

Giles Daoust

Workaholic!

100 tips
for
(young) entrepreneurs
who want
to work *better*

Title Books

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Workaholic!

Special thanks to my first readers for their
encouragement and invaluable advice:

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Catherine Dumonceaux
Éric Everard
Emmanuel Robert
Antoinette Stas

*“By far the most difficult skill I learned as CEO
was the ability to manage my own psychology”*

Ben Horowitz
co-founder of Andreessen Horowitz,
in *The Hard Thing About Hard Things*

About me

I was born in Brussels in 1979; here's a snapshot of my various activities:

CEO of **Daoust**, a Belgian human resources company founded by my grandfather in 1954, winner of the **Entrepreneur of the Year / Entreprise de l'Année® 2016** award, organized by EY, *L'Echo*, and BNP Paribas Fortis.

Founder and CEO of **Title Media**, a media production company established in 2003, now mainly active in Los Angeles.

Founding partner of **LN24**, Belgium's first French-language news channel.

Director of the **Ommegang** show, registered as **UNESCO's** Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Columnist at the Belgian newspaper **L'Echo** and the magazine **Brussels Business** (Beci).

Author of the book *Mots d'esprit d'entreprendre*, published in 2020.

Screenwriter and graphic novel writer.

Photographer with several exhibition to my name.

Member of the Strategy Committee of **FEB/VBO** (the Federation of Belgian Enterprises).

Member of **YPO** (the Young Presidents' Organization).

Winner of the **2018 Young Top Manager of the Year** award given by Top Management.

Nominated for the **2020 Manager of the Year** award given by the magazine *Trends-Tendances*.

I love reading, movies, and music. It's easy to mistake my home for a library.

I work a lot, which is why I wrote this book.

Introduction

When I turned forty, I realized that I had spent the past twenty years of my life as a genuine workaholic.

So, I decided to change how I worked.

I read a lot. I thought a lot. And I wrote a little.

These hundred tips are the result of that reflective process.

They have helped me to work ***better***.

This short book is humbly dedicated to (young) entrepreneurs looking to improve the quality of their work.

If some of these tips happen to inspire you, that would make my day.

Then again, feel free to ignore whatever doesn't speak to you.

Methodology

Don't even bother trying to apply every single one of these 100 tips from the start.

Personally, I try to observe at least 80% of them in my everyday life.

When I manage to pull that off, I work more efficiently, and I feel better.

If you're up for it, I propose the following exercise:

Select 10 tips that speak to you and try to follow them for a month.

If you manage to follow 8, drop the other two.

The next month, select another 10 tips and add them to the first 8.

Keep going until you've worked your way through all the tips that you find relevant.

Don't worry about the ones that don't work out.

The sole purpose of this book is to help you get organized in a way that works for **you**.

I.
PERSONAL
ORGANIZATION

1. Come up with a three- year action plan

Adapt the plan every year as you go along.
A clear short-, medium-, and long-term vision is a must
for being well organized.

2. Schedule regular meetings

A standard routine will help you plan better.

For example:

A weekly staff meeting.

Follow-up meetings twice a month for
any major projects.

Monthly one-on-one meetings with
every staff member.

3.

Make a to-do list

Jot down the week's to dos and meetings
on Monday morning.

Underline the most important ones.

Cross them off as you complete them.

Start over the following Monday.

4. Break your week up into 10 half-days

That gives you 10 time slots for
your key to dos and meetings.
Assign everything on your to-do list to these periods.

5. Standardize your planning

And try to stick to it wherever possible.
Exceptions are unavoidable,
but a set schedule is a great start.

For example:

Morning: no meetings, only key projects,
your personal tasks, emails, phone calls...

Noon: a working or personal lunch.

Afternoon: two or three meetings.

Evening: dinner with your family.

No more than one professional event a week.

With this kind of schedule,
you've got more than enough to get it all done:

Concentrate on moving forward with major projects.
Hold 15 to 20 meetings a week, i.e., 750 to 1,000 a year.

Attend 50 professional events a year.

6. Use the 80/20 Principle

80% of results are produced by just 20% of the action.
Focus on projects with the most impact; don't spread
yourself too thin.

➤ Read *The 80/20 Principle* by Richard Koch

7.

Focus on the 80%

There's no such thing as perfection.
Try to achieve 80% of what you want to do.
The other 20% often turns out to be less critical
than you thought.

