

## EPIISODE 42: HOW TO BE PRODUCTIVE IN BUSINESS AND GET 2X MORE THINGS DONE

with Neen James

Marketing for Creatives Show  
at [IntNetworkPlus.com](http://IntNetworkPlus.com)

**Announcer:**

Turn your hobby and freelance work into a profitable business! Make your marketing easier by applying the strategies of experienced entrepreneurs and have more time to do the work you love. You are listening to the Marketing for Creatives show with your host Marina Barayeva.

**Marina Barayeva:**

Hi everyone. This is Marina Barayeva. Welcome to another episode of Marketing for Creatives show. In this episode, we gonna talk about how to be productive in business and make 2x more things done.

When you escape working for someone 40 hours a week you find out that you start working 80 hours a week. There is just always something to do, don't you think so? If you know what it is and you want to be productive in business and your life this episode is for you.

Our special guest today is Neen James.

Neen is a leadership and attention expert focused on productivity and obsessed with helping leaders get more done so they can create more significant moments in life.

She is the kind of speaker who engages, educates and entertains. Neen delivers the real-world solutions and results that apply in your organization, your home and your community.

Hi Neen. welcome to the show. How are you doing today?

**Neen James:**

Good day! What a privilege to get to serve your listeners. I'm so excited to be on your podcast.

**Marina Barayeva:**

It's so pleasure to have you here. You're so busy woman. It's hard to catch you. (Laughter)

**Neen James:**

(Laughter) Everybody is busy, honey. I think everyone has their own version of 'busy,' right? But never too busy to serve your listeners.

**Marina Barayeva:**

Please tell us about yourself. What are you busy with?

**Neen James:**

Well I guess I grew up in corporate business but I've had my own practice like many of your listeners for the last 15 years. I get the privilege of being a keynote speaker often for corporate audiences and associations and what I've been up to lately as you know, Marina, is I have a new book coming out. So I've been very excited about sharing what I know about how people get more done.

**Marina Barayeva:**

Yeah, that's fantastic. We all want to grow in business. But as you know there are a lot of things we have to do as the entrepreneurs and business owners. How can we be productive in business?

**Neen James:**

You know it comes down to prioritizing our priorities. And, Marina, what I mean by that is that I think there are so many things to do when we're entrepreneurs, especially we're creative whether we're solopreneurs, infopreneurs.

What I feel that happens is there are lots of things we need to do but we have to get very focused on what is going to give us the biggest what I call ROA which is the return on attention.

We can't manage time, but we can manage our attention. One of the suggestions I make to all the listeners and I do this with all of my corporate executives, CEOs and leaders of teams is I would like to encourage everyone today to make a 15-minute appointment with themselves. In that 15 minutes, I want it to be a strategic appointment.

As an entrepreneur, you make a 15-minute appointment with yourself on your calendar and I want you to identify your top three non-negotiable activities.

Before your head hits the pillow tonight what are three things you must achieve that will move your business forward?

This is really important because I think what happens is we often have this massive to do list. We have to do list in our head. We wake up with to do list. We wake up in the middle of the night with to do list when you're an entrepreneur.

What I want to encourage the listeners to do is to think about making an appointment every day with yourself so that you feel like when you get to the end of the day that you have moved your goals forward.

A very easy way to get more done every day and be very productive is to look at time differently and start with 15-minute increments and especially a 15-minute appointment with yourself.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

But even if you do those three very important things you still have a lot of things to do. Maybe you'll do these three things and you still do all that other work. So how to escape that rat race that people get to with the daily routine?

### **Neen James:**

I think you make such a really great point is that we feel sometimes as entrepreneurs we feel like it's a crazy rat race. Because we feel like we can never catch up. There's always business development today.

There's always new proposals to write. There are always things to prepare. There are different marketing activities we need to do. This social media grabbing our attention.

Not to mention serving the clients that help us in our business. Some of us manage teams as part of the practice business that we ran.

One of the things that comes back to is really knowing what your goals are. As a business one of the things that I love getting entrepreneurs to do is to get really really clear what are your objectives for this year. What are the goals you have for this year?

