

Forget Bridget Jones - Keeping a Diary Will Boost Your Productivity

Even if you think you have a wonderful memory you should still record key events and other useful information in writing. Over time our brains reorganise information and our memories change and get distorted, often just the act of trying to recall something important will change the way a memory is recorded in your brain.

I'm always amazed at how many people attend meetings and make notes on scraps of paper or throwaway notepads. Coming from a scientific background I was trained to keep detailed logs and journals and this discipline has stayed with me into business and personal life.

I have a series of lovely bound notebooks dating back to the earlier 80's which I've used day in day out to record notes, meeting minutes, important follow up actions, telephone numbers etc. I keep these on a bookshelf in chronological order. Now if I need to think back over the reasons or background for decisions or remember how something was handled I just reach for the notebook I was using at the time and read through my entries for the period.

A friend uses his diary as a simple means of tracking how his business is developing. Each night he writes the value of sales that day in to his diary along with a note of any exceptional orders or issues that day. Over the years this has become invaluable, as he looks back on how sales developed around key dates like Easter and put calls in to key customers around the anniversary of big orders they had placed the previous year. The funny thing is that although he could get this information off his computer without much effort, somehow the act of writing it down and keeping it in his jacket pocket just makes it so much more immediate, usable and compulsively addictive. In his case he doesn't relax or stop until his team has made more sales than the same day the prior year!

Personally I don't advise actually buying a diary. Their rigid day by day structure is too inflexible. I recommend you treat yourself to a beautiful journal that you will be proud to own and carry around with you. On the front page I write the date I started using it and leave a space for the date of the last entry which I fill in when I complete the last page.

Start each day on a fresh page by writing the date. I personally like to start the day by making a list of the things I must accomplish that day, so that I can tick them off throughout the day. Then as I move from one meeting or appointment to another I then write down a new sub heading which includes the time and a short description of the meeting for example "15:00 Budget Review". Issues and actions can then be written under the heading as required.

I don't limit this approach to work, in part because in today's knowledge economy I'm not sure we ever really stop working but also because the same approach is so useful in my private life as well. For example I had some electrical work carried out a couple of years ago but I couldn't recall the name of the great electrician we'd found when I needed more work doing this year. My journal came to the rescue and I just looked back through my entries from that time and there it was along with a note I'd made of his telephone number.

So in summary I don't believe that keeping a diary or a journal need be a chore, it's more a way of just being efficient.

About the Author

Linda Garrould is an eCommerce consultant and runs a number websites including www.iadoreyour.com [luxury gifts and jewellery](http://www.luxurygiftsandjewellery.com) Why not have a look at their range of high quality [handmade fine Italian leather journals](http://www.handmadeitalianleatherjournals.com) and discover how addictive and useful keeping a journal can be.

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