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If you're a regular reader of *RIM Matters*, you no doubt noticed that I've been tardy with the newsletter this year. My apologies for keeping you waiting.



**Mary Colak, CMC**

Last year was a very interesting and busy year for me—perhaps I'll notice the stark contrast this year with the predicted doom-and-gloom economy. Regardless, I will continue to savour the experiences that each new day brings.

Heeding the predictions of global lean times ahead, now may be a perfect time to improve and streamline your operations to save both time and money.

There are many things that you can do now to make yourself and your organization more efficient. If the work does not tumble in like it once did, then focus on bettering your operations in preparation for the upswing. If the work is still plentiful, you can still improve your operations to maximize productivity.

One area that many organizations overlook in busy times is training. What skills do you and/or your staff need to prepare you to perform at your optimum both during and after the economic storm? Are you managing your time productively? Is your desk always cluttered? Can you find information readily? Is your work and family balanced? Just some areas to think about ....

In this edition, we'll have a look at some issues surrounding operations and productivity, specifically time management. Are you keeping good time?

*Mary Colak, cmc*

## **TIPS AND TRICKS**

Are you spending too much time in the office, yet getting very little done? Consider keeping a time log for a few days. At the beginning of each activity (i.e. checking your email), make a note of the start and stop time and identify the duty you were performing. The results may surprise you and, if nothing else, you will become more mindful of how long you spend on various tasks. After a few days, challenge yourself to do the same activities in less time (set a timer). You will find this very effective because each task seems to expand to fit the time we allow for it.

—Hellen Buttigieg, Certified Professional Organizer

**Got a tip? Share a tip!**

Send it to [info@rimsolutions.ca](mailto:info@rimsolutions.ca) and we'll include it in our next newsletter.

# Ten Excuses Not to Consider Document Management This Year

Author: John F. Mancini, President of AIIM—in Infonomics, January/February 2009

Ahhh. A New Year and Resolutions abound. According to numerous websites, one of the most popular resolutions each year is to 'lose weight.'

This is true. In fact, I personally make this resolution every single year without fail. And almost immediately I come up with all sorts of interesting excuses to abandon it. Among them: 1) I like the taste of beer; 2) I like bread; 3) I like pasta; and 4) Did I mention I like beer?

So if your organization is thinking about finally embarking on that long-postponed document management resolution and are worried about the response of your boss, let me save you the time.

Why struggle with information systems you know are nothing more than a glorified digital landfill? Help your management find the proper excuses to avoid cleaning up the landfill!

## John's Handy-Dandy, Top-10 Excuses to Avoid a Document Management Resolution

**#1: If we need to, we can usually find it.** We usually can find the information we need when a customer calls. Sometimes it takes a while, but once we send out an email to all staff asking for the information, it usually shows up after a bit.

**#2: No one will ever sue us.** Who would ever want to sue us? I'm sure if push comes to shove we could find whatever we need to defend ourselves. Let's not go looking for problems.

**#3: We've got to pick our battles.** Even if it's true that organizations typically spend \$20 in labour to file a document, \$120 in labour to find a misfiled document, and \$220 in labour to reproduce a lost document, it's chump change to us.

**#4: Green/schmeen.** Who cares if the average document is photocopied 19 times? Not my problem. I've got more important things to worry about.

**#5: It's good for staff to be busy.** We understand that professionals can spend up to 50 percent of their time looking for the right information. That's what we pay them for.

**#6: It's easier to just get everyone together in person.** If my staff needs to work together on a project, we find it more productive to send everybody a draft in advance and then have everyone fly in for a few days and sit together with all of the different versions and just hammer out the details. Plus everyone likes staying in hotels and having nice dinners.

**#7: Our business isn't located on a flood plain or anything.** Sure, when we see all those paper documents floating around after a flood on the news, we feel bad for those people. But we're not located in a place where disasters happen.

