

Creative Solutions to Everyday Challenges Within the Workplace

There are bound to be challenging moments within the workplace – I’m sure you can name a few you’re dealing with right now. Instead of allowing them to cause havoc, look to creative solutions that can help turn these challenges into fun opportunities. Creative problem-solving is at the core of the human instinct. It’s how we understand our environment and, ultimately—how we create a better situation.

Problems don’t have to continue because “that’s just the way things are.” I want to share with you a few of the common challenges, ahem... opportunities, I have seen during my time consulting with various companies and offer some creative solutions you can implement in your business’s environment. Let’s dive in:

Challenge #1: “Water cooler talk” in the kitchen

Moments of frustration with co-workers are natural. However, the employee who constantly dishes out gossip and toxic energy can cause irreversible damage to a business. It is essential to confront this sort of behavior quickly before it interferes with productivity or breaks down employee morale.

One easy place to start is to encourage employees to seek positivity. Finding something uplifting to say to or about someone can help lift the mood. We must remember that employees and co-workers are human. They will make mistakes. It is not our duty to scrutinize, but it’s important to help make the situation better in any way we can. When everyone is committed to the team and embracing challenges, productivity will soar. Give a little grace in the office and know that you are only as strong as your weakest employee. Everyone has a talent, role, and creative mind to help enhance the workplace. Don’t let one bump in the road lead to an environment of toxicity.

Challenge #2: Being overwhelmed by the workload

Just as the seasons change, so does your employee/company workload. Overwhelm can lead to stagnation from a fear of acting. In these situations, a change of mindset is essential. Remember that being busy is a good thing! It’s certainly better than a company without anything to get done. To help take the edge off during these extra-busy times, write down three to four things that you’d like to accomplish when you begin your day. Keeping your list small like this helps to focus your energy and not leave you feeling paralyzed and exhausted by just the thought of what you have to do. The feeling of success you’ll receive when you complete things on your list will boost your motivation and make the next task even easier.

I like to use small sticky notes and write one task/goal on each note. Then, as I complete it, I throw it in the recycling bin and feel more satisfied than simply crossing it off. It’s the little things that can add so much happiness!

Challenge #3: Coworker “drive-bys”

- Repeat the first four bullets three to four more times. Diligently focusing on productivity within these set times is recognition in effort to complete the task.

Co-worker drive-byes are those impromptu visits by co-workers that pull you away from your work. While sometimes they are great to give your brain a break from a tasking project for second, other times, they can impede productivity and totally throw you out of the zone. A few frequent conversations throughout the day may seem harmless, but if each of those conversations is five to ten minutes long, you can be losing a lot of time! It doesn't end there, believe me or not, but in a recent article published by The New York Times, it can take up to 25 minutes to return back to a task after an interruption!

If you know you and an employee have frequent side conversations that are impeding your focus, let them know you'll swing by and get them at an agreed-upon time to go for a walk, grab a bite to eat, or get some coffee – for example. Then, you can return to your work refreshed and pick back up where you left off.

This can be a delicate balance because too much conversation can slump productivity but dismissing all discussions can damage employee happiness. Setting clear boundaries and holding to them will keep your productivity on track while still allowing moments for spontaneous conversations. Set a good example for your employees. While you may be the boss, you have the responsibility of making sure that your actions follow company policy, too.

Challenge #4: Too many meetings, not enough time to DO the work

If you're a part of a meeting-heavy culture, you may feel stressed about actually completing what needs to be done before the next meeting. There are a few tricks you can use to help manage your meetings and leave you enough time get some work done. First, stick to a meeting plan ([link boosting productivity blog](#)). Then, after the meeting, set scheduled 60 to 90-minute blocks that are dedicated to completing tasks. These time blocks should be when you can sit down, focus, and give all your attention to your list of to-dos.

Set goals for what you need to accomplish and stay dedicated to completing them. Start with the projects that consume more of your energy in the morning and before a meeting. Then, after a session, debrief with smaller tasks or by collecting your thoughts for next steps. If you are worried about employees scheduling over your designated work time, name it something like "Product Roadmap" or "2020 Planning" or something that sounds important on the calendar, so others are less likely to schedule over it.

Of course, there are many more challenges that the modern business deals with and would like to hear about them as we help motivate each other to find creative solutions. Challenges and obstacles really are opportunities to try new approaches or tactics. Don't be afraid to try out multiple strategies! If one doesn't work for your company, move onto another. Take suggestions from your employees — they may have ideas that you never even considered. Overall, don't get stuck in a negative loop. Toxic mindsets are contagious and can quickly stifle creativity. Focus on positivity and let that be your guide through all the challenges you come across in the workplace.



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