

THE **5**

MOST DANGEROUS

CREATIVE PRODUCTIVITY

MYTHS

BUSTED!

5 DANGEROUS CREATIVE

PRODUCTIVITY MYTHS, DEBUNKED

The world of marketing is filled with myths and half-truths about how to work most effectively and efficiently. But some of these myths, which have become entrenched beliefs in marketing departments, are not only *not* true, but are preventing marketing teams from getting work done.

We are professionals. We have years of experience, we've consulted with experts, and we have taken every precaution to make sure our findings

are correct. What we've found may surprise you. But, unlike urban legends, old wives' tales, or the latest office rumor, our findings are backed by published research and real data. Read on to uncover what these five dangerous myths are, why they are keeping you and your team from being as successful as you could be, and please, **DO** try our tips (*they have been tested and deemed highly effective*) if you'd like to improve your productivity.



STRUCTURE KILLS CREATIVITY

Creativity needs room to blossom. That's the idea behind this myth. Marketers, and especially designers, are creative by nature. They argue that having too many processes is constraining and takes away from time that could be spent creating. But our findings indicate that without work processes in place, you lose more time than you gain.

THE FACTS

Upfront planning with clear objectives to achieve a strategic goal does not just add "one more thing to do and update," it helps streamline work and avoid potential errors. And, errors eat up a lot of time that could be better spent on creative endeavors. Backing up this view, Jed Simms, the founder and co-creator of TOP (Totally Optimized Projects), notes that on average 30-35 percent of project time is spent on rework and that reducing the need for rework releases 15-20 percent of project time and effort for more productive work!

With the right structures in place, such as standardized work requests, templates for repetitive work, complete campaign plans, and a clear approval process, you can save time in numerous ways. You get the feedback you need at the right time and from the right people, reducing the amount of time you spend waiting on approvals, doing repetitive tasks, and reworking projects and giving you more time to spend in the right side of your brain.

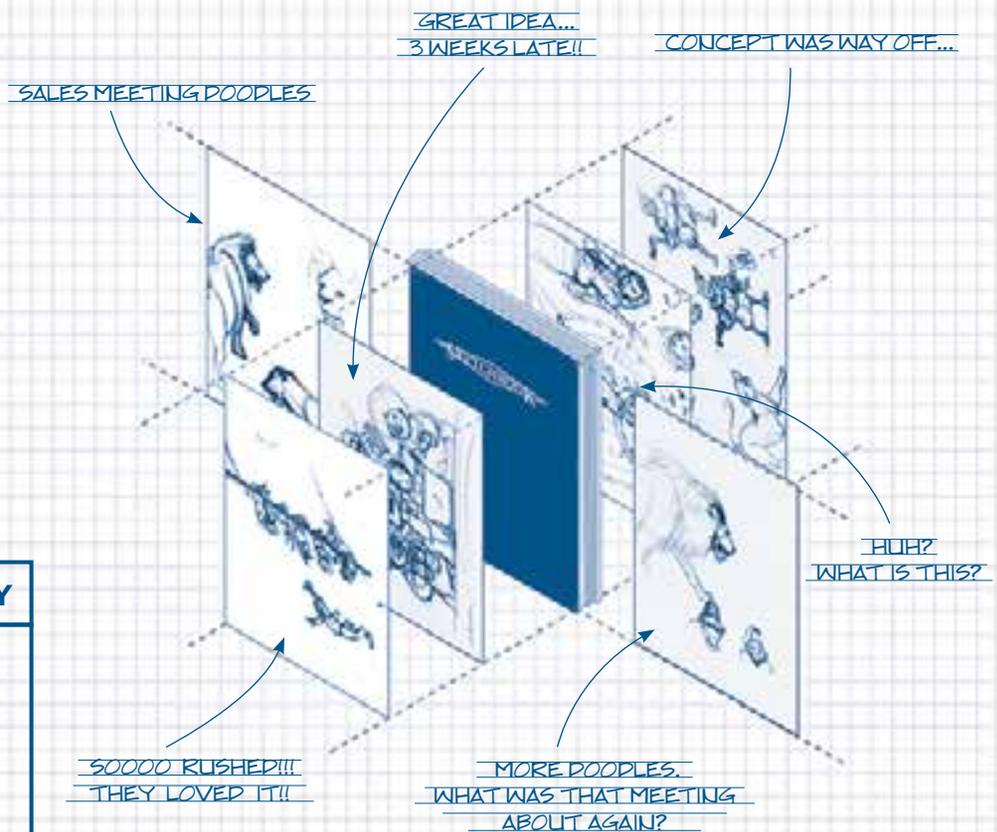
BUSTED!

