

## TWELVE DAYS OF (A PRODUCTIVE) CHRISTMAS

I have never received two turtle doves or a partridge in a pear tree as holiday gifts, but I've always liked the idea of the 12 Days of Christmas. With this in mind here is a rundown of twelve ways to give yourself the gift of a happier, more productive you.

On the first day of Christmas: Track your time. Lots of people tell me they'd like to keep a time log, but find the prospect daunting. So instead of a week, try it for just one day. Chances are this won't be a typical day — especially if you start this project on December 25! — but it doesn't matter. There are no typical days. Embrace the activity and see where the time goes. See if your log matches up with how you'd like to be spending your time. See what you like best about your life, and what you might want to do differently.

On the second day of Christmas: Work on your **List of 100 Dreams**. Make a good long list of anything you'd like to do or have more of in your life. If you've already created such a list in the past, great, but your priorities and interests may have changed. Do some editing. See what you might want to attempt in the New Year.

On the third day of Christmas: Cancel things you don't want to do. Wouldn't it be nice to start the year with only a little of your time spoken for? See if you can keep recurring meetings from following you into January. Wipe Outlook clean and decide what you want to add back into your life.

On the fourth day of Christmas: Build in a fun "obligation." Human nature dictates that we're more likely to do things that happen at certain times and involve commitments to other people. That's why recurring meetings rise on our priority lists beyond their actual importance. The good news is that you can tweak this phenomenon in your favour. Schedule in something you want to do for early 2016.

On the fifth day of Christmas: Finish one project. Crossing a nagging task off of your to-do list will make you feel like you can conquer the world.

On the sixth day of Christmas: Change your food environment. Put fruit in a bowl on the counter, and move chips and candy to a hidden high shelf. Choose one simple habit to implement, such as “I always eat vegetables with lunch.” Over time, these choices add up.

On the seventh day of Christmas: Get a step counter. Most New Year’s resolutions to exercise have faded by February. But what gets measured gets done. A step counter can nudge you to walk the office halls during a break or walk the dog a little farther than you otherwise might. Given that most people won’t spend an hour a day at the gym, this is the next best thing.

On the eighth day of Christmas: Find a reason to get out of bed. Anticipation makes us into morning people. What would make your morning so exciting that you’d be happy to ditch the covers? Design a morning routine that gives yourself the gift of 30 minutes a day focused on something you want to do, rather than your obligations to the rest of the world. Just be sure to give yourself a bedtime that makes this routine feasible.

On the ninth day of Christmas: Lighten your load. Choose one household chore you really dislike and figure out how to get it off of your plate.

On the tenth day of Christmas: Back it up. Don’t let anything that matters to you exist in only one precarious place. Take digital photos of old, printed photos that could be wiped from existence in a flood. Then back up your favourite photos from your phone before you accidentally leave your phone somewhere. Hopefully you’ll never need these back-ups, but if you do, you’ll be glad you have them.

On the eleventh day of Christmas: Boost your wealth. If you just got a raise, use this day to think about ways of increasing your savings. Find any recurring expenses for things that no longer matter to you and use the day to cancel them and redirect the cash toward your growing pile.

On the twelfth day of Christmas: Say what you feel. It's easy to be mindless, but expressing gratitude to those around you can remind you that life is a gift.

**(For more information on productivity contact the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council on Second (2nd) floor, Financial Centre Building, Bridge Street, Castries. We can also be contacted at 468 -5576 or visit the Council's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/stluciancpc> or email them at [stluciancpc@gmail.com](mailto:stluciancpc@gmail.com))**