Track Time, Because it Matters

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Introduction

Over the past year, we have seen an increase in demand for flexible software solutions that connect teams, businesses, and ideas with the tools to help them work smarter and better.

Teams are becoming more distributed, agile, and self-organized. Businesses are adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI) development to automate work processes. Management levels are expecting data to be available at the snap of a finger and preferably without the complication of spreadsheets, for a clear overview of ongoing projects.

The evolution in workplaces is so constant and fast-changing that many things need to happen simultaneously, on the go.

According to Gartner's report on the future of social software in the workplace, it is predicted that 30% of organizations will rely on graph-based applications that enable self-organized teams to manage non-routine collaborative work by 2018. By 2020, 30% of meetings will be facilitated by virtual concierges and advanced analytics.

Here are a few examples:

- ChatOps are being integrated into teams as collaboration tools across teams to share best work practices, code, virtual standups, time tracking, and more.
- The exponential increase in demand for work mobility in today's workforce. Mobile apps such as Asana, Slack, HipChat, and more are becoming more important in businesses to meet the need for flexibility and productivity on the go.
- Leveraging cloud technology for better development and delivery process that can be used on multiple devices with the same features and content.
- The rise of AI in workplaces to facilitate positive learning reinforcement and to boost productivity using machine learning.
- Organizational structures and teams are becoming more agile and fluid to meet different needs at different milestones.
- …and more.

What does this mean for us?

It means that traditional workplace infrastructures are heading out the door and are being replaced by more flexible software tools that allow changes to happen without disrupting the larger picture—including time tracking.

Track time so you can have your cake and eat it too

"So what makes some people more successful than others? "

Elon Musk is no stranger to us. He transformed an entire aerospace industry, dramatically grew the market for electric cars, and injected the solar power industry with a vision. Now, it looks like Musk might also be putting Artificial Intelligence (AI) on his list of accomplishments with his latest venture.

The question is: How did he do it?

According to Ashlee Vance, author of *Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future*, Musk tracks his time to the minute to make sure he spends time doing the right things. He analyzes how his time is being spent among his ventures and personal life, because time is finite.

Musk is not alone in doing that.

Many successful people are, indeed, meticulous with their time. Being productive and focused on something is better than being busy with everything.

Needless to say, time is fair. Unless someone has gained the secret knowledge to spinning more time out of what we already have, we all get the same amount of 24 hours in a day, 168 hours in a week, 8760 hours in a year.

Time tracking is about change and awareness

Time is a non-renewable and extremely valuable resource we tend to take for granted. When we see how we spend our time, we can better understand how we can improve our use of it.

At work, a culture that encourages this awareness means that project managers are less likely to place arbitrary or unrealistic demands on team members if they're armed with better data to help them make more accurate forecasts.

It also means that team members who track time have a better understanding of how long certain work efforts take them, which increases the likelihood of success across the board, and also gives team members greater insights into how they can improve their use of work time.

How much time do employees waste at work?

*Wasted hours daily

10% | 4h

17% | 3h

16% | 5h

25% | 1h

33% | 2h
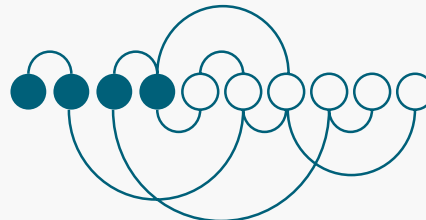
What do they waste time on?

1. Cell phone/texting (50%)

2. Gossip (42%)

3. The internet (39%)

4. Social media (38%)

5. Snack or smoke breaks (27%)

If a lack of visibility into how time is managed and spent is an obvious problem, then time tracking is the simplest thing you can do to improve the ability of teams, managers and PMO, and executives to stay on track.

Time tracking is beneficial to businesses at all levels to measure progress and make necessary course corrections if expectations aren't lining up. For example, if a project manager estimates that a project will take their team 30 hours, but it actually takes three times that amount to complete, they have no way of knowing they're that far off. They also have no way of showing their managers that the organization is spending its time on the right initiatives that align with their overall business strategy.

Having accurate data on how time is spent generating results helps make accurate decisions. Here's another example, Sweden recently moved to a 6-hour work day because studies show that employees produce equal results in a 6-hour work day as they would during an 8-hour work day. That means that an additional 2 working hours does not impact the end-result in a significant way. Ironically, it dampens productivity.

Say you are on the fence of jumping on the 6-hour work day bandwagon, time tracking data will be able to provide you with accurate answers such as:

- If we reduce 2 hours of work each day, how will it impact my ROI?
- What is being done in that 8-hour work day?
- What can we achieve in 6 hours instead?
- Do we really need an 8-hour work day?
- How can I distribute my time, but still stay on top of my projects?

If we look at the infographic above, 33% of employees pretty much spend that additional 2 hours doing something else at work. The question is: Why not invest that additional 2 hours in something better that can bring positive impact (or revolutionize an industry)?

Time tracking comes in handy and provides you with information like:

- If you or your team member are over worked, it is time for a vacation or to spend time with family and friends to unwind.
- If you are done with your work, maybe use the extra time acquiring new knowledge.
- If you only spend 6 hours doing actual work and are still constantly on time with your projects, maybe you don't need an 8-hour work day.

Tracking time doesn't need to be about keeping a watchful eye over the minutiae that team members work on throughout the day. It can also be used for more accurate invoicing. It isn't about making team members demonstrate their 'worth' to their team leads. Rather, time tracking is intended to help project teams ensure that their projects are within scope in terms of allocations, schedule, and budget in order to make better strategic decisions.

