

work at work

The top 5 ways workers are wasting time when they're at work

APRIL 24, 2017 3:24PM



Are you actually working, or just standing around doing nothing?

Cara Jenkin, News Corp Australia Network



ONE in 10 workers admit more than half of the working week is spent wasting time — but scrolling through social media is not the biggest culprit.

Research conducted by Survey Sampling International on behalf of **SEEK** finds talking to colleagues face-to-face is how 48 per cent of Australians waste their days when they should be working.

While logging on to social media is the second biggest timewaster (39 per cent), almost a third of Australians (30 per cent) are at least productive in some way when they do not want to work, spending time cleaning their workspace.

Doing nothing (28 per cent) and taking long breaks (27 per cent) round up the top five ways Australians are wasting time at work.

Most respondents (72 per cent) believe less than 30 per cent of the working week is time wasted, but 11 per cent believe more than 50 per cent of time is lost.

People management specialist [Karen Gately](#) said people often wasted time because they were tired, disengaged — or both.

“Whether it be with their job, team or the organisation as a whole, when people lose interest, trust or respect, they are entirely more likely to lack focus and energy,” she said.

“While of course time wasting can reflect a poor work ethic and deliberate attempt to skive, in most cases people are simply struggling to muster the energy needed to focus on what they need to do.

“Boredom, frustration, resentment and disinterest are just a few examples of the mental and emotional states that drain people of energy and hold them back from getting on with getting the job done.

“A lack of personal accountability for the standard of the contribution they make is another common reason people are less productive than they could be.”



If you're trying to get the gunk out from between the keys, you're probably wasting your time. Picture: Thinkstock Source: *ThinkStock*

[Hender Consulting](#) executive consultant Justin Hinora said time-wasting could come back to bite jobseekers, particularly if it interfered with their productivity.

He said it was increasingly common for referees to highlight productive and unproductive workers when recruiters asked them for a reference.

He said it was increasingly common for referees to highlight productive and unproductive workers when recruiters asked them for a reference.

“For workplaces that are not typically 9am-5pm or shift-oriented, and with employees accessing and responding to work emails after hours, some employers are more tolerant of what might be perceived as time-wasting activities at work, as long as the job was still getting done,” he said.

“Employees have a responsibility to manage their own time effectively. As long as they are performing their responsibilities and achieving positive outcomes, spending time on social media is less of an issue.

“Time-wasting tasks can also sometimes include unproductive busyness, whereby employees are focused on something that gives a sense of being busy but does not necessarily contribute to achieving the necessary task.

“I think it’s humorous that some people will post on Facebook that they can’t believe they’re still at work so late! What are they doing on Facebook?! If you get off Facebook, do your work, then you can go home!”



About a quarter of workers take a break to waste time. Picture: Thinkstock Source: Supplied

However, how much time was wasted could actually be the boss’s fault, not the employee’s.

Hender Consulting executive consultant Julie Brennan said employees highly engaged in their job were far less likely to be tempted to waste time, and that can come down to leadership.

“If people have a clear understanding of how their actions contribute to an organisation, if they feel valued, if they enjoy their job, are held accountable and receive regular feedback and communication on business strategy moving forward, they will be outcomes-focused and self-select not to time waste,” she said.

“Opportunities to connect with colleagues create organisational culture and improve employee engagement, so not all time wasting activities should be considered equal.

“If you are time wasting, maybe you should be asking yourself why?”

Ms Gately said occasional time wasting was unlikely to undermine anyone’s career success but when workers found themselves regularly switching off, they should consider if they were in the right job or with the right employer.

“Sometimes the only real options is to look outside of the organisation for an opportunity that will allow you to do work that at the very least interests you,” she said.