

## Introduction

Productivity and information technology enabling a more efficient workforce has a relatively long history. During the era of factory and office workplace, scientific management of time helped eliminate wasted motion and drive efficiencies. This was “when people work fixed hours, locations, and with measurable inputs and outputs”, says Dr. Melissa Gregg, Principal Engineer at Intel and author of *Counterproductive: Time Management in the Knowledge Economy*<sup>1</sup>. It stands in strong contrast to our 21st century lives. Today, mobile devices can turn any place into a work station, work is distributed across various systems, locations, and stakeholders. “This requires new technical, psychological and logistical skills of workers who are expected to manage themselves across transient, adhoc workplaces.” To survive, companies are integrating technology to optimize organizational management.

Time tracking software has been heralded as one potential tool. Time tracking is a system that measures and records work time completed by a worker. The process dates back to the era of old-fashioned punch cards employees used every morning and evening to clock in and out of the office. Shortly after, companies begin questioning how to better manage their employees’ work day. The 1960s and the 1970s saw the rise of a quantitative approach to management, with companies measuring input, output, and time spent on activities. Much of the mid-century approach focused on managing time. Though the concept is decades-old, modern time management apps are based on what Dr. Gregg describes as “the advice and pseudoscience of the time management of the 70s”. It’s plausible time tracking could increase efficiency, but it maintains little scientific proof to substantiate the claim.

Yet this management ideology still influences the modern work life, despite the globalization of industry and the varied texture of the workforce. For example, the majority of the US workforce will be freelancers by 2017<sup>2</sup>; Millennials make up the lion’s share of US employees<sup>3</sup>; and more employees are pushing for home office flexibility<sup>4</sup>. Digital time tracking has been advertised as one tool that can fuse management into a digital tool. It’s not a recent digital endeavor. The dot com days of the early 2000s saw patents for tracking employees through email.<sup>5</sup> Even now, several patents exist about how to monitor employees; some analyze the health and physiology of employees based on scanning and previous biometric information.<sup>6</sup>

It’s become a digital priority to optimize the monitoring and measuring of employee activity. Time tracking aims to assess company productivity by having employees use a daily timer whilst working on various tasks. Except, in this century, an employee presses a keyboard button (or two) when they are changing tasks and/or activities throughout the work day.

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<sup>1</sup> GREGG, M. (2018). COUNTERPRODUCTIVE: Time management after the organization. DURHAM: DUKE University PRESS.

<sup>2</sup> Gallup, Inc. (n.d.). State of the American Workplace. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/reports/199961/state-american-workplace-report-2017.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Fry, R. (2018, April 11). Millennials are the largest generation in the U.S. labor force. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/>

<sup>4</sup> Chokshi, N. (2017, February 15). Out of the Office: More People Are Working Remotely, Survey Finds. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/15/us/remote-workers-work-from-home.html>

<sup>5</sup> US6141649A - Method and system for tracking employee productivity via electronic mail. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://patents.google.com/patent/US6141649A/en>

<sup>6</sup> US20140278629A1 - Method for employee parameter tracking. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://patents.google.com/patent/US20140278629A1/en>

This tool is supposed to increase employee productivity, raise accountability, and be another source of data to showcase where a company should devote more of their time to. But does time tracking really increase employee productivity?

Despite time tracking app developers claiming their tools create efficient workflow, there is scant empirical evidence. Famed Duke University behavioral economist, Dan Ariely— who also sold a time management system to Google in 2015 confirms, “There’s really not that much good research around on these apps, especially because they’re so different from each other”.<sup>7</sup> Not all time tracking tools are useful in all workplace contexts. What works for one team in one particular profession may not translate to another department in the same company. What Ariely highlights is that there is little scientific validity to back up organizational productivity claims.

*It’s fundamental for companies and employees to consciously assess if and how time tracking tools would provide support.*

For example, time tracking could be more relevant for freelance marketers or writers, as their hours are highly-delineated rather than an employee within a larger company. Or corporate programmers may need to know where they spend their work time within a code rather than researchers in R&D. To accept time tracking as a blanket solution to productivity issues in every department, in every industry hardly makes sense in a diverse workforce.

