

CEOs Waste Money and Time With These 6 Productivity Mistakes

7 min read



Key Takeaways

- **Emails and Other Communication Interruptions** Being too available for answering every single little question that comes up can detract from you spending time on higher-value tasks.
- **Unproductive Meetings** Meetings are some of the most expensive things any business can ever do – especially if they are not productive meetings.
- **Setting Too Many Goals** If you set more short-term and long-term goals than you can reasonably achieve, you might end up not achieving any of them. Do this instead...

When you become a business owner or CEO, your business depends on your own ability to be productive. And we all know, **this is easier said than done!**

Executive productivity can be challenging. If you feel like you're being pulled in a million different directions and as if there is never enough time in a day or a week to accomplish everything you need and want to accomplish, then it's possible you need to work on your CEO task management skills.

Learning to increase your own productivity by avoiding the following mistakes is a great place to start improving your leadership skills, time management habits, and effectiveness as a business leader. When a CEO takes the time to improve their own productivity, you'll not only improve your own daily life but the business and all of your employees will directly benefit, too.

Avoid These 6 Common Productivity Mistakes of CEOs

1. Emails and Other Communication Interruptions

Sometimes, an email is worth reading and responding to right away because answering quick questions coming from your leadership team members can increase the productivity of others in your company. Email, however, can be a big distraction. Plus, sometimes, being too available for answering every single little question that comes up can detract from you spending time on higher-value tasks.

“E-mail interrupts work, extends the workday, intrudes on time for family and thinking, and is not conducive to thoughtful discussions. That’s why setting proper expectations and norms for what e-mails the CEO

needs to receive—and when he or she will respond—is essential.” - **HBJ**

You can try scheduling time for reading emails, automating the email sorting process with smart software, or asking your assistant to sort through emails for you, only bringing the most important to your attention.

Additionally, you can try to start responding to your team's questions with answers like, "I'm not sure. What do you think would be best?" As a result, you'll start training your people to think and act like leaders themselves.

2. Unproductive Meetings

Meetings are some of the most expensive things any business can ever do – especially if they are not productive meetings. So, it's important that you spend time in meetings being productive. Come prepared, make sure your employees who are attending the meeting are prepared, and be ready to do the work in the meeting so that no one (especially you) is wasting their time.

A Harvard Business Journal study found that CEO spent 72% of their total work time in meetings. **Make this time valuable!** ^[1]

Adopting a meeting structure like the Level 10 Meetings outlined in Gino Wickman's Entrepreneurial Operating System can help you keep a cap on meeting length while also ensuring your meetings are highly productive.^[2]

Read More: [How to Get a Better ROI From Your Meetings](#)

3. Neglected Health and Wellbeing

As a business owner or CEO, remember that the oxygen mask rule applies to you every day. In other words, you need to take care of yourself before anything else. Although prioritizing self-care might sound selfish, putting yourself first is the best way to care for everything else.

Two-thirds of business owners suffer from depression ^[3], and if you're working long hours and failing to give yourself enough time to take care of your mental and physical health, you could suffer from mental and physical health problems that not only risk your professional productivity but also your own happiness, health, longevity, and overall wellbeing.

Give yourself enough time during the week to ensure you are able to take care of both your physical and mental health. Spend quality time with your family and friends, unplug from your electronic devices, spend time on hobbies, get into the habit of practicing meditation (bonus – this can improve your focus and productivity, too!) eat balanced and nutritious meals, visit your doctor for wellness checkups, and stay physically active.

4. Trying to Do It All

You might have started your business by doing everything (sales, services, customer relations, bookkeeping, supply orders, furniture shopping, custodial jobs, etc.). As your company grows, however, it's essential that you identify jobs that you can delegate and then create processes that work for you and your employees.

For example, you might find that an employee can take over 90% of a job you used to handle, but they still need you to step in for a few moments at the end to check over everything, make a few minor adjustments, and give your final approval. That's fine; you've just freed up 90% of the time that particular job used to require of you.

In this way, you can become like a coach or mentor to your employees, helping them accelerate their own professional development and decision-making skills, while you also free yourself up to work on your business (as opposed to working in your business). If you're always focused on the work of the business, then you won't have time to work on

the bigger-picture strategy end of your business – and that's what's absolutely necessary for generating greater profits, growth, and success.

Read More: [The Cost of Bad Leadership: How to Choose the Right Leaders for Your Business](#)

5. Setting Too Many Goals

At the helm of your company, you don't want to set too many goals at once. Biting off more than you (and your team) can reasonably chew can lead to a lack of direction and focus, inefficiencies, feelings of being overwhelmed, and lackluster results. In other words, if you set more short-term and long-term goals than you can reasonably achieve, you might end up not achieving any of them.^[4]

Instead, make a list of five-year, three-year, one-year, and even shorter-term initiatives. Prioritize your long-term goals first and then identify the short-term goals that can act as stepping stones to the most important long-term goals. Start with these and then break them down into 90-day initiatives within your company.

Razer-sharp focus with company-wide alignment is the best way to get real traction and results in your business.

6. Not Properly Managing Your Time

For CEOs, time management goes further than scheduling your days, creating to-do lists, and setting timers to remind you when to move on and begin the next task. CEOs also need to think about the value of the things they spend time doing. Just like you consider the ROI on each of your employees' work hours, you also need to think about the ROI on yours.

Make a list of all the things you do during a typical work day and then take stock of them. How much time and attention are you giving to low-value tasks that could be delegated to someone else, completed later, or maybe even completely ignored without any real consequences?

As CEO, you're likely making top dollar in your business, so be sure you're also spending your time tackling tasks of equal importance and value.

Read More: [How Productive Business Leaders Spend Their Time](#)

Positive Productivity Habits for Executives

When you stop wasting time on unproductive tasks, you'll free up time that you can spend in more meaningful ways, like developing some of the habits of fortune 500 CEOs which include things like working consistently on personal development, professional development, and studying industry trends in addition to staying committed to ongoing learning by taking time to read and improve leadership skills.

Additionally, becoming a more productive leader means you'll have more time to take care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally in addition to having the time to really focus on your personal life in a more meaningful way.

When business leaders effectively manage their time, they can live well-rounded, healthy lifestyles that don't force them to spend all of their "free" time focused on the business. As a result, you'll be a better leader, with more energy, and a sense of business acumen that grows continuously sharper.

Bonus Productivity Tip: Stop Wasting Time on Manual Tasks That Could Be Automated

If you're the kind of business owner or CEO that has his or her hands on everything, you might consider backing off slightly and paying closer attention to the value of the jobs on which you're spending time.

For example, streamlining your back office by automating any manual processes that take up your time (or that of your employees) can save you an incredible amount of money and time while also increasing the ROI on your time spent in the office.

With a powerful back-office featuring fully automated processes and integrated software tools designed to save you time while improving the data-driven decisions business leaders need to make every day, you can free up your time and unlock your business's true potential for success.

[1] <https://hbr.org/2018/07/how-ceos-manage-time>

[2] <https://www.eosworldwide.com/>

[3]

<https://www.theladders.com/career-advice/two-thirds-of-business-owners-are-depressed>

<https://www.vistage.com/research-center/personal-development/20210914-top-4-ceo-time-waster-habits/>