

Breaking Bad Habits at Work



Virtually everyone is guilty of it. And that most likely includes you if you're reading this article. What are we talking about? Bad habits at work that keep you from being your most productive and efficient. Whether it's lack of organization, being easily distracted or being late, these bad habits cost you time and make it harder to get all your tasks done during the day. The good news is you're not alone and there are some simple steps you can take to identify your bad habits and correct them.

Take Inventory

Before you can fix a problem, you have to know what it is. When it comes to counterproductive tendencies at work, you should start by taking inventory of your day. Do you show up on time? How much time do you spend multitasking? Is your desk a mess? Do Facebook and LinkedIn suck you in?

Once you've honestly identified some areas where you can improve, you need to adopt the mindset that you're willing and ready to change.

Baby Steps

After you've given some serious thought to your bad habits and written them down, you might find yourself overwhelmed with all the ways you can do your job better. The key to enacting change however is to start with just one habit. Even if it's something as small as getting to work on time, put all your focus on just one habit. Once you prove to yourself that you're able to make a single change, you'll be surprised how motivated you are to tackle the next obstacle.

Replacements

When it comes to habits that involve wasting time, it's easy to say "I'm not going to look at Facebook at work anymore." But what are you going to do with all that newfound time? If you're going to break a bad habit, you need to have a plan what you're going to replace it with. Some ideas might be catching up on paperwork or listening to an industry relevant podcast with that extra 30 minutes.

Be Patient

There's a famous study that says it takes 21 days to change a habit. This is just one study though. Some people can make changes faster and it can take longer for others. The key to enacting lasting change is to be patient. You're going to have setbacks and you're going to slip up, it's inevitable. If you're patient with yourself though, you'll be able to stay on track.

Reward Yourself

Who doesn't like being rewarded? Once you've accomplished the goal of making a change, reward yourself. Sure, you should do something to celebrate at the end, but it's important to reward yourself along the way too. Maybe your goal on a daily basis is to not check social media before lunch. If you make it, spend a few minutes checking your newsfeed while you eat, just don't get carried away.

Plan for Setbacks

We all have triggers. Whether it's missing a project goal or not getting the promotion you were in line for, you're going to want to revert back to old habits that are unproductive. That's why having some coping mechanisms in place is so important. When things don't go your way, maybe you're tempted to close your door and watch YouTube videos the rest of the day. Instead, maybe all you need is a walk around the block or to talk to someone to avoid slipping back into old ways.

Make Yourself Accountable

Nothing helps you stay accountable like telling the people around you what you're trying to accomplish. Maybe it's not drinking after work. When you state your goal to your co-workers, they'll know not to invite you to happy hour. And if they do catch you at the pub, you'll have to answer to them.

Use Technology

As much as technology can be blamed for your bad habits, it can help too. Try setting your phone to go straight to voicemail. Turn off the text and email alerts for set periods of time. Doing simple things like these keeps you from getting distracted and allows you to focus solely on the task at hand.

Whether we want to admit it or not, there are things we can all do to make better use of our time at work. Even though making meaningful change can be hard, the benefits are almost always worthwhile. If you take time to identify some areas where you can improve, adopt a "can-do" attitude and employ some of the strategies above, you'll be amazed by the results you can achieve in a short time.