

**2003 Midwest Research to Practice Conference in
Adult, Continuing, and Community Education**

**Knowledge Worker Productivity:
Closing the Problem—Solution Gap**

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Peter Drucker (1999) states that “knowledge worker productivity is the biggest of the 21st century management challenges.” These traits that derail personal productivity have been identified in the responses of over 2,000 knowledge workers to the question, “What are the most significant things within your control or generated by you that get in the way of your productivity?” The top 10 survey response results are: 61% trying to do too much, 46% not saying no, 45% procrastinating, 44% doing it myself/not delegating, 37% perfectionism, 34% telephone/rop by interruptions, 31% disorganization/clutter, 28% unrealistic time estimates, 19% poor planning, and 19% e-mail.

I saw the opportunities as: (a) Are there a handful of high leverage personal work processing methods that people can use to counteract these productivity de-railers? (b) If implemented, how much efficiency improvement could be achieved?

At HalsteadHeeter we researched the recommended productivity solutions from over 300 globally published studies, reports and documents. We also reviewed training and process improvement programs covering time management and work space management through Lean, Kaizen and Six Sigma initiatives. Then we blended this documentation with our experience working with hundred of successful effective managers, executives and professionals. The distilled result was a handful of personal behaviors and actions that theoretically would beat back the reported productivity de-railers and help knowledge workers improve their efficiency. These best practices were initiative with follow through, ‘lean’ office = duties, greedy schedules, private work periods, private project plans, prioritize 1st daily and rigorous filter/focus. We called these the Productivity ‘Silver Bullet’ Best Practices.

Next, to test these best practices, we designed a knowledge worker development model. It blended a current state time use survey, a briefing on the research and best practices, time phased on-site action training / coaching and an exit survey requesting the learner to report their efficiency gains as a result of applying these ‘silver bullet’ work methods. The measured gains of 237 training participants are shown in Table 1.

With such strong results, the point of concern for adult education is the inclusion of personal productivity work methods training as a core competency to complement and leverage knowledge worker training and eventual on-the-job performance.

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Table 1: Measured gains of Training Participants

	<u>Average Number of Hours</u>	<u>Percent of 40 hr/wk</u>
Hours saved per week		
Handling mail-paper, voice, e-mail	1.5	3.7
Looking for papers or documents	1.1	2.7
By being prepared for meetings	1.2	3.0
Keeping current with work (backlog)	1.6	4.0
Reduced interruptions	1.3	3.2
Working overtime	1.8	4.5
Total hours saved	8.5	21.0
More time spent		
Doing your own work	2.2	5.5
Planning your own work	1.6	4.0
Total converted time:	3.8	9.5

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