



A blog for young professionals working their way through the trenches.

When's the last time you prioritised yourself?

May 3, 2022 by Mark Atkinson — [Leave a Comment](#)



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As a young professional, you know that working in professional services is tough. It's hard work and it can feel super draining.

Every slavery analogy you see on audit/consulting subreddits gets you one step closer to handing in your resignation and trying to become a travel blogger from a beach in Singapore. I get it, I've lived it.

Now, time for two wildly unpopular questions:

1. How much of your time is actually spent productively?
2. Do we blame life in professional services too quickly for our own procrastination/misplaced priorities?

Before you roll your eyes, unsubscribe and buy a Mark-shaped voodoo doll to torture, hear me out.

I'm a *relatively* stubborn guy, but it only took Andy Frisella and his numerous expletives 75 days to have me asking "what on earth was I doing with my time before?!"

Who is Andy Frisella, you ask? Well, he's an American entrepreneur, podcast host and creator of the 75Hard challenge; the latter being the thing that really had me wondering whether my angst towards a career in professional services had been misplaced.

Introducing 75Hard, the not-a-fitness-challenge challenge

"I'm starting 75Hard today" a message from my friend Natalie said, dated August 16th 2021. Mark: *"Huh. What's 75Hard? Let me check it out."*

Less than 24 hours later and I'd started 75Hard too, not knowing how dramatically it'd change my life and view of the world.

75Hard is – first and foremost – a mental toughness challenge. Extremely simple by design but extraordinarily difficult to get right. The challenge entails 75 days of doing 6 things every single day for 75 days. The things are:



1. **2 x 45-minute workouts**, one of which must be outside: It doesn't matter what workouts you do as long as you push yourself. Mine were mostly a walk/jog in the mornings and some form of HIIT/strength training in the evenings.
2. **Follow a diet**: The diet itself is not prescribed, but it should be one designed to challenge you. I calorie counted and cut out all junk/fast food.
3. **Drink 1 gallon (~4 litres) of water**: If it sounds like a lot, that's because it is a lot. But it's also not if you're starting early in the day and doing the workouts.
4. **Take a progress photo**: Every single day. Primarily there to remind us all that it's the little things that matter and that consistency is key.
5. **Read 10 pages** of a self-help/educational book.
6. **Avoid alcohol or cheat meals**. You're not allowed even one.

If you mess up – even in a little way – on any of the above, you start again on day 1.

Workout was only 42 minutes, not 45? Day 1...

Drank 3.5 litres of water and not 4? Day 1...

Fell asleep after 8 pages? Day 1...

not competing against anyone else and only you will know if you've cheated the program. The idea behind the program is that – broadly speaking – we're all addicted to comfort and incredibly bad at prioritising the important things in our life consistently. 75Hard is designed to break your bad habits and teach you that sometimes you've just gotta do things because they're good for you.

While this is not a fitness challenge, it obviously can have some very clear benefits for your health and wellbeing. I was stubborn enough to complete the challenge on my first attempt. My last day was November 1st, and the summary of my 75 days is as follows:

- 13.5kgs lost
- Over 900,000 steps walked (> 10,000 every day)
- 4 books finished (I previously struggled to read 4 in a year!)
- Dramatically improved flexibility and conditioning (I did quite a bit of yoga and pilates, something I'd never really done!)
- Completed a Udemy course on coding in Python. (This wasn't a requirement, but a personal goal of mine for the 75 days)
- Boundless energy unlocked

If it's not on Insta it didn't happen

Here's the kicker: I did this challenge through an audit busy season.

Why I'm telling you this

I love reflecting on my progress but that's not why you're reading this. Aside from all the great benefits above, the biggest takeaway I got from doing 75Hard was:

"Holy shit, it is possible to live a healthy lifestyle (and do other stuff like learn Python) while working in professional services."

Seriously, I must have been wasting an incredible amount of time and energy before. All I know is that with a bit of compromise and a "suck it up" attitude, I was able to do all those extra things. *Every. Single. Day.*

I'm also not special. If you spend any time on r/75Hard you'll see people doing this challenge who have kids, people with jobs that are far more demanding than our cushy desk jobs, and even people with fewer limbs than the majority of us. Heck, even my own mother finished it (on her 2nd attempt) losing 30kgs over a total of 138 days. *(Nice work mom!)*

Andy Frisella and 75Hard taught me that I'm really good at procrastinating and making excuses but that if I really wanted to prioritise myself, I could.

So, how are you prioritising yourself?

Ultimately, it's actually about deciding what's important to you. Does it really need to be one or the other? Why can't we work for great organisations *and* live healthy, balanced lives?

This is absolutely not to say that you should go out and start 75Hard today. You can, but you should know that it **will** suck (at least for the first few weeks) and it **will** require waking up at the crack of dawn every day. It's the sort of discipline I need in my life but I'm the first to admit that it's definitely not for everybody.

There are many ways to introduce good habits to your life without going to this extent. All it takes is you deciding to prioritise yourself a little more often and communicating more openly with our leaders.

The first step is acknowledging that we're all a little addicted to comfort. The next is deciding to do something about it.

P.S. If you are interested in trying 75Hard, I recommend starting with Andy's podcast.

P.P.S. Shoutout to Nat who introduced me to the challenge in the first place! It's difficult to describe how much of an impact those 4 words had on me!

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Mark Atkinson

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Editor & author at Trench Life

Mark spends his days at a big-four audit firm trying to help juniors navigate what can seem like a daunting environment, where you feel clueless on a day to day basis (i.e. The trench)

In his spare time, he enjoys writing, gaming and a beer or three.

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We've got serious, we've got funny and we've got motivational. Take your pick and remember we'd love to hear your very own story from the trenches!

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