Summary:

- Time tracking is beneficial to measure progress in order to take necessary actions.
- Accurate data on how time is spent helps make accurate decisions.
- Time tracking is not about keeping a watchful eye over team members.
- It is intended to help project teams ensure that their projects are within scope.
- Time tracking data can also be used for more accurate invoicing.

Time tracking doesn't have to be tedious or complicated

"It is a process and a way of creating a better work-life balance that can be facilitated if everyone understands its benefits"

Time tracking doesn't have to be tedious or complicated

Encouraging and implementing time tracking tools doesn't need to be a top-down initiative that results in bad organizational vibes.

It is a process and a way of creating a better work-life balance that can be facilitated if everyone understands its benefits—where project teams can see structure and a desire to improve and gain progress rather than a bureaucratic initiative that only managers can benefit from.

Instead of simply handing over a tool to project teams and asking all team members to use it, explain the reason why and how everyone can gain from it. If teams are being pushed too hard or projects are constantly coming in over-budget, that doesn't lead to a constructive, positive, or laid-back work environment. Knowing what we're doing and what's expected from us helps everyone stay in sync, on track, and feel accomplished if our talents are being best put to use.

Implementing the right tools is, of course, critical. Team members are often working with a number of tools and are dealing with a number of distractions throughout the day. Streamlining these tools is important for many reasons—to reduce hassle, inefficiency, and the potential for billing inaccuracies.

After all, an easy-to-use tool makes it easier to create a culture of tracking time.

Project managers and PMOs are usually tasked with managing team resources, scheduling, and budgets. Without a centralized overview of what their team is working on, they cannot accurately measure estimates versus actuals and keep their teams focused on progress. Manual time tracking in spreadsheets is not only a hassle, but can lead to inaccuracies and data that isn't in sync with the overall budget.

When team members are tracking their work with one tool, that generates greater visibility, all stakeholders can be better informed about project progress. Time tracking also leads to more accurate estimates with future forecasting, and is critical for accurately billing time for customers.

Summary:

- Time tracking implementation doesn't need to be a top-down initiative.
- Time tracking helps create a better work-life balance.
- If you are going to implement a tool, make sure it's the right one.
- Automate your tracking, say goodbye to spreadsheets.
- Greater visibility provides more accuracy in planning, forecasting, and billing.

Track time anytime, anyplace

"Work mobility is becoming increasingly important in today's workforce."

Having the right tool alone is no longer enough anymore. It needs to be accessible 24/7. The great thing about being able to track time on the go?

Mobility and convenience.

Work mobility is becoming increasingly important in today's workforce. Gone are the days of work being associated to a physical office space. Similar to the way we consume information, work can be done in bite sizes and distributed over the day with a simple rule: Deliver results, fast.

Teams are becoming more distributed which allows for organizations to access a wider talent pool. Apart from that, the demand for work mobility continues to climb in current workplaces due to more flexible lifestyles. However, meticulous planning and tracking is required in order for teams to be effective. Imagine having to do that on a spreadsheet, or worse still, not being able to do that at all!

That is when tools that are both flexible and easily accessible from any devices at anytime, anyplace are needed to ensure efficient cooperation between team members in order to be able to deliver high quality work. More importantly, it still provides accurate data whenever it is needed.

It benefits the entire organization

"Know how organizational activities are affecting the bottom line."

It benefits the entire organization

For many businesses, the amount of project requests exceeds the organizational resources available to deliver on them. Time tracking ensures teams are working efficiently on tasks and projects that have been better prioritized. It helps the business to better compete and reduce the time it takes to get products or services to market. When we see how we spend our time, we can better understand how we can improve our use of it.
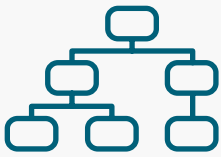
Here are five benefits:

Better Project and Resource Insights

Identify what project teams are spending the most time on and make better decisions regarding resource allocations in the future.

Accountability

Foster a culture of focus and purpose, and ensure that the right resources are working on the right tasks at any given time.

Data to Support Decision Making

Gain real-time insights into project progress, identify value streams, and back up your hiring requests.

Financial Management

Know how organizational activities are affecting the bottom line by distinguishing various capital versus operational expenses. Use this data for accounting.

Customer Account Management

Get real-time information on billable time for your customers. Know immediately if your projects are headed over-budget.

That which gets measured gets done

"Don't let the lack of centralized data and visibility become a liability to your work."

Time tracking is about recording the amount of time spent on a task to help manage the work efforts spent on projects and activities that fall within a portfolio. For a software team, it might include how much time is spent completing a story or fixing a bug. For a marketing team, that might include how much time was spent on preparing for a conference.

When every project team within an organization is tracking time in the same manner, using the same tools, teams and managers can more easily roll-up that information to gain better insights on resource allocations, efficiency, productivity, and the overall state of organizational portfolios.

Don't let the lack of centralized data and visibility become a liability to your work. When you are adequately informed about important resource issues and other organization data with real-time insights, you will be armed with the ability to immediately mitigate accordingly in our current fast-changing environments for better results.

Mostly importantly, organizational data as such can also be used to focus on keeping employees happy and nurturing a work-life balance. Tracking means facing the reality that not all goals can or should be made a current priority, and being able to identify if project teams are being pushed too hard. That can lead to a quickly deteriorating morale and worse—burnout and attrition. Let's try to avoid that and still achieve the results we want with better time tracking.

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