

# How I keep my 9-5 on track

*As a brand partnerships manager by day and DJ by night, how does Mercedes Benson keep both jobs in the mix?*

“I was in my third year at university, studying biomedical science when I attended a Beyoncé concert. ‘I want to be behind the scenes,’ I remember thinking. ‘I want to be in the space where they create moments like this.’”

Web searches and numerous phone calls to HR departments led me to work experience at Adidas. It was amazing. I was in a team with a lot of black women — people who looked like me — in a world I never knew existed.

At the end of my work experience I decided to drop out of university. It was quite a difficult decision to make as education played an important role in my upbringing. But life is about seeing opportunities and saying ‘yes’ to them, so I went for it.

I took on paid and unpaid internships across PR and marketing to learn the industry from grassroots level. I forged strong relationships with my line managers, asking for advice over breakfast meetings and getting them to look through my CV.

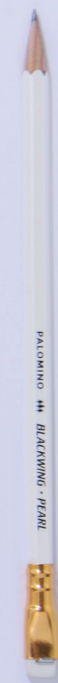
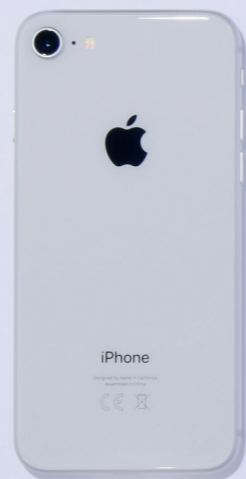
Eventually, I got my foot in the door at Puma, in its entertainment marketing division. It came full circle when Adidas offered me a role in the same department I had my work experience in. I later worked for Google and now act as a brand partnerships manager for a

global lifestyle company — and that’s just my day job. My side hustle is a business called FutureSNDS. It’s a music platform that caters to emerging artists from around the world. We put on gigs in London — ‘celebrating music, curating special moments’ is our tagline. Alongside that, I DJ, playing my favourite music.

To get everything done — and have a side hustle — you have to be organised. I attended productivity sessions which helped with time management. I’m a listicle queen and write a lot of lists because it feels great crossing my achievements off. I put everything on my phone calendar: if it’s not there, it’s not happening.

Start early, that’s also my advice. I’ve begun a new regime and three times a week I go to the gym first thing as exercise helps me focus.

I’m quite methodical with my time, so mornings are reserved for emails — to give people a chance to respond — while I plan meetings for afternoons, so I’ve had time to work out what I want them to achieve. I usually request Google Hangout



meetings or phone calls as so much time is wasted travelling to meet someone.

I work my 9-5 job from home, and then I have what I call my 5-9 — my gigs and DJ sets. I prepare for those at the weekend.

I wish I could have an hour off between jobs during the week as it would give me time to fit in a run and help me re-energise.

Ultimately, the way to be most productive is to have purpose: to keep asking yourself why you’re doing a particular task and what you want from it, so it becomes an achievable goal. That way, you’re always getting results — which drives you to do more.”

## Reflect and find the time for focusing



**Nikki Armytage-Foy is a leadership coach and founder of international coaching business Electric Woman**

For busy people like Mercedes, there are a few pointers to maximise efficiency...

### 1 Note down achievements

If you spend a lot of time thinking about what you need to do, it’s also very beneficial to spend five minutes at the end of each day reflecting on what has been achieved. This will show how productive a day has been.

### 2 Learn to delegate

Take an honest look at your to-do list and work out what

you have time for. Split this into your strengths and your weaknesses, and if you struggle with the task or can admit that it’s not your strong point, then delegate it out to someone else.

### 3 Find time to focus

Five to 10 minutes of stillness each morning can help set us up for the day. During this time, I would advise thinking about what you want to achieve that day, rather than diligently following a “to do” list. It helps reprioritise.



### Fancy a 4pm finish?

For the third year running, Red Bull is challenging the nation to be more productive and finish work early on Friday, 14 September to have more time for the things you love. Get involved at [RedBull.co.uk/4pmFinish](http://RedBull.co.uk/4pmFinish) and share your commitment to a #4pmFinish.

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