
The importance of finding time to think

Taking time out to give your brain the opportunity to think can really benefit you in your role.

In today's fast-paced world, companies need new products, services and innovations to stay competitive. Many employees are expected to be creative and to continuously develop better solutions for their customers.

This is hard because employees are so busy keeping up with day-to-day operations. Even if employees want to be creative it can be hard to find the time to think.

Why do we need time to think?

Time to think is so important for every company as the real value add work requires it. To develop new ideas or improve the current operations, our brains need time.

How many times you have woken in the middle of the night with a great idea? Or come up with genius solutions in the shower? Why does this happen? It happens because our brains are free from all the usual day-to-day clutter and have a chance to form and develop ideas.

No time to think

Look at the environment most people work in these days. The opportunity to be creative is low. Most offices are open plan, everyone has multiple devices and distracting notifications. Add in the pressure of changing deadlines and high customer expectations.

Plan time to think

To recreate that decluttered brain, it is important be proactive and block time within your work schedule. When you are planning your week, spot the opportunity. Maybe you have an hour first thing before your meetings start or a two hour slot at the end of the day. Guard this time with your life. Mark it in the group Outlook or Gmail calendar so other people can't steal it.

Give yourself at least 60 minutes to allow deep thinking and creativity.

Declutter your mind and your time

To help declutter your mind use fundamental productivity techniques such as making good daily/weekly plans, and capturing and scheduling tasks on a to-do list or in a productivity app. Manage your key distractions by removing or minimising them.

Maximise your ability to think by getting away from your busy desk. Use a spare office or a meeting room. Or can you take a few hours to work at home?

Get buy-in from your manager or colleagues in advance. Explain what you will be working on, what your goal is for the session and then afterwards report on what you achieved.

If you can't leave your desk, use noise blocking headphones. This will help you concentrate and indicate to others that you need to concentrate. Make sure you offer to cover for colleagues when they need uninterrupted time.

Use creative tools

Now that you have created time to think, you want to encourage your thoughts to flow. Enhance your creativity with some of these great techniques.

- Coloured post-it notes on large A3 paper or a flip chart pad.
- The mind-mapping technique for developing a central idea or problem.
- The six thinking hats technique for group thinking and creativity.
- A whiteboard with post-its pads and pens.
- The simplest is a good old-fashioned notebook and pen! Possibly the best creative tool available.

There are lots of other techniques such as ideation and design thinking. These methods can really help teams brainstorm and develop innovative ideas for products and services together.

At beproductive.ie we run team workshops on many of the techniques mentioned above so contact Moira if you would like to discuss a session for your team.

Be productive in teams

Every company can benefit from allowing their employees time to think once it is well planned and provides clear outcomes. If you find these techniques useful try them with your team. Help foster a creative environment for everyone.

For more information about productivity workshops, contact moiradunne@beproductive.ie.

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