*Time tracking is an opportunity for employees and employers to examine how integrating time tracking into their daily work.* This paper aims to clarify what time tracking potential gains and downsides are to employees and employers. With the resulting insights, it’s hoped that management tailors their approach to time and organizational efficiency within the digital workforce.

## **Time Tracking for Employees**

### **Potential Gains**

Time tracking software has been implemented in a number of organizations, like Twitter.<sup>8</sup> Like the old saying goes, “You can’t manage what you don’t measure”. There are certain advantages in creating a record in how employees spend their time.

***Possess data to show what is and isn’t working within projects.***

Time tracking certainly has an advantage for employees. With the software, employees can take ownership of their data to show proof of what is and isn’t working—even if it’s contrary to a manager’s beliefs. Sometimes management fails in figuring out priorities or deadlines. If employees use time tracking, they will be able to provide information to their managers. They will be able to specifically point which project tasks involve too much time or which activities are not cost-effective. With a time tracker, it may be easier to prove when things are not going according to the initial plan. This gives both employee and manager an opportunity to discuss what the next steps should be before a problem occurs.

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<sup>7</sup> Messinger, L. (2015, August 18). Do time management apps really make people more productive? Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/aug/18/time-management-apps-work-life-balance-productivity>

<sup>8</sup> Messinger, L. (2015, August 18). Do time management apps really make people more productive? Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/aug/18/time-management-apps-work-life-balance-productivity>

## *Optimize future planning*

Another incentive for employees to incorporate time tracking into their projects is optimized project management. According to a 2016 Project Management Institute study, organizations waste \$122 million for every \$1 billion spent on project due to inadequate project management.<sup>9</sup> An employee in an department usually owns a group of tasks. As a team member, they fulfill those tasks to move the greater project forward. Completely new projects demand more time as new learnings and processes are discovered and established. Time tracking may make project management more efficient, particularly in assignments that are comprise varying horizontal and vertical teams.

Time tracking may be especially useful for future projects that are similar to past projects in scope and size. An employee will be able to better estimate how long tasks will take based on past activity; employees will be able to compare and contrast time spent on projects. With a comparative assignment, discussions on progress pace or high-calibre coordination between stakeholders can take place. Additionally, if management creates deadlines that overly optimistic in delivery and time, employees have data to compare. Employees will be able to give an informed opinion regarding the time parameters and goals, if not jointly feasible. Solutions may be worked out before the problems arise. Unnecessary activities, departments, and tasks may be eliminated as the process is optimized.

## **Potential Drawbacks**

While time tracking may create advantages in the workplace, the potential downsides need consideration. Not every tool belongs within every workplace. What works for one line of work does not apply to all industries. Here are a few considerations when pondering time tracking for improved employee productivity.

### *Stealing Wages—Digital Wage Theft*

Combined with certain legal ambiguities, time tracking software may do some damage. The digital tool could become a serious pitfall in exploiting employees. Due to the hourly nature of the tool, employers could chisel away at a worker's hourly pay. Wage theft is a particular problem for employees in health services, drivers, factory and food-service employees according to a study by Elizabeth Tippett.<sup>10</sup> Nearly 60 percent of the US force is comprised of workers receiving hourly pay.<sup>11</sup> Understandably, most employers use a digital system to track those hours before turning in those hours to their billing department. Tippett, who studies employee productivity and time tracking, is an associate professor at the University of Oregon School of Law. Tippett defines “wage theft” as when a person does not receive payment for their work. It often looks benign, like a manager asking an employee to work a few extra hours per week without pay. Or employers refusing to pay over-time.

