

*Get Control!*SM
Get More Done

WOUNDED WORKFLOW!
A GETCONTROL.NET WHITE PAPER

BY MIKE SONG AND BILL KIRWIN: info@getcontrol.net



4 Productivity Pain Points That Cost the US \$1 Trillion Each Year and Hurt Your Organization's Productivity, Profits, and Sales.

SUMMARY:

The plunging economy, rising global competition and the rapid shift to information-related jobs have created a renewed focus on productivity initiatives. In order to survive, businesses need information workers (i-workers) who can produce more, faster, smarter, better products and services with fewer resources.

Unfortunately, major obstacles to increased productivity work against this goal. Over the past six years we have conducted a study of over 35,000 i-workers that reveals four critical pain points that prevent i-workers from getting more done.

1. **O**verload
2. **M**iscommunication
3. **D**isorder
4. **I**solation

The cost of Overload, Miscommunication, Disorder, and Isolation (**OMDI**) to the U.S. in wages alone is over \$1 trillion a year and rising fast. Organizations must address these issues if they hope to compete in the future. In this paper, the four productivity pain points are clearly identified along with a simple plan to help every organization survive – and better yet, thrive.



INTRO: THE INCREDIBLE WASTE AND OPPORTUNITY OF WOUNDED WORKFLOW

The Waste: Information workers spend 70% of their day on three activities: email, meetings, and the endless search for stored/new information. They report that 30% of this time is wasted, which equates to a staggering 1.7 hours per day or over \$12,000 per year in lost productivity per worker. If we extrapolate this across the entire country we arrive at this remarkable equation:

100 million information workers
X 1.7 hours per day
X 240 work days per year
X \$30/ hour average wage
= \$1.2 trillion in wages that are wasted each year!

The Opportunity: Our research reveals that the majority of waste related to information work emanates from four key productivity pain points: **Overload, Miscommunication, Disorder, and Isolation (OMDI)**. This OMDI syndrome represents a new way of thinking about the chaotic world of the typical i-worker. As leaders and teams struggle to do more with less – initiatives designed to address OMDI pain points are yielding great results for the following reasons:

Low Cost / High ROI: OMDI productivity initiatives are relatively inexpensive and save a minimum of 15 days per participant per year. Most initiatives actually pay for themselves in weeks or months rather than years.

No Capital Investment Required: OMDI initiatives focus on measurable, lasting behavioral changes vs. the purchase of expensive hardware or software.

Motivated Workforce: The will to change has never been stronger. We've conducted hundreds of focus groups with Global 1000 clients. Information workers are frustrated and eager for new strategies to improve workflow and lower stress.

The timing is perfect for a new productivity movement to take hold. It's critical that we ignite this revolution in order to make individual businesses and our entire workforce more efficient and therefore more competitive.

Where to Start: The first step is to develop an OMDI scorecard for your organization. Standardized OMDI diagnostic surveys and Fortune 500 case studies are available (info@getcontrol.net) to assess which particular pain points are causing the most trouble for your people. Once the facts are known, a prescriptive program can be developed to change behavior, implement technical tips, and provide the

support system to make the changes permanent. These changes will have a cathartic impact on individual, team, and enterprise productivity.

Let's begin by defining the productivity pain points and then offering a plan that will save an astounding amount of time, money, and energy for your organization.

- Email growth projected to be 9% through 2012.
- 30% of time spent on email and managing files is wasted
- 43% of time spent in meetings is wasted
- 81% of i-workers report frequent unnecessary, non-spam email
- 82% report over use of email mass distribution

CHALLENGE 1: OVERLOAD

The first pain point is **overload**. While *information overload* is our primary concern – it should also be noted that other forms of overload – such as travel demands or the act of taking on too many responsibilities – do exist.

Our research reveals that professionals are swamped with more email, meeting invitations, tasks, and projects than they can possibly handle.