**#8: Information security just isn't at the top of our list.** Yes, we lock the doors at night. And yes, we keep the HR files locked. And yes, we use passwords on our computers. But we need to be flexible. If people want to take information home and work on it on their home computers, that's a good thing. We trust our employees.

**#9: Change is expensive.** When I need to get an invoice approved, I just put it in the right department's mailbox at the front desk. They usually pick it up in a few days and sign it. We file it and then every year years pack up the old files and send them to off-site storage. Why spend money to automate something this simple?

**#10: This information management stuff is just too squishy.** Managing our financial assets is important to us, so we invested in a top-notch financial system. Managing our people is important, too, so we invested in HR system. But information is just not as critical. And managing it seems so complicated.

What's your document or content resolution this year? ■





## Employer Training in Short Supply

Eric Beachesne, Canwest News Service, January 22, 2009

Canadian bosses blame a skills shortage for their lagging productivity, but maybe should be blaming themselves, according to an international study that found they are also among the least likely of companies in 12 countries to offer their workers and managers training.

Canadian workers also spend a quarter of their workday on unproductive activities, though relatively speaking that's not bad, as workers in other countries waste even more time on the job, the study by Proudfoot Consulting, an international management firm, found.

"While Canadian companies identify a skills shortage as the number-one roadblock to efficiency improvements, at the same time they provide one of the lowest levels of training," it said.

Canadian workers receive an average of eight days of training per year, the second lowest level of the 12 countries surveyed and 25 percent below the global norm, said the report, which is based on interviews with 1,275 managers and analysis of data in the 12 countries and across eight sectors.

"Not only that, but the usefulness of the training is questionable as only 55 percent of managers in this country say training needs within their company are formally and regularly assessed—the lowest score in the study," it added.

The report, which compares workplace efficiency in Canada, the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Russia, South Africa, Brazil, India, China and Australia found that only 11 percent of Canadian firms are 'high performers' with productivity gains of 15 percent or more, just half the 22 percent average internationally.

While Canadian managers say they could increase productivity by 13 percent over the next two years, they expect to achieve gains of only

eight percent, which means they are leaving 42 percent of potential productivity gains on the table, it said.

"This less-than-stellar performance in Canada can be attributed to a number of factors, including the low level of relevant training for both staff and managers, the slower speed of decision-making and problems with internal communications in Canadian organizations," said Jon Wylie, Proudfoot's managing director in Canada.

"If the labour pool lacks the necessary skills, it is incumbent on companies to train and develop the required skills in order to be successful. This is one area where Canada falls short," noted Wylie.

Canadian managers also cite high staff turnover and low workplace morale as significant problems, with Canadian managers more likely than managers anywhere else to say staff turnover rates will get worse in the next 12 months.

But those problems are not unrelated to the lack of training, Wylie said.

"Recruitment, retention, and morale are closely linked to effective training and internal communications," he said.

Canada also ranks second to last in terms of the ease with which information flows within companies, it said, adding that inefficiency may indicate unnecessary bureaucracy, and is a major contributing factor to the slow speed of corporate decision-making in Canada. ■

***Canada also ranks second to last in terms of the ease with which information flows within companies ... inefficiency may indicate unnecessary bureaucracy, and is a major contributing factor to the slow speed of corporate decision-making...***



# Productivity: How do we measure and improve it?

Author: Marnie Wright. *Reproduced with permission by the author for BC-Notes, Fall 2007 edition*

British Columbians inspire the envy of many Canadians on a number of fronts. We have lush natural resources, a natural environment that promotes labour, immigration, and economic promise associated with the 2010 Olympics/Paralympics. Yet so much potential still begs the question: Why aren't we more productive?

British Columbia lags behind other provinces in productivity. As one of the provinces with the highest levels of real-GDP-per-hour worked, B.C. saw almost no improvement in its relative productivity from 1997 to 2005.

