

Ways to Minimize Employees Wasting Time at Work

Manage Employees Properly and They Won't Waste Time at Work

By [Chris Ruisi](#)

The easiest thing any manager can do is blame their employees for wasting time at work through poor time management that results in quality slips and missed deadlines. This translates into poor customer service, strained internal relationships and ultimately, loss of business.

If left unchecked, it becomes a nightmare for a company's Human Resources manager who is overwhelmed with performance and disciplinary issues, higher than normal [turnover](#) and continuous [recruiting](#) to fill the vacancies. It's like being on a merry-go-round that never stops.

Where Does the Time Go?

In back to back surveys conducted by Salary.com in 2012 and 2013, about **Wasting Time at Work**, the following was discovered:

- 64% (in 2012) to 70% (in 2013) of survey respondents admitted wasting time at work on a daily basis. Time wasted ranged from 30 minutes to several hours each day.
- Top time-wasting activities were: 43% talking with co-workers, 34% online activities and 4% each on texting and personal calls.
- The most significant reasons given by workers for why they waste time were: 35% were not challenged enough, 32% felt that there was no [incentive](#) to work harder, 30% got no satisfaction from what they do, and 23% were just downright bored.

Sometimes Why Employees Waste Time Is Obvious

In both the 2012 and 2013 surveys, employees identified **too many meetings** as the biggest waste of time within their workplace. Other interesting responses to the survey question, "What's the biggest distraction in your workplace?" were:

- Inefficient co-workers: 17%
- Other co-workers: 17%
- Office politics: 13%
- Busy work: 13%
- Other: 11%
- And finally, My Boss: 8%

Blaming your employees may be the easiest way to explain the time wasting. But, you need to ask yourself, what are you doing (or not doing) that is allowing or encouraging them to waste time? The answers and solutions may exist right under your nose. Here are 5 possibilities.

Minimizing Time Wasting Starts with Leadership

An effective leader is only as good as the team they develop (properly train) and lead ([set expectations](#) and [goals](#)). If the leader is not effective, the team will not perform well on a consistent basis.

If the leader doesn't set expectations for the team to achieve, then the team will set their own and do what they want – including wasting as much time as they can.

Most people will only do what they are asked to do. If they are not asked to do something specific, or if the instructions are too broad or vague, it is not a surprise that they are wasting time and failing to produce a satisfactory level of productivity.

It's no wonder that when surveyed as to why they waste time, they give answers like “not challenged enough”, “no incentive to work harder” or “lack of job satisfaction.” Leaders get paid to produce results through the combined efforts of their team members. When the leader does a poor job of leading, the team decides what they will do and when they feel like doing it.

In the Beginning: Heading Off Time Wasting at Work

The solution to the wasting time challenge actually starts at the time of hire. If a leader doesn't have a [clear vision](#) of where he wants to take his organization in the future, then there is no way that he can [hire the right people](#).

Why? Because he doesn't know the ideal person he should hire in terms of skills, abilities and [cultural fit](#) needed to make the vision a reality.

So, without the vision, the leader increases the odds of hiring the wrong people – the ones who have a tendency to waste time or give only the bare minimum in terms of their performance. Leaders must have a clear and specific vision, along with a definitive description of the jobs needed and the type of people to fill those jobs to have a productive team.

Team Members Need Clear Expectations

Once employees are hired, make sure that each of your team members knows specifically **what** they are supposed to do and **how** and **when** they are supposed to do it. Most importantly, each team member must understand **why** they do what they do. They need to know how what they do fits into the vision you are creating.

When people see how what they do contributes to the total effort, it's easier for them to rally around the cause and see their purpose. Teams that have a purpose, and perceive their contribution to the purpose, tend not to get distracted and waste time at work.

Set, Communicate, and Measure Performance Expectations

The leader needs to recognize how to set and communicate realistic performance expectations for what needs to be done. Once set and communicated, the leader must follow through and hold the team accountable for meeting those expectations.

Expectations allow you to measure results. If you can't measure the results, then you cannot manage the process to achieve the desired results. In the absence of expectations or any effort to hold people accountable for meeting them, the team will set their own expectations and meet only the ones that they set for themselves.

If employees know that their performance is being measured objectively, consistently and in a constructive way, they are less likely to wander off and waste time.

It's Never about Time Management

As I mentioned at the very beginning, the solution to combat employees wasting time at work starts with you, the leader, and both the expectations and accountabilities you establish. Let's be clear, the solution has nothing to do with time management because you can't manage time – it just keeps moving on.

What you can manage is **you**, and how you use the available time you have at work. I call it **you management**. Spend the time to teach your team about **you management** in conjunction with everything else discussed here and then stand back and [let them do](#) what they need and want to do.