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By Carl Davidson

the value of time

Increase your sales by 30% from better use of time

Companies spend millions of dollars on training and motivational meetings to increase sales and productivity, but one way to increase sales appears to be spending more time selling and improving time management.

According to a new survey by America Online and Salary.com, the average worker admits to frittering away 2.09 hours per eight-hour workday, not including lunch and scheduled break time.

The biggest distraction for respondents? Personal Internet use—44.7% of the more than 10,000 people polled cited surfing the Web as their No. 1 distraction at work. Socializing with co-workers came in second at 23.4%. Conducting personal business, “spacing out,” running errands and making personal phone calls were the other popular time-wasting activities in the workplace.

The survey also showed that the younger the worker, the more time they waste on personal use of Internet. Also, the more money people make, the more likely they are to use time at work for shopping, news and other personal functions.

Why would average workers with average morals steal about a quarter of the time they are paid for? The answer may surprise you. Respondents reported they:

- Do not have enough work to do (33.2%);
- Are underpaid for the amount of work they do (23.4%);
- Are distracted by co-workers (14.7%);
- Do not have enough after-work time (12%); and
- Other (16.7%).

Let's take a look at how committed you are to sales and using all employee time possible for selling.

Hours

The best time to sell is during the hours most couples are home together. While no hours are perfect, the absolute best hours to sell are weekdays in the afternoon and evening and all day Saturday and Sunday. It continues to amaze me that so many water equipment dealerships are open for sales early in the day Monday through Friday and closed on weekends. This means your customers have to take a day off of work to speak with you and that is not going happen in many cases. This costs sales and causes one-legged demos, making it much harder to get sales.

Set Minimums

Time will be wasted in great quantities unless each salesperson has a minimum number of contacts to make each day. I am speaking of contacts, not sales. If you make it part of your staff's job that they must do a minimum of two demos per day, they will then have a goal they know will be measured daily, and they will have a benchmark by which they will be judged. They know there is a level of activity required to keep their job. This applies a bit of pressure that makes a person sell and demo instead of playing solitaire or using the Internet.

In addition to having a set minimum, a supervisor or owner should find out each day how many demos were performed. I suggest you develop a “demonstration summary form” to be signed by the homeowners for each demo done. This signed form takes review of numbers out of the realm of feelings or dreams and grounds it in reality.

Valuing Time

If the owner does not value time, the employees will feel justified in wasting it. How do you show that you value time? Do you know when employees are late or leave early? Do you do personal tasks on company time? Remember that even though you work long hours, if you take an hour to get your hair cut during the work day, employees will feel justified in doing so as well. If an employee needs a morning off to see a doctor or

lawyer, do they have to make up the time, or do you give it to them? This too is a mark of not placing a value on time.

Policy on Internet & Phones

Does your company have a written policy every employee has signed on e-mail and Internet use? If not, you can bet your facilities are used in a lot of ways you never intended and that a lot of your payroll costs go to e-mail, websites like MySpace and Internet shopping. I went to one dealership on a Saturday and found every computer in the building was on an NFL betting site.

Be sure you know what your staff does online and what they use their e-mail accounts for while at work.

There are inexpensive programs that will record all keystroke activities on your system, so you can keep tabs on time used on the Internet and e-mail. As part of our recruiting work for clients, we place ads on Monster.com, and we get 90% of our applications during normal work hours. That means employees are applying for jobs while being paid by their employer and using company Internet facilities.

You should also have a policy on personal phone calls. Cell phones have allowed every employee to bring their personal phone to work. Are they allowed to make and receive calls during non-break periods? Not having a written policy on this matter tells your staff you do not value time.

How High is Selling on Your List?

If you are the owner or manager, how much of your day is actually spent on the only two activities that pay: selling to customers and recruiting and training sales staff? I realize you have a million things to do but the time spent on these activities tells you the importance you place on this work as opposed to work that is important but does not lead to sales.

If you are in sales, ask yourself the same question. What percentage of your day is spent on the only two activities that earn money for you and your company: generating appointments and doing demonstrations?

If the amount is lower than you would like, try to rearrange your

day based on priorities and activities that lead to sales. Cut out things that cannot end in sales, like Internet usage, and concentrate on a set goal for activities such as calls, letters, meetings and demonstrations.

Making sales a top priority, setting goals for activities and other ideas discussed in this article will make a big difference to your success. *wqp*

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