Parkinson's Law

"The amount of time which one has to perform a task....

.... Is the amount of time it will take to complete a task."

C. Northcote Parkinson, Naval historian, Cyril Northcote Parkinson was a British naval historian and author of some 60 books, the most famous of which was his best-seller Parkinson's Law, which led him to be also considered as an important scholar in public administration and management.

If you've spent any sort of time reading about productivity hacks, you've probably run across Parkinson's Law before. You might know the name or concept, but you may not know exactly it is or how you can implement this law to be as effective as possible.

Parkinson's Law

Cyril Parkinson, a British historian, first observed the trend during his time with the British Civil Service. He noted that as bureaucracies expanded, they became more inefficient. He then applied this observation to a variety of other circumstances, realizing that as the size of something increased, its efficiency dropped.

He found that even a series of simple tasks increased in complexity to fill up the time allotted to it. As the length of time allocated to a task became shorter, the task became simpler and easier to solve.

This concept goes hand in hand with the belief that you need to **work hard** rather than efficiently. That mentality is reflected in the fact that managers often reward workers for (butt in seat) hours rather than hours spent actually working or results produced. However, as negative as this rule sounds so far, you can flip it on its head to use it to your advantage.

How To Use Parkinson's Law To Your Advantage.

Unfortunately, very few people will actually tell you to work less. Even fewer people will force you to work less. That means that if you're going to implement Parkinson's Law, you're going to have to do it yourself.

You're going to have to apply artificial limitations to your work in order to do it more efficiently. So read overleaf....

Here are a few tips for doing just that:

- Systematically chop your tasks into chunks, and force yourself to set a specific timetable for accomplishing them.

- Restrict your time artificially by moving throughout the day. Force yourself to move every two hours, and create a set task list.

- Instead of trying to write 1,000 words in a day, run x miles in a day, or go to the gym, make a rule to do XYZ before 10am. Get it done early and then let yourself coast. You'll be surprised at how much this frees up the rest of your day.

Parkinson's Law
Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.

- Blackmail yourself. Get an accountability partner who will force you to pay up, literally, if you work past a certain time or take too long to something. In addition to enjoying the mental victories, if you use this approach, you'll be motivated by real consequences.

- Set a hard deadline. Set a specific goal for the end of that length of time, and set it in stone. Have something planned to motivate you to hit your goals.

- Limit tasks like responding to email to thirty minutes a day. Instead of agonizing over each email, spend thirty minutes on your emails at the end of the day and be done with it. You'll find that smaller tasks take up much less time this way.