8. Choose your One Thing

Your One Thing is an important goal.
Achieving it makes up for what
you couldn't get done or had to shelve.
Define your One Thing
for every day, week, month, and year —
and get it done on time.

➤ Read *The One Thing* by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan

9.

Use the Urgent/ Important Matrix

Also known as the Eisenhower Matrix.
It will help you prioritize jobs and projects
and decide which steps to take.

Urgent and important: do.
Not urgent and important: schedule.
Urgent and not important: delegate.
Not urgent and not important: delete.

10.

Learn to say no

Be selective.
Declutter your schedule.
Increase the quality of your work.

11.

If it doesn't feel right,
don't do it

Trust your instincts.

Don't feel right about a project?

Then it's probably not for you.

There are always plenty of projects out there.

12.

Say no to meeting-itis

Loads of meetings are inefficient or unnecessary.
Limit meetings, their duration, and the number of
participants.

13.

Don't check your email all day long

It shreds your concentration.

Decide the best times to answer your email
based on your schedule.

Stick to those times unless there's a genuine emergency.

For example:

At the beginning and end of the morning.
At the beginning and end of the afternoon.

14.

Flag it

Most emails don't require an immediate response.
Not urgent? Not sure how to respond?
Flag it and come back to it later.

15.

Don't CC everyone

Why? If everybody replies,
you'll find your inbox snowed under.
If you need input from several people,
organize a (short) meeting instead.

16.

No social media on your smartphone

These apps make it impossible to concentrate and increase stress. Try checking them once or twice a day on your computer or tablet instead.

17.

Turn off notifications

Nothing is more irritating than a never-ending stream of news updates and message notifications.

Ask people to call you if it's urgent.

18.

No smartphone at night

When you get home, put your smartphone
somewhere out of sight.

Your emails can wait until morning.
If you're expecting an urgent message,
only check for that specific message.

19.

Give yourself some alone time

Whether you're an introvert or extrovert –
good work requires concentration.
Being “anti-social” can be a good thing once in a while.

20.

Read a lot and read about everything

Entrepreneurs need inspiration.
That makes finding time to read part of your job.
Business books, essays, biographies, novels, magazines,
websites, and even graphic novels –
expand your horizons to find what inspires you.

II. ATTITUDE

21.

Be diplomatic

Being too blunt risks hurting feelings.
Be gentle.

22. Smile!

You can say just about anything to just about anybody ...
as long as you smile.

23.

A good sense of humor is everything

It's highly effective for overcoming tricky situations
and resolving conflicts.

However, don't be sarcastic or mocking.

24.

Silence is your friend

Spare your jaw and your energy.
Be a good listener and choose your words carefully.
Silence is sometimes a good strategy
when other techniques fail.

25.

Don't always try to have
the last word

One word too many can take you from on
the right track to off the rails in no time.

26.

Don't shift the blame

If there's trouble, it won't get you anywhere.
Try troubleshooting instead
so that it doesn't happen again.

27.

Limit outside advice

Learn to recognize when someone
else's opinion is essential.
Does it seem like that's all the time?
If so, your insecurity and
stress might be doing the talking.

28.
**Don't seek the approval
of others**

People tend to be jealous and compliments are rare.
Find satisfaction in your work.

29.

Write letters, but don't send them

Have you ever wanted to give someone
a piece of your mind?
Write them a letter ... one you'll never send.
Feels good, doesn't it?
Now you can move on.

30.

Set your ego aside

It's your worst enemy.
Never let success go to your head.

31.

Set personal development goals

Want to lose a bad habit?
Or modify certain aspects of your behavior?
Make a list and tackle a few items every month.

III.
WORKING
WITH OTHERS

32.

Surround yourself
with the best people
you can find

It's the key to everything.
No one ever succeeds alone.

33.

Treat your staff well

Want them to stay?
Make them want to stay!

34. Learn to delegate

Focus on tasks that contribute the most added value.

Delegate the rest to your staff.

Obviously, you might need to shoulder it all for a while if you're just starting out.

35.

Don't become a control freak

You can't control everything.
You *shouldn't* control everything.
It's a business, not a one-person show.

36.

Don't micro-manage

Give your staff clear instructions and
give them a chance to add value.

Accept that things won't turn out exactly
the way they would if you'd done them yourself.

37.

Don't do other people's work for them

Is it really any wonder that you're overworked?

38. Don't bypass

Respect the hierarchy and only work with
those closest on the ladder.

Stick to the rung above and below.

