**Identify Your Power Hour - Triple Efficiency with Laser Focus**

**Male speaker**: Welcome to the Chalene Show.

**Chalene Johnson**: All right, let’s get to work. This episode is all about finding your magical sweet spot, that perfect hour of the day. For you, too, as Gary Vaynerchuk would say, crush it.

You might be interested to know that this is the third episode in a series, a series I’ve been doing on focus and efficiency. Now don’t worry, you can listen to them in any order, so it’s not like you’re going to get messed up by listening to this one and not having listened to the two previous**.** And here’s the cool stuff. I can send you the cliff notes for this episode and the two previous ones right to your cell phone, like right now. Dude, how cool is that?

In fact, you can keep the show playing. All you have to do is hit the little button on your cell phone, your smartphone, that takes you back to your home screen. You open up your text messages. Are you doing this? Do it. Hello. I’m waiting. Open up your text message, act as though you’re about to send a new message, and then enter this phone number, 949-565-4337, and then text me one word, the word “laser”. Send that to that number and if you missed it, I’ll put it in the show notes, right in the description on iTunes and of course it will be in my show notes. But**,** like, it’s a lot easier way for you to have the notes right there while you’re listening. And, of course, that will help you to implement these changes as quickly as possible.

This episode has been designed to help you identify which hour of the day is your power hour, the time of the day where you are best able to focus. Now, you’ll understand how to maximize that time and protect your creativity and get the mental mojo, and to get done what normally people take three to four hours to do, you’ll be able to do that in one hour if you know what the time is. And then, of course, if you apply the steps from my previous episodes on how to create an environment that allows you to focus.

Now, just to recap, if you haven’t listened to those two previous episodes, the first one was how to organize your brain and focus like a laser. And that one really helped you understand the neuroscience, like what’s happening in our brains, how our environments and technology have changed tremendously, dramatically, and our brains have not evolved at the same pace as technology. Surprise, surprise.

And then in the following episode, I talked about all the ways that you can really master your environment. Like, yeah, technology is very distracting but there are things we can and should be doing if we don’t want to spend the entire day working.

Now, the moment I finished the last episode, talking about environment and the things that distract us, I realized I left out one really important tip. So before we get into finding that perfect sweet spot, perfect hour for you, let me give you this one last efficiency tip that’s going to help you to be focused in that special hour once you’ve determined what that hour is. And then don’t forget perhaps the most potentially damaging and distracting of all time robbers is, in fact, your Internet browser. Nothing is more distracting or worse for your focus than trying to get things done while you’re on the Internet. Holy cow! Have advertisers and marketers and I know I’m in that group too. I know I’m trying to get your attention as well. But, man, oh, man, the Internet is the most dangerous place to be if you’re trying to focus.

So, what if you have to be doing work that’s on the Internet? Well, I’m going to challenge you to ask yourself, “Could I do this task offline and then when it’s complete, load it online?” So in other words, if you’re writing a blog post, get off the Internet. Just open up a Word Document and write your blog. If you’re recording a podcast, turn off your Internet browser. If you’re doing research, first, come up with a list of all of the questions you need to research. Then, only open up one tab. The next time you have to go on the Internet to do work, work, W-O-R-K for your J-O-B, only open up one tab. See what happens.

And yes, sometimes with just one tab open, you’re still going to find distractions. I mean, even today while I was doing some research for this show. I’m on the Internet, I’m trying to apply all of these techniques and sure enough, there it is in my sidebar, things that I had been browsing the night before online that were probably sitting in my shopping cart and suddenly, that website was following me everywhere I went online. I could see in the sidebar what’s called retargeting. That means I’ve gone to a website to do some online shopping, and then I decided I’m not going to buy it, and then I go back to Google and lo and behold in the sidebar, there are the shoes I was just looking at. You’ve probably seen this happening. You’re going to see more and more and more of it.

