

business trends

Survey Reveals Top Workplace Time-Wasters, Tips On Staying Productive Ⓜ

(NAPSA)—Imagine a workplace where there's always a full week's worth of important tasks to do, but the employees can't get started until 10 a.m. Wednesday.

Although that may sound far-fetched, it's similar to how workers worldwide assessed their personal productivity in a recent online survey sponsored by Microsoft Corp. Responses to the Microsoft Office Personal Productivity Challenge (PPC) from more than 38,000 people in 200 countries showed that, on average, workers spend about 17 hours of their typical 45-hour work week in unproductive activities.

The top time-waster among U.S. workers is procrastination, cited by 42 percent of respondents, followed by lack of team communication at 39 percent and ineffective meetings at 34 percent. Other common struggles include managing e-mail and accessing important information while away from the office, keeping notes and other documents organized, and prioritizing demands on employees' time.

Along with these challenges, the survey responses also showed that technology has a strong influence on workers' productivity. That's no surprise to Dr. Larry Baker, a 25-year veteran in the time-management field, who helped Microsoft develop the PPC assessment.

"Computer-based communication has dramatically quickened the pace of business," Baker said. "As workers depend more and more heavily on technology, their software use also needs to evolve

so they can more effectively prioritize the information coming at them, figure out what to do with it, and minimize the distractions that drag down their productivity."

Baker offered some suggestions for using technology, such as using the tools provided in Microsoft Office 2003, to overcome common time-wasting activities and be more productive:

- Block unwanted e-mail by using anti-spam filtering tools, and prioritize other messages with the help of software tools such as search folders, quick flags, reminders and alerts.

- Reduce the number and length of meetings by creating virtual work and meeting spaces that enable co-workers to communicate and collaborate without leaving their desks.

- Stay connected while on the go through the use of mobile computing devices and software that enables remote access to e-mail, tasks, contacts, calendar entries and other important information stored on company networks.

- Capture and share notes more effectively with the help of software that provides flexibility to combine handwritten, typed and spoken information in a centralized, electronic environment—rather than go through the time-consuming chore of manually typing up notes from paper or a cassette tape.

For more tips on improving personal and team productivity with the help of technology tools, visit the Microsoft Office Experience Web site at <http://www.microsoft.com/office/evolve>.