STRUCTURE CREATES TIME FOR CREATIVITY

TIP: ADD SOME STRUCTURE TO FREE YOUR CREATIVITY

"Checkpoints slow you down, in a good way," says Todd Henry, CEO of Accidental Creative.² By planning ahead of time and checking on progress as you go, you'll end up with more time and fewer "uh ohs." Before starting your creative work:

- Develop a complete creative brief.
- Create and implement a campaign execution plan.
- Map out your work to meet deadlines.
- Follow a standardized and accepted plan for approvals.





SAYING "YES" IS BEST

A lot of people believe it is okay to take on impromptu tasks because they can get it done quickly. But too often, when you say, "Yes, that will only take a few minutes," you may be doing more harm than good. What you thought would just take five minutes quickly turns into an hour or more—distracting you from your most important work.

"OH, YOU NEED THIS TOMORROW
NO SWEAT!"

"I'D BE HAPPY TO TAKE
CARE OF THAT FOR YOU!"

"IT SHOULDN'T TAKE MORE THAN
AN HOUR OR TWO."

"SURE, NO PROBLEM!"

"NO WORRIES!"

"I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO..."

"I'M NOT TOO BUSY...
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?"

THE FACTS

This myth has two parts. First, we underestimate how long tasks will take. This is called the planning fallacy and is well measured in study after study.³ The planning fallacy is the tendency for people and organizations to underestimate by 20 to 50 percent⁴ how long they will need to complete a task and the overly optimistic assumption that the outcome will be better than past data or experience indicates.

The second part of this myth is in believing that these types of short distractions don't hurt productivity, because they do. When you take on tasks to be "helpful," but that aren't aligned with your business strategy and goals, it can hurt the bottom line. Research shows that in organizations where managers focus on strategic goals 70 percent of projects meet or exceed their forecasted ROI, compared to only 50 percent at organizations who rarely do.⁵ So next time you're about to say yes, think twice, and if it's not aligned with your business strategy, say no.

BUSTED!

SAYING "NO" OR "NOT NOW" IS OFTEN BEST

TIP: KNOW HOW TO SAY "NO"

For most of us, saying no is difficult. We're socially programmed to be nice and helpful. So here are a few useful tips on saying no:

- Learn how to feel good about saying no. Back up your answer with clear reasons why.
- Pre-empt the requests. Let people know in advance you can't take on one more task right now.
- Be polite, but firm. Avoid using maybe or apologizing.
- Be ready to outline the consequences if you were to say yes. "If I say yes, projects x and y will be late."