If you are online, there’s flashing lights and retargeting ads and links and all kinds of things to distract you. Whenever possible, get offline. There’s really two ways to focus. The first of which is to eliminate or minimize distractions. And the second is to really get in touch with when your brain is at its peak, when you’re able to focus your best.

Now for each person, that’s different. For some of you, you get really creative and really focused late at night. And there are others listening who you do your best work first thing in the morning. And for some of you, you need to exercise, have your breakfast, meditate, read a paper, go through a whole series of morning rituals before you really feel your brainpower kicking in.

I’m not going to tell you what time of the day is best for you. I can tell you that research tends to support that most people find the early part of their morning is the time when they are best able to focus. But research and statistics are kind of pointless if it doesn’t apply to you. There are some people who don’t get creative until 11 o’clock at night. And I just believe that each one of us has a little different biorhythm.

For me, personally, I start to get crazy creative around 11 AM. And then I have another jolt pretty late in the evening like around 8 or 9. But for me, it’s learning to keep myself accountable so that I don’t go back to work in the evenings. And the way that I can do that and resist that temptation is by getting the thing that I need to get done in the morning where I have no distractions.

So that second key piece is really understanding when you are the most focused because that’s when your brain is most likely and most comfortable to be operating in the central executive mode. That’s when our cognitive skills are the strongest.

So now, you’re off the Internet and you’ve reviewed the notes from my last episode or you’ve listened to that show and you’ve figured out how to create the perfect environment so there are no distractions. You can really get to business, get work done, and crush it. Because nobody wants to work all day, right? I mean, even if you’re in an office environment working for someone else, if you can be more productive, dude, that means you are more valuable. And valuable employees hold all the cards. You’re the ones who get to ask for the raise, you get to set your own hours, and you call the shots. The more productive you are, the more valuable you are. Not just as an entrepreneur, but as member of your family, as a member of a team. So we’ve got to figure out how to make you most efficient not just by creating an environment where you’re able to focus, but also to identify the time of the day that your mojo is at its highest.

Now, I like to call this your power hour even though you’re going to hear shortly that I’m not going to ask you to stay focused for a full hour. Some people call it circadian rhythms. It’s like this natural biorhythm that all us experience, like you can feel certain points of the day where your energy is high and your brain is at its peak. And ironically, there’s lots of research on this. But again, as I’ve said before, research is only a statistic and it doesn’t necessarily mean that it matches your own personal experience. So, most research seem to support that around 4:30 in the afternoon is when most all of us are at our least productive. Not surprising, huh?

The fact remains that our brains kind of keep a timetable and it’s very hard to change that timetable or to fight it. You’re either a morning person or you’re not. You are either a night owl or you’re not. Everyone has their own biorhythms. Whether your personal schedule matches your biorhythms or not, it still pays to understand your mind’s ability to focus and be most effective. Well, it fluctuates during the course of the day, so even if you can’t match your personal schedule to it, at least knowing when that is is going to help you tremendously.

So, research does show that the most common time for people to want to get started on work is first thing in the morning. However, there’s also a lot of scientific reasoning to support that our most creative time is in fact later in the evening, around 10 PM. Now, people who responded in this research study also said that they were least creative, as I said, around 4:30 PM. And that they also found that they had a lot of ideas coming to them in the morning while they were showering or getting ready or just thinking, which also tends to support the idea that when we are not able to work – think about it. When you’re taking a shower, you’re not on your phone. You can’t be looking at your desktop computer. Hopefully you’re not watching TV. You’re just thinking. And what we know about that is when we remove distractions and we just are able to think, that’s when we become really creative.

But aside from just being creative, you’ve also got to figure out when is the hour when you can focus the most, like you could really do your best work. In other words, by figuring out what that hour of the day is, you don’t want to waste that hour doing dumb things. You know what I mean? Like if you’ve figured out that when you are the most focused and you’ve got the most mental mojo and energy, let’s say you figured that’s around 11 AM or maybe it’s 10 PM, just by using that extra hour to work on your business, to work on your dream or to do some really important work, knowing that that’s the time of the day that’s most critical for you, well, if nothing else, you can avoid doing really dumb things during that same hour.