In the long run, productivity is almost everything. A province or country's ability to improve its standard of living over time depends almost entirely on its ability to raise its output per worker. Over long periods of time, small differences in rates of productivity growth compound, like interest in a bank account, and can make an enormous difference to a society's prosperity. Nothing contributes more to poverty reduction, an increase in leisure, and to the country's ability to finance education, public health, environment, and the arts than productivity, according to Alan Blinder and William Baumol, authors of *Economics: Principles and Policy*.

At every level, from the individual and organization to a nation, it is important for us to strive to improve productivity. It not only positively impacts the bottom line and drives profit, but also fundamentally contributes to our standard of living. Increased productivity benefits the economy in a number of ways, including better wages and working conditions for employees, increased profits for organizations, and increased tax base for government.

*Our four strategies  
show you how to boost  
your stats and keep  
your metrics  
thoughtful and  
relevant*

## Express productivity in multiple measures

In Economics 101, so to speak, productivity measures the rate at which outputs of goods and services are produced per unit of input (labour, capital, raw materials, etc). It is calculated as the ratio of the quantity of outputs produced to some measure of the quantity of inputs used.

Productivity is a "supply-side" measure: productivity = outputs/inputs. From there, productivity growth = output growth less input growth.

Productivity growth means that you have found better ways to create more output from given inputs. For example, the introduction of new technologies means that you can use inputs in ways that generate a greater quantity of outputs or higher-value products.

At a broad level, we often use productivity measures to indicate the capacity of a province to harness its human and physical resources to generate economic growth. We can express productivity as a physical measure, e.g., number of cars produced per employee, a monetary measure, e.g., thousands of dollars of output per hour worked or as an index, e.g., output per unit of labour = 100 in 1997-98.

A 1999 United Nations study listed North Americans as working the longest hours in the industrialized world. According to the study *Key Indicators of the Labour Market*, Japan, France, and Germany all surpassed North American productivity gains and put in fewer hours.

## Create goals to stimulate productivity

Now that we know how to measure productivity, how do we improve our numbers? Each organization needs to begin by looking at what drives its own inputs and outputs, and create goals and objectives that stimulate increased productivity. Here are some simple strategies: *See Productivity on page 5*

1. **Be thoughtful about what you measure.**

Measuring the wrong aspects of employee performance can be damaging and create feelings of de-motivation. But that doesn't mean that you shouldn't measure at all. Thoughtful measures can provide the basis for employee recognition and drive results. When determining what aspects of employee performance to measure, consider the following:

- **Ask employees.** When they have a hand in creating the metrics they are measured against, their productivity rises over time. It always instills a sense of pride in ownership, and having employees own the results they produce will focus their efforts;
- **Measure key competencies.** Ensure that the metrics reflect as many aspects of the business as possible. Measure competencies key to organizational success like innovation and creativity;
- **Focus on performance improvement, not perfection.** Include in the performance management process a strategy to assess satisfaction levels and barriers to improved productivity;
- **Think micro and macro.** When assessing employee performance, include organizational measures related to business performance. This directly ties the success of the overall organization to the individual contributions of each person in the division; and
- **Assess team effort when assessing a person's performance.** Collective efforts can translate into much higher outputs, but often don't get the same recognition as individual achievements.

2. **Try on telecommuting.** Evidence abounds on the impact of telecommuting on productivity, probably more than any other kind of initiative. Industry observers once surmised that increased productivity resulting from telecommuting produced a halo effect: people felt so grateful they simply worked harder. While this might partly ring true, allowing people to work when they feel most productive is a big factor. In addition to productivity gains, morale tends to increase and absenteeism

decreases.

For example, when employees in Contra Costa County in the San Francisco Bay area experienced three days of telecommuting per month, average productivity increased by 27 per cent. Reasons included uninterrupted time to work, fewer distractions, and less travel time. Perhaps most importantly, they reported a considerable increase in the overall quality of their lives.

3. **Involve employees in planning.** *Time Magazine* surveyed 1,000 employees, asking them which organizational factors would have a positive impact on their own productivity. Fifty-four per cent replied: clear workplace goals.

