



Improve Your Office Productivity

Tip 13: 10th January 2008

8 Ways to Productively Work Less and Relax More in 2008

Happy New Year to You All,

Certainly, today's always-on-and-available-anywhere technology can lead to addictive work habits. We've all seen examples of that among friends and family but having a cheap, convenient, 24/7 global reach through technology can also efficiently enable you to live the life you've always wanted. The choice is yours.

Here are some affordable tools and ideas that harness technology's power to save you time and money. Cherry-pick among these solutions to build in breaks, or reconfigure your work-life routines, or reinvent your life entirely so that you can improve your work/life balance in the New Year. Let's see how technology can save time and money. Check out eight tips about affordable technologies that can save you time.

1. **Use Voice-over-Internet protocol phone service (VoIP) to create a virtual office.** To maintain a professional phone line and still travel, take time off or live abroad, VoIP telephone services are a terrific help. You've probably heard about such affordable services, which, basically, use the Internet to send and receive calls. Usually, you pay only for Internet access and not for calls, much the way e-mail works.
2. **Use online services for office communications and banking.** Host your company computers on external servers, so that you can access all e-mail, files, and financial information or transactions from any Internet café. (Of course, you do want to have privacy safeguards in place when working this way.)
3. **Leverage the power of a professional Web site.** Setting up a Web site, more than any other technological helpmate, will shave considerable time and effort from your workdays. With a professional site, you can more efficiently conduct business, fulfill orders, organize contacts, share documents with employees or contractors, and market your wares or services, even when you're out of the office or on the road.
4. **Use your site features to stay in touch with customers.** With so many marketing channels and consumer options these days, increasingly, it's the business that quickly responds to customer needs that gains a competitive advantage. You can use your Web site to "listen" and react to what your customers request. For example:
 - Set up an online forum so customers can register and post comments to you and to each other.
 - Set up a survey that customers can take online. This can be a focus group type of survey (say, about a new product) or a customer satisfaction survey.
 - Set up a special e-mail address and ask customers for specific feedback or advice whenever you launch a new product, service, or special promotion.
5. **Use e-mail software to track schedules and tasks.** Software such as Microsoft Office Outlook 2007 can improve your performance. Most people are good at creating to-do or task lists, but often become distracted and don't commit to a scheduled time to accomplish those tasks. By utilizing the task and reminder functions of an e-mail program, you can set up a calendar that generates alerts, whether annual, weekly, or daily. Some business owners say that such alerts boost their productivity by 50 percent or more.
6. **Create a sales contact database for your business.** Software such as Business Contact Manager, included within Microsoft Office Live Essentials and Office Live Premium, can transform your electronic address book into a sales, contact management, and marketing tool. Then, when you send out marketing or sales material, instead of hand-addressing envelopes, you can automate the process with labels or envelopes printed from your database list. Similarly, you can use the database to send e-mail marketing messages. Just make sure that the software you use for your database (usually part of a sales contact program) can be integrated with your e-mail program. Besides mailings to your entire sales list, you can use the database for specific or premium marketing, such as holiday cards, special discounts, and birthday greetings.
7. **Invest in e-mail marketing that yields results.** Certainly, consumers now delete e-mail marketing messages faster than you can say "click-through." However, when it's done right (which means your consumer really wants your message and knows your brand), e-mail marketing remains relatively cheap and incredibly effective. You can automate the process of sending and tracking your e-mail campaigns with affordable tools and either off-the-shelf or online software. Such low-cost services can help you mount campaigns, send out e-mail newsletters or campaign mails, and maintain scrubbed, up-to-date lists much faster and cost-efficiently than you can on your own.
8. Mobile phones and continual access to e-mail now make us available around the clock. So, in the end, all the technology in the world won't let you kick back unless you make some rules.

Begin with these, and then move on:

- Schedule specific times to check e-mail.
- Turn off your phone when you're home or out with friends

For helpdesk support, Contact: helpdesk@cert.co.ug

Smart Tips