Bypassing the hierarchy can create chaos and
disempower or alienate.

39.

Have a staff member
who won't stop calling?

Ask them to consolidate their questions.
You'll do them a favor by boosting their independence.

40.

Answer questions with questions

Your staff can find the answers on their own.
Teach them to ask the right questions.

41.

Don't repeat yourself half a dozen times

Struggling with a staff member who
doesn't seem to listen?

Are they pretending to be confused?

Maybe they don't belong on your staff.

42.

Staff that don't seem to share your commitment

Don't sweat it.
Dedication is a choice ...
one reflected in the career you make.

43.

What comes easily to you might not to someone else

Not everyone has the same level of
expertise or experience.
Be patient and share what you've learned
with your staff.

44. Give people time

We all have the potential to grow, but it takes time.
Be patient, especially with the ones
you think are worth the wait.

45.
Don't forget to say
“thank you”

It's the basis of all good working relationships.

46. Give compliments

It's friendly and inspires
... but only dish them out when they're deserved.

47.

Learn to say you're sorry

As an entrepreneur, you're bound to make mistakes
and maybe even lose your cool.
Don't be afraid to apologize to your staff;
they'll always appreciate it.

48.
**Guilt is not
a management tool**

Don't use guilt to make your staff work better or harder.
It's a non-starter and fosters a hostile environment.

49.

Never imply that it's all down to you

It takes time to build respect, trust, and loyalty.
Whatever you do – never, ever be condescending.

50. Know your limits

Are there things you're not good at?
Say so!
There's nothing wrong with not knowing it all.
Your staff will appreciate the honesty.

51.

No gossip

I'm not interested in he said-she said.
That nonsense has no business in the office.

52. Your staff are not your buddies

Do you have a good relationship with them?

Great!

But don't give them the impression that
you're their buddy; it could come back to bite you.

53.

Disrespectful staff

Don't work with them.
It's that simple.

54.
**Be bold enough
to dismiss someone**

Don't tolerate dysfunctional workplace relationships.
Spoiling your work and that of others isn't worth it.

55.

Cheer staff growth on

Enjoy watching them learn and improve.
But *never* claim to have made them who they are.

IV.
STRESS
MANAGEMENT

56.
Overtime is not
a measure of success

Too much work is often synonymous
with mediocre work.
Working less but *better* doesn't make you a slacker.

57.

Slow down

Is living life at such a hectic pace fun?
Slowing down will boost your happiness and efficiency.

58.

Don't give in to anxious thoughts

We all feel it.
But we can't let it run our lives.

➤ Read *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck* by Mark Manson

59.

**Close your eyes and
take a deep breath**

Close your eyes for ten minutes.
It will do you a world of good.
You can even do it at your desk.

60.

Show drama the door

Few problems in life are really serious.
Anything that dogs you today will probably make you
laugh a year from now.

61.

Put things in perspective

Billions of people are not as lucky as you.
Millions of people have problems just like yours.

62. Learn to let go

Do you get hung up on things that aren't really
that important?
Forget about them.
Feels good, doesn't it?

63.

Keep it simple

Few skills are as critical as keeping it simple.

64.

**Don't make a mountain
out of a molehill**

That's wisdom.

65.
**Own up to
your mistakes**

And learn from them.
No one is infallible.

66.

You have the right
to change your mind

You make loads of decisions.
It's OK to change your mind from time to time;
just don't be fickle.

67.

Lean into the slope

Skiers lean into the slope to avoid falling.
Discover the pleasure of facing your fears.
It's a must for growth.

68.
**About to lose
your temper?**

Sit on it a few hours.
Still worth your time? Then be angry.
Otherwise, let it go.

69.

Sleep on it

Not sure what to do?
Sleep on it.
Your perspective will be better in the morning.
Most decisions can wait.

70.

Nights are for sleeping

... not for back-to-back reruns of workplace woes.
If you can't sleep, read a book, watch something,
or listen to music.

Go back to bed when your mind is less busy.

71.

The day after a sleepless night

... avoid making any major decisions
because you're probably not thinking straight.
Lighten your schedule and go to bed early
to catch up on sleep.

72.

Make time for what makes you happy

That could be reading, hobbies, sports,
cultural events, friends, or family...
Set aside a few hours every week for something
that puts a smile on your face.

73.

Take a day of quality *me-time* once a month

Spend the whole day on your own.

Get up late, read a book, get some fresh air, exercise,
eat healthy, etc.

Give your mind the time it needs to process.