4. **Assess your use of technology.** Most organizations offer a laptop computer, BlackBerry or cell phone as a way to support employees' work. By making it easier to work from any location, an employee's productivity is bound to go up, right? Not necessarily. Organizations need to be very watchful of how and when employees use technology. Burnout, stress leave, and overworking are chronic issues that zap productivity. The key is to be thoughtful about how employees will use technology within your organization. Give due consideration to how and when they will use email and engage in efforts to reduce unnecessary email traffic.

You can make productivity gains with small, simple adjustments to how an organization operates: small changes can result in big gains. A focus on productivity ultimately reflects the effectiveness of the organization. Clear measurements, focused communications, and thoughtful planning are ways to make the organization more productive. When you consider the impact of productivity on your own quality of life, productivity is truly everything. ■

Resources:

- "Measuring minds at work," Saheli, S.R. Datta, *Business 2.0 Magazine*
- WFC Resources: Productivity
- Statistics Canada: "Provincial Labour Productivity Growth, 1997 to 2005:" [www.statcan.ca/english/research/15-206-XIE/2007007/productivity.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/15-206-XIE/2007007/productivity.htm)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: [www.oecd.org/](http://www.oecd.org/)
- Alan Blinder and William Baumol, *Economics: Principles and Policy*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, 1993.

## Common Time Wasters

Improving our office productivity right now is as simple as eliminating the most common time wasters. This includes: drop-in visitors, telephone and email disruptions, procrastination and crisis management. Here are some tips to help you manage these time wasters.

### Drop-in Visitors

“Have you got a minute?” Even if we say, ‘yes,’ inevitably, the visit never takes a minute! As a consequence, we have allowed the visitor to take away our time from our priority work. And getting back to that priority work after the visitor leaves, will set us back a great deal of time. Here’s what to do regarding drop-in visitors.

1. If you agreed to the visit (“Yes, I’ve got a minute”), set a time limit on the visit. Say: “I have to leave in 10 minutes. Can we finish in that time?” If not, schedule an alternate time to meet.



If it turns out to be more than a minute and the task that you are working on is more important, then say: “I’m working on a priority project right now. Would you please schedule me in your calendar for later in the day and then we can meet to discuss?”

2. Stand up when someone drops in. Remain standing throughout the conversation. You’ll be pleasantly surprised at how much shorter the visit will last!
3. Ask the person—“Can it wait until later? I’m fighting a deadline right now.”
4. Offer to go to the visitor’s desk—then you’ll have control over how long you talk.
5. If your boss drops in and you’re working on a deadline, ask him/her what they really want you to work on—the deadline project or the new work your boss is bringing you (thus the visit!).

6. Rearrange your office layout so that it is not conducive to drop-in visitors.
7. If you’re working on a deadline, close your door and put a sign on the door to tell others that you are on deadline. The sign could read: “I’m working on an important deadline. I’ll be free at 3:00pm. Thank you.” Or, “If your question can wait, my project won’t be late. Thank you.” You get the idea.

But what if you don’t have a door? Then put your sign up where it is very noticeable (on top of the cubicle screen—maybe a sign for each side or directly on top of your monitor in bold red letters). Or ask someone to screen your visitors and let them know that you are on deadline.

### Telephone and Email Interruptions

I’ll bet Alexander Graham Bell had no idea that his patented invention would be both a blessing and a curse! When you’re trying to get work done in the office, the telephone (and now, email!) is probably the most intrusive instrument for our deadlines.

Remember that the telephone is a tool with which we can accomplish our work. We can control it—here’s how.

1. Screen your calls via call forwarding (to your assistant), call display, or send all messages to voice mail. If you truly don’t want the noise interruption of your telephone while working on a deadline, turn down the ringer (or disconnect it from the wall—remember to plug in again, though!).
2. Arrange your schedule to return calls during a specific block of time during the day.
3. When returning calls, be prepared with your own notes, so that the call stays on track (to minimize socializing and get the purpose of the phone call accomplished quickly).
4. To avoid repeat calls, use an outgoing message that includes when you are available for phone calls.

