Startling Statistics About How We Use Our Time
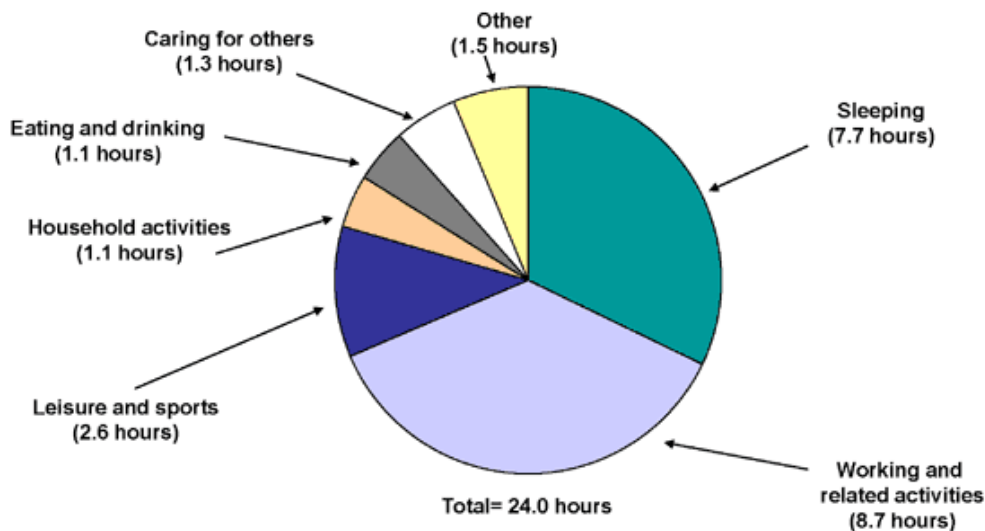
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Startling Statistics About How We Spend Our Time

Do you ever feel like you are spinning your wheels each day? Have you ever wondered if how you spend your time is similar to how other people spend theirs? The American Time Use Survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that after work and sleep, there's really not much time left for anything else by the average working American. This is how the average working person spends their time on a daily basis:

Time use on an average work day for employed persons ages 25 to 54 with children

Caring for others (1.3 hours)

Other (1.5 hours)

Eating and drinking (1.1 hours)

Sleeping (7.7 hours)

Household activities (1.1 hours)

Leisure and sports (2.6 hours)

Working and related activities (8.7 hours)

Total= 24.0 hours

NOTE: Data include employed persons on days they worked, ages 25 to 54, who lived in households with children under 18. Data include non-holiday weekdays and are annual averages for 2009.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Working and related activities: 8.7 hours
Sleep: 7.7 hours
Leisure and sports: 2.6 hours
Household activities: 1.1 hours
Eating and drinking: 1.1 hours
Caring for Others: 1.3 hours
Other: 1.5 hours

This means that over half the day is gone, with over 12 hours a day devoted to working, eating, household and caring activities. Then there is the time for sleeping (7.7 hours). There's only a few hours left for anything else.

It's interesting to note that watching TV was the leisure activity that occupied the most time. Only 21% of men and 16% of women participated in sports or exercise. Maybe that's because we're too tired after working all day and managing the household to want to get up off the couch?

If you feel you are burning the candle at both ends, you're not alone. Other startling statistics about email use and how often we are interrupted at work can indicate how hard it is to manage time effectively.

Key Point
Time management is a challenge but there are things you can do about it. The key is to focus on your most important activities and realize you probably will never get it "all" done. Once you give yourself permission to leave some things undone, the need for perfectionism can be lifted off your shoulders and you will feel much better. A good time management course can also help you learn to prioritize your time better.