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<sup>9</sup> Organizations Waste an Average of US\$122 Million per US\$1 Billion Spent on Projects. (2016, February 04). Retrieved from <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20160204006252/en/Organizations-Waste-Average-US122-Million-US1-Billion>

<sup>10</sup> Characteristics of minimum wage workers, 2015 : BLS Reports. (2016, April 01). Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/minimum-wage/2015/home.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Robaton, A. (2017, February 17). Most Americans are hourly workers. Retrieved from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/most-americans-are-hourly-workers/>

How wide-spread is digital wage theft? The Economic Policy Institute found that in the US alone, wage theft is \$15 billion per year. Tippett explains how digital wage theft occurs. In her study of more than 330 state and federal cases, the courts found three main methods of how of machine-aided wage theft occurs:

*-Rounding*

This occurs when the software changes the starting and ending times of an employee, usually due to the pre-defined work time.

*-Automatic break deductions*

This setting deducts preset time intervals, like taking a lunch or a coffee break from pay—even if the break was not fully taken.

*-Time shaving*

Managers alter software records manually, often paring down the actual numbers worked to the pre-defined working hours.

Time tracking could be an opportunity for employers to explicitly shave off payment due to workers. A few minutes every day quickly adds up. Do companies actually take advantage of the time tracking software to exploit workers? According to Tippett, the answer is a resounding “yes”.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Induce frustration***

The compulsion to track time may become a frustrating exercise for employees. Depending on the tech, the software may be a gateway to lower employee morale. Since time tracking is a tool, it takes time, energy, and training to learn how to best use it. For employees that already are a bit tech-anxious, introducing a new tool may be a cause for concern. The Hay Group calls employee frustration the “silent killer” within a company.<sup>13</sup> Employees that are frustrated differ from the groups of workers who feel unhappy in their job, those who cause conflict, and the those who feel already burnt out. Typically, frustrated workers are aligned with company goals and values feel; they believe in creating great work.<sup>14</sup> However external causes hinder them from producing high-quality work. This causes deep frustration—a perilous outcome.

One study estimated frustrated employees account for 20% of the workforce.<sup>15</sup> Managers are missing out on having these employees feel productive as possible. Frustration can stem from a number of workplace-related factors: benefits, coworkers, or long hours. Integrating new technology may make workers feel confused about *how* to execute the technology or *why* management may not trust them to do their job without a time tracker. Both of these scenarios may lead to workers feeling their workplace holds them back from accomplishing their best.

If employees feel frustrated with the tech, there are a few strategies employers can take. In an interview with Forbes, Dynasti Hunt from EducationSuperHighway, suggests a “Lunch and Learn”

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<sup>12</sup> T., & Chika, E. (2018, May 30). How Employers Profit from Digital Wage Theft Under the FLSA. Retrieved from [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3180275](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3180275)

<sup>13</sup> Strategic workforce planning for business leaders. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.haygroup.com/en/our-library/factsheets/strategic-workforce-planning-for-business-leaders/>

<sup>14</sup> Royal, M., & Agnew, T. (2012). The enemy of engagement: Put an end to workplace frustration - and get the most from your employees. New York: American Management Association.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Royal and Tom Agnew ,Authors. (2011, November 04). Workplace Frustration is the Silent Killer According to New Book 'The Enemy of Engagement'. Retrieved from <https://www.cnbc.com/id/45080681>

method for tech-anxious employees.<sup>16</sup> “It’s a fantastic way to build connections across a team while simultaneously learning something new. Whether you provide the lunch or ask the team to brown bag it, they will welcome the opportunity to learn in a more open setting that isn't quite as structured as formally scheduled training”. An employee or an employer could easily start this inclusive initiative.

## **Time Tracking for Employers**

### **Potential Gains**

Time tracking software could be arguably geared more towards meeting the needs of companies, than employees. The tool, in theory, provides a range of benefits for management.

#### ***Create a Precise Record***

The business manager guru, Peter Drucker, emphasized in small way that time is our most scarce resource.<sup>17</sup> In a 2013 McKinsey&Company’s quarterly release, they highlighted why organizations should be laser focused on time management. They asked nearly 1,500 international executives how they spend their time.<sup>18</sup> Of the executives, only 52% felt how they spent their time closely aligned with their company’s strategic needs. Nearly 50% of respondents felt they were not “concentrating sufficiently on guiding the strategic direction of the business”. This is where time tracking as a tool may aid progress.