Number of Information Channels Rising: In the past five years, i-workers have seen an explosion in the number of channels that pour information into their lives. It began with snail mail, faxes, voicemail, email, and meetings. New information channels include IM, wikis, virtual meetings, RSS feeds, blogs, text messages, and social networking tools such as Twitter, Facebook, Plaxo, and LinkedIn.

Volume of Information Also Rising: The digitization of information allows for rapid replication of email via distribution lists and the *reply all* feature.¹ Each new web offering such as social networking promises to reduce email but, in our experience, it actually has the opposite effect. To make matters worse, wireless technology and PDAs have resulted in 24-7 non-stop access to information channels, and the number of meetings has also increased with the advent of virtual meeting technology.

Overload impacts productivity and peace of mind in a number of ways:

LACK OF PRIORITIZATION

As i-workers dash from one meeting to the next, key messages that require follow up and action begin to slip to the bottom of the *inbox ocean*, and meeting action items are put aside as busy professionals return to their offices to find jammed inboxes or an unexpected voicemail message. The result is that

¹ The Radicati Group, "Email Archiving Market, 2008-2012." March 2008.

most professionals spend too much time working on non-urgent, non-important tasks – and productivity is lost.

STRESS AND WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Many professionals we interviewed complained of feeling like a hamster on a wheel, running harder and faster than ever but not actually getting anywhere. According to our research, 67% of all i-workers feel powerless to control the information tsunami that hits them every day in an endless stream of email and meetings. In addition, i-workers now spend 41 minutes per day on email outside of normal business hours. The end result is a workforce that never gets a chance to rest and relax before coming back to work on Monday. This ultimately erodes output and job satisfaction.

ADDICTION

As message after message buzzes into our lives we develop behavioral patterns – most likely hardwired into our neural pathways over time – that cause us to become addicted to new information. Symptoms are easy to spot. 63 percent of all professionals feel an irrational need to check their email even when it isn't required. Some professionals check their email in meetings, and 54 percent of all professionals are often frustrated by colleagues who huddle over their PDAs doing "The Blackberry Prayer" during important meetings.

As i-workers constantly check for low priority email they inadvertently create more replies and comments that boomerang back and forth through cyberspace, driving overload to new heights. In some cases, fatal car and train accidents have been caused by drivers who were compelled to text or email from behind the wheel.²

INTERRUPTIONS

Interruptions are both a time *and* brain drain for most i-workers. According to a recent study,³ it takes at least a minute to recover one's pace of workflow after an email interruption. If our email is set to synch

Overload Comments

"I have too many emails and meetings which hinder my ability to get my work done during the day. Thus I work most evenings to catch up."

"Too many emails, too many reply-to-all emails, too many late add-on meeting agendas and topics, too many meetings that have no outcome."

"There are way too many meetings. There are meetings about having meetings. This practice results in less actual work being completed."

"The sheer volume makes valid, workable storage solutions difficult."

Source: getcontrol.net Survey Database

² Train engineer was texting just before California crash, Reuters, Thursday, Oct 2, 2008 <http://www.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUSN0152835520081002>

³ Thomas Jackson, Ray Dawson & Darren Wilson (Danwood Group/Loughborough University), "Evaluating the Effect of Email Interruptions within the Workplace," Keele University, 2002.

every 5 minutes (a common factory preset) we could receive 12 interruptions per hour or 96 potential interruptions per eight-hour work day.

Another study revealed that email interruptions lower workers' IQ scores by ten full points.⁴ At the outset of a mentally challenging project, our brains are like a train that is standing still. As we begin to work, the brain slowly speeds up and we begin to juggle more complex elements as our concentration builds. When we hear a ding and see a pop-up email notification, our *brain train* grinds to a halt as we turn to investigate the new information. Productivity is lost when we return to our project and have to begin the process of gaining momentum all over again.

CHALLENGE 2: MISCOMMUNICATION

The second workflow challenge facing professionals is **miscommunication**. Again, productivity pain points are easiest to spot in our most common activities: email and meetings. 46 percent of all professionals rate the quality of email flowing through their organization as 'poor' or 'fair'. Rather than a stream of clear, concise, and actionable email, i-workers are faced with an avalanche of vague, wordy, and garbled email.

