UiPath | Reboot Work.™

Making Work Matter

Why eliminating tedious tasks increases happiness at work

Busywork isn't real work.

Let's face it. Our modern offices are full of busywork tasks, the type that no one wants to be doing because they are not meaningful. These tasks seem pointless and employees can't justify their existence — but have to pretend otherwise.

[1]David Graeber, "On the Phenomenon of Bull***t Jobs" (2013)

Today, workers are increasingly frustrated with their jobs.

Sadly, busywork has only increased since that colorful term was coined. A recent survey in the United Kingdom found that when asked, "Does your job make a meaningful contribution to the world?" over a third of Britons said no.

Busywork is central to workers' dissatisfaction.

Here's the problem. Busywork has become so rampant that most of our time is spent doing something other than the jobs we were hired to do. A recent study found that American employees spend less than half of their workweek doing real work.[2]

[2] "The State of Enterprise Work" (2019)

The conscious mind: the tip of the iceberg.

The more we repeat a task, the less we think about it. Freud said the human mind is like an iceberg—our consciousness represents just the tip, while the unconscious systems that drive our thoughts and behaviors are much bigger and hidden from view.

This is your brain on autopilot.

As we grow up, more activities—like speaking, using fine-motor skills and driving a car—get kicked into the unconscious mind. We don't have to think about any of these things because our brains search for a familiar path of least resistance. That's great if the goal at the path's end is, say, taking a sip of coffee. It's not great when we have to solve a complex business problem.

"An impoverished imagination."

Our tendency to run on autopilot results in an "impoverished imagination."[3] Constantly taking the path of least resistance, as we're wired to do, not only diminishes our critical thinking capability but also impacts memory and weakens our defense against diseases like Alzheimer's.
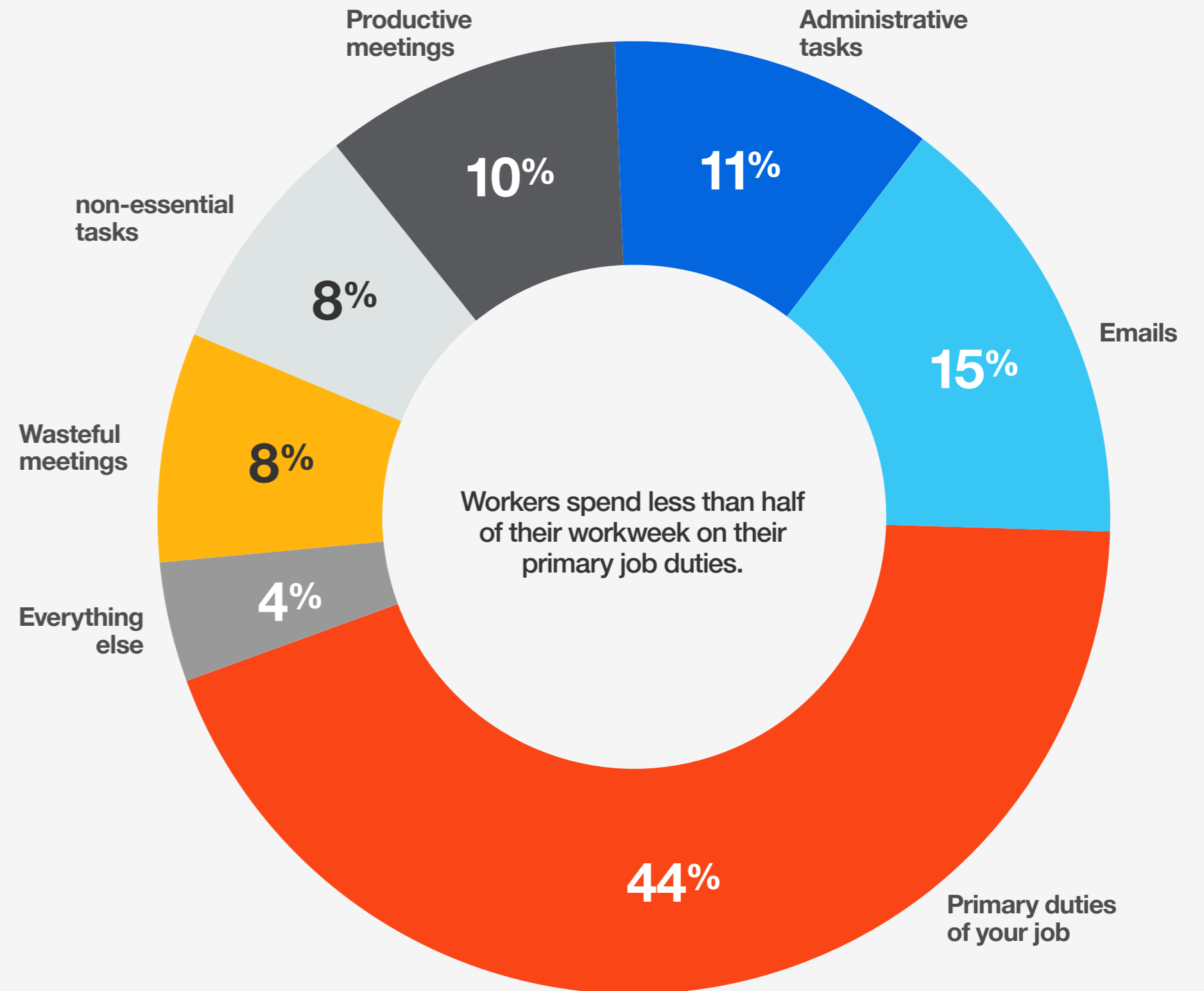
[3]David Eagleman, *New York Times*

The modern workplace isn't helping.