Six Startling Statistics about Email Use

Yes, technology has changed things. Now almost everyone has some kind of email account(s), and it's getting harder and harder to "unplug". Just how have emails and text messaging impacted us? I thought you'd be interested in some startling statistics:
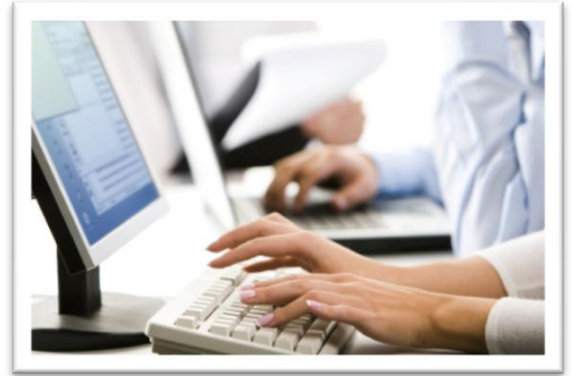
- Organizations lose around $1,250 per user in annual productivity because of time spent dealing with spam, $1,800 per user due to unnecessary emails from co-workers, and $2,100 - $4,100 per user due to poorly written communications. *(Tim Pisello, ITBusinessEdge.com, 12/2008)*

- 62% of at-work email users check work email over the weekend, and 19% check it five or more times in a weekend. More than 50% said they check it on vacation, with the highest amount coming from mobile device users at 78%. *(Erin Gifford, "It's 3:00 am - Are you checking Email Again?", AOL Corporate Newsroom Statistic, Annual Email Addiction Survey 2009, AOL)*

- In 2007, a group of Microsoft workers took, on average, 15 minutes to return to serious mental tasks, such as writing reports or computer code, after dealing with incoming email. They wandered off to reply to other messages or browse the Web. *(New York Time, 3/25/2007).*

- 75% of senior executives in more than 60 countries said they are concerned about data theft and other forms of computer-related reprisals from laid-off employees. *(Ernst & Young, 11/10/2009)*

- American teenagers sent and received an average of 2,272 text messages per month in the fourth quarter of 2008-almost 80 messages a day, more than double the average of a year earlier. *(Nielsen, Co, 2009)*

When drivers text, their collision risk is 23 times great than when not texting. *(Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, 2009)*

There are many benefits that occur from our advanced use of technology. We now have the ability to communicate in a multiple variety of ways, and can reach people worldwide in a matter of moments. We now have a world of information available at our fingertips.

But there are challenges as well. The biggest one is that incoming emails and texts make everything "urgent". As more and more comes our way, it becomes difficult to take time for the really important things: work that is focused and purposeful. To determine if you've gotten off-track, ask yourself: "Am I accomplishing my most important priorities each day?" If not, the use of excessive emails and text messages could be part of the problem.

6 Startling Statistics about Interruptions at Work

You've certainly felt the pain of distractions and interruptions at work. Have you been putting all your focus into completing a certain task, been interrupted, and then afterwards can't remember where you were? Or worse yet, you don't ever go back to your original place?

The amount of emails and interruptions we get at work is truly staggering. Check out some of these startling statistics:

1. The average employee spends **28% of their time** dealing with unnecessary interruptions followed by "recovery time" to get back on track. *(2009, Basex)*

2. The time spent per day being interrupted and trying to refocus is **2.1 hours**. *(2009, Basex)*

3. Physically co-located workers spend longer chunks of time engaged in tasks for which they are not accountable. *(University of California-Irvine)*

4. The average manager is interrupted **every 8 minutes**. *(Study conducted by Priority Management)*

5. The Institute of Psychiatry at the University of London suggests that **your IQ falls 10 points** when you're fielding constant emails, text messages and calls. This is the same loss you'd experience if you had missed an entire night's sleep. *(Yoga Journal, p. 22, 12/2005).*

6. The cost of managing interruptions at work costs the US economy **$588 billion** per year. *(2009, Basex)*

Summary

Think what a difference it would make to your organization to only cut the amount of interruptions in half! Think what a difference it could make in our national economy! It's never been more important to help employees, teams and organizations reduce interruptions and better manage their time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Cullen is the President of Quantum Learning Solutions, Inc. and has extensive experience working with organizations of all sizes to enhance management and leadership development. She is the author of numerous articles and e-learning programs focusing on the most effective tools for retention, engagement and performance.

Quantum has been providing high quality training and development solutions since 1988. We work with a variety of Fortune 500 organizations and smaller companies, in the areas of Management Development, Employee Development, and Team Building. We have offices in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Chicago, Illinois.

For more information about time management training, and how Quantum Learning Solutions has created time management programs that work, please feel free to contact us:

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