Too tricky with your schedule?

Take two half-days off instead.

74.

Life is not a sprint

It's a marathon.

Save some energy for the next lap.
You've got all the time in the world.

75.

The journey is
the reward

The outcome never matches the effort that goes into it.

Just enjoy the journey.

It might sound cliché, but it's the truth.

V.
HEALTH

76.

Nothing is worth
ruining your health

All the money in the world can't buy it back.

77. Hypochondriac tendencies

Most of those minor aches and
pains are probably from stress.

Prioritize stress reduction,
not constant doctor's appointments.

78.

If you're tired

... rest.

It's as simple as that.

Don't let fatigue and strain accumulate
for weeks at a time.

79.

Do you feel exhausted?

Take a (half) day off *this week*.

I know, I know. You don't have the time...

Do it anyway because it will double
your productivity later.

Plus, catching up is easier than you think.

80. Take a daily 30-minute walk

Staying stuck in the same position all day is detrimental to mind *and* body.

Put walking on your agenda, whether it's in the morning, lunch or evening. Buy a treadmill to guarantee that it becomes a daily habit – come rain or shine.

81.

Drink tea

Coffee gives you a brief burst of energy that bottoms out quickly.

Tea is a steadier source.

Have a cup of black tea in the morning and some green tea in the afternoon.

82. Eat healthy

Don't neglect your health.

Ten years down the road you'll be sorry you did.
Eat lots of fruit and vegetables and avoid fatty foods.
Never skip meals.

83.

Eat a savory breakfast

Sugary breakfasts give you an energy high
that ends in a crash by late morning.

Eating savory foods provides
a steady stream of energy all morning long.

Eat what you like at breakfast,
but make sure to switch things up periodically.

84.

No junk food

Swap chips and candy for dried fruit.
It's just as tasty and super healthy.

85.

Eat a light dinner

You'll sleep better –
especially if you're stressed.

86.

No alcohol at lunch

Have a private or business lunch coming up?

Choose a non-alcoholic alternative.

If you don't, say goodbye to clear thinking
for the rest of your afternoon.

87.

Avoid alcohol at professional events

You're already tired after a long day at work.
Alcohol will just make it worse.
And it may even lead you to say things that
you'll regret afterward.

88.
**Limit alcohol
consumption during
the week**

The more alcohol you drink tonight,
the harder it will be to get up tomorrow.
Your concentration will be fuzzier,
and work will be more frustrating.

89.

No meds

No vitamins in the morning, no sleeping pills at night.

Don't take meds to manage stress.

Adjust your diet and work rate, not your medication.

90.
No drugs

Ever.

Stay in control of your own mind.
It's the one tool you can't afford to lose.

VI.
PERSONAL LIFE

91.
Keep work and home
life separate

Build a firewall between these two worlds.

92.

Spend time with family
and friends

It puts everything into perspective.
And it means a lot to them.

93.

Squabbles with your partner?

Is that really you?
Or are work and stress doing the talking?
No job, project, or success is worth breaking up a home.

94.

Don't yell at your kids

That's your stress talking.

Don't let your job turn you into a grouchy parent.

95.
Kids are kids

Don't expect them to behave like adults.

96.

Adults are kids

Don't expect them to behave like adults.

97.

Save energy for the weekend

It's no fun for your family
when you're exhausted from work.
Save some energy for them.
You'll also be more productive
back at the office on Monday.

98.

Go on vacation twice a year

Switch off your smartphone during the day.

Check your email at the end of the day
and only answer urgent messages.

You'll be energized and
a whole lot more productive on your return.

99.

**Any regrets you may
have in 20 years**

... will be about your family, not your work.

100.

When facing a major
dilemma, whether
private or professional

... imagine yourself in 20 years.
What decision would make you most proud?
Go for that one.

Bibliography

These books kept me good company while I was writing.

I highly recommend them.

The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck, by Mark Manson

Everything Is Fucked, by Mark Manson

The One Thing, by Gary Keller en Jay Papasan

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Murakami
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On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft, by Stephen King
I. Asimov: A Memoir, by Isaac Asimov

Notes

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Giles Daoust is a Solvay Business School graduate and the CEO of Daoust and Title Media. He is also the director of the Ommegang, a founding partner of LN24, and a regular contributor to *L'Echo* and *Brussels Business*.

A bona fide workaholic, Daoust wrote this book to provide (young) entrepreneurs with 100 tips to help them work better.

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