

Time & Motion Working Smarter, Not Harder

Time & Motion is hardly a modern concept, more usually associated with improving efficiency in production lines rather than the office or showroom. Once hailed as the solution to all efficiency problems it has been overtaken by terms like process improvement or re-engineering, however, the basic theory delivers practical benefits and bottom line results. Time & Motion is not about working harder but working smarter. It helps you build efficiencies in to every task and reduces unproductive time.

I was introduced to the idea at an early age and the principles have remained with me ever since. By way of a basic practical example, let's think about a typical arrival at work in the morning where you want to check your email and have a cup of tea.

Approaching these basic tasks in isolation you might take the following approach:

1. Take off coat and have the usual morning chat with co-workers
2. Turn on computer and sit and wait for it to start up
3. Open email and wait while new messages are downloaded
4. Read through messages
5. Go to the kitchen and put the kettle on to boil
6. Wait in the kitchen for the kettle to boil and then make tea
7. Return to your desk and carry on with your work while drinking your tea

Alternatively you could take the following action:

1. Put the kettle on to boil as soon as you arrive, before you go to your desk
2. Go to your desk and start up your computer
3. Take off your coat and touch base with co-workers
4. Check the computer is ready for action, open your email and send/receive
5. Go and make the tea (while messages are downloading)
6. Return to your desk and read your messages while drinking your tea

I estimate that the second way of approaching the same activities could take half as much time as the first – the result is the same but the time saving is considerable. I realise this example is somewhat naïve but if the same principle is applied to other daily tasks you will find yourself and your team working much more efficiently.

Would you not want to find more time without having to spend more time? The challenge you have is to take a look at what is on your list of tasks for the day, especially the repeatable items, and think about the order in which you approach them. At times, busy managers get too involved in 'doing' things so fail to see opportunities to work smarter or where others could be working with them on other aspects of the task. The fancy term is working concurrently but the result is the same – arriving at the solution faster.

Some might call it multi-tasking, some might call it time management, and some might call it Time & Motion. Whatever you choose to call it, one of the most valuable things to all of us is time . . . once it has passed it can never be retrieved, so why waste it?

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