

# Tuning Out the Noise: What's Distracting Workers and Efforts to Reclaim the Workday

## *Disorganization and Online Distractions Top the List*

### *Latest Results from The Harris Poll*

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**Note: If you would like to arrange for an interview with a local Express franchise owner on this topic, please go to [ExpressPros.com/Locations](https://ExpressPros.com/Locations) to find the nearest location.**

**OKLAHOMA CITY, June 28, 2023**—Barrages of meetings, emails and online distractions eat away at workforce productivity, and the majority of U.S. employers say they are working to eliminate time wasters to help employees feel more in control of their time.

This is according to a recent survey from The Harris Poll commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

Nearly 7 in 10 U.S. hiring managers (68%) report their company is actively identifying and/or eliminating “time wasters” (i.e., behaviors, obligations, and other aspects that may waste time in a workday) from their employees’ days. Companies doing so report the most common items they are identifying/eliminating include disorganization (44%), online distractions (44%), unnecessary tasks (such as approval processes and reporting) (42%), interruptions (39%) and unnecessary meetings (38%).

By eliminating some of the “time wasters” in a workday, employees may be able to feel more in control of their time.

A strong majority of hiring managers (87%) say their company has taken actions to ensure employees feel more in control. Communicating the importance of work/life balance (42%), offering flexible work hours (42%), offering remote work options (34%) and providing tools to help employees organize tasks/projects (34%) are among the ways companies are attempting to help employees reclaim their time.

Employed Americans concur, as more than 9 in 10 (94%) say companies should take steps to

help employees feel more in control. In their opinion, this includes offering flexible work hours (63%), remote work options (51%) and communicating the importance of work/life balance (50%).



## Emails, Meetings and Social Media

The biggest inefficiencies Express franchise owners across the country see are unnecessary and lengthy meetings, emails, cell phones calls (or phone calls) and unlimited access to social media.

“Employees are not able to complete all their tasks, but they check their social media pages constantly throughout the day,” according to Nancy Reed, an Express franchise owner in Texas. “Another distraction is spending too much time chatting with others, either in person or via Microsoft Teams during the workday. Having the flexibility to collaborate and build a great team is important, but if employees are unable to properly manage their time and complete tasks while doing so, then it can become a distraction.”

In New Jersey, Express franchise owner Mike Nolfo identifies meetings as the top workforce time suck and says the solution attempts are part of the problem.

“As the recruiting shortage continues, companies are constantly short-staffed,” he said. “Since they are short-staffed, management often hosts more meetings to maintain control and disseminate information. Until companies catch up with hiring, this trend will continue.

“We’ve been implementing ‘meeting vacation’ weeks where we cancel all internal meetings to see if the meetings are really needed. Oftentimes, we notice that most meetings were not necessary and a waste of energy.”

## **Evaluating Inefficiencies**

While Nolfo doesn't see companies making much progress on eliminating these time-wasting activities, Reed says businesses in her area are trying to increase efficiencies to reduce costs.

"Companies are re-evaluating their processes, efficiencies and organizational structures," she said. "They are looking closer at time wasters and seeing how to be flexible with employees' cell phone and internet use during work hours for personal reasons without affecting the work environment."

So, in an era of plentiful jobs and not enough applicants, how can employers balance efficiency with the need to recruit and retain top talent?

Motivation.

"If an employee is motivated and enjoys the work they do, then these distractions will not affect them," Reed says. "They will be self-disciplined to stay focused on their workday goals and objectives instead of surfing the internet and social media pages. Develop projects that add meaning. Setting strict rules on cell phone or internet usage is counterproductive and only creates a negative work environment. Both can be balanced, but employees need to be motivated and driven by the work they do to stay focused on their jobs and workday."

Today's workforce has so many factors fighting for its attention that it makes sense to implement tactics to increase focus and productivity; but it must be done mindfully, according to Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller.

"Successful companies are ones where employees are engaged and feel valued," he said. "Once that foundation is in place, these workers will buy into a culture of efficiency because they believe in a higher purpose for their employment."

## **Survey Methodology**

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between Dec. 1 and Dec. 15, 2022, among 1,002 U.S. hiring decision-makers (defined as adults ages 18+ in the U.S. who are employed full-time or self-employed, work at companies with more than one employee, and have full/significant involvement in hiring decisions at their company). Data were weighted where necessary by company size to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 3.2 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

The omnibus survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Dec. 13-15, 2022, among 2,041 adults ages 18 and older. Data are weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income and propensity to be online, to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 2.8 percentage points using a 95% confidence level.

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If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bill Stoller to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena Hollander, Director of Corporate Communications and PR, at (405) 717-5966.

#### **About Bill Stoller**

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment International. Founded in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing franchisor supports the Express Employment Professionals franchise and related brands. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.

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