

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:05] DC: It takes the right skills and the right innovation to design and manage meaningful print marketing solutions. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse, where we explore all facets of print and marketing that create stellar communications and sales opportunities for business success. I'm your host, Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Thanks for tuning in. Listen long and prosper.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:31] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. Today, we are here with Time Management Tips in 20, which means I am here with my time-frugal friend, Sarah Ohanesian from So Productive. Hello, Sarah.

[0:00:51] SO: Hello, Deborah. Good to see you again.

[0:00:53] DC: Yeah. Good to see you. I mean, it's been a month. We're pretty regular with these, yeah?

[0:00:59] SO: We're right on time.

[0:01:00] DC: Excellent. Speaking of which, today we're going to be speaking about time crimes, a phrase I coined during our last podcast. Take it away.

[0:01:12] SO: I love this. You said it casually. Then we both looked at each other through and said, this needs to be a podcast episode. Why don't we start with, what is a time crime? How would we define that? Really thinking about, I would say, time crime is anything that steals your time. I would also add in, anything that steals your attention, because when your attention is stolen, probably, likely that your time is not too far behind. I think I really perked up when you first said this term because it's honestly one of my absolute pet peeves. I'm someone who likes to plan. I like to know where the day is going.

Those moments when we feel like, either our time is being wasted, or our time got stolen, some unexpected reason why our time was stolen, that really can be so frustrating for us. I love this concept of crime and stealing when we're talking about time, because it actually makes it seem so much worse, because it is. It's something that when we go about our day and the time is stolen, that feels like, we've really been robbed of something. I think that's why that – there's this emotional reaction to it, because it's bad and it feels bad. Thank you for coining this term. I love it. This is what we're going to be talking about today.

[0:02:28] DC: I think I had a time crime this morning. I had it on my to-do list that I needed to make an appointment to get my car serviced, which should not be a freaking 45-minute activity that requires my VIN number. I mean, looking at my VIN number and then figuring out exactly what services I need under the – I just need a tune-up, checkup thing. Then I had to do it a second time in the chat, all to which they said, “We'll go to call you back.” To which I'm like, “Why did I just waste this 20 minutes? I could have just called to begin with.”

I called to begin with and they tell me that they don't make appointments for things like this, because it's nothing specifically wrong with my car. That the process is to pull up to the “express lane,” wait as long as it takes for me to be the next person up in the express lane, and then wait some amount of time for my car to be finished. Which I was like, well, I can't do that. That's sounds to me like half a day to a day sitting in a dealership. I made sure that I could take my car to be serviced somewhere else.

Again, I'm in 45 minutes of this now, which is what I thought was just going to be a two-second thing. Called a place I had my tire fixed once and was able to make an appointment on Wednesday, the exact time I wanted to go. The person called me back within five minutes. It was no process at all. Now I'm going. But I feel like, the first place stole my time from me, making me repeat these processes and then not even being able to help me. Why wasn't there, if you need a minor thing, then just come to the express lane and don't even bother filling any of this out? Would you consider that a time crime?

[0:04:32] SO: Absolutely, for sure. I have one I'll share quickly. On Friday, we had an appointment on a board of an association and we had to go and change. We're changing seasons. We had to go change who's on the bank accounts. We had an appointment. Sure

enough, that appointment comes and goes. 10 minutes come and go. 20 minutes come and go. We're all sitting there. Time is stolen. Those are really good examples.

I would also encourage people as we're thinking about these examples, are you stealing time from your customers or your clients? Do you have a lack of a process in your business that is potentially stealing time from people? What a huge customer service opportunity to improve upon that.

[0:05:11] DC: I agree. One of my pet peeves is how many clicks does it take somebody to get to where I want them to go? If it's more than one, I'm like, "Why does it have to be more than one?" Sometimes it's not my doing. For example, on LinkedIn, now it says, are you sure you want to leave the site if you click on something? Other than that, I have a pet peeve about clicking multiple links to get where you need to go. I do my best to save people time that way. Okay, Sarah, let's get into it. What are some common time crimes that people encounter during their work week?

[0:05:51] SO: Yeah. I would actually equate this to, if you think about a crime, there's maybe a thief association with said crime. Start to think about, what are some of those thieves? What are some of those things, and could be people even that are stealing your time? I do a lot of work in corporate training and different things and people always say to me, "Well, I can't get my work done, because everyone else is interrupting my time." that is probably the most common one I hear are literally other people are the thieves. Other people are stealing your time. That is one to look out for. I wouldn't say that one's very, very common.

Here's a couple you may have not thought about though. These are probably less common. One main thief, yourself. You could be stealing time from yourself. What I mean by that is we often think about, "I'm going to work on something. I'm going to prioritize something." Then we just allow ourselves for one reason or another to steal that time for something else. Something to think about is like, are you stealing time from yourself? An interesting concept there.

We've got a big election coming up. I would say, news, consuming news, talking about the news, getting upset about the news, getting emotional about the news, that can be a really big thief of our time. I think we tend to underestimate how much time we're actually devoting to that. The other big one, social media. You probably know this. People talk about this one quite a bit,

but do you know how much time that's actually potentially stealing from you every day? Because it could be more than you actually think. You could be underreporting how much time you think you're spending on social media.

