

Quick Guide: Make Minutes Count

"Look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves." The same principle also applies to time. All those minutes we spend in unproductive tasks can add up to a useful bonus that you can spend on tasks that give you a sense of achievement. So here are the **top ten tips** to help you make your minutes count:

- 1. Become well acquainted** with how your equipment and software work so that you don't lose time trying to work it out when you're in a panic. Also know where things are kept (eg toner, paper, forms etc) so you can get them quickly when you need to.
- 2. Take breaks.** This may feel you're losing time, but skipping lunch, coffee and the loo will lead to poorer quality work. Taking breaks also allows you some time away from the pressures of work, to think things through.
- 3. Do not hang on to paperwork;** take some action! Piles of outstanding paper can cause stress, and, too, you can lose time continually sifting through the pile. So learn to Determine action, Deal, Ditch, Delegate or Deposit your paperwork.
- 4. Keep your stapler, hole punch, rubber etc,** in a drawer to avoid people chatting while they borrow them, especially if you sit near a photocopier.
- 5. Find out what time meetings are due to end** and (if relevant) when your item on the agenda is scheduled. Tell the chair of your time of exit.
- 6. Lock in on one job at a time** for maximum efficiency and beware of procrastination. Set yourself a time limit to work on the task so you can move on to another.
- 7. Instal electronic Post It Notes** on your PC (eg Microsoft One Note or "Stickies" (zhorn software). They won't get lost and you won't worry about remembering things. You can also drag and drop them onto your tasks lists and calendar for action another day.
- 8. Always plan your day the night before,** so you don't lose minutes first thing in the morning, wondering what you have to do.
- 9. Plan to do the tasks that need your energy** and creativity when you are at your best. Do you think better in the morning or the afternoon? When is your natural 'siesta' time?
- 10. Finally, don't let people steal your time.** Unlike money, it cannot be replaced.

Compiled by Des Whitehorn