

MONDAY MANNA
JAN 1, 2024

OVERCOMING UNPRODUCTIVE WORK HABITS By Rick Boxx

Since the Microsoft Corporation has millions of people using their software products, they have gained valuable insights into work habits. For instance, on average, employees surveyed spend 57 percent of their time using office software for communication and meetings. About two-thirds of them also say they struggle to find time and energy to do their actual job.

Technology was supposed to save us time, but we have learned that sometimes it can become counterproductive. In Ecclesiastes 3, King Solomon taught, “For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a person may be weighed down by misery.” The first step toward improving productivity is identifying the problem.

How many hours a week do you spend on email and meetings? According to Microsoft’s research, meetings and email consume the majority of time for the average worker. Surveys showed that too many meetings and emails are detrimental for product innovation and personal interactions with customers.

Let’s think about meetings and their impact on productivity. When we schedule a meeting, we should first pause to consider the purpose of the meeting and what is its desired outcome. Once those have been determined, consider carefully who needs to be in that meeting – and who can be excluded from it.

John 15:2 teaches a principle we can relate to the workplace. “[God the Father] cuts off every branch in [Jesus Christ] that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” Have you ever given thought to pruning your schedule? Consider scheduling 30 or 15-minute meetings, instead of 60 minutes. You might accomplish just as much and free up time needed for other work activities.

When collaborating with others on projects, email is often the tool we must check frequently. When new emails catch our eye, we can easily become distracted by other issues. Even if we can get away from email on a desktop or laptop computer, most of us now have email on our phones. In effect, the shadow of email follows us everywhere.

Emails can create a vicious cycle that distracts us from the important thinking and physical work that needs to be done. Some suggestions can help. They include turning off email notifications; scheduling specific times to review emails; and blocking out time on your calendar for more important work to avoid the temptation of checking to see what emails have just arrived.

Recently, I have noticed another concerning trend – the growing number of messaging tools. When I started my consulting business, if someone wanted to reach me, their choice was

由香港工商基督徒協會 (CBMC Hong Kong Ltd) 逢週一發放

地址：香港上環禧利街2號東寧大廈20樓2004室 Tel: (852) 2805-1923

Email: enquiry@cbmc.org.hk Web: www.cbmc.org.hk

支持本會使命，服侍工商界及職場，請下載奉獻表格

<https://www.cbmc.org.hk/file-download.html>

either to call me or come to see me in person. In the last few years, however, the number of ways people use to reach me has become overwhelming. Now I monitor email, text messages, other messaging forms, and phone calls. It makes it difficult to give proper focus and concentration to the most important work.

Psalm 119:15 says, “I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.” I am striving to discipline myself to more frequently turn off all distractions and meditate exclusively on God and His plan.

Copyright 2024, Unconventional Business Network. Adapted with permission from “UBN Integrity Moments”, a commentary on faith at work issues. Visit www.unconventionalbusiness.org. UBN is a faith at work ministry serving the international small business community.

Reflection/Discussion Questions Challenge

1. How do you feel about meetings? Do you find them a valuable, productive use of your time, or do you regard them as obstacles that prevent you from engaging in other projects and endeavors that you consider more important?
2. What about emails and the various forms of messaging: Have you found an effective, efficient way of managing them, so they do not interfere with actual work that you need to accomplish? Explain your answer.
3. Are there any other workplace habits you have been struggling with that seem to be reducing your productivity? If so, what are they – and why are they problematic for you?
4. Mr. Boxx suggests that we should seek God and His plan. How do you think this can help in overcoming distractions that can interfere with your workplace productivity and effectiveness?

Challenge

Sometimes good intentions fall short of our desired goals. Who can you think of that would be willing to hold you accountable if you find yourself being too easily distracted by things like email and messaging? If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, the Bible instructs you to “work as for the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). This would include recognizing things that might be negatively affecting your work. Accountability partners can help in ensuring that we are focused on the right things.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Ecclesiastes 3:1-3,11, 9:10; Ephesians 5:15-16; Colossians 4:5-6