

Bulldoze Those Workday Speed Bumps

With a finite amount of time available, the temptation is to go faster and work more hours if you want to get more done. But productivity isn't just about squeezing more into your day: it's also about reducing the "speed bumps" -- things like poor administration, red tape, bureaucracy, and unclear priorities -- that waste your time. Here are a few ways you can streamline that reduction process.

1. **Eliminate the causes of most problems, and avoid crises.** There's a difference between an emergency and a "crisis" that occurs because something wasn't done. If you delay something long enough, you're contributing to a future crisis.
2. **Control and prevent interruptions.** To avoid getting bogged down by interruptions while still managing to stay informed, establish conditional interruption criteria, set aside check-in times, or create signals to show when deadlines are imminent and you can only be interrupted for emergencies.
3. **Handle drop-in visitors and co-workers effectively.** Controlling time taken up by visitors requires both courtesy and good judgment. Be honest and assertive about how much time, if any, you have for a particular interruption.
4. **Refuse requests you don't have time for.** Just say no if something doesn't fit into your schedule. Set boundaries, so you don't have to feel guilty about being the bad guy -- and stick to your guns.
5. **Recognize and eliminate personal shortcomings,** especially if they lead to decreased departmental and organizational productivity. Your company's in business to help customers and make money, not to tolerate your idiosyncrasies.
6. **Avoid spending time in irrelevant, unnecessary meetings.** If you're calling a meeting, carefully choose the best time to hold it. In any meeting, help the group stay on track. Find ways to avoid some meetings altogether: e.g., by sending an alternate, by having someone tape it, or by leaving early.
7. **Eliminate unnecessary responsibilities or tasks that belong to someone else.** Keep a time log so you can see whether you need to bring in extra help, or where you're wasting time so you can plug productivity leaks.
8. **Get rid of everything you don't need or use and live simply.** Simplify your life so you'll have more energy to spend at the office. Among other things, get rid of unnecessary junk, learn to live within your means, and reduce your debt.

9. **Delegate properly.** Don't do tasks that others are capable of doing. Improper delegation is one of the primary symptoms of overwork. Productive people know how to get help and use it effectively.
10. **Keep socializing during work hours to an appropriate level.** While some socializing at work is productive, it can quickly lose its value, especially when you enter the realm of gossip or negativism. Putting limits around socializing is an important way to recover time for more significant things.

Speed bumps are inevitable in most work environments, but you don't need to let them slow you down and siphon off all your time and energy. In fact, it's wise to invest a little effort here and there in order to get rid of them. By eliminating speed bumps, you create the space to accomplish the important.

© 2009 Laura Stack. Laura Stack is a personal productivity expert, author, and professional speaker who helps busy workers Leave the Office Earlier® with Maximum Results in Minimum Time®. She is the president of The Productivity Pro®, Inc., a time management training firm specializing in productivity improvement in high-stress organizations. Since 1992, Laura has presented keynotes and seminars on improving output, lowering stress, and saving time in today's workplaces. She is the bestselling author of three works published by Broadway Books: *The Exhaustion Cure* (2008), *Find More Time* (2006) and *Leave the Office Earlier* (2004). Laura is a spokesperson for Microsoft, 3M, and Day-Timers®, Inc and has been featured on the CBS Early Show, CNN, and the New York Times. Her clients include Cisco Systems, Sunoco, KPMG, Nationwide, and 3M. To have Laura speak at your next event, call 303-471-7401. Visit www.TheProductivityPro.com to sign up for her free monthly productivity newsletter.