Time tracking provides a record of how the limited resource is being spent, by both management and employees. The McKinsey&Company study proposed executives could create a “time budget plan” to establish time parameters and to focus on fulfilling priorities. This suggestion could apply throughout a company’s workforce, potentially supported by a time tracking tool. Proposals, internal initiatives, and client projects include time commitments from all parties involved. A time tracker could then clearly demonstrate whether those projections are being fulfilled or not. If not, managers and employees can take deliberate steps to fix any obstacles.

Organizationally, time trackers may provide employers a practical record of which team members are working on which tasks. Since time trackers show when employees clock in and when they depart, a manager can oversee how much time they’re allotting to tasks. This can be a talking point meant for annual reviews. Employees and managers can discuss the types of the tasks and the time commitments completed. It could reflect an employee’s growing abilities at certain tasks or areas of improvement. Keeping a record would be a useful initiative when discussing evolving (or devolving) positions.

### **Motivates employees to finish on time**

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<sup>16</sup> Bradford, V. (2018, March 20). The shock of the new: Helping employees embrace technological change. Retrieved from <https://e-resolve.co.uk/shock-new-helping-employees-embrace-technological-change/>

<sup>17</sup> Drucker Institute. (n.d.). Time Again For Better Time Management. Retrieved from <http://www.druckerinstitute.com/2013/01/better-time-management/>

<sup>18</sup> Bevins, F., & Smet, A. D. (n.d.). Making time management the organization's priority. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/making-time-management-the-organizations-priority>

Companies want to deliver on time. Yet it's not uncommon for companies to fall prey to the *planning fallacy*, a term coined by a research team at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).<sup>19</sup> The human brain has an optimistic slant on gauging how quickly things can get done. When managers assign deadlines for different tasks, they often underestimate the duration of how long things can take. Cue the creation of deadlines. By assigning a final time, a team creates boundaries. For some employees, meeting deadlines may be a challenge. For managers, a time tracker may be a tool to incentivize the employee to remain on track. Writer for the Guardian, Dean Burnett comments on the essential nature of deadlines, "(They) may be unpleasant and annoying, but they do seem to make sure things get done". Time tracking may support in "getting things done" on time.<sup>20</sup>

If employers have given workers a reasonable amount of time to complete a project (taking into account the *planning fallacy*), this signals employees to remain focused on completing tasks. Time tracking software gives the ability for employers to reflect on whether they have optimistically gauged the project duration. Perhaps certain tasks are taking longer; perhaps this has been a reoccurring habit, but the employer has failed to notice until the time tracking tool. Either way, a tool may provide valuable feedback to both employee and manager when a task is taking longer than projected. Because time sources are being closely monitored, the manager can quickly put out a potential fire during the project. A manager can then move to dedicate more staff to the task or rethink resources.

### ***Carve out creative time***

One of the most successful and recognized companies in the world allots employees time to spend on their own non-work related activities. 3M gives employees 15% to spend on their own personal projects.<sup>21</sup> The only requirement is that employees must give updates about their progress, whatever their project. One of 3M's most well-known contributions to the world, the sticky note, was invented by a daydreaming, 3M engineer.<sup>22</sup> Time must also be seen as a way to support employees' goals and needs in the long term. Research done by cognitive neuroscientist, Joydeep Bhattacharaya, at University of London suggests that the brain needs down time from concentrative tasks.<sup>23</sup> The brain is optimized when it has space to think freely, allowing thoughts to come and go. This is creative thinking—the powerhouse of the problem solving for companies. Allotting time for employees to free-think is a competitive move.