It's not surprising that—in a work environment where well over half of activities involve some combination of emails, administration, interruptions and meetings—high-level thinking is at an all-time low. And all that busywork is drowning out our ability to engage our conscious mind and think creatively and strategically.

[4]The State of Enterprise Work report 2017-2018.

Percentage of time spent on workweek activities.[4]

Productive meetings 10%

Administrative tasks 11%

non-essential tasks 8%

Emails 15%

Wasteful meetings 8%

Workers spend less than half of their workweek on their primary job duties.

Everything else 4%

Primary duties of your job 44%

There's finally a cure for busywork: RPA.

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) automates repeatable business processes, freeing us up to do more meaningful work. With RPA, an employee can train a software robot to learn and subsequently execute those routine jobs we all hate. And RPA's integration with artificial intelligence and machine learning can make it a time-saver for mindless but complicated tasks like verifying credit card applications, sorting through large quantities of data, or storing customer information.
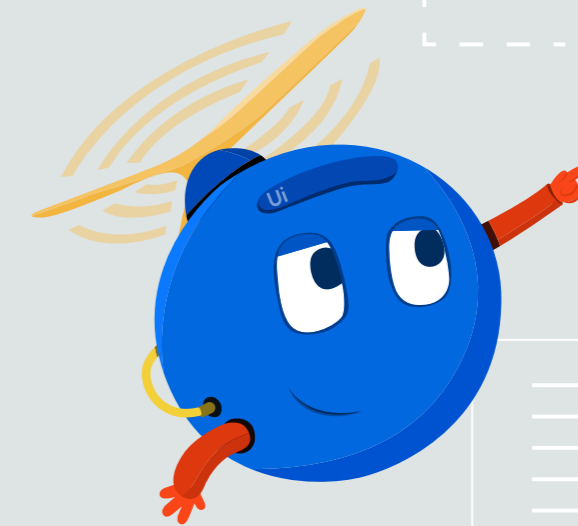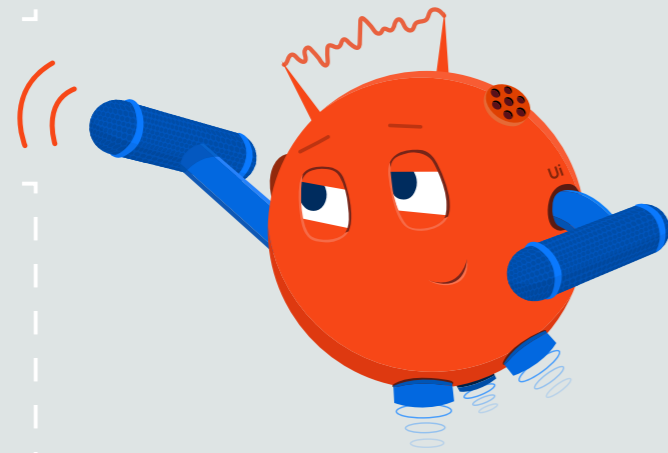
Have massive amounts of data to process? Get RPA.

Take a health insurance company. Imagine the thousands of claims and invoices they have to process. And their data's stored across multiple systems, some legacy and some modern, so their employees have to move information from system to system by hand. With RPA, they could use robots to perform the searching, cutting, pasting and reporting tasks—without any need for human input.

A potential game-changer for mortgage lenders.

Let's switch gears to real estate. The typical home-buying process requires lenders to order appraisals that provide unbiased estimates of each home's value. But that process is notoriously repetitive and error prone. By vastly reducing mistakes and subsequent delays associated with appraisals, RPA could save lenders millions.

Rethink accounts payable.

In an accounts payable department, people are often stuck repeatedly processing invoices and uploading data to an enterprise planning system system, like SAP. Many of these invoices are non-standard, meaning they could be paper documents, faxes, or PDFs—filled with unstructured or semistructured data in different formats. Using optical character recognition and machine learning models, RPA can interpret these invoices and pick out key information for processing.

Reboot work.

Technology was supposed to make work easier. For too many, it's become a dull, mindless grind. RPA can unburden workers from robotic, repetitive tasks, freeing them to do more challenging, more collaborative and more creative work—the kind of work we were meant to do. And in the end, this makes happier (and more productive) workers.
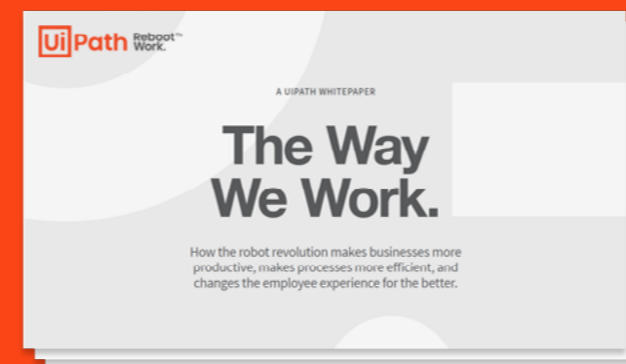
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