



TOP 7 REASONS WE DON'T GET MORE DONE AT WORK

For the past 6 months we've had one question on our minds – what stops people getting what they need to do done at work? Insanely curious, we asked anyone we've had a conversation with during this time.*

In this report we've highlighted the key findings and organised the results according to how much people said their productivity was impacted. Also included are some of the comments shared as well as some suggestions for overcoming each challenge.

What are your top 7?

** 527 people who go to work, including employed and self employed, across a variety of industries and geographies. Data captured through face to face conversations as well as comments sent via email and social media.*

No 1 Meetings

93%

Is it any surprise that the number one blocker to productivity in the workplace is meeting attendance? It seems counterintuitive though – we need meetings to bring people together for decision-making, collaboration and good old information sharing. The trouble is the way meetings are managed can make all the difference between those that contribute to productivity and those that blatantly take it away.

“Too many meetings”

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“Time wasted in meetings”

“Over-run meetings”

“lack of decision making in meetings”

Three questions to ask when a meeting request pops up:

- What is the purpose of the meeting?
- Do I really need to be there?
- If yes, what can I do to make sure the meeting is managed more effectively so the purpose of the meeting is truly served?

No 2

Emails

88%

Love it or hate it, there's no doubt about it, email has changed the way we communicate forever. Problems arise when it appears to be the ONLY way to communicate and others feel it's a way to tell us everything. The inbox quickly fills up.

“too many emails”

“it just NEVER stops!”

“feel like I have to deal with them straight away.”

The reason email rates so highly as a time stealer is perhaps less to do with the volume and frequency of information we receive and more to do with how we react to it. Is it possible to have an empty inbox? Do you care?

Here are some quick wins for managing a monster of a mailbox:

- **Dedicate certain times in the day** when you choose to review recent emails. We realise that the frequency will depend on the part email



plays in providing information that's essential for your work. Challenge yourself to create some clear space between doing work and checking emails. This is the first step towards taking back control.

- **Create a system** – whenever recent emails are reviewed try following the 3 Rs:
 - Refuse - ie it's for the bin;
 - Reply now - only allowed if it takes less than 2 minutes to respond;
 - Read later - set up a flagging system or put into folders, email software these days has lots of tools to help us get organised. Then dedicate some time at another juncture in the day to address emails that need more focused attention.
- **Stick to your commitment** – work on your willpower muscle to stick to whatever email management system you decide. You'll be amazed how email volume reduces as colleagues suddenly realise that you don't respond to them straight away or out of working hours – they'll find another way to get your attention if they really need to!

No 3

Too Tired

73%

We all know that it's not just enough to be willing to do the work, we've got to be able too. Tiredness came up as one of the top 3 reasons why people aren't getting enough done when they sit down at their desks.

"Going to bed too late means tired the next day means I don't work as fast"

"When I'm tired, I really struggle to focus."

"Tiredness, which means I drink a lot more coffee."



Sleep is of course something many of us struggle with and there are many factors that impact our chances of getting a good night's kip – young children, a restless mind not to mention a busy social life. Starting the day before, what can we do to make sure we get the zzzzzzz we need to set ourselves up for a more productive next day? Your next day self will thank you!

- What time would you like to rise tomorrow?
- How much sleep to you need to thrive? Forget about the myth of being able to survive on 4 hours sleep a night, most adults need between 7 and 8 hours of quality sleep every night.
- Based on the answer to questions 1 and 2, set your bedtime and stick to it! Treating it like an appointment and creating an environment and personal practices that support a gentle transition to the land of nod are key.

Ready for a bit of science? Timing your sleep is like timing an investment in the stock market – it doesn't matter how much you invest, it matters when you invest. The deepest and most regenerative sleep occurs between 10 p.m. - 2 a.m. After 2am, sleep becomes more superficial. A body that is chronically deprived of the regenerative sleep between 10 p.m. - 2 a.m., may still feel fatigued next morning.



No 4 Personal Motivation

66%

What goes on between the ears has a lot to answer for when it comes to our ability to be productive. Our thoughts drive our feelings, which in turn drive our behaviours. When goals are unclear or more importantly we're not inspired by the part we need to play to get there, procrastination thrives and productivity suffers.

