FUTURE TALENT✳ LEARNING

Identifying
Low-Value Tasks

We'd all like more hours in a day but, try as we might, there are only ever 24 of them. There are ways, though, that we can make the most of them when we're at work.

Research by Julian Birkinshaw and Jordan Cohen suggests that, by being more conscious and intentional about how we use our time, we can free up to 20% of it to spend on tasks that are more worthwhile, meaningful and add value. Their reasoning sounds simple: we must eliminate or delegate unimportant tasks and replace them with activities that add more value.

Before we can do that, we need to figure out how we're spending our time now and identify how important these things are for us, our teams and our organisations. Once we've identified any low-value tasks, then we can take action to shift our focus onto activities that are more value added.

ASSESSMENT

Make a list of everything you did yesterday or the day before, divided into 30- or 60-minute chunks. For each task, ask yourself four questions:

1. How valuable is this task to my organisation?	Score
It contributes significantly to overall company objectives	4
It contributes in a small way	3
It has no impact, positive or negative	2
It has a negative impact	1

2. To what extent could I let this go?	Score
Essential: This takes top priority	4
Important: I need to get this done today	3
Discretionary: I'll get to it if time allows	2
Unimportant/optional: I can cut this immediately	1

3. How much personal value do I get from doing it?	Score
Definitely keep: it's one of the best parts of my job	5
Probably keep: I enjoy this activity	4
Not sure: this task and good and bad parts	3
Probably drop: I find this activity tiresome	2
Definitely jettison: I dislike doing it	1

4. Do what extent could someone else do it on my behalf?	Score
Only I (or someone senior to me) can do this task	5
This task is best done by me because of my particular skill set or other, linked responsibilities	4
If structured properly, this task could be done my someone junior to me	3
This task could easily be done by someone more junior, or outsourced to a third party	2
This task could be dropped altogether	1

Total Score	
Any task that scores lower than 10 is a candidate for delegation or elimination.	