In *Imagine: How Creativity Works*, Jonah Lehrer explores how innovation solutions occur within companies and shows the science companies are utilizing to create work conditions conducive to creative thought. Lehrer, in an interview with National Public Radio's Fresh Air, explains the principle behind 3M's 15% rule.<sup>24</sup> "It sends this message to the researchers and scientists and

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<sup>19</sup> Buehler, R., Griffin, D., & Ross, M. (1994). Exploring the "planning fallacy": Why people underestimate their task completion times. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(3), 366-381. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.67.3.366

<sup>20</sup> Hanmer, M. J. (n.d.). The Purposeful Adoption of Election Day Registration. *Discount Voting*, 55-78. doi:10.1017/cbo9780511605338.003

<sup>21</sup> Govindarajan, V., & Srinivas, S. (2017, December 06). The Innovation Mindset in Action: 3M Corporation. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2013/08/the-innovation-mindset-in-acti-3>

<sup>22</sup> The Neuroscience of Creativity: Why Daydreaming Matters. (2012, March 22). Retrieved from <https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/the-neuroscience-of-creativity-why-daydreaming-matters/>

<sup>23</sup> Professor Joydeep Bhattacharaya PhD, FRSA. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.gold.ac.uk/psychology/staff/bhattacharaya/>

<sup>24</sup> Lucas, S. (2011, August 15). Scientific Proof That Micro-Management is Bad For Your Company (And How to Fix It). Retrieved from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/scientific-proof-that-micro-management-is-bad-for-your-company-and-how-to-fix-it/>

engineers, look, we trust you. We hired you. We think you're smart. We're not going to get in your way. We're not going to try to micromanage your mind.”

Time tracking may be billed as a productive tool, but to the brain it may resemble a micro managing mechanism. Therefore, give employees ample time for the creative flow of a wandering mind. The Journal of Experimental Psychology published a 2011 study that found people’s performance decreased when they were being monitored.<sup>25</sup> Time tracking may mean even great employees may not produce their best work. Intense focus has become a commodity in our digital age. It’s not only difficult to hone, but the parameters needed to create it are lacking within the modern workplace. Focus comes from cognitive downtime, when our brains have the freedom to roam. Therefore employers can benefit from scheduling regular creative down time for their employees. This can give workers a brain reboot—and company’s a competitive edge.

## **Potential Drawbacks**

Like any tool promising productivity, an organization should consider the potential risks in implementing time tracking.

### ***Wastes time***

In an ironic move, time tracking demands time investment in itself. First, it takes time to understand the technology. Secondly, it takes time to complete—just like any other work task. Some programs do have automated systems that blend more seamlessly into the background. However Laura Stack, author and speaker at the ProductivityPro, tells Fast Company “People are spending far more time creating these elaborate (time tracking) systems than it would have taken just to do the task. You’re constantly on your app refiguring, recalculating, recategorizing.”<sup>26</sup> Time tracking does require a commitment. When employees begin and finish a task, they jot down what things they did and/or did not accomplish; in some apps, they have to notify another team member; depending, employees may need to go back and readjust time stamps or further elaborate on what they did 2 weeks ago on a Tuesday morning. Depending on the tool, it may take a bit more time from a work day.

### ***Shift company culture into burn-out***

Employee burnt out may be the largest consideration to employers. Too often, burn out is deemed the fault of the individual or poor talent management. That conclusion is false. According Eric Garton, leader of Bain & Company’s Global Organization practice and Partner, employee burnt out occurs because of the company, not the person.<sup>27</sup> This era of work places employees between increasing workloads, long hours, little vacation, job insecurity, and frustrating work processes. Management plays a huge role in how employees feel. In Garton’s book, *Time, Talent, and Energy*, he explains how his research team found three commonalities within companies with high burnout rate: “excessive collaboration, weak time management principles”, and giving the most productive

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<sup>25</sup> DeCaro. (2007). Choking under pressure: Multiple routes to skill failure. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. doi:10.1037/e501972009-001

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<sup>27</sup> Garton, E. (2017, July 20). Employee Burnout Is a Problem with the Company, Not the Person. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2017/04/employee-burnout-is-a-problem-with-the-company-not-the-person>

workers an excessive workload.<sup>28</sup> Not only does these three phenomenon make finishing project tasks difficult, it makes it impossible for employees to recharge their focus.

