

## THE BIG HOLE IN YOUR DAY

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We all have 24 hours in a day and 7 days in a week. And if you multiply that out and my math is correct (I assume it is because I've done this a few times), that gives us a total of 168 hours per week. And the thing about time is that it can only be spent, it cannot be saved. (Did you ever have any time left over on Sunday night that you could lop on over to the following week?)

And there are only two ways to spend time, spend it wisely, or, well, not so wisely.

The average person is working in excess of 40 hours per week and I have found that most people lose about 3 hours per day or 15 hours per week in a Black Hole that sucks away and consumes better than a third of the quantity of time we have available to be productive in our work.

The Hole? Needless interruptions.

Now an interruption is nothing more than an "unanticipated event". (That's what makes it an interruption.) They come to us in two ways, either in-person or via the telephone. (Telephone would include all the electronic devices such as fax, email, beepers, pagers, etc.)

Like everything we encounter, interruptions are both good and bad. A lot of what you and I do on a daily basis is to address the "good" interruptions, those that are "crucial" and "important". Indeed, a lot of what we are paid for is to handle those "good" interruptions. Those are not the concern.

What takes away from achieving higher levels of productivity are the "bad" interruptions, those that have "little" or "no" value".

Examples of "good" interruptions are when a client or customer calls you to place an order, your boss stops by to inform you that you will be getting the raise, or a co-worker interrupts you at your desk to show you how to complete a project in less time. These are all interruptions but they will lead to enhanced results. They are "good", so very good.

Examples of "bad" interruptions are when a co-worker drops by to complain about the price of hay in Denmark (assuming that you are not in that business) or some irrelevant, uninteresting topic or a telephone solicitor reaches you at work to try to sell you something you do not need or want.

Here are some interesting statistics. (Your actual mileage may vary, but if you need something to compare yourself to.) On average, we experience one interruption every 8 minutes or approximately 6-7 per hour. In an 8-hour day, that totals around 50-60 interruptions in the day. The average interruption takes approximately 5 minutes. (Some may take several hours or days; others may only take a few seconds.) If you are receiving 50 interruptions in the day and each takes 5 minutes, that totals 250 minutes, or just over 4 hours out of 8, or about 50% of the workday.

Now, if you were to track and rate each interruption we experience during the day, (let "A" = Crucial; "B" = Important; "C" = Little Value; and "D" = "No Value"), most people will discover that only about 20% of their interruptions are of the "A" and "B" variety and 80% are of the "C" and "D" variety. (Maybe you will come out better; I hope so.)

Finally, if you experience 250 minutes of interruptions in your day and 80% are of the "C" and "D" variety, having "Little" or "No Value", 80% of 250 is 200 minutes or just over 3 hours per day going down the drain being consumed by interruptions that are not worthy of your time.

For most, there is a hole so big in their productive day that they could drive a truck through it.

*Dr. Donald E. Wetmore, a full-time Professional Speaker, is one of the foremost experts on Time Management and Personal Productivity and the author of "Beat the Clock". If you would like to receive a free copy of his companion article, "How to Plug up the Hole", to help reduce the interruptions in your day that have "Little" or "No Value", email your request for "plug" to: [ctsem@msn.com](mailto:ctsem@msn.com)*