

Q How do I improve my A time management?

Remove roadblocks. Increase energy. Focus actions.

WHERE DO YOU GO TO GET QUALITY WORK DONE?

If you're like the people Jason Fried interviewed for his book *Rework*, your answer might be a coffee shop or a special room in the house, or while traveling on a train or a plane. You wouldn't mention work as being a good place to get quality work done. Why? Too many ineffec-

tive meetings, and managers interrupting your work to make sure you're working. Business leaders caught between management's goal for high productivity and employees sending up the white flag of burnout.

How can you make work a better place to get work done without depleting the energy, spirit and creativity of your employees?

Remove roadblocks

- » Cancel all unnecessary meetings. Those that are necessary, use to make key decisions, not just exchange information.
- » Clear the decks of things you're avoiding: The difficult conversation with the boss or saying no to the project you know you can't complete. Avoidance consumes a lot of mental energy.
- » Check e-mail only twice a day. It takes over 15 minutes to regain focus after an e-mail interruption.
- » Post your calendar and show when you're available for impromptu meetings.

Increase energy

Tony Schwartz in *The Power of Full Engagement* says managing energy, not time, is the key to high performance. Like professional athletes, he suggests identifying your recipe for high energy. The higher your energy, the more pro-

ductive, creative and clear thinking you become. But how can you increase the energy of your team?

- » Take a walk during one-on-one meetings. Energy and brain functions come alive with even a little exercise.
- » As long as goals are met, encourage your employees to get work done wherever they are most productive.
- » Institute "no-talk Thursday afternoons." Notice how much work gets done and energy increases during this weekly afternoon of no interruptions.

Focus actions

The FranklinCovey Group in the book *The 4 Disciplines of Execution* says that in the battle between the day-to-day urgency — or the whirlwind — and goals that move an organization forward, the whirlwind usually wins. They

suggest scheduling important but not urgent activities first.

- » Do important work at inspiring locations.
- » Conduct an inventory of all your responsibilities and identify tasks you can delegate. If none appears, then determine how you develop key people to take over some of your responsibilities.
- » Reset expectations. Seldom is there enough time and resources to do all that needs to get done. Sustainable productivity occasionally means having to say no.

The U.S. has the most productive and one of the most over-worked workforces in the world. Yet, we can work fewer hours and be more productive if we allow our employees to choose where they work, stop interruptions and unnecessary meetings, increase their energy and schedule important priorities first. ■



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