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Identify Time Sinks

We all have habits that seem to 'devour' our time. If you want to make your workflow more effective, you have to identify these time sinks. The list below will give you some hints and guidance as to where to look for them.

Desk/Workplace Organization	**Affects me**	**Partially affects me**
Missing work equipment	☐	☐
Bad filing system/inadequate sorting system	☐	☐
Too lengthy search times (due to insufficient tidiness, unclear or impractical arrangement, etc.)	☐	☐
Time-consuming search for addresses, notes, telephone numbers, etc.	☐	☐

Personality	**Affects me**	**Partially affects me**
Not being able to say 'no', helper's syndrome	☐	☐
Exaggerated perfectionism	☐	☐
Errors due to hurrying/botched work	☐	☐
Chaotic working style	☐	☐
Procrastination ("postponitis")	☐	☐
Lack of concentration	☐	☐
Health issues affecting your ability to work	☐	☐
Personal problems affecting your ability to work	☐	☐
Frustration/lack of motivation	☐	☐
Unclear personal objectives	☐	☐
Waiting too long before asking for help (e.g. because of ambition or shyness)	☐	☐
Leaving tasks unfinished	☐	☐
Language issues	☐	☐

External Disturbances	**Affects me**	**Partially affects me**
Unexpected phone calls	☐	☐
Meetings convened on short notice	☐	☐
Unannounced visitors	☐	☐
Disturbances, noise	☐	☐
Too many inquiries (e-mail, phone, . . .)	☐	☐

Workflow	**Affects me**	**Partially affects me**
Disturbance from colleagues	☐	☐
Interruptions by push messages (cell phone, e-mail, facebook, skype, . . .)	☐	☐
Wasting of time on irrelevancies/unimportant details	☐	☐
Unclear priorities	☐	☐
Waiting for someone to do the groundwork before you can get started	☐	☐
Equipment failure	☐	☐
Permanent availability	☐	☐
Saving money at the wrong end	☐	☐
Saving due to necessary cost reduction	☐	☐
Work equipment of insufficient quality	☐	☐
Missing essential knowledge or skills	☐	☐
Compulsory tasks (e.g. administrative duties) not related to your actual work	☐	☐
Over-optimization (spending more time/resources on optimization than it actually saves)	☐	☐
Overthinking or overplanning	☐	☐
Jumping back and forth between different tasks	☐	☐
Unsatisfactory support by your supervisor	☐	☐
Travel time (e.g. going to your workplace))	☐	☐
Bad daily planning	☐	☐
Being unproductive due to insufficient/too short breaks	☐	☐
Too many/too long breaks	☐	☐

Computer	**Affects me**	**Partially affects me**
Search times because of unclear file names (e.g. no date, no version number, meaningless names)	☐	☐
Prolonged search times caused by confusing/unclear file structure	☐	☐
Missing backups	☐	☐
Search times due to poorly organized backups	☐	☐
Loss of time when creating backups (e.g. by missing automatization/scheduling)	☐	☐
Spending too much time writing unimportant e-mails	☐	☐
Reading e-mails	☐	☐
Too much time for social media	☐	☐
Surfing the internet	☐	☐

Collaborations and Projects	**Affects me**	**Partially affects me**
Unclear agreements about roles and responsibilities	☐	☐
Conflicts within the team	☐	☐
Misunderstandings	☐	☐
Ambiguity as to who is the right contact person	☐	☐
Conflicting objectives (e.g. project partners/superiors pursue an objective that contradicts yours)	☐	☐
Insufficient clarification of objectives (not specific enough, not understood by everyone, no clear due date, etc.)	☐	☐
Being reluctant to delegate	☐	☐
Insufficient control of delegated tasks	☐	☐

Meetings	**Affects me**	**Partially affects me**
No or insufficient moderation	☐	☐
No guiding thread, no structure	☐	☐
Insufficient preparation	☐	☐
Attendance, although the topic is outside your area of interest/responsibility (e.g. because attendance is mandatory)	☐	☐
Important information/persons missing	☐	☐
Belated participants	☐	☐
Unclear agenda	☐	☐
Unclear expectations regarding the outcome	☐	☐
Meetings are too long/take more time than planned	☐	☐
No end time is specified (Pakinsons law: “Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion”)	☐	☐
Digressions, off-topic discussions	☐	☐

Home Office	**Affects me**	**Partially affects me**
Disturbances by ringing door bell, not work related phone calls	☐	☐
Family related issues	☐	☐
Dish washing, cleaning, house keeping	☐	☐
Disturbances by noise	☐	☐

Miscellaneous	**Affects me**	**Partially affects me**
	☐	☐
	☐	☐
	☐	☐