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Work Smarter

How Time Slips Away

People often wonder where the time goes. Seldom they get as much done as planned. Sometimes (hopefully not often) people really do “waste” time. Most often, even the best time managers develop “leaks” that allow time to slip away. These time wasters add up. Here are the 11 most common “time wasters.”

1. Starting a job without thinking it through. Save time by deciding what to do (step by step) before beginning a job.
2. Doing things by habit. Many do tasks a certain way because they’ve always done that way. Look at procedures and processes and change unnecessary or unproductive methods.
3. Keeping too many records. A lot of records are required, but many are not especially those we keep for ourselves.
4. Paying too much attention to unimportant items. Be productive. Little tasks must be done, but do them in little time. Concentrate efforts and time on major tasks that contribute to getting the job done.
5. Failing to anticipate a crisis. According to Murphy’s Law, what can go wrong will. Use quiet time to prepare for the unexpected. The best plan is to use this time to build or strengthen teamwork skills.
6. Making unnecessary phone calls or visits. Often they are an excuse to avoid another task. Don’t get caught in the trap of talking about work to avoid work.
7. Socializing too much. Watch yourself and your employees. Socializing can be productive, but keep it short.
8. Failing to guard against interruption. Don’t be isolated, but, don’t allow people to walk-in either. Find a middle ground that allows people access and allows quiet time for work.
9. Don’t things that should be delegated. This is often a supervisor’s worst fault and biggest time leak. Supervisors know what can be delegated and know it is important. Just do it.
10. Failing to plan regularly with the boss. Adding something to the job can improve its quality. However, ensure that the added work adds value to the final product.
11. Doing things that aren’t part of the job. It happens, and can’t be entirely eliminated, but managers can control it. Managers must set the example and show that their work and time is company work and company time.

Many will see a time leak on this list that applies to them. Use these tips to make time more productive.

Source:

Ferguson, Larry, *Work Smarter*, Technology Transfer Quarterly, Florida Department of Transportation, February 1995.