The reason this is important is because there are so many things that grab your attention. You need to have a decision filtering system.

So having goals. And the ways I do my goals, I have them in five different areas: spiritual, relational, physical, financial and educational.

Those five areas again, Marina, are spiritual, relational, physical, financial and educational.

The reason I grouped them in those five things is because entrepreneurs... what happens is we never close. We never stock. Our business is always on our mind because we are responsible for generating our income.

But one of the reasons I encourage people to have goals in those five areas is so that we feel like we can have more work-life integration.

I don't believe in work-life balance. I think that's a big fat myth.

But I do believe that we need to look for ways as entrepreneurs where we can make the most of working really hard, where we're doing client work, but also being able to enjoy the people we work hard for and that is to have time with the people that we care about.

One of the ways to escape the rat race is to know what your goals are. Then schedule your activities accordingly.

But also, don't forget as an entrepreneur you've got to schedule time for recovery.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

Neen, in our audience many people are solopreneurs, professionals and small business owners with a few people in their team. A lot of things they tend to do by themselves. As you said they need to focus on all of these five important areas.

But how to define and prioritize what matters for your business more and for your life more? And what we as the business owners should focus on?

Because sometimes it's so easy to get lost. Like "Ok. I will work a little more." But in that case, your relationships may have problems. Or "If I stay a little bit more with my family, I will not have enough time for my business."

### **Neen James:**

Yeah and these are common challenges that it doesn't matter what kind of entrepreneur you are whether you have a team, or whether you are a team of one. One of the things that I think we have to consider is that when you think about what you are going to focus on it depends on where you are in your journey.

For example, if you have recently just started your business you're doing everything yourself. You don't have the cash flow yet to pay other people and you are 100% responsible for everything.

So what you've got to be doing is even more diligent around that business development and growth.

Scheduling time every day for outreach, networking, alliance building, connecting, and being able to build the business. You're spending probably your weeknights going to events, writing proposals.

When you're new in your business you're probably working like a lunatic. You still need recovery breaks.

But some of the listeners might be a little further on in their business might be a little bit older. You're still doing business development. But maybe what you're looking for now is you're looking to develop systems so you might focus some time on developing systems.

I believe systems create freedom. As entrepreneurs, sometimes we have to think like a big business and we know big businesses have systems, procedures, templates, policies, and I believe as entrepreneurs we need to do the same thing.

Simple systems could be just apps you use. That might be email templates you create. It might be checklists that you build. And one of the things that helps us to do as entrepreneurs, it allows us to do the routine things, the regular activities.

If we have systems in place that means we can put our hands space into that creative, into the brainstorming, into the strategic thinking.

I want to encourage people that regardless of where you are on your journey whether you're new or whether you enjoy this a long time, developing systems is a way to help you focus especially if you can template things, create systems and templates for everything.

Then once you've been established for a little bit longer maybe you can then free up some funding to start outsourcing some activities. If you can afford to outsource activities, maybe you could barter your time.

For example, when I first moved here from Australia to the US I didn't have any clients. I had no money to buy shoes. I had no money for anything.

What I realized was I did have a talent. And what I could do is I could barter my talent for what I needed from others.

For example, when I first came to America I needed someone to help me set up my accounts and do my taxes. I reached out to an accounting firm and I said "I tell you what. I'll teach your team how to be really productive if you could set up **QuickBooks** for me and help me with my taxes." And they jumped at the chance.

I could have learned QuickBooks, I could learn the software, and I could try to do my taxes, but that's kind of a waste of my time and not something that I'd be good at.

What I did was what I was good at which is teaching people how to be more productive and stay focused in exchange for them helping me. So a creative way to get more done is to barter your talent and your time for a service that you need. That's going to help you grow your business.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

You were talking about this system. What would you put into the system like a template for e-mails? Or do specific work at the specific time? Or how would you create those templates and the system?

### **Neen James:**

Maybe let me share with you a couple of systems that seem to work well for me and my team. My team is really just my assistant and she's virtual and my marketing manager she's also virtual. So my whole team is virtual.

