

# Employees aren't paid to space out

Yet that's exactly what many are doing 2 hours each day.

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Detroit Free Press

**DETROIT** — American workers spend almost two hours a day at work calling friends, surfing the Internet, running errands and "spacing out," according to the second annual survey of time wasted at work by America Online and Salary.com.

The survey polled 2,706 workers last month, including AOL users and corporate human resource professionals. Results were based on an eight-hour day.

Workers reported wasting 1.86 hours a day, down from last year's tally of 2.09 hours.

The decrease might not necessarily mean employees are working more.

"I think it shows a trend that the lines are getting blurred between what's wasted time and what's acceptable," said Lena Bottos, director of compensation at Salary.com.

"Is it wasted time if you spend 20 minutes looking for a baby sitter because you had to work late? Is it wasted time if you're figuring out your 401(k) — something that's provided by your company and could be considered work-related?"

A Free Press sampling of metro Detroit workers showed that surfing the Internet and e-mailing friends are some favorite pastimes. Some workers like to throw a football between cubicles, pay bills or check out deals on Craigslist.org.

The AOL/Salary.com survey found that companies assume a certain amount of wasted time when figuring employee pay. It also found that employees are wasting about twice as

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# Time: Taking breaks is expected

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much time as their employers expect.

Employers spend \$544 billion a year on salaries for which real work is expected, but none is done, according to Salary.com.

But taking breaks is expected from employees, Bottos said.

"There's nothing wrong with taking a break or taking time to do some personal things if you work more than eight hours a day and need to take care of a bank errand and the bank is closed when you get off work," she said.

It becomes a problem when a company pays an employee for working eight hours and the employee spends an hour doing personal e-mail or has trouble making deadline, she added.

Too much wasted time could be an indication that an employee might need another job.

"Ask yourself why you are wasting time. Are you doing personal things because you are at work for more than eight hours a day, or is that you don't want to be there anymore and you might need a new challenge?"

Michael Perkins, co-founder of the Southfield, Mich., jobs coaching firm InterviewWise, said slacking off every once in a while is inevitable.

But too much could be a sign that you are either bored or overwhelmed with responsibilities and simply have no other time to do things like pay bills or buy a plane ticket.

"Or maybe there isn't enough work to fill up an 8-hour day," Perkins said. "Maybe things are slow, yet you have a full-time job and you need to look busy."

Whatever the reason, there are many reasons to cut it out.

More companies are firing employees for improper use of company equipment, particularly when it comes to Internet use.

You really don't want to be caught looking at porn sites or downloading music or movies, Perkins said.

"If you're doing too much of this, you should probably start looking for another job or for more challenges at your current job," Perkins said.

"Try not to approach your boss and say that you're bored," he said. "Instead, tell them that you're ready for additional challenges."