Time Robbers

Where does the time go? The work is full of unpredictability. There is so much demand for a supervisor’s time. The time robbers steal supervisors precious time and we sometimes feel powerless to combat them. Successful supervisors know what time robbers are most prevalent and they take steps to take back their time.

The most common time robbers are:

- Wasteful Meetings
- The Phone/Email
- Casual Visitors/Open Doors
- Procrastination
- Poor Delegation
- Disorganization

Activity: What are your top three time robbers in your work?

1. 
2. 
3.

Take control: You decide how you want to spend your time.
Time Robber Tips

Getting Started:

• Put your goals on paper. Set specific goals for two weeks and write them down. Then, focus your attention on activities that lead to achieving those goals. You will be surprised you much you can accomplish when you put your goals on paper.
• Focus on STARTING a task: That’s the hardest part.
• Think on paper: Build a habit of writing everything down on paper: Goals, to-do’s, even problems. Putting things on paper clarifies the situation. Don’t rely on your memory.
• Do the most important task first. Not the easiest or fastest.
• Leave yourself reminder voicemails
• Note your peak energy times. Do the creative tasks when you are sharpest and mundane tasks when you’re least creative. (Not everyone is a morning person!)
• Create a 10-20 minute file: Most people have e at least twice a day when an unexpected 20 minute gap comes up. When the gap happens, knock those tasks out.

• Do these three things at the end of the Day:
  1. Clear your workspace
  2. Plan tomorrow’s activities
  3. Enter your to-do list in your planner
  Then go home

• Reward yourself when you complete a task you wanted to delay. It will give incentive to knock out other unpleasant tasks.

Interruptions:

Interruption rule: If you can’t eliminate it, make it as short as possible.

• Stand up! When someone comes in. Keep standing until it’s over. It’s uncomfortable for most people. The length of most interruptions is in direct proportion to the comfort level of the interrupter.
• Say “One more thing, before you go.” Be respectful, but take control.
• Keep track of the interrupters. Is it your boss? Is it a particular staff? Sit down with your boss/staff and address?
• Schedule office hours, regular meetings with your staff and your boss. Defer interruptions to the set times when possible.
• Role Model: Ask your peers, staff, and boss: “What do I do that wastes your time and hinders your performance?”

Phones/Computers

• Work emails into your schedule. Plan to respond 2-4 times/day. Turn it off when not on the schedule. (Do you check your home mailbox all day?)
• Use your voicemail to teach others when you will respond.
• Set a protocol and teach others when you will respond.
• Teach others that you WILL respond by the end of the day.
• Stand up: Research shows that phone calls are shorter when you stand.
• Say: “Before we hang up, I need to cover one more thing.” Take control.
• Dial “1” when listening to someone’s voicemail. It works on most phones.
Meetings

“Want to waste half a day?...Go to a staff meeting.”

Ask many employees about their biggest time robbers and many will list the never-ending staff meeting at the top of the list. Meetings are one of the most misunderstood tools used by supervisors. Leading a successful staff meeting is more than just putting together an agenda. Preparing to lead a staff meeting is as important to its success. Understand the purpose of each agenda item so you can lead the staff to that end.

Make sure a meeting is the ONLY way to accomplish a task.

Questions to ask in preparation of staff meeting agendas:

1. Is this agenda item needed for everyone or just a few (or even just one)?
2. Is this agenda item needed to:
   a. Share information?
   b. Teach a skill?
   c. Ask for input?
   d. Brainstorm a solution?
   e. Make a decision?

Tips:
• Write down the meeting agenda and end time so everyone knows when it will be over.
• List the goal (information, skill to learn) after each agenda item.
• Share the agenda ahead of time. Give “assignments” and ask participants to come with prepared input.
• Early morning meetings are the most productive.
• Schedule the most important things first.
• Let others lead part of the meeting or take over pre-assigned agenda items.
• Remove the chairs and have a “stand up” meeting. That gets people focused.
• The last person to show up takes the notes. No one will be late again!

“It could get worse before it gets better.”
Choose three tips you will implement immediately?

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How will you communicate to the “robbers” your new approach?

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