*See Time Wasters on page 7*



*Time Wasters, continued from page 6*

To minimize email volume and disruptions:

1. Remove yourself from group lists.
2. Batch reading and sending of messages—schedule time in your day to handle email (just like you would regular postal mail or courier deliveries).
3. Turn off the email message alert.
4. When sending email, ensure your subject line is clear—this will help you group subjects together for batch filing.
5. OHIO—only handle it once—like your filing! If you've opened an email, do something with it right away. Do not leave it sitting in your inbox. Ever.

### Procrastination

There are many reasons why we procrastinate. One is fear of failure—is the task you are working on too complex or difficult? Are your expectations for completion too high or maybe you're unsure you have the skills required, so you find it hard to get started? When a task seems large and overwhelming, break it into smaller parts and complete each part as a small project.

Another reason for procrastination is perfectionism (okay, I admit, I am usually guilty of this one). Sometimes we think we need more information than we've got or more time to think about how to complete the task. Maybe what we've got is *paralysis by analysis*! So how do we handle perfectionism? Simply by starting the task ... once it's started, perfectionists rarely stop until it's done! But remember to set a deadline for completion (this will help with the 'paralysis by analysis' syndrome!).

Unchallenging work is another cause of procrastination. By putting off what we don't like to do, we typically end up doing it when our energy is lowest. And what happens then? We probably

don't do a great job and we end up spending more time on the task than if we had done it right away. To get through the boring task, schedule time to get it accomplished and also write down a reward that you will give yourself after you finish the task.

Working under pressure is a particularly destructive cause of procrastination. When we do this, we not only create stress for ourselves, but also for others. We also increase our chances for mistakes and usually there is little (if any) time to correct mistakes. So, don't leave things to the last minute ... always schedule realistic timeframes within which to accomplish tasks.

### Crisis Management

Sometimes a crisis will happen such that you must drop whatever you're doing and deal with the crisis. However, crises are rare occurrences.

If your job seems to be in constant crisis mode, then there is a good chance that you are not planning your day. Without a plan, you wait to see what crises hit each day. And after the crises, if you do not evaluate, plan and apply corrective action, then you will hit other crises the next day and the days after that. Planning helps prevent crises.

Here's a quiz to find out how good you are at crisis prevention (from "Time Trap" by Coastal Training Technologies Corp.). Score your answers as follows:

- Almost Never = 0
- Sometimes = 1
- Half the Time = 2
- Usually = 3
- Almost Always = 4

(If your score is below 18, try using some of the points listed in the quiz and then retake it three months from now.)

*See Time Wasters on page 8*



*Time Wasters, continued from page 6*

1. I anticipate things that can go wrong and take action to prevent them or to limit their consequences. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I require regular progress reports on all major tasks so I can identify problems in time to take corrective action. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Whenever goals and objectives have been set, I examine all reasonable alternatives for achieving them so I can determine which are least likely to generate crises. \_\_\_\_\_
4. When managing crisis situations, I avoid over commitment of resources by determining who and what are really needed to handle the situation. \_\_\_\_\_
5. After a crisis, I ask those involved what happened and what steps can be taken to avoid a repetition. Then I implement suitable steps immediately. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I build cushions into my day to allow time to respond to unforeseen crises. \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

Finally, controlling time wasters helps us control our time. And recognizing the importance of our time is parallel to recognizing the importance of our life—what we do with our time is what we do with our life.

Make a commitment now to have a happier life by controlling your time. ■



## Did you know?

**The Web According to Google**—Google said its index of websites hit a milestone last year:

Year	Number of Unique URLs on the Web
1998	26 million
2000	1 billion
2008	1 trillion

### Historic Records Saved from Scrap Pile



More than 7,000 documents dating back to British Columbia's time as a British colony were almost lost forever.

Copies of the historic records had been digitally copied at the University of Victoria during the 1980s and stored on an IBM mainframe computer. As the computer was on its way to the scrap pile, staff realized what was on its database.

