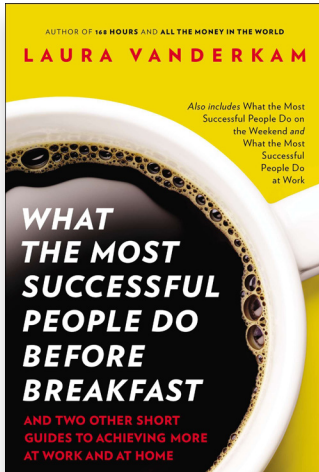


# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Laura Vanderkam

Laura is the author of several time management and productivity books. Her work has appeared in publication including the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Fast Company, and Fortune.

# What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast

## THE NUTSHELL

Portfolio/Penguin 2013

The best morning rituals are activities that, when practiced regularly, result in long-term benefits. The most successful people use their mornings for these things:

1. Nurturing their careers—strategizing and focused work
2. Nurturing their relationships—giving families and friends their best
3. Nurturing themselves—exercise and spiritual and creative practices

I've learned that getting the most out of this time involves a five-step process.

### *Track Your Time.*

The reason to do this is that the solution to morning dilemmas often lies at other times of the day. You may be too tired in the mornings because you're staying up too late. Track your mornings carefully and question your assumptions. What absolutely has to happen, and what does not?

### *Picture the Perfect Morning.*

After you know how you're spending your time, ask yourself what a great morning would look like for you.

# What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast

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## *Think Through the Logistics.*

How could this vision mesh with the life you have? How long will your ritual take? The good thing about filling the morning hours with important activities is that you'll crowd out things that are more time intensive than they need to be. Map out a morning schedule. What would have to happen to make this schedule work? What time would you have to get up and (most important) what time do you need to go to bed in order to get enough sleep? Can you get to bed by that time?

Come up with a plan and assemble what you need, but whatever you do, don't label this vision as impossible.

## *Build the Habit.*

This is the most important step. Start slowly. Monitor your energy. Building a new habit takes effort, so you want to take care of yourself while you're trying. Eat right, take breaks and surround yourself with supportive people who want to see you succeed.

## *Tune Up as Necessary.*

Life changes and rituals can change, too. The most successful people know that the hopeful hours before most people eat breakfast are far too precious to be blown on semi-conscious activities. How would you like to use your mornings? Figure out what is truly meaningful to you. Once you decide, small rituals can accomplish great things.

## **What the Most Successful People Do on the Weekend**

A good weekend needs a plan. Some research is finding that skipping the planning stage means cutting yourself off from the major mechanism via which weekends can deliver joy. Schedule not just what you have to do, but what you want to do.

## **What the Most Successful People Do at Work**

### *Discipline 1: Mind Your Hours*

Writing down how you spend your time keeps you accountable for the hours that pass, whether or not you're conscious of them.

### *Discipline 2: Plan*

When I poll audiences about what they'd like to spend more time on, planning and thinking land near the top of the list but they're just too busy! Successful people who have the same 168 hours per week as the rest of us simply build planning into their lives.

### *Discipline 3 Make Success Possible*

Figure out what app, website, person, financial wager, or group will make failure as uncomfortable as possible, and use that to make your goals happen.

# What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast

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## *Discipline 4: Know What is Work*

The question of opportunity cost is particularly important if you're running a small business. Entrepreneurs often have a terrible time delegating the tasks they know they're good at, but the problem with having just 2,000—3,000 work hours per year is that a choice to write the first draft of that report yourself is a choice not to figure out which of your revenue streams is growing fastest and deserves more attention. Those who leap from microbusiness to million-dollar business tend to make this calculation.

## *Discipline 5: Practice*

Anything that involves skill can be practiced and, if you'd like to become better and more efficient at what you do, probably should be practiced.

## *Discipline 6: Pay In*

It is no longer sufficient to be employed—one must remain employable. Career capital is a convenient way to think about the sum total of one's experience, knowledge, network, and personality characteristics. When your career capital level is high, you can cash in your chips at any point for a new situation, to take your career to a new level, or even to take a break without destroying your ability to earn a living. Successful people develop the discipline of paying in to this account every day.

## *Discipline 7: Pursue Pleasure*

Successful people know there isn't any virtue gained by spending your 40-60 working hours each week doing something that doesn't buoy your spirits, but that spirits are buoyed by very specific things. Productivity is a function of joy. Joy comes from making progress toward goals that matter to you.

Small tweaks add up over time. Successful people constantly look at their days to evaluate what brings them pleasure and what does not, and they figure out how they can spend more hours pursuing pleasure and fewer hours doing what they don't care about. While work hours sometimes seem lengthy, they aren't endless. The daily discipline of seeking joy makes astonishing productivity possible, because then work no longer feels like work. It feels really, really lovely.