Time management tools to help you get ahead at work

It can be difficult to manage your time well at work. Keeping up with a multitude of tasks, projects, and demands while staying connected with your team and clients can spread employees or business owners very thin. There are a number of tools and techniques that you can use to keep yourself or your team on track by better managing tasks, understanding where time is being spent, and reducing distractions.

Keep reading to learn more about the best time management tools. From time management software to mobile apps to general tips and tricks, these tools can help you limit procrastination and better utilize your time at work.

Time tracking tools

Many employees track their time via timesheets, timeclocks, or time tracking software so that employers can review their hours worked. Time tracking software and apps are helpful for employees or freelancers that need to keep track of billable hours for different clients or projects. However, these tools also work well as time management apps when employees use them to track time spent on specific tasks or activities.

Keeping track of how you spend your time at work can help you identify where your time is being eaten up most. You may find that a certain task is taking up more hours than it should. This can be because you aren't managing your time well or get more easily distracted during that activity. For example, some tasks that are more repetitive and boring can be hard to stay focused on, so you may need to experiment with music like lo-fi that can sometimes boost productivity or find a podcast that will provide entertainment without becoming a major distraction.

You may also find that these repetitive workflows can be automated to require less time. For example, CRMs can often streamline the process of sending outreach emails or follow-ups by automating the process or providing email templates.

There is a wealth of useful and actionable information that can come from time tracking. To get started with time tracking, check out these software options.

Clockify

If you're looking for a no-cost timekeeping option, Clockify is a great alternative to traditional time clocks or paid time and attendance software. Clockify is a cloud-based time tracker application that can be accessed via desktop or mobile. The service allows employees to track their time worked and log time spent on particular projects.

Clockify has a free plan for time tracking that includes access for unlimited users. This is a rare offering as many free services limit the number of users and subscription services often charge based on the number of users. Project tracking is also great if you are in an industry such as legal or consulting where you need to track

billable hours.

QuickBooks Time (Formerly TSheets)

QuickBooks Time, formerly known as TSheets, is a great option for small businesses that already use Quickbooks or Intuit services. Quickbooks Time allows employees to clock in from their phone or computers and records their geolocation. If you use QuickBooks for payroll processing, the integration is convenient. The GPS tracking feature is also great for route or field-based employees.

Hubstaff

Hubstaff is a time tracking app and productivity app This is another great software that your remote or dispersed teams can use to track time while also tracking time spent on specific tasks or projects. This is a great way to not only track time for payroll and attendance purposes, but also to get a better idea of how your staff is spending time. You may find that administrative tasks or meetings are taking up more of their days than you expected, or that you are likely to exceed the forecasted number of hours on a client project. Having this real-time data can help you get a better view of the day-to-day activities of your team members.

Task management tools for teams

When collaborating on projects as a team, time management is incredibly important. If one team member falls behind, it often delays other team members' work and creates a chain reaction. If you need help keeping your team on track, consider using a project management tool to manage deadlines and project communication within your team. These tools can also be used by individuals who find that they need help tracking their own deadlines and to-dos.

Asana

Asana is one of the most popular project management tools for teams. The user-friendly application makes it easy to track and assign tasks within larger teams. Managers can create tasks or projects, specify subtasks, assign work to teammates, set deadlines, and communicate about the tasks within the app. It's great for managing collaborative tasks as team leaders can add information on a task and delegate subtasks in a centralized location.

One nice thing about Asana is that there is a free version for individuals or teams with fewer than 15 members. This allows individual employees to also utilize the tool even if their company does not have a task or project management software in place. You can assign tasks and deadlines for yourself and see them in a calendar view or to-do list format to plan out your week (or month) and stay on track with all of your projects.

Trello

If you are someone that really likes to visually plan out their day, check out Trello. The format is visually similar to a planner, which gives it a more familiar feel for those that are new to productivity tools. Users can create "Trello cards" for each task that they need to complete. You can forward emails to your Trello to automatically create Trello cards. This is great if you're someone that tends to forget about tasks or let them get buried in your inbox. Managers can also forward or email tasks directly to your Trello Board or add you to tasks on their boards.

These cards can be organized across different columns. Many Trello users create columns pertaining to the status of the task such as "planned", "in progress" and "completed". Others use them to categorize tasks by priority, by day, or by category. This flexibility is great, as one organization approach does not fit everyone. Creating cards for your tasks and organizing them in the way that fits your thought process best can help you manage your time better by giving you a way to clearly visualize what needs to get done.

