

6 Steps to boost your work productivity

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Are you tired of making promises to yourself about getting better organised so you can be more efficient and have more time to do the things you love to do? We've all heard the phrase "work smarter, not harder" but it's not that easy to do unless you know a few of the strategies to make it happen. The following outlines some of the techniques used to help get you better organised:

Step One: Clear out the Clutter

Spend some time re-organising your space. Take a critical look at how things are stored or filed. Remove anything unessential from the top of your desk and keep it stored neatly out of sight. A clean workspace is always a much more inviting and inspiring environment and it also promotes a professional image for when clients visit or when your supervisor is present. Aim to maintain this tidy space each day, it takes only 5 minutes but makes an entire difference to your work habits.

Step Two: Plan and prioritise your day

Failing to plan and prioritise your daily tasks can result in your work time being eroded by concentrating too much time on non-core tasks. Use the planning and scheduling tool available at your work to make a "To Do" list and prioritise tasks on your list from most important to least important. You will have to be realistic about what you can achieve each day and try not to allow tasks to be held-over for the next day. Always ensure that you allow a little time for contingency tasks.

Step Three: Say 'NO' to the time hijackers

Being able to recognise when someone is about to waste 10 minutes or more of your time is an invaluable skill that will help reduce your work stress and keep you on target to complete your 'To Do' list each day. Think to yourself, is what this person asking me to do a core task in the interest of the business or will it simply side-track me from what I should be doing? Spend a few minutes to see if you can provide advice or assistance, but if not, find the appropriate person who will be able to assist and return to the task at hand. You can always check later to see how the person got on.

Step Four: Productive Time

Have you ever realised that you are at your most productive at certain times of the day? Take notice of your work patterns – keep an activity log so you can see the patterns more clearly. Once you have your work patterns identified schedule to get much of your productive work done during those times and schedule breaks and less urgent tasks around those times when you are typically less productive.

Step Five: Dealing with Procrastination

We have all experienced putting things off until later because they're less interesting than other things or because there is some other reason why you don't like to tackle the task. Sometimes procrastinating can lead to the task becoming urgent and creating much more stress than it should have done had it been taken care of earlier. Allocate estimated timeframes for each item on your list

of prioritised tasks and work through these methodically regardless of how you feel about each task. When you come to a task you're not so enthusiastic about check the allocated time and ensure you have it completed on or before the time. You'll have a sense of achievement once it is done and you can move onto other more enjoyable tasks.

Step Six: Stay Focussed

It is easy to let other distractions take your mind off what you need to be doing so make an attempt to become aware of the distractions in your work environment and develop your own strategies to prevent losing your focus. A good way to do this is to have your 'To Do' list in clear sight, so you have your day planned out in front of you. Emails and telephone calls can also be distracting. Don't encourage lengthy personal emails or telephone conversations. Not only does it distract you from your work but it is also very costly for your employer to have employees engaging in regular non-productive activity.

When you adopt the above habits you'll find that you achieve more at work in less time than it used to take, leaving you with more time to do the things you like. These steps come from one of Branch-Outs most popular courses on Time Management. You can find more information about our Time management course at www.branch-out.eu or you can contact one of our course advisors. We'd be happy to discuss your needs and can customise a course specifically for you.

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