



IN HER OWN WORDS: 3 Reasons to Time-Log—Even If You Don't Have To

Keeping track of your accomplishments and your time is doubly important if you are a woman.

Do you ever reach the end of a busy workday and wonder where your time went? I used to. Usually, I would feel like I'd worked every minute of the day, but I would still have so much to do. What did I spend all my time doing? One day, I decided to find out.

After some research into time-logging software, I purchased the one that seemed like it would work best for me, Timelime (<http://timelimeapp.com>, \$14.99, Mac only). I started keeping track of how I spent my time during the workday. It was an eye-opening experience to say the least and radically changed how I approached my work.

When someone asks, "What did you accomplish today? This week? This month?"—time-logging software will give you a ready answer. Here are three reasons why you, too, should use time-logging software to track your work during the day, whether you are faculty or in a staff or administrative role at your institution.

You'll know where your time goes

After my time-logging experiment, I (predictably) discovered where my time went: by the end of the day I even had a beautiful pie chart of how I spent my time. I've time-logged every day since, capturing work-time data to the minute.

When you finish working on a project, most time-logging software prompts you to enter a small description of the specific task that you just completed, like "researched for new article," "advised student" or "designed budget." Provide as much information as is useful to you.

But you might not be the only one who finds this information useful. If you have a supervisor, this data can help you to "manage up." Use your time-log information to give updates to your boss.

However, don't print a time-log spreadsheet and hand it over. Instead, write a friendly email memo, letting your boss know what you've been working on, providing accurate data about which projects have taken how much of your time, and why.

Not only will you have proof of how much work you are doing (which makes you look good), but also your boss will have the information she or he needs to make adjustments to your assignments (which makes your boss look good). And because we know that "men are promoted based on potential, while women are promoted based on past accomplishments"—as Sheryl Sandberg summarized a 2011 report by McKinsey & Company—keeping track of your accomplishments is doubly important if you are a woman.

You know if you are spending time on valuable activities

Face it, some work turns out to be more valuable than other work. This is the premise of the 80/20 rule (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/davelavinsky/2014/01/20/pareto-principle-how-to-use-it-to-dramatically-grow-yourbusiness/>), also known as the Pareto Principle. The 80/20 rule basically states that 80% of your work value ends up coming from 20% of your work time. Therefore, we should strive to figure out which work time is producing the most valuable results. Enter time-logging software.

If you keep track of the projects you are spending your time on, then you can, after a while, begin to see

whether you are spending an appropriate amount of time on the projects that are giving you the most value in return. For example, say you are a researcher whose tenure clock is running down. You are working on an article and you find that it is taking an inordinate amount of time to get it published when compared to other articles. Given the time-logging data, you decide to save that particular article for after tenure and turn your attention to other projects that are more fruitful.

If you work as part of a team or are not in a position to make the sort of call as to what projects are the focus of your time, time-logging can help you provide good data to your supervisor so that she or he can start making good decisions about how your team's time is spent. Furthermore, if you want to suggest a change in approach, if you time-log, you will have evidence to back up your suggested change.

You will stay on track

When I started my time-logging experiment, there was one unexpected benefit: I became more focused on my work. I would reach to check the inevitable diversions that arise when working on a computer (read: social media), but if I were to do so, I'd have to turn off my time-logging. But I was too proud of the progress I was making, so I wouldn't.

To use the terminology of Jerry Seinfeld's productivity secret, I didn't want to "break the chain" (<http://lifelacker.com/281626/jerry-seinfelds-productivity-secret>) by turning off the timer.

While time-logging, the ticking timer icon reminds me that I am "on the clock" for a project. I don't want to stop until I'm done. The time-logging keeps me focused on the task at hand, until I reach a stopping point that I can summarize in the software's description field.

After all, no one wants to write, "Got started on a budget report but got distracted by Facebook so stopped after 10 minutes." Even if you are the only one reading the notes, that's just embarrassing.

Ready to try time-logging?

Here are some software suggestions in addition to Timelime:

- Harvest. Limited free version, but it's very limited. The \$12/month subscription is full featured for solo users. Web-based for all platforms or use Mac-only client (<http://www.getharvest.com>).
- Eternity. \$4.99 for iPhone.
- Now Then. \$2.99 for iPhone and iPad.
- Timesheet. Free but with in-app purchases. Android.
- TimeCamp. Free version. Web-based for all platforms (<https://www.timecamp.com/>).
- Timely. Free version is limited. The \$14/month subscription is full featured for solo users. Web-based for all platforms (<http://www.timelyapp.com>).
- Toggl. Subscriptions start at \$5/month. Web-based and desktop client for all platforms (<https://www.toggl.com>).

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