But what we do is we've systemized everything. For example, I have systems in my calendar. So generally speaking, I don't do client appointments before 11:00 a.m.

And the reason for that is I blackout that first part of my morning to work out, make sure I eat breakfast, do some strategic planning, make sure that I'm doing business development. Then once 11 o'clock hits, then I tend to look at more very client oriented work.

I also make sure that we color-coded my calendar. Every time I have a phone call it's a certain color in my calendar. When I do speaking it's a different color. When I'm traveling it's a different color.

So very quickly we can see where I need to be and what needs to happen we establish colors.

We also color-coded even things like manila folders in our office with physical files that match our calendar.

Other systems we have in places we use some things that save us time. For example, I use Mac and there is a great app called **Text Expander**.

And Text Expander allows you to create e-mails and then save them as a short code and then every time you want to use that particular email you just typed the short code into the e-mail and it automatically populates that field. It's really easy to use and there are so many things like that.

But another system I use that might be interesting to your entrepreneurs is an app called **Freedom**. The Freedom app is actually a web blocking app. So if you're trying to get really focused on getting something done it blocks any social media sites and it can block for periods of time or like for a day at a time.

I found the only way sometimes I get things done is by blocking out all the distractions. And so one of the systems we use is called the Freedom app. Does that help answer your question?

**Marina Barayeva:**

Yeah. It does. Thank you so much. You were talking about your team. When the entrepreneurs grow, maybe they've got a virtual assistant or they got a local team how to motivate your team to be productive? How to make other people be productive?

Because you can influence yourself. But what about your team?

**Neen James:**

I think what you've got to be clear about with your team is what are you are focused on. As an entrepreneur, what happens is we know where we're trying to go. We understand our objectives. We know the direction where we want to take our business.

What we have to do is we have to be able to articulate those same desires, goals, and objectives to our team.

One of the ways to help your team stay motivated is make sure you're sharing with them your strategies. Make sure you are sharing the objectives. Make sure you have measurements in place and have standards for each of your team and then check in regularly with them.

My virtual assistant and I we talk every week we have an appointment when we catch up on my travel, my speeches, my commitments, my invoicing.

What we do is we always have an agenda for our call, we know exactly what we need to achieve. And I think the way to keep the team motivated is not just sharing with them the goals but share with them the success.

When they have done something that has helped you move your business forward something that has really made a difference to your business, share the success with them. Share the good news with them. Keep encouraging them. There are so many ways as leaders that we can help and motivate our team.

But we also have to understand how does a team like to be communicated with? What of the things that are important to them? How can we help them achieve their goals?

I think one of the traps we sometimes fall into is when we own a business because we are used to doing everything ourselves, sometimes we think this is quick and easy I'll do it myself. And that's true. The first time.

But if we keep doing that we're spending time on things that maybe our team could be doing. And so many of the team we surround ourselves would enjoy that aspect of their work. Let them do what they really good at.

Then make sure you check it regularly and make share your goals with them. So they feel like they're part of your team, not just someone who's doing things for you.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

When you work with your assistant there can be two challenges that the entrepreneurs can face when they start working with them. There are two extremes.

One of them they try to delegate their work but because they got used to do everything by themselves they're still not productive. They actually still do all of this work.

Or another side. They give to the assistant too much work and they don't have time to learn. They won't be able to keep up with this work.

### **Neen James:**

Right. Yeah, they are very common. And it doesn't matter whether you are an entrepreneur or a corporate person. I see the same thing happen across industries, across different brands that I work with and I think this is very true. I think it all comes back to trust.

For example, one of the reasons we don't allow people to do their work is we don't always trust them. One of the things we want to build up quickly is stop by delegating small. Start to allow someone to take some of those opportunities off your plate, those responsibilities, tasks, and activities.

But start small so you can build up trust in the individual, but also the can trust yourself that you're not going to snatch that back from them.

One of the things to think about is when it comes to delegating it's still your responsibility because it's still your business.

That maybe when you're delegating when you do it the first time walk them through. When you do it the second time walk through and make sure you create a checklist so they have instructions on how to do it. Then the third time let them do it themselves. But check in with them to see how it went.

