

# Leadership Talking Points

## NEWSLETTER

## Worldwide “Urgency Addiction” Harming Productivity

You are not likely to finish reading this newsletter. Why?

You’ll probably have to answer a text, check your phone, respond to an e-mail, put out a “fire,” or talk to a co-worker who interrupts you with a question.

Any wonder it’s hard to get anything done?

In a 7-year study involving more than 400,000 participants, FranklinCovey has discovered that workers are far more distracted than ever before, waste a lot of time, and continually work in crisis mode. The result? We’re investing a lot less mental energy in real work.

Consider these data points:

54%

of respondents spend much of their time on activities that demand their immediate attention but have little relevance to their top priorities (e.g. needless interruptions, unimportant meetings, and noncritical phone calls and emails).

55%

said other people's demands keep them from moving forward on their critical goals and objectives.

54%

constantly address issues that are important to others, but not to themselves.

28%

feel they rush around all day, but do little that contributes to their organization's most important priorities.

By their own account, the respondents spend more than half of their time on work that is irrelevant or unimportant because of pressures from others. More than one in four are in "rush mode," trying to cover a lot of ground but are only superficially successful.

#### WHY ARE WE HAVING THIS PROBLEM?

Because of what we call "the urgency addiction." The incessant ringtones, buzzes, and beeps are habituating us to respond immediately to everything. A brain that is constantly interrupted gets used to it and actually expects it.

#### TIME WASTED PUTTING OUT FIRES

A nasty consequence of the urgency addiction is that we spend our lives putting out fires. The most urgent thing gets our attention, and we get accustomed to running from one fire to another:

54%

of respondents are always 'putting out fires' and working in crisis mode.

35%

of respondents are often required to come in at the last minute and help with key projects.

When you're working constantly in crisis mode, your stress levels go up and the quality of your thinking goes down. Thus the familiar feeling, "I just can't get on top of it all."

### LITTLE TIME LEFT FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE

Urgency addicts end up working too much as fires blow up all around them. Their addiction takes a severe toll on their personal lives:

44%

spend their weekends 'in recovery' from the workweek, with little time left for meaningful weekend activities.

20%

spend much of their personal time on busywork, junk mail, excessive TV, Internet trivia, games, etc.

32%

waste several hours in front of the television or surfing the Internet.

### WASTED TIME COSTS BILLIONS

What is the urgency addiction costing us?

In North America alone, employees waste enough time on petty urgencies to cost their employers some \$134 billion in lost productivity.<sup>1</sup> Australians estimate losing about \$87 billion<sup>2</sup>, while British firms report about £80 billion.<sup>3</sup>

Questions to Ponder: What will be the future if the amount of wasted time continues to increase? What would be the impact if people wasted only half the time they're wasting now? What if all meetings were only one-third more productive than they are? What if people spent two thirds of their time exclusively on what really matters to the organization instead of wasting half their time on petty urgencies?

1 <http://www.ibtimes.com/workers-wasting-time-cost-us-employers-134b-lost-effort-infographic-903334>

2 <http://www.news.com.au/business/worklife/aussie-time-wasting-at-work-costs-87b/story-e6frfm9r-1226514781381>

3 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2007/oct/22/3>

