Do More and Sleep Better

ATLANTA product camp

Product Camp 2018 Presenter: Imani Mance

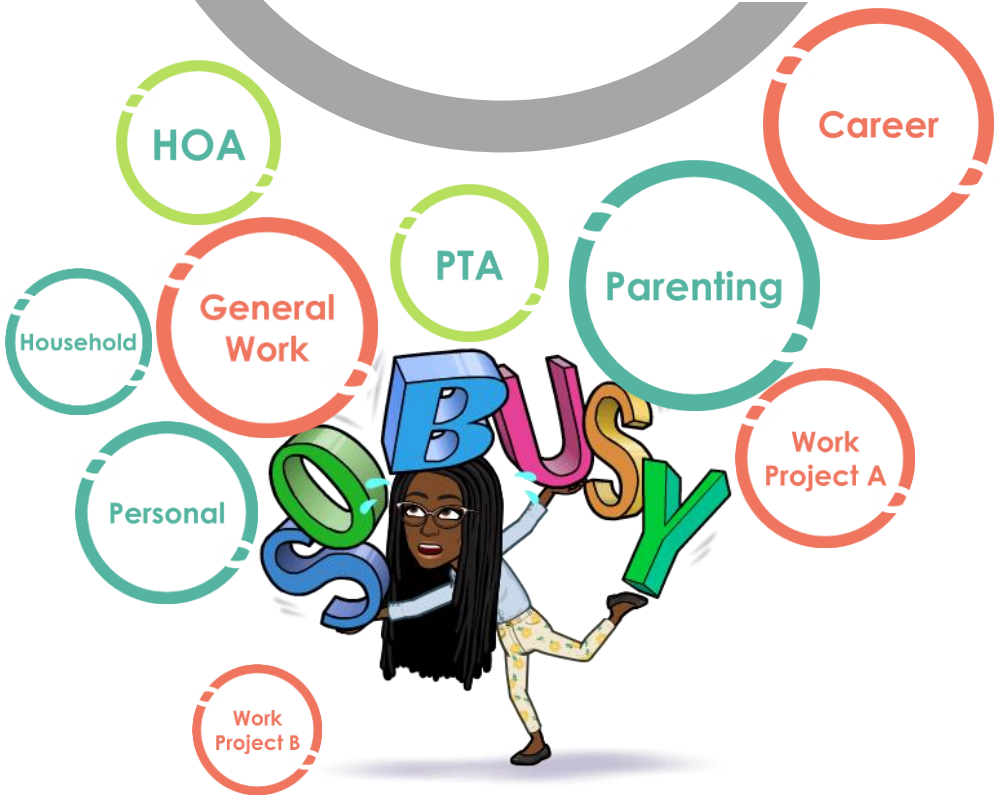
IM Imanimance.com | @imanimance

6 Tips…

If you're like me your attention and energy are probably pulled in many different directions, so much so that you feel a little overwhelmed. You've probably been so overwhelmed that you've lost sleep trying to manage all the tasks in your personal and professional life. Perhaps you feel like you're not getting enough done or the right things done in the day. Have you tried lots of different time management and project management tools but still can't seem to get ahead?

Well, I am happy to share that I've found a better way. I no longer lose sleep over all my to-do's and its because of 6 simple things that I do. In this guide I share my practical tips for not only keeping track of tasks across multiple projects and life, but also how to get them done so you can rest easy.

“Tip #1: Everything’s a project.”



Juggling all the tasks in my professional and personal life was a nightmare. I would lay awake for hours trying to figure out what I had forgotten to do that day. I felt like I was always dropping the ball in some area of my life. The crazy thing was I was pretty good at managing projects at work.

My issue wasn’t the tasks on project plans. It was all those tasks not on my project plans, like responding to email, making doctor’s appointments, etc. Then one day it dawned on me that I needed to project manage my life. That’s when I decided to create projects for every area of my life. This helps me make sure I have a clear plan of what needs to get done and when for all the important areas of life.

Tip #2: Don't rely on your Brain!

I used to worry all the time that I would forget to do something important or forget to capture it in a project plan or on my to-do list.