And by the fourth time they should have had it. One of the things you want to consider is creating systems along the way to get you to delegate more.

It is very true that sometimes it's quicker and easier to do it ourselves but it's the first time that that happens.

Every time we do it after that it's actually often costing us money. So all of the listeners that encouraged you to think about what's your hourly rate?

You may not have thought about that before but let's just say your hourly rate is saying \$200. Even if you don't run in a billable hourly model if your rate is \$200 and you are organizing your own travel chances that someone else could be organizing that travel for you instead of you spending 30 minutes on trying to book a flight for yourself which is actually cost you 100 dollars.

What you want to think about is:

- What is the best return on your attention?
- What is the best use of your time?
- What are the activities that will grow your business?

Not the busy work. Because busy is not necessarily productive. So think about an hourly rate.

The other thing that can happen with an assistant is we get so excited we've got the assistants. We give them everything and then we totally overwhelm them. Then they get behind.

One of the reasons that my virtual assistant and I have weekly meetings is to make sure we're monitoring the workload, making sure we're not dropping the bowls. And Marina remember how hard it was just to get this organized?

That was because there were so many things going back and forth, because there are so many things on our plate because we have different time zones and different commitments.

One of the things we have to be diligent about is as entrepreneurs is still our brand. It's our business. That's what our clients see. It doesn't matter who our team is we are 100% responsible.

When we can get the team understanding what their expectations are. I think that helps everyone be more productive.

**Marina Barayeva:**

Fantastic. Let's go back to ourselves as the business owners and entrepreneurs. What to do with self-sabotaging and procrastination? If you want to be productive in business. It's so common thing.

### Neen James:

We all procrastinate. You are so right. We also self-sabotage because sometimes as entrepreneurs we think "Oh, gosh. I wonder if I should really be doing this. Wouldn't it just be easy to just go get a job? What was thinking? Why am I doing this? Who am I to think I can do this?"

And we go through these crazy thought patterns. But you've been put on this planet to do something unique. You've been put on this planet to do something special.

Entrepreneurs are really special kind of person. Because they have these amazing creative brains that looking constantly for different, better, easier, cheaper, faster, creative ways to do something.

I love that about being an entrepreneur. The flip side of that is sometimes we can have so many great ideas that we don't execute on them and that in itself can be a form of procrastination.

Here's what I want to challenge your listeners today. If you know you're procrastinating on something just to acknowledge that to yourself. Like just go "Yep. That's what's happening." Just declare "I'm procrastinating."

But what you can do is think about investing just 15 minutes on doing something to get you closer to the thing you're procrastinating about.

For example, I used to always procrastinate on writing proposals. I hated writing proposals. It was just such a chore for me. I had every template created. All I had to do is fill in the blanks. I don't even know why I would get frustrated but I would.

What I would say to myself is okay for the next 15 minutes I'm going to write a to-do list of everything I could do. I'm going to look up the client, make sure of the spelling name at least get something done in 15 minutes. And you know what's so surprising, Marina, is when you do that you actually often get it completed.

So the challenge I would have for people who are procrastinating is acknowledging it first and then go "You know what? I'm just going to see what I can get done in 15 minutes." Even if it's just a brain dump of everything you have to do to move it forward, it gives you momentum.

Sometimes we get 15 minutes into it and we think "Oh, gosh if I spent another ten minutes on that, I'll nail this and I'll knock it over."

And sometimes we spend 15 minutes on it and go "Oh my God this is going to take me three hours." So then you need to find some time in your calendar.

I think we procrastinate for different reasons. We procrastinate because we just don't want to do it. We procrastinate because we don't know where to start. We procrastinate because we think it's much bigger than it is. And sometimes we procrastinate because we don't like the person who gave it to us.

One of the things to consider is why are you procrastinating. And then also another thing I find really helpful is when I commit to a client, let's say it's a proposal, I say to the client "I will have a team by 2:00 on Tuesday." By declaring a time and a day it makes me more accountable.

