



Use Your Time Wisely

An etiquette brief on time management by Civility Experts Worldwide

Introduction

For an expanded lesson plan including activities and answer keys, please visit the shopping cart at www.etiquettetrainingtoolkits.com

Lesson K3L2: Productivity and Priorities (Excerpt)

IMAGINE... leaving work at the end of the day and actually leaving your work there. Or, waking up in the morning and feeling confident that you can accomplish everything you need to and more. Wouldn't it be great to stay calm and collected when the unexpected arises because you know for certain you can tackle, and handle, any challenge that comes your way? Achieving optimum personal productivity is all about managing your priorities, making effective decisions, and staying organized. With a shift in perspective, willingness to change and some concerted effort, anyone can maximize their personal productivity.

Experts agree that depending on the scenario (and on the person) there are many reasons for low productivity. However, there are three explanations that can apply to almost all workplaces. These are stress, poor management, and lack of work ethics and/or social and personal responsibility.

On Stress:

What's so different about today's workplace?

Studies from organizations such as National Institutes for Occupational Safety and Health and the American Psychological Association show the following changes in working conditions have overburdened our traditional coping mechanisms:

- Growing psychological stressors as we increase productivity demands and work longer hours
- The need to gather and apply growing amounts of information
- Job insecurity
- Demographic changes such as aging workers, female participation in the workforce, and the integration of a growing population of ethnic and racial minorities into the workplace
- The need for both men and women to balance obligations between work and family as women enter the workforce worldwide



THINK ABOUT IT: It's a worldwide phenomenon.

Statistics from a recent global stress research study show that increased stress is felt worldwide, and stress affects women differently than men:

A recent Roper Starch Worldwide survey of 30,000 people between the ages of 13 and 65 in 30 countries showed:

- women who work full-time and have children under the age of 13 report the greatest stress worldwide
- nearly one in four parents who work full-time and have children under 13 feel stress almost every day
- globally, 23% of women executives and professionals, and 19% of their male peers, say they feel "super-stressed"

Numerous common health problems are linked to stress:

- The leading six causes of death in the U.S.: heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide
- Immune response and deficiency
- Memory loss
- Obesity

"Productivity is getting things done to the extent and standard to which the completion of whatever you are doing has value". Lew Bayer, Civility Experts Worldwide.

Factors that encourage productivity:
productivity:

Positive attitude
Ability to change
Open mindedness
Encouragement
Teamwork
Broader skills base
Taking risks
Motivation
Belief
Discipline
Other _____

Factors that hinder

Negative attitude
Fear of change
Narrow mindedness
Criticism
Jealousy
Incompetence
Fearfulness
Ulterior motives
Impatience
Laziness
Other _____

Productivity and Priorities

In a five-year workplace study, more than half surveyed said they were distracted by rude behavior at work and got less done while fuming or worrying about it... 22% said they purposely quit doing their best work due to incivility (*Christine Pearson, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill*)

When people in the same workplace have a different idea of what productivity is, the following can happen:

- arguments
- lack of communication
- scattered resources
- anxiety/stress
- lack of teamwork
- _____

One of the primary reasons we have standards in our workplace such as job descriptions and performance evaluations, is that all of these systems help us measure productivity.

"Time sneaks up on you like a windshield on a bug"

Jon Lithgow

How Does Productivity Relate to Social IQ and to Civility?

Increasing your Social IQ means that you make deliberate efforts to increase your awareness and understanding of your environment. Typically, people who are interested in others and in having an understanding the world are people who have an attitude of consideration and respectfulness. The more you learn, the more you realize how much you don't know. The more you experience and share with other people the more you empathize, understand, and respect them. When a person is "other-focused" that person tends to spend less time worrying about the "what-ifs" and/or feeling fearful and self-conscious. When people are involved in strong relationships their support systems grow and they seem to find balance more easily and their productivity increases.

Less stress + More Support + Happier + Social IQ + Confidence = Productivity.

You don't need all the elements to be productive however; having some or all of them certainly contributes to long-term productivity and helps to maintain a high standard of productivity.

Productivity and Priorities

We need to consider that sometimes we don't even know why we do things but we keep doing them even though the behaviour hurts us in some way. We also need to realize how easily we could eliminate many stressors and productivity drains. If we just considered the impact of letting the issues go unresolved and recognized that many of the issues we dismiss as silly or unimportant do in fact impact our productivity.

Wouldn't life be simpler if things were always as they appeared to be? Productivity is one of those areas where what seems to be an obvious explanation for a behaviour or attitude isn't usually that simple. Frequently there are underlying issues or factors impact our productivity.

For example, you could be genuinely annoyed by something someone does – you are furious and for an hour or two you can't get anything done. Maybe you wouldn't react so negatively or stay angry for so long as a rule but on this day you are very tired. Being tired is an underlying issue that contributes to the decrease in productivity but we immediately identify the behaviour of the other person as the cause.

Here's another example, maybe you are annoyed about a co-worker being late for a meeting. You usually just put up with this sort of slight, but this is the sixth time in 2 weeks that this co-worker has kept you waiting. You are completely fed up and do not speak to the person for 2 full weeks so your projects are delayed and communication is strained. It's not this specific incident that is the productivity drain. It's the ongoing pattern of behavior or perception of disrespect.

As people become more socially intelligent, most of us should be able to separate issues. Relationships rarely move forward if we hold grudges and hang onto the past. This means that if you are furious with someone for something he/she says or did, you can argue about it, resolve the issue and then move on.

Or as in the example above, you recognize that it's not very intelligent to potentially miss out on a good, productive working relationship with someone just because he/she smells funny, or laughs a certain way, or dresses weird, or speaks a different language, etc. You determine that as Gestalt theory explains, "*The whole is greater than the sum of the parts*".

Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.

Abraham Lincoln

How Can We Increase Productivity?

www.replicon.com offers a free download of a web time sheet/productivity tracking software.

Here are some general points about productivity:

- Every individual and every organization can improve productivity!
- Productivity is an attitude. It's a way of being and should become a habit.
- Being productive is a continuous process, you have to constantly adapt and change.
- Very productive people understand that you can't control everything, BUT – they also know that you'd be foolish not to control all those things that you can control.
- Just because something is working and seems effective doesn't mean that you couldn't do things differently to make it even more effective.
- Productivity initially costs (sometimes not a lot though) time, energy, or money. Usually the investment more than pays for itself.
- You can't always measure the impact/outcome in terms of dollars, consider stress relief, time saved, relationships saved, long-term morale, saving of resources, increased quality of experience etc.
- Productivity takes planning.
- The whole team has to buy in. If 2-3 people are not contributing or are counter-productive, the savings produced by the others are lost.
- Every small change that leads to productivity encourages or leads to further changes and more productivity. Do not underestimate the power of one person doing one small thing.

"The simple act of paying positive attention to people has a great deal to do with productivity" Tom Peters

If you would like an expanded version of this brief, please visit www.etiquetetrainingtoolkits.com where you can purchase this and 140+ additional civility and etiquette lessons and other materials.