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SIMPLIFICATION TIPS AND TRICKS

10 Ways To Escape The Complexity Trap

Boost daily productivity and get to the work that matters by implementing these simple tricks. Visit www.futurethink.com or contact us at innovate@futurethink.com for more tips, tricks and work hacks.

DEFINE MEANINGFUL WORK

If you could eliminate the time sucks from your workday, what would you do with your time? Individually or with your team, make a list of the work that you wish you could spend more time doing (client conversations? innovation projects?) and why these tasks are important. Defining what counts as "valuable work" in your organization will help people understand why they need to simplify.

CREATE A CODE OF CONDUCT

Stop unproductive behaviors and compel others to act with simplification in mind. Think about which behaviors cause unnecessary work and which should be avoided. Also, which behaviors make it easier to get things done? Then create "we will do X..." statements such as "we will say NO to unproductive meetings" and "eliminate redundant work" and "not create false urgency." Code of Conduct statements like these empower people to simplify and focus on valuable work.

TRACK YOUR TIME

Do you know where your time goes? In a typical week, how many meetings do you attend? How many hours do you spend on email? Are you spending your time on low-value tasks or high-value work? Among your low-value tasks, can you eliminate or simplify them? Which meetings can you cancel or hold less frequently? Use this log as a benchmark to chart your progress two months from now.

CREATE A CUT-THE-CRAP COMMITTEE

Designate a small group to be in charge of observing how work gets done (or doesn't). Make it their job to identify time sucks, redundancies, and unnecessary practices. Entrust this group to bring issues to light with the goal of eliminating roadblocks.

ASK 'WHAT IF I DIDN'T?'

Start asking questions that reveal opportunities for simplification. For example: "What if we didn't do that meeting/report/call?" or "If a new CEO started here, what processes would s/he immediately observe as the biggest time-wasters?" or "What jargon could be eliminated from this document?" Use provocative questions like these to problem solve or identify areas of complexity within your business.

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MANDATE DECISION MAKING

To encourage decision making and free up time, task each of your team members with making two decisions this week without you. Set boundaries on what's allowed and what still needs approval (e.g., budget sign-offs), gradually increasing the number of weekly decisions. Empower people to solve problems on their own, and not waste other's time out of fear or indecision.

KILL STUPID RULES

What stupid rules hold you back from doing more valuable, innovative work? Identify things that constrain your productivity, such as standing reports, approval processes, and mandatory meetings. Kill or modify those rules and policies immediately to make space for valuable work like innovation and strengthening customer relationships.

END USELESS MEETINGS

Every meeting should accomplish its goals in the least possible amount of time. Host 27-minute meetings to keep attendees on topic and aware of time. Only attend meetings in which a designated "D" (decision maker) is present. Identify which of your own meetings are redundant or have outlived their usefulness—then cancel (or suspend) them. When you refuse to participate in a useless meeting, you reclaim more time for valuable work.

MEASURE PROGRESS, SIMPLY

Choose your metrics according to behaviors you want to encourage. If shorter or fewer meetings are a goal, consider tracking "cost savings from shorter or fewer meetings." From a reduction in reports to an increase in employee retention, the right metrics will support your business goals and encourage positive behavioral change.

MINIMIZE YOUR INBOX

Applying just a few behavior changes can reduce the volume of internal email in your company. For example, reduce your message to only the subject line of an email. Write no-scroll emails—and if your message requires scrolling to read it, send the info as an attachment or pick up the phone instead. Minimize cc's to three or fewer people and include only decision makers. Better emailing starts with you.

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