And I don’t mean to say that anything is dumb, but you know what I mean. Like things are less important, like surfing the Web or shopping online or playing games on your phone, like watching reality TV, that stuff that you should not be doing when you’re really able to focus. By harnessing your peak productivity time, your sweet spot, that’s how you can really get ahead.

Even if you have a set number of hours that you have to put in at work each day or on your business, just by shifting more menial kind of boring mindless tasks to those hours of the day where you’re less focused, that alone will free you up so that during that time when you really can focus, you can use your time to do your very best work.

Another great example of something you should not be doing during that hour where you’re super focused is going through your inbox. Like I’m about to go on a rant right now, so someone better just calm me down. As you know, I don’t love email. In fact, my record has been nine days, and this week, I beat my own record. I went 11 days without going through my inbox.

Now, that doesn’t mean that I never sent an email in the last 11 days. It means I didn’t open my inbox once over the last 11 days. My assistant Kristingoes through my inbox and there were just a couple of things this week that she’s like, “You need to respond to this.” And she forwarded them to me on my phone to my text messaging so that I knew specifically what to search for so I didn’t actually open up my inbox and see all of those other people’s agendas staring at me in the face. I mean, that’s the problem with your inbox is it’s going to distract you. It’s emails from other people who want you to focus on what’s important to them. To most effectively use your power hour, you’ve got to make sure that your time is focused solely on the one most important thing you need to do today to move you forward towards your goals. One thing. One activity. One thing you focus on.

Now, I call it your power hour but specifically, I’ve always worked in 45-minute cycles. So, I work an hour but here’s how I divide it up. I go 45 minutes of concentration with a 15-minute break. DeskTime, which is a productivity app that tracks employees’ computer use and puts that data together to study how productive workers are, what they found is that the highest performing individuals in any industry tend to work 52 minutes in an hour, followed by a 17-minute break. Those were the most efficient, most productive members of any team, isn’t that crazy, because those 17 minutes were often spent away from their desk, away from the computer, very interesting.

And then in 1999, Cornell University did some research. And they used a computer program to remind workers to take breaks. The project ended. And those workers who had received alerts, reminding them to actually stop working, those workers were 13 percent more accurate and effective on their work than people who were not reminded to take a break.

Okay. So, here’s your action step, pull out your phone. And once you figured out what your best most focused hour is, I want you to set an alarm for your start time and an alarm for your finish time. Now, I used an app called, well it’s a website and an app, If This Then That. You’ve heard me mention it on many other episodes, If This Then That. And the website is ifttt.com. That’s three T’s in a row.

And what it allows me to do is say if it is 11:00 AM, then send me a text message to my phone that says, “Chalene, put everything aside and focus on one thing. And then, I have another reminder that comes in and tells me to take a break.

Now, it’s very important that you plan your break specifically. Listen closely. You’ve got to get up, you’ve got to get up and move. You’ve got to move to a new location. You have to do something physical, take a walk, stretch, grab a foam roller and roll out some of those sore muscles, keep an exercise ball nearby and do 10 minutes worth of crunches or go ahead and, you know, throw your legs up against the wall and start working on your hand stands.

Well, I guess that might not be that practical. I mean, unless you work in our office. That would be totally acceptable at Team Johnson. Team Johnson is all about taking physical brakes. We all work out together. In fact, on Friday, we’re all going to go take a cycling class together. And then, we’ll probably do a two or three-hour pow wow after our cycling class. We’ll go to this little local organic restaurant around the corner called Greenleaf. We love it.

And we’ll just sit there and have a good time. And we’ll talk about what went right and what went wrong at SMART Success, how we can improve upon our systems. And then, we’ll take a little break. And we’ll eat. And then we’ll meet a little bit longer about other things. But the idea here is it’s never more than 45 minutes of focus. And then you got to break for 15 minutes. You got to get up and do something.