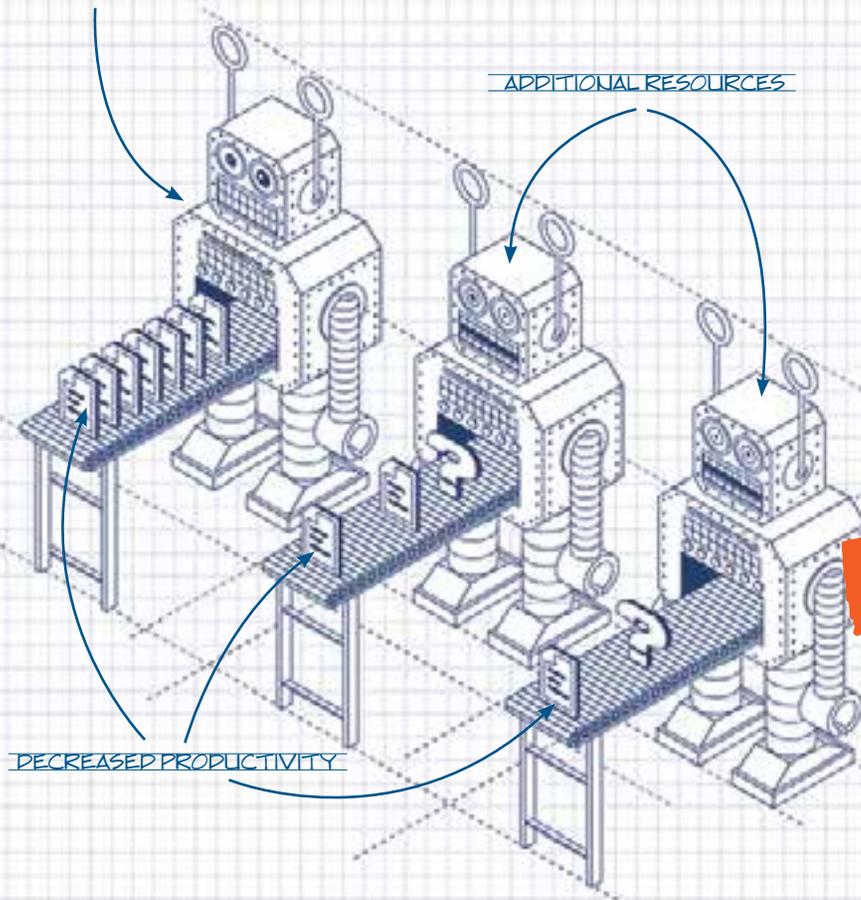
MYTH
No. **3**

ADDING RESOURCES INCREASES OUTPUT

We're sure you've heard, "We need more resources, we just don't have the bandwidth," when campaigns start to run behind. This myth is based on the idea that with more resources, tasks will get completed faster, work will be better shared so there will be less late nights, and more work will get completed on time and on budget. But more resources may not be the miracle cure you and your team are hoping for.

CURRENT RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



DECREASED PRODUCTIVITY

THE FACTS

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Nine women can't make a baby in one month"? Well, the same idea applies here. According to Brooks' Law, first introduced by the software engineer Fred Brooks, adding manpower to a late project makes it later.⁶

What people often forget to consider when buying into this myth is the amount of time and cost required for on-boarding and training. During on-boarding, productivity diminishes for both new resources as well as current resources that must help with training. According to a survey of 610 CEOs by Harvard Business School, it's estimated that typical mid-level managers require 6.2 months to reach their break-even point.⁷ Now, that's a lot of productivity down the drain! Plus, this myth ignores the fact that adding additional headcount to already inefficient processes won't bring about instant change. The only way to get more productivity out of a broken system is to fix the broken system.

BUSTED!

MORE RESOURCES CAN *REDUCE* PRODUCTIVITY

TIP: FIX THE SYSTEM FIRST

If you want to get the most out of the resources you have and any you add, start by improving your work processes. Here's how:

- Standardize work requests and be strict about getting everyone on board.
- Automate repetitive tasks to save time
- Create templates to streamline workflows and ensure nothing gets missed.
- Track time on all projects to provide historical context for estimating new ones.