- 79% of all professionals often receive email with vague subject lines
- 74% often receive email that requires clarification

The result is a never-ending stream of misunderstandings and in some cases interpersonal conflicts that drain productivity and create more chaos.

Another form of miscommunication is inappropriate email content. A percentage of the workforce still appears to be oblivious to the fact that controversial jokes, wise words of wisdom messages, chain mail, and political rants can trigger interpersonal disputes and costly litigation.

Miscommunication Comments

"I often receive emails from my boss that are sent to several if not all of his direct reports and there usually is no direction on who should be in charge of the request that is being made or the question being asked. Because of this, it is usually unclear whose responsibility it is to follow up on the email.

"We have too many people that are working e-mail during meetings instead of paying attention."

Source: www.getcontrol.net Survey Database

⁴ In 80 clinical trials, Dr. Glenn Wilson, a psychiatrist at King's College London University, monitored the IQ of workers throughout the day. CNN article: <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/04/22/text.iq/>

In a recent survey of entertainment industry executives, we found that 80% had recently seen an inappropriate email that could get the organization into trouble. If executives are receiving inappropriate emails, imagine what kinds of emails are being sent to the rest of us.

Meetings also reflect communication challenges. Many meetings (49%) are arranged quickly without a clearly stated objective and agenda. Within meetings, pre-work, ground rules, decision-making protocols, and guidelines for staying on course are rarely communicated, leading to a massive amount of wasted time.

Remarkably, 40% of all professionals report that the quality of meetings they attend are no better than 'poor' to 'fair'. This is an indication that much can be gained through improved communication before, during, and after meetings take place.

Despite the fact that professionals send an average of 16,675 emails and attend 463 meetings per year, they've been given very few communication tools to make email and meetings more productive.

CHALLENGE 3: DISORDER

The third productivity pain point is disorder. What good is information if you can't find it when you need it?

The most astounding conclusion from our extensive research is that – despite the advent of search technology – information workers still can't find their information.

- 93% are eager to improve their ailing organizational systems
- 85% report that keeping track of multiple document versions is often challenging
- 75% agree that it's often time consuming and frustrating to locate stored email and documents
- 63% rate the quality of their team's shared drive as 'fair' to 'poor'
- 50% still print out documents because they're concerned that they won't be able to find them on their computers

Disorder Comments

"Help! I can't find anything!"

"Our upper and middle management have failed to create, document and communicate their requirements for document organization. A "word-of-mouth" approach is poor, lazy and shows a lack of leadership and understanding."

Source: getcontrol.net Survey Database

The primary function of information work is to create knowledge – to be able to organize and quickly find all the bits of information that form a useful knowledgebase. Yet only 19% of i-workers have received any training on the effective storage and retrieval of email and documents.

The research and advisory firm IDC reports that knowledge workers spend about 16 hours per week filing, organizing, and searching for information. Losing a document creates a ripple in workflow, such as emailing an associate to resend a file. In some cases, missing information can have more dire consequences, such as a costly bad decision, or a dangerous mistake at a nuclear power plant or military installation. In the analog world, information is neatly categorized using a scheme such as the Dewey Decimal System – the digital frontier has yet to get that organized.

Most new hires are handed a computer, and that's it. No insight is provided on how to manage the thousands of files that will rapidly accumulate on a typical hard drive. No techniques are given for how teams can structure information on a share drive. And when a seasoned employee leaves, their computer is wiped clean by IT because there is no strategy for transferring most of the stored information on their computers. It's as if our precious knowledge sits on death row – waiting to be lost through poor storage techniques or the next job promotion.

CHALLENGE 4: ISOLATION

The final productivity pain point is the most surprising. Simply put, the sharing of information-related workflow best practices is rare. Therefore, i-workers are *isolated* in the sense that they don't receive coaching on how to overcome OMDI and get more done. In fact, less than 20% of i-workers report that they have recently received coaching on how to manage email and meetings more productively.