Other than doing something physical to recharge your brain to replenish your glucose stores within your brain, so that you can focus again, other than doing something physical, the next best thing that you can do is just sit and look at nature.

Yeah, it’s called daydreaming. And I know it sounds odd because that was the kid that always got in trouble in school, right? The kid who was looking out the window, watching what was happening at recess or just staring off at the trees. That kid always got in trouble for daydreaming, but that kid is probably a multimillionaire now, because you do your very best most creative work when you can just daydream, brain storm where there’s no distractions. That’s why, that’s why all of your best ideas come to you while you’re resting, just before you fall asleep at night, while you’re in the shower.

They are times when you don’t have a phone in your hand. You’re not looking at your desktop computer. So, spend 15 minutes. Here you go, permission. I’m going to write you a permission slip to take 15 minutes out of every hour of your focus. And just do something that’s brainless. Because then, when you return into another 45 minutes, if you’ve got the ability to do that, you’re going to be that much more able to crush it.

The next thing I want you to do is to create a focus declaration. Here’s what it entails. It starts with the things that you will not be doing during this time, things that normally you do to procrastinate or waste time. You know the deal. I don’t even have to call you out on this. It’s looking at other people’s stuff on Instagram and on Facebook. It’s online shopping. It’s playing games on your phone, it’s wading through emails, it’s folding laundry, it’s cleaning, it’s all over the things that we do that I call “Destination Procrastination.”

Now, in your declaration of productivity, I just want you to list the things that you will not do during that hour. Your phone goes on airplane mode, you’re only going to open up one tab on your Internet browser or try to go offline if you can. You’re going to eliminate all distractions. And you’re not going to spend any time doing things that are, you know, a normal part of your day but they’re pretty mindless. They don’t require your mental focus. It doesn’t require your mental focus to return emails or to enter data. I’m talking about the really important stuff, the stuff that requires you to be on point.

Now, part of your declaration is also to say I will only work on one thing, and one thing only, during this 45 minutes chunk of time. That’s it, just one thing. Can you handle that? Once you’ve determined what time of day you feel the most creative. What time of day your juices are really flowing and you’re able to concentrate, now, what I want you to do is everything in your power to make sure there are no distractions during that timeframe.

Now, what we do know about our brains is we don’t like to focus on one thing from more than about 45 minutes to an hour. So, it’s no coincidence if you look at most school schedules, the school systems have figured out that that’s the system that produces the best results, if we’re changing subjects every 45 to 50 minutes. You should do the same.

So, especially if you’re working on your dream, if you’re working on your big goal and during the day, you have your regular job, if you can spend your lunch hour just 45 minutes without any distractions working on your dream, that’s the equivalent of spending about six hours doing the same thing with distractions all around you, kind of crazy.

Now, what if you could go home and spend another 45 minutes in the evening or even two 45-minute blocks back to back, just a little 15 minute break in between to just walk around, do a little bit of daydreaming, not get too distracted, not get into something new but just take a mental break, kind of cleansing your mental pallet, and then, going back to work.

So, again, to recap, two hours of concentrated work with a 15 minute break somewhere in the middle. Ideally, you don’t want to spend more than 45 minutes on one project at a time or your brain just tends to fatigue. You should set this up so there is zero distraction.

Now, just be creative about this. I mean, if you’ve got a boss, if I’m the boss and you come into me and you’re like, “Hey, Chalene, yo, I can be way, way more productive for you if you’re cool with me closing the office door and I’m going to put my phone on Do Not Disturb, but I’m going to put my nose down and get this project done. But I want everybody’s cooperation. If you are my employee and you said that, like, “Dude, go for it.”

As a matter of fact, Lauren Muchko, who happens to run the show at Team Johnson, she’s our go-to girl. I know that a lot of her work requires focused concentration. And we have a very small really totally cool, very interesting office staff, which means, you know, there’s great conversations, fun outfits and cool things to talk about every single day.