Then the other one to consider is getting ready, like getting ready in the morning. How much time is that taking you? Prepping meals. Just that basic adulting, paying the bills, doing those things that you need to do. I think we often underestimate how much time that takes. We can start to feel like a thief. Dealing with auto things, going to the bank. These things that we have to do just to basically live our life as a functioning adult, those things can feel so frustrating, because we don't allocate an appropriate amount of time to do those things, but we have to do them. Those are a few of those common, I would call them thieves that are stealing our time. Some of those, you might not think of right of way.

[0:08:10] DC: Okay. I have an issue with the first one, which is other people stealing your time from you. I'm going to say that only if you let them do that. We've had a zillion podcasts on how to, I don't want to say push back, but I want to say, how to address requests coming at you from people asking you to do invisible work and things of that nature. How do those two concepts work together?

[0:08:44] SO: A 100%. One of those things, too, is again, it feels like time crime, because it feels like, someone stole something from you. That's that thing. I always say, one of the worst phrases in business is, do you have a second? If someone says, "Do you have a second?" That is a signal that the thief is trying to steal your time. Because one, it's not going to be a second. We all know it could be the next hour of your life. But it's a phrase that feels very innocent. It feels like, I'm just trying to ask you one thing, but it really does derail your time.

[0:09:17] DC: Hey, I've just got a quick question.

[0:09:19] SO: Exactly. Yeah. there was actually a study done. University of California Irvine did a study, and they found that when you are disrupted, so if someone says, "Do you have a second?" That line alone, it's going to take you 25 minutes to get back into your focused work. If you're focused in working on something, that little interruption, 25 minutes to get back to where you were. Again, that's where that stealing of time comes into play. I didn't know you were just going to come in and ask me that question. You've now disrupted me and automatically stolen

25 minutes. Now, let's actually address your issue. It's a big deal that stealing and that quick interruption of people's time that's never as quick as you think it's going to be.

[MESSAGE]

[0:10:01] SO: I'm Sarah Ohanesian, Founder of SO Productive, a productivity, training, and consulting company. Teams I work with get more done. They experience improved processes, greater productivity, and increased efficiency, all without stress and burnout. If you want to improve your performance, or the performance of your team, visit so-productive.com and get started today. I offer conference keynotes, one on one coaching and hands-on corporate workshops, all focused on increasing productivity and time management. Let's discuss how SO Productive can supercharge your organization. Links are in the show notes.

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[0:10:45] DC: Okay, so what are some practical steps to eliminate, or reduce those time crimes that we are being victims of?

[0:10:54] SO: Absolutely.

[0:10:56] DC: Or causing by allowing them. I'm just saying like, personal responsibility is key here in time management because it's your time. You're the one who has to manage it. Things can be flying at you all over. But if you're managing it in a certain way, then perhaps, you get to a point where people know, okay, in a crazy example, Deborah's doctor's office hours are 12 to 1 for random, hey, do you got a second things? I'm not saying that that's a reality in my world, but it could be – we've discussed before blocking off time on your calendar for certain things. It might be, that's when you answer those random, “hey, you got a second for a question?” emails and phone calls and texts and something like that.

[0:11:46] SO: Absolutely. I'm actually glad you brought that one up. That was actually the first one I wanted to share today is that concept of having open office times, where people know they're allowed to come in, they're allowed to ask a few questions. We are in a collaboration business. In the printing and direct mail industry, you've got to be able to ask your coworkers

things. There's a process that your jobs are going through. We need to be able to talk to each other and collaborate with people.

In your industry as well, having this concept of open office hours is really, really critical. I'm going to have my, essentially, my door open, virtually or physical, allow you to come in, get all your questions asked and then functionally, shut the door, so then you've got some time to focus on the other side of that. That really helps to reduce that drop in experience that can happen and feel very, very disruptive for people. That's one concept I love. Open office time, essentially, then closed office time to focus work and balancing that throughout your day. Big, big takeaway there for people.

The other thing is just thinking about, who are those repeat offenders? I don't necessarily mean people, although it could be. But what are those other repeat offenders, those thieves that are stealing your time, maybe once a week, once a month, what are those things? When you know what they are, you can plan for it. Deborah, I hope at night you lock the door where you live. I certainly do. We plan ahead. We lock the door at night. I would love for you to do the same thing. When you know you've got to plan ahead, you've got to essentially lock the door, so you're safe with the time that you have. When you know who those thieves are, again, not necessarily people, well, what are those things that are sucking time out of your day? Lock the door, so you're safe from them. Again, you don't have to lock the door all day every day, but protecting some of that time when it's time to go to sleep, in this example. In work reality, when is it time to get your work done? You've got to lock the door for a few moments to keep those thieves out.

[0:13:43] DC: All right. How do we start identifying, to your point, those repeat offenders and things of that nature?