Evernote

Evernote is another popular tool for task management and delegation. It works well for individuals who want an application to manage their calendar and create to-do lists. Teams can also use the program to delegate tasks and collaborate on projects. Users can set reminders and create subtasks to manage their progress and time.

Gantt charts

If you don't want to invest in a new program or app for your team, consider using Gaant charts for team-based time management. These charts can be created and utilized in Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets. A Gantt chart

visually illustrates a project's schedule and components in a bar chart format. They depict the relationship between the start and end dates of tasks, project milestones, and dependent tasks.

Displaying tasks in this format can also help employees feel more incentivized to meet deadlines and get their work done. If an employee can see exactly where their work fits into a larger project, they may feel more connected to the task and motivated to get it done in order to contribute to their team. Often we procrastinate on tasks that feel unimportant or less impactful, but seeing that a coworker is waiting for your task to be done before they can complete their portion of the project adds an element of teamwork and can make meeting the deadline feel more significant.

Time management tools

There are plenty of software options that can help you track and manage your time, however, there are also a number of techniques that you can use to boost your productivity — with or without software. Check out these time management techniques.

Virtual to-do lists

Many people find that making a list and checking off items as they complete them helps them stay on track with their tasks. Checking off an item from your task list can be quite satisfying. To-do lists also provide a nice visual of your progress throughout the day so you can see if you're on track to finish your work or running behind schedule.

To-do lists are great because they are an easily accessible time management tool. You can make one with a pen and any scrap of paper available, a more formalized to-do list app like Todoist, or use the built-in reminders app on iOS. Virtual to-do list tools are great for keeping track of past to-do lists and carrying over tasks across several days.

Pomodoro technique timer tools

The Pomodoro Technique is a popular time management technique that has been used for decades. The pomodoro technique is designed to encourage focus and reduce distractions and multi-tasking. This technique breaks the workday up into 25-minute intervals called pomodoros.

To use the pomodoro technique, you simply set a 25-minute timer and make as much progress on a given task as you can in that time window. When the timer goes off you take a 5 minute break and then start the timer again for another 25-minute pomodoro. After four pomodoros, take a longer 15-30 minute break. This can be done with a basic timer tool on your iPhone or Android phone, or through a dedicated tool like Focus Time.

This is a great way to break up big projects into smaller, more manageable activities. Starting on a large project can feel intimidating, but sitting down to complete 25 minutes of work is likely to feel quite manageable. It also builds in breaks so you don't feel like you need to ignore your phone or your other favorite distractions all day. Instead, you allow yourself a set amount of time to rest, scroll Tikok, or grab a snack without it leading to a ton of wasted time or lost momentum.

Calendar blocking

While you likely have a work calendar set up in Outlook or Google Calendar for managing meetings, you may not be fully leveraging that calendar for time management. Adding important due dates and reminders of upcoming due dates can be a great way to track tasks on your calendar.

You can also try setting meetings with yourself to dedicate time to work on important tasks. This can work similarly to the pomodoro method, as you can block out half an hour or an hour with limited distractions and

plan to take a break or switch tasks at the end of your allotted time.

Time blocking is also a helpful tool if there is a certain time of day that you find yourself struggling to dive into your work. Many people have difficulty getting started on tasks first thing in the morning, while others may have difficulty after lunch or towards the end of the day. Putting a task on your calendar can act as a reminder of what exactly you need to do and deter you from haphazardly switching between different projects or aimlessly scrolling through emails to decide what to prioritize.

Do Not Disturb

If you are someone that gets distracted easily or often feels overwhelmed by incoming notifications, one of the most effective time management techniques is setting yourself to Do Not Disturb. This is similar to the blocking off your calendar approach. If you're often distracted by your phone or social media, put your phone on Do Not Disturb while focusing on a task. iPhones even have an adjustable focus mode that can be used to block out social media, texts, and nonessential notifications while allowing Slack messages or other work-related notifications to still come through.

This approach isn't limited to your phone though. Many remote workers struggle to focus on their work because they feel the need to reply promptly to messages on Slack or Microsoft Teams to demonstrate that they are actually at their desks working. Try to schedule an hour or two per day where you can disconnect these communication tools to tend to high-priority tasks that require a greater focus. If you have a highly communicative team, it can be helpful to reach out to your supervisor to make sure that they understand that you want time to focus in order to improve productivity, not to take a long break or run to a workout class midday.