



White paper

## **Where does all my time go?**

Tips on understanding and managing time

[www.stdtime.com](http://www.stdtime.com)  
Scoutwest, Inc.

## Where does all my time go?

Everyone knows that time is a limited resource. You only get so much to spend, and almost everybody gets the same amount. It's not exactly like money, where you have the opportunity to earn more. You only get the opportunity to learn to spend it more wisely. But that takes work.

Consider briefly the familiar aspects of money as an example of budgeting time. Everyone budgets time and money, whether they know it or not. Since it's usually a limited resource, you're forced to do so. You have no choice. But some people do it better than others, and that's usually because they have spent a bit of time studying the matter, while others ignore it. With money, you basically allocate funds earmarked for expenses you know are coming in the future. You plan to spend a certain amount for each expense. Unwise planning can cause you to lack necessary funds when certain events arise, sometimes forcing you to borrow at interest. Only experience and watchfulness can help you predict events you'll need resources for. One simple way to increase your monthly expendable income is to eliminate debt, and the interest payments associated with it. Another way is to stop spending money on things you don't really care about. Accounting professionals, controllers, and financial officers are paid to do this very thing, prioritizing and dealing with critical events as they occur. They set up accounts and dip into them at appropriate times. They ensure the most efficient use of money so that the company profits. It may sound boring, but it's actually a highly skilled discipline with obvious value. No company would consider operating without them.

These principles have parallels in time and project management, yet many people do not apply the same principles to time management as they do to accounting. Project planning and time tracking products are tools of this trade. Surprisingly, I've been on major projects where neither was installed on the manager's workstation! It comes back to that issue of watchfulness. Didn't the

manager care about watchfulness, or had he already been through enough projects to know his way? In either case, learning the nuances of time management, project execution, and project anatomy is a valuable discipline worth pursuing. They are normally learned by observation with the assistance of instruments such as those just mentioned. This may not be something you want to devote your life to, but a little study can do your career good. Plus, a major benefit of time tracking tools is that they show you actual numbers. We often say, “it’s going to take this long”, based on our “experience”, but reality is usually different.

The list below will give you some items to look for when studying your projects. You may not be involved in all of them, but monitor the ones you are. Track your time diligently for a while, and notice how much time you spend on each one. Prioritize the ones you really want to spend your time on. Make sure you have sufficient time to meet your goals without borrowing from the future. Make efficient use of your time so that your projects are profitable.

- 1) Time you spend talking with customers
- 2) Training time
- 3) Process time vs. work time
- 4) Leisure time vs. work time
- 5) Researching technologies
- 6) Writing customer requirements
- 7) Designing products
- 8) Implementing your designs
- 9) Rework because of incorrect designs and assumptions
- 10) Internal product testing
- 11) External beta testing
- 12) Product readiness
- 13) Formal team meetings
- 14) Informal team meetings and communication
- 15) Fixing issues after the product has shipped

## About Us

Scoutwest, Inc. develops and publishes project management and time tracking products for consulting, manufacturing, government, and general business applications.

Thousands of small to large businesses, in dozens of countries worldwide, trust their mission critical business processes to Scoutwest products. Standard Time® and Standard Issue® work together to offer well-rounded project management solutions.

We specialize in packaged software for timesheets, project management, time tracking, defect tracking, and issue tracking. Standard Time is a web-based timesheet that also runs on Windows, Palm OS, and Pocket PC. It can be used for client billing and task management. Standard Issue is used for bug tracking and general issue tracking.

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