Here are some reasons why so many i-workers are on their own when it comes to workflow coaching:

1. **No Goals:** Most organizations need to develop workflow goals to which their people can aspire. What exactly does it mean when one colleague masters a new Outlook® or WebEx® feature and becomes more productive than another colleague? Most organizations don't even have a name for this kind of achievement and therefore they have no way to recognize and motivate employees.

2. **No Guidelines:** Most employees are handed their computers but never given guidelines for productive use. Without standards for reducing overload, writing better messages, discovering key tech tips, and other useful knowledge, most professionals simply stumble along, missing huge opportunities to streamline their workflow.
3. **No Leaders:** Strangely absent from the push to get more done are leaders. Without goals and guidelines, leaders struggle to convey productivity insights to their people. Some feel unqualified. Others aren't sure if it's their place to provide productivity coaching. One thing is certain, without guidelines and goals, most leaders will struggle.
4. **It's Awkward:** As with any behavior change initiative the first steps are the hardest. Addressing an unclear email with a colleague is something that most professionals have never done. They often feel nervous and fear rejection.

Without goals, guidelines, or leaders it's easy to see how productivity opportunities fall by the wayside. The isolated worker continues to work inefficiently at the expense of competitive advantage and countless opportunities. This final productivity pain point can be summed up in a single phrase: You're on your own!

Isolation Comments

"Never had training - learn by doing and asking"

"I don't ever remember e-mail best practices or training given...Gee, I wonder why we're not very efficient and don't even know the features that could help us?"

"E-mail has taken away our ability to effectively communicate with people in voice and in person and has propagated the ability of people to say things they wouldn't say to your face and to give partial answers or incomplete information so they can "get it of my desk".

"People avoid valuable personal exchanges by deferring to email too quickly."

Source: getcontrol.net Survey Database

GET CONTROL![™]: A SIMPLE TRAINING PLAN

Over the past six years our Get Control! productivity training seminars have helped millions of professionals and thousands of organizations become more productive, competitive, and successful. *Get Control!* addresses all four productivity pain points while focusing on the core activities (email, meetings, getting organized) and the core technologies (Outlook, Lotus, BlackBerry, iPhone) that consume most of the business day.



As pioneers in conquering OMDI we are uniquely qualified to help organizations assess the impact of this productivity drain. Our consulting services can benchmark the impact of OMDI, produce a scorecard for your enterprise, and offer prescriptive advice on how to mitigate its effect. Our TCO/ROI model can demonstrate in hard dollars how much OMDI is costing your business and the benefits of implementing a *Get Control!* program.

WHY IT WORKS

Our program frequently outperforms competitor and home grown programs for the following reasons:

1. It's effective: We've road tested and refined these programs with our clients, who are among the best and brightest organizations in the world. Visit our website www.getcontrol.net or email us at info@getcontrol.net to review Capital One and Novartis case studies or arrange a demo.
2. Less is more: Our approach to training is to provide short, informative programs that consume no more than half a day. We find that the less we say, the more our participants remember.
3. Clear standards: Each program introduces a small number of high-impact best practices which will become standards at your organization. Once goals and guidelines are clear, everyone can adjust their behavior and leaders can help people get more done.
4. Info-Coaching™: We have developed a powerful info-coaching model that shatters the inhibiting impact of isolation. Info-coaching is the act of sharing workflow best practices with colleagues and throughout an organization. It provides a roadmap for sustaining productivity gains that can easily be implemented by entry level employees to the C-Suite.
5. Results are measurable and long-lasting: Every program has clearly defined, measurable objectives that can be sustained for years to come. We have the data, references, and client list to prove it.

Action: Become a catalyst for real and lasting change that delivers a competitive edge to your organization. Click info@getcontrol.net or call 1-888-340-3598 for a free consultation.