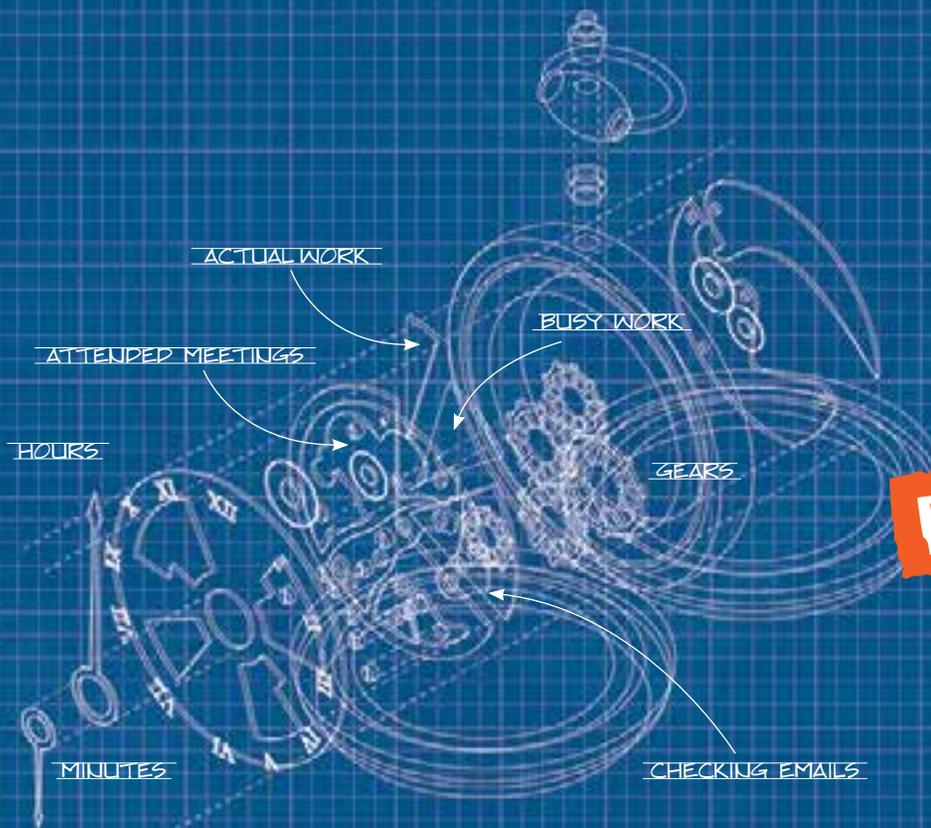
BUSY IS THE SAME AS PRODUCTIVE

Attending meetings and putting out fires on top of your regular workload can keep you very busy. According to this myth, being busy and having “meetings all day” should mean you are being productive and accomplishing a lot. Unfortunately, being busy often doesn’t mean that you or your team are actually getting work done. And even when you are, it may not be the right work.

THE FACTS

According to Thomas Edison, one of history’s most productive inventors, “Being busy does not always mean real work.” Instead, says Edison, “The object of all work is production or accomplishment...seeming to do is not doing.” Whether you’re trying to invent the light bulb or push out an ad campaign to build brand awareness, productivity is about achieving strategic goals, not how busy you are.

Busy work, like meetings and answering email, often distracts people from getting the most important work done. According to Shirley Lee Training and Development, 49 percent of participants considered unfocused meetings and projects as the biggest workplace time waster and the primary reason for unproductive workdays.⁸ To avoid wasting time on busy work, prioritize tasks and align these with strategic initiatives to ensure that the right work—not busy work—is getting done.



BUSTED!

MEETINGS AND BUSY WORK WASTE TIME

TIP: REDUCE MEETING TIME AND FREQUENCY

In a survey reported in *Industry Week*, 2000 managers claimed that at least 30 percent of their time spent in meetings was a waste of time.⁹ To be more productive, try to keep meetings to a minimum:

- Ask for a meeting agenda beforehand and decline if you find it irrelevant.
- Find a creative work management solution that increases visibility and eliminates the need for meetings.
- Create “no meeting Fridays.” Block out every Friday to allow time to get important work done.
- Start and end meetings on time—no exceptions.



EMAIL IS THE BEST WAY TO COLLABORATE

Most people assume email is a great tool for collaboration because it's simple, flexible, and universal. But email often has the opposite effect—creating silos and information overload. "Let me send that to you again so it's at the top of your inbox," is a phrase we've all heard. Why? Because email, rather than facilitating collaboration, is often a place where both ideas and documents get lost in an overflowing inbox.

THE FACTS

Email may be the most commonly used tool to communicate and collaborate, but in reality, it has created an overload of information that is difficult to manage. According to a recent McKinsey Global Institute report, the average worker spends 28 percent of the working week managing email.¹⁰ Another study by the Radicati Group estimates that corporate employees receive and send more than 100 emails a day.¹¹ With stats like these, it's easy to understand why email overload has become a serious drain on productivity.

In addition, email is ineffective for collaboration because it's nothing but a long queue of scattered information that locks up data in private accounts, lacks effective search capabilities, and often leaves important team members out of conversations accidentally.

BUSTED!

