with noise and frantic activity." Sounds busy...and unproductive!

But de Vries then goes on to explain how most effective executives find that this same nothingness is good for their mental health. Doing nothing, unplugging, reflecting--whatever you call it, doing nothing brings these executives "to regions of the mind that they are otherwise busily avoiding." As we become less focused, we are more likely to generate novel ideas and jumpstart our creative juices.

Even Scott Barry Kaufman, PhD, asserts in Psychology Today that letting your mind wander "offers a huge arena for realizing our own potential." "Daydreaming," Kaufman suggests, "helps us consolidate memories and synthesize disparate ideas and plans, yielding a greater sense of identity and personal meaning."

For creative achievement, greater cognitive ability, and a still mind--try and do everything that you can to make sure that you nothing each day.



While Peter Economy has spent the better part of two decades of his life slugging it out mano a mano in the management trenches, he is now a full-time ghostwriter and bestselling author of more than 85 books -- including *Managing for Dummies*, *Everything I Learned About Life I Learned in Dance Class*, and *User Story Mapping: Discover the Whole Story, Build the Right Product* -- with total sales in excess of two million copies. He has also served as associate editor for *Leader to Leader* for more than 12 years, where he has worked on projects with the likes of Jim Collins, Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and many other top management and leadership thinkers.

[Visit Peter Economy at Inc.](#)

[@bizzwriter](#)