

TIME WASTER PROFILES TIME WASTED IN MEETINGS

Common Causes of Nonproductive Meetings

R. Alec Mackenzie, an outstanding expert and consultant on time management, has done research to determine the most significant “timewasters” in industry, business, and government. On the following pages are timewaster profiles of five specific groups he studies. Each participant was asked to make a list of top 10 personal timewasters in order of importance. A weight of 10 was given for the most important timewaster, nine for the second most important, etc. down to a weight of one for the least important of the 10. The “No.” column indicates the total number of participants who listed that item in their list of 10. The “Wt.” column shows the total weights given by those who selected that item.

In summarizing this research on timewasters, Mackenzie ranked them as follows in order of significance:

Most Significant Timewasters

Telephone interruptions

Drop-in visitors

Meetings*

Crises

Lack of objectives, priorities, and deadlines

Cluttered desk and personal disorganization

Ineffective delegation and involvement in routine and detail

Attempting too much at once and unrealistic time estimates

Lack of clear communication or instruction

Inadequate, inaccurate, and delayed information

* Note that “meetings” was the third most significant timewaster among managers in various sizes and types of organizations.

Causes of Nonproductive Meetings

Timewaster Profile¹ 125 Managers of a Major Corporation

	No.	Wt.
1. Crisis Management/Shifting Priorities	66	196
2. Meetings	43	125
3. Lack Objectives, Priorities, and Daily Plan	55	113
4. Telephone Interruptions	38	108
5. Ineffective Delegation/Doing It Myself/Involved in Detail	36	94
6. Drop-in Visitors/Open Door	43	90
7. Confused Responsibility and Authority	38	88
8. Inability to Say "No"	31	75
9. Indecision/Procrastination	24	63
10. Untrained, Inadequate Staff	13	45
11. Unclear/Lack of Communication/Overcommunicating	15	44
12. Socializing	14	40
13. Stacked Desk/Personal Disorganization	16	35
14. Inadequate Information/Waiting for Decisions	9	28
15. Attempting Too Much at Once/Unrealistic Time Estimates	11	26
16. Wanting All the Facts	11	25
17. Lack Progress Reviews	6	14
18. Multiple Bosses	4	13
19. Failure to Deal with Poor Performance	6	12
20. Overcontrol	2	10
21. Personnel Changes	3	10

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¹ These five "Timewaster Profiles" and "Time Wasted in Meetings" are from R. Alec Mackenzie's *"New Time Management Methods,"* copyright 1975 by The Dartnell Corporation