OVERCOME PROCRASTINATION & LACK OF MOTIVATION: Time-Saving Opportunities = 1 Hr 13 Mins/day

Research & Analysis

#1 – Spending time on non-work-related tasks to delay doing work = 43 mins/day

- There are many surveys and studies that attempt to determine how much time people waste every day by doing tasks other than work. In our review of 6 studies, we found a reported range of 43 minutes to 125.4 mins with an average of 94 minutes.[1,2] We have chosen to assume the least amount of time reported (43 minutes) to be as conservative as possible and because the study finding the 43-minute value explicitly asked about "procrastination," while the others asked about time spent on non-work-related tasks.

#2 – Making wrong prioritization decisions that result in missed deadlines = 15 mins/day

- According to research on 0.5M tasks entered into an online to-do list app, when we change (i.e., miss) a deadline, it takes us an additional 15.8 days to complete the task on average[5]
- During that time of just over three weeks, we assume that we split out time evenly among our 74 active to-dos[3], such that we spend 1.4% of the extra 15.8 days on our missed deadline task, meaning that every missed deadline costs us about 2 hours
- Of deadlines we miss, we miss at least 14% of them due to prioritization[4]
- We change deadlines (i.e., a proxy for missing a deadline) on over half of all entered tasks[5]
- To be more conservative, we assume that had we gotten the work done on time, we would have spent 25% of the post-deadline time before the deadline, so 25% of the time calculated is not actually incremental time
- When we multiply the 2 hours spread over the 15.8 days (7.6 mins/day) times the number of tasks we miss deadlines due to prioritization decisions [74 x 51% (missed deadlines) x 14% (due to prioritization decision)] and the percent of time we wouldn't have spent before the deadline (75%), we find that we lose 22.8 mins/day
- We also assume a 33% overlap with deadlines missed due to poor prioritization decisions, further deducting the time loss to 15.3 mins/day

#3 – Not finishing work we have started = 13 mins/day

- We work on about 37 different tasks over the course of a day[6], spending an average of 12.8 mins/task.
- Of these 37 tasks, we'll miss or change the deadline for 53% of them[5]. For those 20, we are 16% less likely to ever complete them than for tasks we complete on-time[5].
- This means that we spend time on roughly 3 tasks per day that we won't complete because we missed the deadline, costing us 40.4 mins/day.
- We assume that one-third of poor prioritization decisions are made due to procrastination, discounting the amount of time lost to 13.3 mins/day

#4 – Making wrong prioritization decisions that result in idle time = 2 mins/day

- We experience an average of 13.8 minutes of "others-caused" idle time per day[7]
- We assume that one-third of this time is the result of a poor prioritization decision on our part that resulted in us not having a consistent stream of work (e.g., we didn't account for the capacity of our supervisors),[8] even though we report it as "others-caused"
- As in the above calculation, we assume that one-third of poor prioritization decisions are made due to procrastination
- One-third of one-third of 13.8 minutes results in potential savings of 1.5 mins/day

Want to put this time back in your life?

START THE COURSE

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[1] Vaden, Rory. "Is Procrastination Killing You and Your Company? Author Offers Proven Distraction Busters." *CNBC* (Mar 2012): 10,000 employees polled, 125 mins wasted on non-job-related tasks
Korkki, Phyllis. "Driven to Worry, and to Procastinate." *New York Times* (Feb 2012): 120 mins wasted on nonwork tasks
"Employee time tracking: the complete guide to monitoring employees in the workplace." DeskTime (Accessed Aug 2018): 600 worker survey, 96 mins spent on non-work-related tasks
Connor, Cheryl. "Who Wastes The Most Time At Work?" *Forbes* (Sep 2013): 86 mins of wasted time at work (average of 3 generations)
"WORKPLACE PROCRASTINATION COSTS BRITISH BUSINESSES £76 BILLION A YEAR." *Global Banking & Finance Review* (Feb 2015): 2,000 adults, 43 mins per day spent procrastinating
[2] Note: While we don't doubt that the higher results are accurate, we chose to use the minimum in order to be as conservative and realistic as possible when projecting potential savings and to account for any overlap between this category of potential time-savings and the ones that follow. Also, the survey that produced the 43 mins/day used the language "procrastination," whereas the other surveys were focused on all non-work-related activities
[3] Bellotti, V., et. al. 2004. What a To-Do: Studies of Task Management Towards the Design of a Personal Task List Manager.
[4] "The Cost of Poor Project Management." PwC: Project Management Institute (2016)
[5] Wilcox, K., Laran, J., Stephen, A. T., Zubcsek, P. P. "How Being Busy Can Increase Motivation and Reduce Task Completion Time." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (2016).
[6] Note: Some studies have shown we complete 50% of our tasks on our list in a day, but this study also showed that only 15% of completed tasks were entered onto the list before completion, which suggests 50% is a more accurate representation of tasks engaged than tasks completed.
[7] Blanding, Michael. "American Idle: Workers Spend Too Much Time Waiting for Something to Do." *Harvard Business School: Working Knowledge* (Jan 2018).

[8] This is assumption is based on common reasons given for others-caused idle time in which several reasons are given for idle time: poor allocation work, overstaffing, equipment failure). For lack of better data, we assumed an even split between these 3 reasons.