According to Garton’s team, excessive collaboration also includes the overuse of digital tools.<sup>29</sup> There is an expectation that with so many tools, employees can optimize their existing workload to the point where they can work more. Employers are expecting digital tools to carve out more time, yet switching between tasks and tools is mentally exhausting and a productive loss.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, because collaboration has become a priority in nearly every organization, employees sometimes may not know how to organize their time in conjunction with others. The company has not provided a structured process in how employees can use their time nor the feedback about the activities spent.

A time tracker could be useful in seeing how employees spend their time. To Garton, a time tracker might only be considered a minor tool in overhauling employee time management. It’s about viewing the costs of less productive activities, like meetings, internal or external collaboration, etc. Garton emphasizes that employees must have autonomy. If employees feel they’re being micromanaged through a time tracker, it will drain organizational energy.

Employees may be fired up and ready, integrating the tool into their daily work. Initially, they put in their hours and may come into work early to show dedication. After time has passed, employees may feel burnt out from the constant updating and checking. They may choose to do non-work activities with their time as they recover—making it difficult to meet deadlines. Simply, a time tracker could prove exhausting to a workforce. As Stack explained, the amount of time dedicated to tracking time may exhaust employees to the point of it being counterproductive to productivity aspirations.<sup>31</sup>

## Considerations and Conclusions

### *Considerations*

For employees, one consideration is the essential need to understand how to work smarter, not harder. Peter Drucker, world-renowned management guru, once said “Working on the right things is what makes knowledge work effective.”<sup>32</sup> Because the evolving workforce does involve transitory workers, the responsibility of managing time falls more on the individual. Self-management is how employees must progress forward. Workers within a company must learn how they optimize and use their time, just as freelancers do. Managers must allow a system within the organizational system to formalize, giving workers the freedom to structure their own efficiency method.

### *Optimize Organizational Process Feedback*

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<sup>28</sup> Mankins, M. C., & Garton, E. (2017). *Time, talent, energy: Overcome organizational drag and unleash your teams productive power*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

<sup>29</sup> Eric Garton: How the Right Operating Models Deliver Value from Mergers and Separations. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.bain.com/publications/articles/eric-garton-how-the-right-operating-models-deliver-value-video.aspx>

<sup>30</sup> (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/research/action/multitask.aspx>

<sup>31</sup> Schulte, E. (2017, April 18). *The Perils Of Time Tracking*. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/3041278/the-perils-of-time-tracking>

<sup>32</sup> Cohen, J., & Birkinshaw, J. (2014, August 07). *Make Your Knowledge Workers More Productive*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2013/09/make-your-knowledge-workers-more-productive>

Companies may fall prey to concluding a change in how they incorporate technology is the same in rethinking their operational strategy. In a survey conducted by Deloitte in 2016, roughly "3,700 organizations across the globe were asked how susceptible their industries were to digital disruption and how prepared they were to deal with these challenges." The result: 87% of companies knew "moderate to great disruption" was on the horizon, but only 44% of respondents cited they were adequately prepared.<sup>33</sup> Technologies are meant to support organizations as they implement their models. On a 10-point scale, 61% of businesses rated their digital maturity as five or lower. It's understandable why businesses are eager to implement a digital tool—they feel they're already behind the competitive curve.

The rush to be a digital-first company may mean companies implement technology without changing the organization of the business process. After all, technology does not have to be complicated to be effective. The biggest tech blue-chip companies, Twitter, Uber and Foursquare, use lower tech apps like iDoneThis.<sup>34</sup> This app send out a daily email in the evening, asking for employees to respond with a brief summary of their daily activity. In restructuring time management, the most effective approach is one where becomes part of the employee's daily routine.