The documents include 19th-century communications between the governors of the colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island and the colonial office in London. The university said the records will be posted to the Internet.

*Source: Information Management Journal, ARMA, January/February 2009*



## RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

**AIIM-The Enterprise Content Management Association**—AIIM is the international authority on Enterprise Content Management (ECM) - the tools and technologies used to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver content and documents related to organizational processes. ECM enables four key business drivers: Continuity, Collaboration, Compliance, and Costs. [www.aiim.org](http://www.aiim.org).

**ARMA International**—is a not-for-profit professional association and the authority on managing records and information – paper and electronic. [www.arma.org](http://www.arma.org).

**Bitpipe.com**—is the definitive guide to online resources for IT professionals. Provides information through technology white papers, webcasts, case studies and IT product information. [www.bitpipe.com](http://www.bitpipe.com)

**British Columbia Corporate Information Management Branch**—CIMB provides central information management services and support to ministries, Crown corporations and agencies within the Government of British Columbia. CIMB is responsible for government recorded information management policy, standards and procedures. [www.cio.gov.bc.ca/services/records/](http://www.cio.gov.bc.ca/services/records/)

**Civic Info BC**—Civic Info BC is a cooperative information service for those who work or have an interest in BC's local government sector. [www.civicinfo.bc.ca](http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca)

**Gartner**—global leader in technology-related research and advice. [www.gartner.com](http://www.gartner.com)

**Forrester Research**—Forrester Research, Inc. is an independent technology and market research company providing advice to global leaders in business and technology. [www.forrester.com](http://www.forrester.com)

**IDC—International Data Corporation**—get the latest trends, surveys and forecasts. [www.idc.com](http://www.idc.com)

**ISO—International Organization for Standardization**—check out the latest information on ISO 15489, the world's first standard for records management. [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org).

**Library and Archives Canada**—Library and Archives Canada collects and preserves Canada's documentary heritage, and makes it accessible to all Canadians. This heritage includes publications, archival records, sound and audio-visual materials, photographs, artworks, and electronic documents such as websites. As part of Library and Archives Canada's mandate, they work closely with other archives and libraries to acquire and share these materials as widely as possible. [www.collectionscanada.ca](http://www.collectionscanada.ca)

**Local Government Management Association of BC (LGMA)**—LGMA is a professional organization representing municipal and regional district managers, administrators, clerks, treasurers and other local government officials in BC. [www.lgma.ca](http://www.lgma.ca)

**National Archives and Records Administration (USA) (NARA)**—Of all documents and materials created in the course of business conducted by the United States Federal government, only 1%-3% are so important for legal or historical reasons. These documents are kept by NARA forever. Learn about NARA's record keeping standards. [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov).

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## UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

All workshops are held in Victoria, BC

### Introduction to Records & Information Management

A one-day workshop covering the basics of RIM.  
April 8, 2009

### Using ARCS, ORCS and LGMA

A one-day workshop teaching the basic skills needed to master ARCS, ORCS, or LGMA.  
April 15, 2009

### Effective E-Mail Management

A one-day workshop for Executives and others who want to get a handle on their e-mail. Demos & practical hands-on experience provided.  
April 22, 2009

### Preparing Records for Offsite Storage

A one-day workshop providing practical hands-on experience on how to prepare records for offsite storage.  
May 5, 2009

### Converting Your File System

A one-day workshop demonstrating how to convert your office's old files to a new records classification system.  
May 7, 2009

### Designing Records Classification Systems

A two-day workshop providing practical hands-on experience in developing file taxonomies.  
May 25-26, 2008

### Planning & Implementing Your RIM Program

A two-day workshop providing the tools and skills needed for developing a RIM program.  
May 27-28, 2008

For more information and to register, go to:

[www.rimsolutions.ca](http://www.rimsolutions.ca) or  
[www.24carrotlearning.com](http://www.24carrotlearning.com)

Or call: 250-658-4873