



Trends

November/December 2008

2008 Wasting Time at Work Survey

Scheduling a hair appointment, reading the newspaper on-line, chatting with co-workers – we all do it. But how often do we do it? Just how much of our day is spent on activities that aren't necessarily work-related and why? In Salary.com's fourth annual Wasting Time at Work study, we surveyed more than 2,500 employees across all job levels during July and August of 2008 to find out. This year's survey also included questions about telecommuting options in the workplace.

Participant Overview

Most of the participants in this year's study - 90% - work full-time. Fifty-five percent of respondents are female and 45% are male. Approximately 70% spend one hour or less commuting to work each day and most spend between eight and ten hours in the workplace each day. Sixty-four percent of respondents report wasting one hour or less each day, 22% waste approximately 2 hours daily, and 14% waste 3 or more hours each workday.

Wasting Time Activities

This year, 73% of the survey participants indicated that they spend part of their day on activities that are not work-related, a 10% increase over last year's number. For the second year in a row, the top five "time-wasting" activities are:



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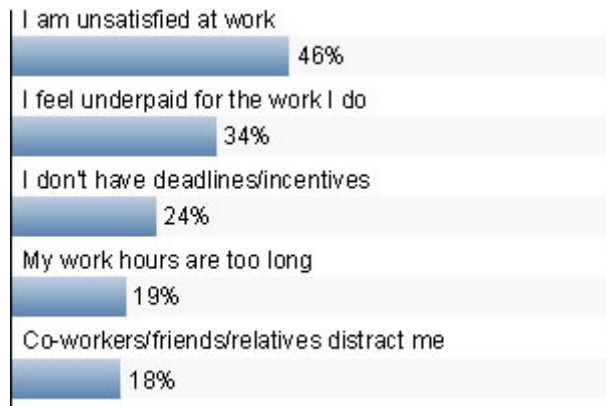
Twenty-two percent of respondents admit to wasting up to two hours per day, down slightly from 24 percent in 2007. Interestingly, data indicates that individuals with a Bachelor's degree or higher tend to waste slightly more time during the workday. This is likely due to the fact that these individuals hold higher-level positions within their organizations and are not under close supervision.

Twenty-seven percent of this year's participants indicated they don't waste time, however, 33% of those same individuals indicated that they spent time on activities that are not work-related. It is likely that these individuals do not see these activities as time wasters, but behaviors that are simply a regular part of everyday work life.

Employees 50 and over waste the least amount of time, with 49% reporting they waste a half hour or less each day. Only 13% waste between 30 minutes and an hour. Thirteen percent waste approximately 2 hours per day and only 5% report wasting 3 or more hours. They also tend to spend more time conducting personal business than their younger counterparts.

Why do you waste time?

Last year, most employees wasted time because they were bored, felt their work hours were too long, or felt underpaid. While low pay is one of the top reasons for wasting time this year, job dissatisfaction, which didn't make last year's list, is the number one reason for wasting time. The top five reasons for wasting time at work are:

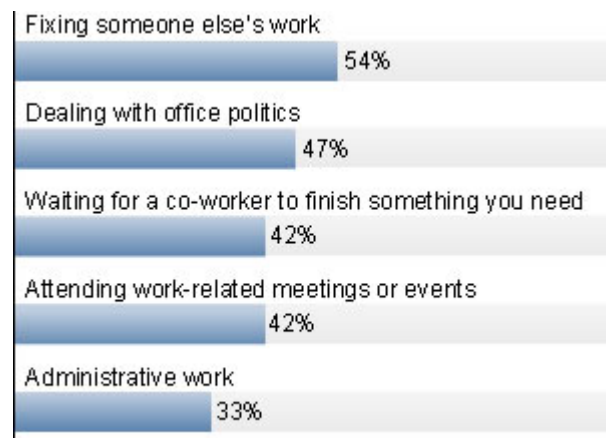


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New to the top of this year's list as well - coming in at number three - is that employees don't have deadlines or incentives to work harder. This clearly illustrates an increased level of job dissatisfaction over last year and indicates an alarming lack of employee engagement. Employees who don't feel invested in the work they do are less motivated and more likely to waste time which ultimately leads to lower productivity.

Work-related activities can lead to reduced productivity

The majority of survey respondents - 75% - feel that some office related activities cut into productive time at work. The top 5 work-related distracters are:



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The top two distracters this year are the same as last years'. Waiting for a co-worker to finish something you need and administrative work swapped places in the top five. And sending or responding to work-related e-mails was knocked off the list this year by work-related meetings or events.

Telecommuting

With increased focus on work-life balance and increasing fuel prices making the cost of commuting to and from work escalate, we asked employees their opinions regarding telecommuting.

Only 15% of respondents indicated they currently telecommute. However, 20% of the survey participants work in the healthcare industry in positions that do not necessarily lend themselves to working outside the workplace/office setting. Additionally, 27% of respondents reported that telecommuting is not an option at their work place. It is not clear if this is due to general workplace policy or if telecommuting is not possible because of the nature of the jobs in which respondents are employed.

Of those employees who can telecommute, they don't very often. Forty percent only telecommute once a week; 19% telecommute five days per week; 18% telecommute 2 days per week; 10 % telecommute with 3 or 4 days per week; and 11% report some alternate or as needed type of arrangement with their employer.

While 49% of survey participants feel that they are more productive in an office or workplace environment, 61% of those same employees indicate they would take advantage of a telecommuting option if it were offered.

Overall, 70% of respondents said they would take advantage of telecommuting if it were available. However women are more likely to be interested in telecommuting. Of the 70% of respondents who say they would take advantage of a telecommuting option, 58% are female.

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