When I made everything in my life a project, I also started doing a weekly **brain dump**. A brain dump is the process of listing all the tasks I can think of for each project in my life.

My list of professional and personal projects helps me ensure I've thought about every important area of my life and the related tasks. I capture those tasks in an online tool to ensure I don't' have to rely on my memory. I rest easy knowing that my to-do list is just a click away.

Tip #3: Plan your tasks by DO date NOT DUE date.

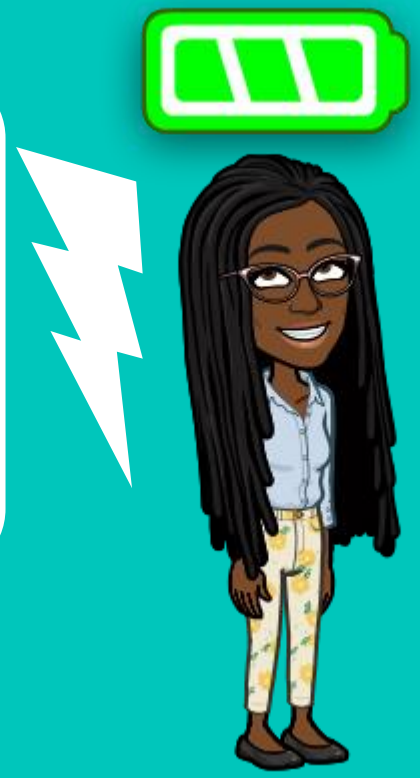
The two main problems with project management systems are 1) They are driven by DUE dates and 2) They make it difficult to pinpoint when work will get done. You can put a start date and an end date on a task for sometime in the future, but who knows what else you will have going on during that time. So if you go by the dates in the plan you are usually under pressure. That is why I focus on DO dates instead. I plan all my work by when I should and can get the task done down to the hour.

I use a system that allows me to plan all my project tasks by DO date. I create milestone tasks for DUE dates. With that said, I don't assign DO dates for other people. I let them know when it is DUE. Asana.com is an online project and task management system that makes this process really easy. In Asana, I can see everything that I need to DO across projects on a given day. This was the biggest difference maker in me getting sleep. Now I don't spend my day stressing over all the URGENT and IMPORTANT tasks on my plate.

“Tip #4: Plan to DO tasks when the TIME is RIGHT.”

Set a DO time for each task based on the optimal time to complete. I prioritize my tasks by the amount energy, creativity, and effort they will take. I am usually my most creative and high energy in the morning. I block my calendar for a couple hours in the morning to tackle challenging tasks or my least favorite tasks.

I schedule tasks that I enjoy, tasks that don’t require critical thinking, or tasks that are energizing during the time of day when I know I will be low energy. For me that’s during lunch, short blocks of time between meetings, or at the end of day before I go home. Planning my to-do’s around my energy level is critical to getting more done.



Tip #5: Strike while the Iron is HOT!

I have a 5 minute rule which I learned from my boss. It is not for food, but for tasks. If someone asks me to do something that will take less than 5 minutes, then I do it right away. Instead of spending 1-2 minutes adding it to my task list, I just get the task done. This usually happens when I am in meetings or when someone stops by my desk. PLEASE NOTE: I don't apply the 5 minute rule to email tasks. Unless it is urgent, I don't respond to emails while I am doing deep work. I focus and get the work done. Instead, I set aside time to follow up on emails and add any tasks in those emails to my to-do list. The 5 minute rule helps me get more done and it helps me keep my to-do list manageable.

Tip #6: Make a task list and check it twice.

At a minimum, review your task list at the start and finish of everyday.