"Me being lazy, Me being lazy, Me being lazy"

"self belief"

"it feels too difficult"

"lack of a plan"

"Lack of motivation"

Three ways to increase personal motivation:

- Knowing that thoughts can be manipulated, start by uncovering what's on your mind and considering ways to reframe it. For example, instead of 'I don't have time for or I can't be bothered to....' try 'This will help me to..... It's my priority to....'
- Be clear on the so what. Every task should be contributing to a greater goal. What is that greater goal? Is it big enough? bright enough? Enticing enough to spur you into action? If not, what needs to change?
- Ask what you tomorrow would say to you today if you don't get on and do what needs to be done. Make tomorrow's you as scary as you possibly can!



No 5 Getting Distracted during Productive 66% Work

So we get it, we know that in order to get things done we need to simply knuckle down and do the work. This requires focus. The enemy of focus is distraction and a high proportion of the people we spoke to found this difficult to resist. You can picture the scene – plan perfected, time allocated to devote to planned task, glass of water/coffee/chai tea at the ready, all we need to do now is the one activity we'd planned. After a few minutes of focus, suddenly an email alert pops up or a text message pings, we resist but feel torn and before long the temptation is too much and we investigate. The result is valuable time lost – in dealing with the distraction our mind has been elsewhere and now it takes more time to get back to the same level of focus we were at before we got distracted.

"Other people chatting (not work related stuff) around you"

"Flipping between too many different things"

"Checking emails during productive work"

"Lack of prioritization"

"untidy work station"

"Get carried away, getting deeper and deeper into the latest cool marketing thing"

"getting easily distracted – oh look, I'm doing it now!"

Ways to get in the zone and focus like a fanatic

- Tell others around you that's what you're planning to do so interruptions are minimised.



- Switch off email alerts, Instant Messenger, put phone on Do Not Disturb.
- Don't be too ambitious. Be kind to your willpower muscle by being realistic about the amount of time you can truly focus for. Starting with 15 minutes, then 25 minutes up to a maximum of 90 minutes for tackling those meaty tasks.
- Get a timer, set it and then trust it. Enjoy the freedom of full immersion in that one thing you really must get done.

No 6 Other Distractions (cue social media) 57%

Ok so we thought that Social Media might appear higher up the list of things that stop us from being productive. However it is one of several activities that can be generally classed as a distracting including time spent shopping online, calls, research or email regarding personal matters and time spent socialising.

"Thoughts of what else I need to do (like groceries, cooking, school-related things)"

"checking Social Media – what have I missed?"

"texting and thoughts of where else in the world I would rather be"

"getting me coffee"

"family phonecalls and drama"

We think there's a way to make, what appear to be productivity vices, a help more than a hindrance. Dubbed the 'modern-day smoke break', distractions



like social media and online browsing actually provide essential breaks away from focused tasks. Time spent socialising or conversing with colleagues is critical for building connections and positive working relationships.

We think this one is all about balance. Follow some of these tips and you may be able to stay on FaceBook afterall!

- Schedule time out to indulge.
- Make it short bursts of time.
- Stay disciplined by protecting focus time and getting back to the real work when you said you would.



No 7 Out of my Control

51%

It's all well and good trying to take responsibility for things we can control. The reality for many is that events out of our control can impact the ability to get things done. Those events include other people, the support systems we use to do our work such as IT and work facilities as well as a daily commute.

"Slow/unreliable laptop"

"IT support, or should I say lack of it!"

"Being interrupted doing something to help someone else get their job done so they can go home."

"a tedious commute"

So what are we going to do? Just sit back and let these things derail our best intentions and the discipline we've dedicated to getting things done? Hardly.

- Let's start by being prepared to expect the unexpected.
- When the unexpected does happen and it's unhelpful (some 'unexpecteds' are good) consider how you'll frame it in your mind – there's a big difference to how you perform when you think of something as 'a complete disaster' or 'the last thing I need!' compared to being able to appreciate the silver lining.
- Be clear and confident in your own plan for the day. This makes it less likely to be hijacked by others. If we don't choose how to manage our own time, someone else will do it for us!



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