And I believe that public accountability drives private accountability. So you may want to declare timeframes to people that you want to deliver things to say you have to do it to protect your reputation.

**Marina Barayeva:**

So 15 minutes a day. 15 minutes for strategy. 15 minutes for stuff which you're procrastinating on.

**Neen James:**

15 minutes is the key to everything. (Laughter) Think about it if you want to work out and you don't have time to just work out for 15 minutes.

If you want to eat healthier spend 15 minutes preparing snacks and a meal. 15 minutes is the key to business development to being able to get rid of that email. It's amazing when you start thinking of time in 15-minute increments. How different it really is to your productivity.

**Marina Barayeva:**

Well can you please share with us another 15 minutes. Can you give us the strategy on how to manage our daily tasks to be more productive in business and make at least two times more things done every day? Because if we can have every day different activities.

**Neen James:**

Yes. I would encourage all of the listeners to spend 15 minutes on yourself.

Now, this is what helps you become more productive. If you take care of yourself physically, mentally, spiritually, however that is for you, by investing in yourself you're going to be a better leader, you're going to think clearly, you're going to have the energy you need to grow your business.

You need 15 minutes for yourself. That might be about exercising, or meditating, or preparing a healthy meal. You need 15 minutes.

It also might be that the 15 minutes means you want to start developing relationships. If you want to get more done one of my favorite kind of meetings is called a tele-coffee. You make a coffee and I make a coffee and we talk on the telephone. I do tele-cocktails on Friday. I love those. They're my favorite.

What I do in those tele-coffees is I do business development calls. I do one every single day. If you want to get more done and you want to grow your business one of the things to consider is investing 15 minutes every day and having an appointment with someone who can help you grow your business.

It might be a potential new client. It might be a great advocate who can promote you to other people. It might be a strategic alliance that could partner your business services with their business services.

It could be an association where you can get more actively involved. It might be a board that you can serve on. It might be a community group where you could go and speak to them.

When you think about your business and want you to consider 15 minutes as a strategic appointment with yourself, 15 minutes in an appointment to take care of yourself, and 15 minutes in an appointment to grow your business.

That gives you three different kinds of 15-minutes appointments and in a 24-hour period you can afford it. It's a great investment in how you can get twice as much done in half of the time.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

So we need to chunk everything, every single task for 15 minutes and give it to all of those areas business, spiritual, health, and all of these things.

### **Neen James:**

Absolutely.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

Ok. And as you said your book just came up. Can you give us a little teaser on your favorite productivity tip from there?

### **Neen James:**

I can. My book is called **Attention Pays: How to Drive Profitability, Productivity, and Accountability**. What I love about the book is that we discover that people pay attention in three ways: personally, professionally and globally.

So if you're listening to this what I want you to consider is that when you pay attention - attention pays. What that means is you want to start looking for what are the activities as an entrepreneur that are going to give you the highest ROA. I mentioned that the Return on Attention.

Because you and I, Marina, we get the same 1440 minutes in a day. Time's going to happen whether we like it or not.

You can't manage time, but you can manage your attention. And I want you to start thinking about:

- Where are you focusing your attention?
- Who deserves your attention?
- What deserves your attention?

- And how are you going to pay attention in the world?

The book is called Attention Pays.

**Marina Barayeva:**

Fantastic. Please, Neen, share with us, how can we connect with you and learn more about you too.

**Neen James:**

There is only one Neen James online. So that makes it so easy for you. N-E-E-N-J-A-M-E-S.com if you go to [neenjames.com](http://neenjames.com) or if you want to follow me on [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) if you want to see my adventures on [Facebook](#) if you prefer.

There is only one Neen James and you'll be able to find out everything about the new book there as well.

**Marina Barayeva:**

Aw. So special. Only one Neen James. (Laughter) It was great to have you on the show, Neen. Thank you so much.

**Neen James:**

Thank you for the privilege of serving your listeners. I love what you're doing in the world. Thank you for everything you're doing, Marina.

**Marina Barayeva:**

That's all for today. Thank you for listening. For the show notes and the full transcript of the episode please go to [intnetworkplus.com](http://intnetworkplus.com).

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