[0:13:50] SO: Yeah, I would just start writing them down, and that could be just keeping a notepad at your desk, or maybe you want to just keep a Word doc. But what are those things? Again, part of this is emotion. My time could get stolen, but I don't really care, because it's not bugging me emotionally. It's like, "Ah, whatever. I lost a few minutes. I don't really care." Part of this is thinking about how is it making you feel? Because that's when it's going to feel like a thief versus just helping a friend with what they needed.

Writing this down and just, I call it an audit. Just keep a quick list of those things that feel like they are stealing your time. Do it for a week and see if you find any commonalities. It's always this certain person. It's always this certain client. It's always this part of the process. We always get stuck at this one point of the process. We don't have a template for this. We're always sending this email and it takes me so long to write this email. Could I have a template for it?

Thinking about, what are those common things? Again, not to get too woo-woo on us, but how is it making you feel? Because if you're feeling like, "I'm resenting that thing. I'm getting mad about that thing, that's actually feeling like a thief that is stealing something from me," that's when it's time to do something about it. Great solutions. Do you need a template? Do you need a process? Could you smooth something out? Deborah, you were talking earlier about the car dealership. This is probably a really good opportunity to improve some customer service here. When you do that audit and you find those things that are stealing your time, the next step is, well, what could you do about it?

[0:15:26] DC: By the way, I changed service providers. That's what I did about it.

[0:15:30] SO: Yeah. Yeah. Imagine that. That's terrible. Imagine if some of your customers are leaving, because of this lack of process or lack of organization. I think it's a huge opportunity for companies. Also, just thinking about, it might not be something you can change immediately overnight, but over the next quarter, over the next six months, could we make some changes to smooth out some of these processes, so our time is a little bit more in control, that really change how we feel about when our time is stolen.

[MESSAGE]

[0:15:59] DC: Are you looking to elevate your game and take your bottom-line customer relationships and events to the next level? Then I want to work with you. I'm Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. I engage with a vast global audience of print and marketing professionals across all stages of their careers. They are seeking topical information and resources, new ways to serve their customers and connect with them, optimize processes for their communications and operations, and they need the products, services, and partnership you offer to get to their next level. Print Media Centr offers an array of unique opportunities that amplify your message and support your mission across the Printerverse. Let's work together,

bring the right people together, and move the industry forward together. Link in the show notes. Engage long and prosper.

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[0:16:59] DC: Okay. I'm going to ask you one last question that would put us in opposite ends of this outcome. What is the proper response to, "Hey, Sarah. I've got a quick question for you," when you don't want your time to be stolen?

[0:17:16] SO: Yeah, a couple of things. Again, I'll speak from my perspective, which is probably a little bit different from yours, Deborah. I don't have my email open all day every day. On one point, I might not see that message, because I have some of those boundaries up in terms of focus. That might be one place where we differ. The other thing is I could just respond back to you and say, "Sure. I've got some time on my calendar at 4.00. Can we talk about it then?"

Another opportunity could be like, "What is it in relation to?" We could just communicate text, Slack, Teams message, email each other on that. Then I can make a decision on, yes, that client really does need an answer from us today. I'm happy to disrupt what I'm doing to handle that. I think providing a little bit more context can be really helpful.

"I have a quick question for you about this client and this particular job" is very different than, "I have a quick question, but I'm not going to tell you exactly what it is until I get time with you." That can help allow that person you're trying to get a hold of to make a better decision for their time as well.

[0:18:19] DC: What if it's a knock on your doorframe as you're sitting there working on your computer? "Hey, Deb. I see that you're sitting there. I see that you're not on the phone and you're typing something, or you're looking at something. This makes me feel like, you can give me five minutes, 10 minutes of your time."

[0:18:36] SO: Sure. Again, you don't have to – it's rude if I say, "No, get out of here." It's not rude if I say, "I'm really happy to help you. I'm in the middle of something. Are you free at 4.00? Could we talk about it then?"

[0:18:49] DC: Or, give me some, what this is about?

[0:18:50] SO: Or get some context. “Yeah, what is this about? Yeah, great. I'd love to talk to you about that, but can we do it in a few minutes?” Or, “Oh, my gosh. That is really an emergency. Let's sit down now and talk through that.”

[0:19:02] DC: Okay, I'm surprised, but I will accept that as a fair answer. Again, it's just because of the way that I grew up in the advertising world that no, you drop everything and you answer that question right then or there because otherwise, chaos can ensue if somebody doesn't have an answer.

[0:19:18] SO: Yeah. Yeah. I argue that both ways, like I get it. Fire happens in every single business, and sometimes things need to be addressed. On the other side of that, when we're in fire drill mode all day, some of those larger goals aren't getting done as well. Yeah, I think the context is the big takeaway for people here, because that will help us make a better, a more educated decision.

[0:19:37] DC: I appreciate that. Thank you so much for your time. Thanks everybody for listening. Until next time, no more time crimes. Long and prosper.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:19:49] DC: Thanks for listening to Podcasts From the Printerverse. Please subscribe, click some stars and leave us a review. Connect with us through printmediacentr.com. We'd love to hear your feedback on our shows and topics that are of interest for future broadcast. Until next time, thanks for joining us. Print long and prosper.

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Command the Chaos Course: <https://www.so-productive.com/productivity-course/>

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