Here's my process:

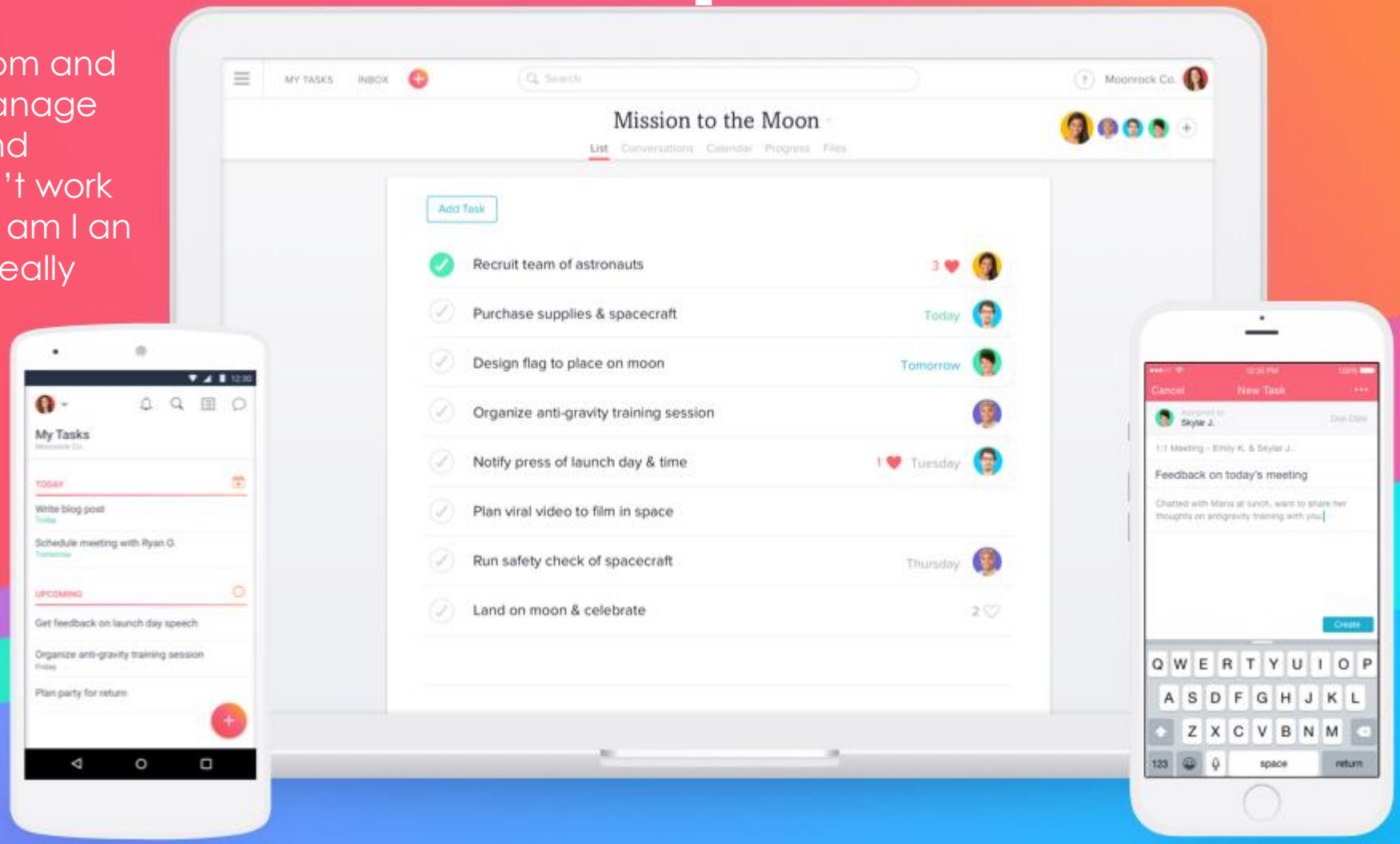
1. I start the day looking over my daily to-do list and doing a brain dump.

2. I then compare my to-do's with my meeting schedule to see what's feasible. I then schedule time for each to-do based on my typical energy levels.

3. I mark things complete as I finish them and add new tasks (*that take longer than 5 min*) as I get them.

4. At the end of the day I review my task list to see what's left and I add it to a list for another day.

As I mentioned before, I use Asana.com to manage all my tasks for both professional and personal projects.

Bonus Tip: Use asana!

I use asana.com and the app to manage all my tasks and projects. I don't work for asana, nor am I an affiliate. I just really love their tool.