Since product life cycles are getting shorter, time management needs to be unobtrusive. The majority of companies hinge on products launched in the past year or 18 months. These products are upgraded frequently, from yearly, monthly, or weekly. As a product ages on the market, the cycles shrink due to the constant upgrading; companies receives less profit from each cycle. Therefore organizations need to be thinking of how to scale organizationally, with technology as the supporting role. Too often, companies expect technology to be the constant driver.

Time tracking can be an incredible tool to an a consciously-driven company. This means that it can be a digital driver in departments that would value and utilize its advantages. Rather than used as a digital platitude, time tracking can be a game changer in seeing organizational feedback and restructuring.

## **Conclusion**

Charles Duhigg's recent book, *Smarter, Faster, Better* deeply examines the American experience of interlacing work and time. The Pulitzer-winning journalist notes "In 1980, more than 90 percent of the American workforce reported to a boss. Today more than a third of working Americans are freelancers, contractors, or in otherwise transitory positions."<sup>35</sup> The change calls for a rigorous rework of how people prioritize tasks, given they are in control of their time—and have to survive on making wise choices on how they spend their time. From his research, Duhigg concludes management fads only complicate.

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<sup>33</sup> Deloitte The Netherlands. (2017). Digital era Technology Operating Models Volume 2 | The 9 big shifts to the Technology Operating Model and how to address them

<sup>34</sup> Messinger, L. (2015, August 18). Do time management apps really make people more productive? Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/aug/18/time-management-apps-work-life-balance-productivity>

<sup>35</sup> Duhigg, C. (2017). *Smarter, faster, better: The secrets of being productive*. London: Random House.

In the 1980s, General Electric (GE) created a goal-setting strategy, nicknamed SMART (specific, achievable, realistic, and timeline-based).<sup>36</sup> While the strategy helped the company reach some goals, employees devoted more time bringing their work processes under the strategy's requirements rather than the work needed to reach those goals. "It's very easy to get trapped into simply getting small things done because it feels so good to cross them off our to do list. This is called using a to do list for mood repair as opposed to for productivity"<sup>37</sup>

Time tracking may be an echo of the quantitative-focused management fad of the 1970s; it may be more for "mood repair" rather than organizational impact. But it also could be a significant tool in helping organizations structure their processes and how they empower employees to be autonomous in solving a problem.

Companies need to be aware that one small tool cannot make an impact within a digital and diverse workforce, if the organization is not being consciously redshifted as a whole. What makes sense is to address how each segment within an organizational can evolve, rather than expecting a time tool to deliver optimization.

Time tracking and organizational awareness go hand-in-hand in keeping competitive. For example, recognize the strategic role of an enterprise-wide project management office (EPMO) and align it with your company's strategy. Project Management Offices are an integral part of implementing strategic initiatives. Companies that utilize their EPMO to carry out company strategy have 27% more projects completed successfully; 42% fewer projects that report scope creep (the phenomenon when projects continuously change or grow indefinitely).<sup>38</sup>

Companies need to rethink their core business processes if they're looking to survive the digital shift—not simply expect a blanket tool to solve complexities. If employers view time tracking as "mood repair" in their digital angst, the tool will only be a Lilliputian attempt to face the Goliathan complexities of the modern workspace. Whilst more time and thought-intensive, the key lies between time tracking and giving employees the autonomy to use it to optimize their own workflows. Starting from management, overhauling operations, rethinking core business, and giving employees freedom to choose the tools that boost their own problem-solving. Time tracking is definitely a tool that can help conscious employers and employees gain clarification and competitiveness.

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<sup>36</sup> Shin, L. (2016, March 30). How To Accomplish More On Your Most Important Goals. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurashin/2016/03/30/how-to-accomplish-more-on-your-most-important-goals/>

<sup>37</sup> Duhigg, C. (2017). *Smarter, faster, better: The secrets of being productive*. London: Random House.

<sup>38</sup> PMI Pulse of the Profession® 2018. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.pmi.org/learning/thought-leadership/pulse/pulse-of-the-profession-2018>