EMAIL CREATES BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

TIP: REDUCE EMAIL OVERLOAD

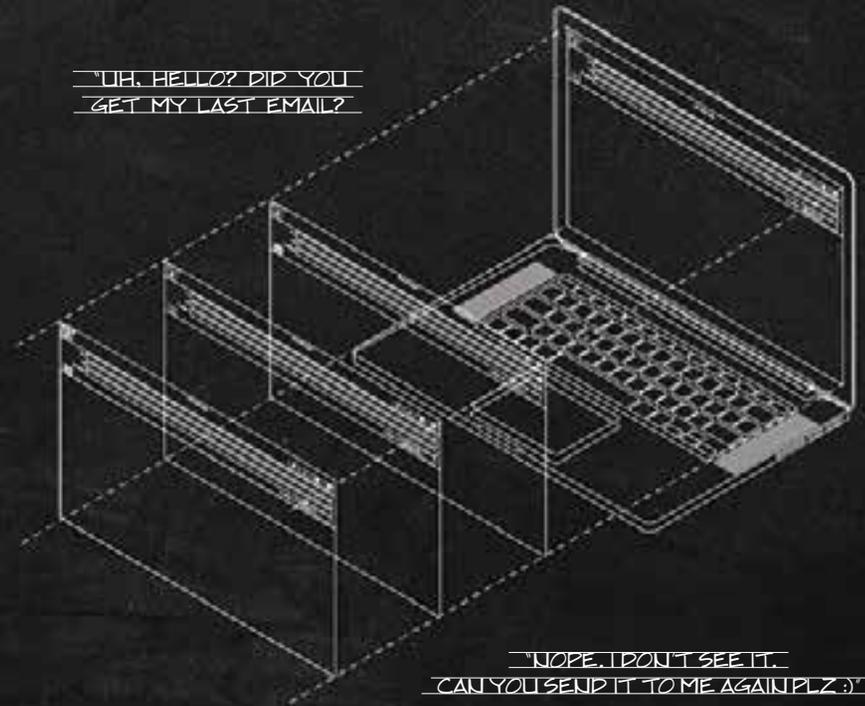
The ubiquity of email makes it impossible to escape entirely, but consider these strategies to help reduce the time you spend managing email:

- Install an email filter to help sort out non-priority emails.
- Create response templates for messages you send frequently.
- Keep emails short. This saves you and the other person time.
- Don't use email to discuss work. Use a solution to collaborate in context.

"HEY JIM, I NEED THOSE SCREENSHOTS
CLEANED UP FOR MY POWERPOINT
PRESENTATION ON WEDNESDAY."

"THEY ARE IN THE MARKETING
SHARED FOLDER, MOSTLY RETOUCHING."

"UH, HELLO? DID YOU
GET MY LAST EMAIL?"



"NOPE, I DON'T SEE IT.
CAN YOU SEND IT TO ME AGAIN PLZ :)"



BUST! THESE MYTHS AND WORK SMARTER

Now that you know what's fact versus fiction, you can put your knowledge into action. Instead of running from meeting to meeting, adding resources you'll just have to turn around and train, or searching for yet another revision lost in your email inbox, you can work smarter. By following these tips, you can eliminate a lot of the busy work and be more productive.

Real productivity, as Thomas Edison pointed out, is based on actual production or accomplishment. So the next time you catch one of these productivity

myths flying around your marketing department, put it to the test. Does the advice you're being given help you achieve a strategic goal? If not, then you know what to do: bust it! Then, you and your marketing team can get back to working as productively as possible and getting the right work done.

WORKFRONT MARKETING WORK MANAGEMENT

Busting bad habits and myths and increasing productivity for marketing departments across the globe.

Workfront is a cloud-based Marketing Work Management solution that helps in-house creative teams and agencies, marketing departments, and external agencies conquer the chaos of excessive email, redundant status meetings, constant rework, and tedious approval processes. Unlike other tools, Workfront Marketing Work Cloud is a centralized, easy-to-adopt solution for managing and collaborating on all creative work through the entire work lifecycle, which improves team productivity, credibility, and executive visibility. Thousands of enterprise marketing teams and agencies trust their work to Workfront, such as Adobe, Cisco, HBO, Covario, Ralph Lauren, SapientNitro, REI, Trek, Schneider Electric, Tommy Hilfiger, and ATB Financial. To learn more, visit marketing.workfront.com or follow us on Twitter @Workfront_Inc.

Trek Bicycle recovered 30% of the time they'd previously lost to maintaining spreadsheets.

The ATB Financial creative services group increased their time for value add activities by 30%.

Covario's product marketing team regularly exceeds their 90% on-time target by 8 points.

Schneider Electric eliminated a 48-hour delay in creative work request intake.

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