

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

Tabata My Job

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Although I'm lucky enough to work out primarily with kindred spirits at CrossFit NYC, a few times a week I head around the corner from my apartment to a "commercial" gym. When I do—gasping my way through the WOD—I'm inevitably met with uncomprehending stares, as though an alien had suddenly descended from the sky and plopped itself down in front of the pull-up bar.

But if my ways seem strange to my gymmates, theirs are equally bewildering to me: hours-long sessions spent wandering the floor, punctuated by short sets of preacher curls or goes at the hip-adductor machine. How, I wonder, can people work, day in and day out, so inefficiently? The answer, I recently realized, is practice.

And not just at the gym. Studies show that the average American worker spends ten hours a day at the office, yet, after chatting with colleagues, surfing the web, and strolling to the water cooler, accomplishes just one and a half hours of actual work. In other words, 85 percent of the time most people spend at the office goes completely down the drain.

Like most CrossFit converts, I was initially drawn in by the brutal efficiency of the approach: such little time, such great results. Which is why, marveling one day at the comparative inefficiency of the gym-goers around me, I started to wonder if what flows into the gym also flows back out. If most people bring bad habits from work to working out, could I take good, CrossFit-instilled habits in the opposite direction? Could I Tabata my job?

Bottom-to-bottom Tabata squats are, in my mind, one of the purest expressions of



http://www.crossfit.com/cf-video/bottom-to-bottom_1.mpg

CrossFit, perfect examples of what, at CFNYC, we joke about as the First Law of the WOD: If it looks easy on paper, you're probably screwed. Before you've tried B2Bs yourself, it's nearly impossible to believe that four minutes is long enough to have any noticeable fitness effect. After, it's equally impossible to believe you survived those four minutes.

So, the Tabata protocol seemed an obvious first place to look for CrossFit insight that might translate to the office. At its heart, Tabata is simple: eight brief intervals of very intense effort, separated by an equal number of even briefer intervals of rest. As twenty seconds of job productivity seemed slight even by my procrastinatory, distraction-prone standards, I decided to stick with the idea but adjust the time-frames, bumping them up to ten minutes work, five minutes rest. Eight intervals, then, take exactly two hours.

Here's how it works: Take the eight tasks at the top of your to-do list. This is important. Don't cherry-pick tasks, as it leaves the ones you don't want to face floating on your list for weeks on end. As painful as each B2B Tabata interval may be, it's also brief enough to be endurable; the same goes for ten minutes of any of your work tasks. Whip your interval timer out of your gym bag, and set it for eight ten-minute/five-minute repeats. Fire it up, and jump in on the first task.

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Tabata My Job (continued...)

When the bell chimes, stop. Seriously, stop. It doesn't matter if you aren't finished. Just put down what you're doing. You'll get to it later that day, or, for painful, avoided tasks, in the next day's Tabata pass. Then spend five minutes goofing off. Surf the web, hit the bathroom, fire spitballs at the obnoxious guy two cubicles over. It doesn't matter what you do, so long as it's not work.

But, once the timer next beeps, immediately jump back in for task number two. Hit it hard, knowing that, as soon as you start, you're literally just minutes from moving on.

Rinse and repeat until you've made it through the two-hour block.

Sure, it doesn't sound like much. But the first morning I tried it, Tabata My Job helped me blow through more work in two hours than I had in whole days the week prior. Even better, it allowed me to cross off several tasks that had long been looming at the top of my list. In fact, in future Tabata runs, I discovered that many of the scariest tasks were actually remarkably brief—well within ten minutes—once I finally buckled down and jumped in.

By the end of the first week, Tabata My Job had become a daily fixture. I took to blocking out 10:00 am to noon on my calendar and avoided taking calls or scheduling meetings in that window. That way, no matter how badly any day fell apart, at least I'd have logged focused work on eight separate items.

Following my lead, a few fellow execs took to daily Tabata My Job intervals as well, all with similarly stunning results. Just as at the gym, functional and intense seem to be universally effective precepts at the office. And just as regular CrossFitting seems to leave most people even more likely to put their fitness to use during the rest of the day, a morning Tabata My Job actually left us all more likely to crank through other to-do's throughout the afternoon.

Of course, along with function and intensity, CrossFit stands equally on the third pillar of variety. So, over time, we've begun to explore other potential CrossFit-crossovers, in the hopes of achieving even greater results by mixing things up. As those ideas are still

works in black-box-testing progress, they'll have to wait for future journals or message board discussions. But, suffice it to say, the Tabata My Job success has left me looking at CrossFit in a whole new light. It's no longer a way of thinking I employ just when working out, but one I'm trying to put to work (and play) throughout all of life.

Along with [CrossFit NYC](#), Joshua Newman runs Cyan Pictures + Long Tail Releasing, a movie production and distribution company.