

2013 Wasting Time at Work Survey

Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Wasting Time in the Office

Aaron Guveia, contributing editor to Salary.com



What a Waste

Are you interrupting your job duties to read this? Or, more likely than not, are you taking a break between filling out last-minute March Madness brackets?

We understand the considerable amount of irony involved in taking time out of your workday to read an article about wasting time at work, but our annual Wasting Time at Work survey results are out and they're pretty interesting. Ever wonder exactly how much time the average American worker spends on non work-related items while on the clock? Are they checking Facebook? Tweeting? Doing some online shopping? And more importantly, why do they waste time at work?

We surveyed more than 1,000 people to find out the answers, so take a break from whatever it is you're doing and check them out. We promise not to waste your time.

Employees Are Wasting More Time at Work

When we last did this survey in 2012, 64% of our survey respondents said they waste time at work on a daily basis. This year that number is on the rise as 69% of the people surveyed in 2013 said they waste time at work every single day. But the question remains, how much?

Most people (34%) said they routinely waste 30 minutes or less each day while on the clock. Nearly one-quarter (24%) said they waste between 30-60 minutes daily, with 11% claiming they spend several hours per day wasting time on non work-related items on a daily basis. Of the people who don't waste time each day, 21% reported slacking off 1-2 times a week while only 10% claimed they never waste time on the job.

Most people (34%) said they routinely waste 30 minutes or less each day while on the clock. Nearly one-quarter (24%) said they waste between 30-60 minutes daily, with 11% claiming they spend several hours per day wasting time on non work-related items on a daily basis. Of the people who don't waste time each day, 21% reported slacking off 1-2 times a week while only 10% claimed they never waste time on the job.

Extra, Extra...Read All About It

Now that we know workers are wasting time at work, the next question is what are they doing?

Obviously the Internet is a big time-waster, and our survey data backs that up. Among the various types of personal websites people visit most at work, news sites proved to be the most popular as 37% of respondents chose checking the news as their top time-waster. The good news for employers is 20% of workers claim they don't visit any non work-related websites while they're on the clock.

Other types of most-visited time-wasting sites included:

- Social media: 14%
- Online shopping: 12%
- Entertainment/lifestyle: 8%
- Sports: 3%
- Travel: 2%

Which Website is the Biggest Time Suck

So which individual website is the most conducive to slacking off? Just blame it on Mark Zuckerberg.

With more than 1 billion active monthly users, it shouldn't shock anyone that the one non work-related website employees visit the most from 9 to 5 is Facebook. The social media behemoth topped the list with 15% of all respondents choosing it as the biggest time-waster, narrowly edging out Yahoo! with 14%. Here's the rest of the list:



- LinkedIn: 10%
- Google+: 8%
- Amazon: 6%
- ESPN: 2%
- YouTube: 2%
- Twitter: 2%
- Craigs List: 2%
- Pinterest: 1%

Thirty-eight percent either didn't answer or chose "other."

Who Wastes Time?

Here's how the time-wasting stats break down demographically based on wasting time on a daily basis.

Men waste more time than women by a 73% to 66% margin. And despite the common belief that it's the youngest workers who slack off the most, 82% of employees age 26-32 and 76% of workers 33-39 waste time on a daily basis -- higher than the 75% of workers age 18-25 who said the same. Interestingly, single people and those in committed relationships waste the most time per day at work with 75% each, compared to just 51% of divorced respondents who waste time daily.

And just like last year, the more educated you are the more likely you are to waste time. Seventy-six percent of people with doctorate degrees waste time at work every day, compared to 59% of those with a high school diploma or less.

But Why Do They Waste?

We've covered the who and what -- now it's time to find out why employees waste time at work?

When asked to choose the main reason they waste time, 11% of respondents said it was due to a lack of incentive which topped the list. That was followed closely by 10% who said they are unsatisfied in their jobs, and 9% who claimed to be bored. Only 3% said they slack off due to low pay.

Also, 43% said interacting with coworkers caused them to miss the most work, beating out the 28% who answered with surfing the Internet. Texting, social media and taking personal phone calls all received 4% while shopping online accounted for 2%.

When Do They Waste Time?

If you really want to get some work done, aim for Tuesdays between 9am and 11am.

Only 3% of respondents picked Tuesday as their most wasteful workday. As for which day people slack off the most, it probably comes as no surprise that Friday takes the cake with 43% of people choosing the day before the weekend as the day they waste time most often. That's followed by Monday at 16%, Wednesday at 9%, and Thursday at 6%.

As far as the most popular time of day to slack off, the later it is the higher the chances of non work-related activities. Most people, 27%, chose 3pm-5pm as their main window to waste time, followed by 16% at 1pm-3pm, 13% from 11am-1pm, and 10% from 9am-11am. Surprisingly, 15% of people are early-birds and get to work between 7am-9am to waste time.

Which Industry Wastes the Most Time?

Which industry wastes the most time? Hold on to your hats, because you're going to be absolutely shocked when you find out -- it's Government!

OK, so maybe it's not so shocking. But yes, 25% of government workers said they waste a few hours a day at work -- the highest of any industry in our survey. Employees in the Energy & Utilities field were next with 22% of workers saying they waste a few hours a day on the job, followed by Agriculture & Ranching workers at 20%.

On the flip side, the industry that wastes the least time is Healthcare, with 16% of workers claiming they never waste time on the job.

Which Part of the Country Wastes the Most Time?



Wondering which part of the country wastes the most time at work and how your region stacks up?

People in the West South Central region (OK, TX, AR, and LA) and Pacific region (AK, WA, OR, CA, HI) top the list with 14% of each group stating they waste time at work for a few hours a day. Workers in the Mountain region (ID, MT, WY, NV, UT, CO, AZ, NM) round out the top three with 13%.

The parts of the country that report never wasting time at work are New England (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, **CT**) and the Mid-Atlantic (NY, NJ, PA), with 12% each

Is "Wasting Time" Really a Waste?

One person's "waste of time" might be another's productivity booster.

So says the 60% of people who think spending time on non work-related tasks during work hours actually improves productivity. The idea is that it has become increasingly difficult to separate work and life, to the point is now more of a work/life blend. So short breaks throughout the work day keep people fresh and ultimately more focused in the long term.

That having been said, the number of people who think "wasting time" at work improves productivity is down 11% compared to last year.

Wasted Time Occurs BECAUSE of Work Too

Although employees have a multitude of ways to waste time on the job, sometimes the job itself and the workplace in general is the culprit.

For the second year in a row, employees chose "too many meetings" as the biggest distraction and waste of time presented by the workplace. Meetings topped the list with 19% of total respondents picking it as the biggest problem. Surprisingly, complaints about bosses fell all the way at the bottom. Here's the full list when people were asked "What's the biggest distraction in your workplace?"

- Inefficient team members: 17%
- Coworkers: 17%
- Office politics: 13%
- Busy work: 13%
- Other: 11%
- My boss: 8%



Should Employers Crack Down?

If you're an employer who has to run the company and maintain a certain level of success, these results could be disconcerting. The question is, what do you do about it?

Many employers are cracking down in the form of e-mail monitoring and blocking certain websites like Facebook, Twitter and other potential time-wasters during work hours. In fact, 30% of our survey respondents said their employers already block the use of at least some personal sites between the hours of 9 am to 5 pm. But this is the exact same number as last year, which means many companies likely see the drawbacks of putting such restrictions in place, such as lowering morale, potentially driving qualified applicants away, and causing existing employees to jump ship.