

Optimising your work time begins with identifying the causes of wasted time and learning to avoid them. Here are some suggestions:

Procrastination

- Indecision, or not making a decision at all, is perhaps the biggest cause of 'inactive' time.

Imprecise objectives

- Having a clear idea of what you want to achieve at the start of the day is the best safeguard against directionless 'drift'.

Interruptions

- Minimise distractions that affect your productivity - especially unnecessary telephone calls or personal visitors.

Over-ambitious targets

- Avoid setting yourself goals that are too ambitious, or giving yourself too little time in which to complete your goals.

Prioritising tasks

- Use the urgent/important matrix to prioritise your tasks. Start with those that are both urgent and important and then proceed to those that are important but not urgent. Avoid altogether those that are neither urgent nor important!

Delegation

- Delegation is a key benchmark in effective management. If one of your staff can do a job 80% as well as you can, delegate it. Be sure to communicate fully the elements of the task so that you do not end up having to do it all over again!

Meetings

- Rambling discussions without clear objectives waste a lot of time and effort in meetings. Devise a clear plan and a realistic but economical schedule for each meeting. Avoid meetings where your presence is not essential.

Clear desk policy

- Many time management experts argue that the most effective people work from clear desks. When something lands on your desk you have three options: action it, file it, or bin it!

Just say 'No'

- When colleagues ask for your help if you think that obliging them will harm your own productivity find a polite way to decline.

Respect for time

- Showing respect for how others organise their work time helps staff maximise their productivity and not feel distracted.