So, I said to Lauren, “How are you able to do this yourself? How are you able to really shut out all distractions and just focus on writing or your work?” I mean, a lot of what she does is technical. So, if there’s a glitch, it can throw off thousands of people. She said, “Yeah, you know what, it’s difficult, it’s tough. My office doors are all glass. And I can hear conversations. And people often need me.” And so, I said, “Lauren, one day a week, I want you to stay home and just write, create an environment, whatever you need to be super productive.” I think if you make that case to your boss and then you can follow through with the results, I mean, who would say no to that?

For those of you who are thinking about starting your own business, you’re building your dream or maybe you’ve started your own business and it’s just not going anywhere and you feel like you’re working all the time, you probably are. Stop trying to work it all the time by toggling back and forth, and back and forth, and back and forth. You can never get in the flow, you can never get in the zone. Dude, get in the zone. Create a 45-minute block and just do one thing.

Now, for my last and final tip and this one is huge. It is huge, H-U-G-E. Huge, gigantic, ginormous. This is a game changer, you’re going to write this phrase down. Are you ready? I am going to focus on one thing and one thing only for the next 45 minutes. If you write that phrase down and you look at it before you start your 45-minute block of time, you’ll start to engrain that theory into your brain. One thing, do one thing exceptionally well, focus on it, get it done. And you will blow through your to do list. You will become so much more efficient. And when become more efficient, you use time better. And what does that do? It gives you more time.

Then my friends, it’s up to you if you’re going to fill that with more work or actually live, actually be with people, be present. No more of this 10 minutes here, and 10 minutes there, and 20 minutes there. That’s why you feel so exhausted at the end of the day, because you’re going back and forth, and back and forth, and back and forth. And all of these decisions are being thrust at you.

If you want to know more about how our brains work and how critical it is that we make these changes, I urge you to listen to the episode just prior to this one. The title of that episode is “How to have an organized brain?” The inspiration behind that episode is a phenomenal book I want to recommend to you called *The Organized Brain* by Daniel Levitin. I hope I said his name correctly. I mispronounce it all the time. Phenomenal book written by a neuroscientist, but I think that program, just prior to this one will really inspire you. In fact, it will motivate you to start making these changes. Our brains were not meant to multitask. We are not supposed to be filtering out so much information at once all day long. We’ve got to change that. And you will feel this flood of happiness when you’re able to focus intently on just one thing.

If you’d like the notes to this episode or the previous episode, all you have to do is save this phone number to your phone. It is 949-565-4337. The notes for this episode, you just text me the word “Laser”, L-A-S-E-R. And you’ll immediately receive a text reply with how to get the show notes, very, very simple, as well as an outline that you can follow along and fill out in your own handwriting, because we know that really helps the learning process, not just the learning process, but the cognitive association that allows us to implement these things and actually make a change.

In other words, we start to process the information when we write down the words in our own hands. This step is crazy cool. It’s those little teeny tiny things, this little hacks as their called that make us better, like one little percentage at a time. Can you imagine if you just got 1 percent better today and the next day, another one percent? A hundred days from now, you’d be a 100 percent better human being. I don’t even know how that’s possible. You know why, because you are a 100 percent the bomb dot com. That’s right, baby.

I hope you love this episode, but I have no way of knowing, unless I hear from you. So, leave me a voice mail message. I love them. I look forward to them. Every day I wake up and I hit refresh because that’s how I know what stuff you like and what’s going on in your world. And I just feel so connected when I get your messages. So, thank you for leaving those. And I love it when you guys call and you’re like in the middle of like an epiphany. And I can hear your happy tears, it’s just awesome. I just feel super connected to you. And I want to thank you for those.

You can leave me your own message by going to chalenejohnson.com/podcast. There’s an app on that page that allows you to leave me a message. It’s called SpeakPipe. And it will give me a voice mail recording that you can leave from your phone that goes directly to me. And it’s just awesome. It’s how I know what you’re thinking about the show and what’s going on in your life. So, until we have a chance to spend some time together again, I just want you to know how much I appreciate you.

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