



## Recover lost time using tracking tools

**I**s your business stuck in a rut? Are you getting to the end of the day faster than you get to the end of your to-do list? Are interruptions and distractions your constant companions?

Keeping productivity high is a constant uphill battle, with frequent plateaus and occasional drop-offs. What you need are tools to keep you moving forward and on track.

Recently, I've been working with several companies dedicated to using Kaizen principles in their businesses. For those of you new to Japanese business management philosophies, kaizen means "improvement" in Japanese. It refers to the practice of continuous improvement in all aspects of your business. Kaizen is implemented through activities such as measuring performance, standardizing business processes, eliminating waste, and improving employees' skills and abilities.

What draws me to Kaizen more than anything else is the focus on measurable outcomes — and the resulting feedback loop it creates in a business. I'm reminded of one of my favorite quotes, by Thomas S. Monson: "When performance is measured, performance improves. When performance is measured and reported back, the rate of improvement accelerates." As a technical guy, I can see how technology can be a big help in these areas. This month, I have a couple of tools

to help you monitor and measure your personal and business productivity.

### RescueTime.com

Tracking your time on daily tasks and projects traditionally has meant keeping a "time journal" of your daily activities. If you're like me, the level of effort spent keeping track of time seems to outweigh any benefits. But with RescueTime, my computer keeps track for me. RescueTime runs in the background and measures which application, Web site or document is actively being used. It can alert you when you exceed time goals, helps categorize

time spent away from your computer, and will even block certain Web sites or applications during self-imposed "focus time."

Aside from the powerful analytics and insights you'll gain from tracking your personal tasks, the real advantage comes from using the business version of RescueTime. Called Empower, this module lets you track all of your employees and gives them the ability to see their own productivity in comparison to the rest of the team. RescueTime has the right task-tracking philosophy: Let the actions record themselves.

### Xobni.com

I hate to admit it, but I spend a lot of my day reading and writing emails. While I would like to think I can quit any time, the truth is I'm addicted.

Measuring my daily email activities is easy with Xobni (which you might already have noticed is "inbox" spelled backward). It's a personal productivity plug-in for Outlook that enables you to find emails, connect your contacts to social networks and stay in touch better.

But once again, it's the email analytics feature that is really the most interesting part of the solution. It helps you analyze your own email behavior, understand whom you email most, and identify what time of day you send the most email. Measuring the impact of even the mildest email addiction can lead to recovery. Try using Xobni to curb your habit.

The first step in improving your business productivity is learning where you're spending time. Gaining an accurate view of the workday can help you make more meaningful and informed business

decisions.

Who knows: You might find hours of productive time by eliminating distractions and busy work.

