

5 Clever Productivity “Hacks” for Real Estate Professionals

Article targeting Real Estate Professionals featured in Old Republic Home Protection’s e-newsletter.

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The term “life hack” was popularized by technology journalist Danny O’Brien twelve years ago, and the following year the American Dialect Society voted it the second most useful term of 2005 (just after the word “podcast”). You may have heard the phrase here and there, but what does it *actually* mean?

A life hack is any clever trick or tool that makes you more productive or efficient, whether at work or in your personal life. Since time is money for real estate professionals, Old Republic Home Protection is offering five life hacks designed to help you accomplish more... with less effort!

The Pomodoro Technique: An oldie but goodie, the Pomodoro technique is a time management tool that requires nothing more than a simple timer (originally a Pomodoro kitchen timer). You commit to working in 25-minute bursts (called Pomodoros) followed by a short 3-5 minute break. Each time you complete a Pomodoro, make a checkmark on a piece of paper. After you hit four Pomodoros, take a 15-30 minute break. You can also experiment with longer periods of focus combined with longer breaks in between.

This technique works great when focusing on tasks that require sustained attention (e.g., filling out forms, e-mailing clients, paying bills) but it’s impossible to rigidly apply at every turn. Real estate professionals are pulled in so many different directions throughout the day, and you can’t exactly ignore a call from a panicked client because you’re in between Pomodoros! That said, the principle remains rock solid—regular breaks refresh and refocus the mind, and if you work them into your day when you can, you’ll likely find yourself accomplishing more.

Visually Stimulating Project Management Tools: Would you rather light your hair on fire than learn a project management tool that revolves around lifeless spreadsheets? If so, you may be a good candidate for Trello—the project management app designed for visual learners and thinkers. It displays all your projects and tasks on virtual notecards

and makes it easy to outline everything you need to get done. You really have to experience Trello to appreciate it, so [click here](#) to catch a glimpse of this remarkably useable tool.

You can also check out a similar program called [KanbanFlow](#). The interface isn't nearly as attractive, but if simplicity is what you're after, Kanban will serve you well!

Identify Your Top Three: A few years ago, life hacker and best-selling author Tim Ferris recorded a short podcast called "Productivity Tricks for the Neurotic, Manic-Depressive, and Crazy (Like Me)" where he discusses his daily routine. Every morning, while he sips his green tea, Ferris identifies the top three things he simply *must* accomplish for the day. Obviously, your job requires you to accomplish more than three things on a given day, but identifying the most important three will allow you to keep your focus and feel a sense of accomplishment when you cross them off your list.

Track Your Internet Use: The Internet is both a tremendous productivity tool... and a tremendous waste of time! If you spend too much of your day sharing cat memes on Facebook, install [RescueTime](#) on your computer and your mobile devices. It tracks the time you spend on different websites, giving you a clear picture of how much frivolous web surfing you do throughout the day. You can even print monthly reports that will drive the point home and hopefully help you change the behavior.

Block Time-wasting Websites (at Specific Times): [Freedom](#) is an application that allows you to block your own access to specific websites at certain times, and it works with iOS, Android, Macs, and PCs. However, take caution! Social media is a valuable marketing tool for real estate professionals, and there may be times when you simply *need* access to Facebook or Twitter. As a safety measure, leave yourself full access to social media on your smart phone or tablet at all hours. Sure, you may be tempted to abuse your Facebook privileges if you're only blocked on your laptop, but if you're jumping through hoops to repost cat videos, you'll definitely notice the indiscretion!