



Culture > Health and Wellness

# Slow Zone

Practicing “slow work” can make you and your teams happier and more productive.

Matt Alderton



With the increase of remote work, many employees feel like they’re expected to be always available. But that constant connectivity takes a toll.

In fact, nearly a quarter of full-time workers experience professional burnout always or very often, a 2018 Gallup study reveals. Those employees are 63% more likely to take a sick day, 2.6 times as likely to be looking for a new job and have 13% lower confidence in their performance. They’re also 23% more likely to visit the emergency room.

In response to this issue, some individuals and organizations have embraced a new, contrarian way of working. Called “slow work,” its objective is quality of work, not quantity.

“The slow work movement is about maximizing mindfulness and focus at work,” explains Paul Gentile, senior director at LogMeIn, a software company that specializes in remote connectivity. “Rather than splitting mental capacity among all your tasks at once, slow work encourages you to offer your full energy and attention to each task individually.” Embrace these smart slow work strategies to gain a new equilibrium in your worklife.

## 1. Know your purpose.

Successful slow work starts with defining your purpose, says career strategist Emily Eliza Moyer. “If employees know what motivates them and can connect that back to the mission of the company, they will both be able to perform at their best and feel the work they do every day is deeply meaningful,” she says.

Knowing their purpose can help employees prioritize work, focusing on tasks that advance their mission while letting go of tasks that don’t. “We have a limited amount of time in the day to do work,” Moyer continues. “Having a clear purpose gives you direction.”

## 2. Practice batching.

When he was a corporate employee, Paul Broman worked more than 50 hours a week. Now a slow work entrepreneur, he puts in just 15 “intentional” hours per week. One of his favorite strategies is batching—grouping small tasks like emails together to do them all at once instead of piecemeal.

“For instance, I batch my meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays so I can have Monday and Wednesday as prime workdays,” says Broman, CEO of Helpful Habitat. “On a team level, instead of firing off an email every time they have a question for you, you can ask your teammates to batch all their questions in a Google doc so you can answer them together during a very targeted block of time.”

## 3. Schedule flow time.

What batching accomplishes for small tasks, flow time can accomplish for large ones. “Block out one-to-two-hour chunks of time in your calendar for uninterrupted work so you can fully focus and reach your peak creativity and productivity,” Gentile advises. “To avoid distractions, opt for a quiet space like a private meeting room and turn off all chat and email notifications.”



**23% of employees feel burned out at work very often or always, and 44% feel burned out sometimes.**



— Gallup, 2018

## 4. Try timeboxing.

Something that perfectly complements flow time is timeboxing. “Find more efficient ways to complete tasks by allocating yourself a predetermined amount of time to finish a project,” Gentile says. “This will help you focus your attention, motivate you to complete tasks in a timely manner and prevent you from wasting time on items of less importance.”

## 5. Embrace flextime.

Team leaders can facilitate slow work by offering flextime. “Flexible work hours have a ton of benefits,” Gentile says. “Employees are able to work when they’re most efficient and have more freedom to stop and take breaks when needed. Flexible schedules also give employees the opportunity to put more time into other parts of their lives without remorse about missing work. When employees invest energy in areas that support their well-being, such as time with friends and family, they are consistently happier and more productive at the office.”

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## 3 Tools to Help You Work Slowly

Some tech tools are designed to alleviate burnout and can support slow work. Slow work advocate Paul Broman recommends three kinds of apps.

- 1. Pomodoro apps:** These timers are based on the Pomodoro Technique, where you divide your day into a series of focused work sessions punctuated by short breaks. Popular options include Focus Booster and PomoDoneApp.
- 2. Mindfulness apps:** Train yourself to be more intentional with your thoughts and actions. Try Headspace or Calm.
- 3. Calendar apps:** Streamline scheduling to take advantage of concepts like flow time and timeboxing. Calendly and Any.do are favorites.

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