ActivTrak

The Ultimate Guide to Workforce Productivity Analytics:

How to boost productivity and efficiency in the workplace

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What is Workforce Productivity Analytics?

Workforce productivity analytics is a branch of the broader workforce analytics category.
While workforce analytics traditionally refers to solutions that help organizations measure employee data for workforce planning, talent management, performance, and engagement, typically used by HR teams, workforce productivity analytics focuses more specifically on data related to employee, team and organizational productivity, intended to be used by all departments.
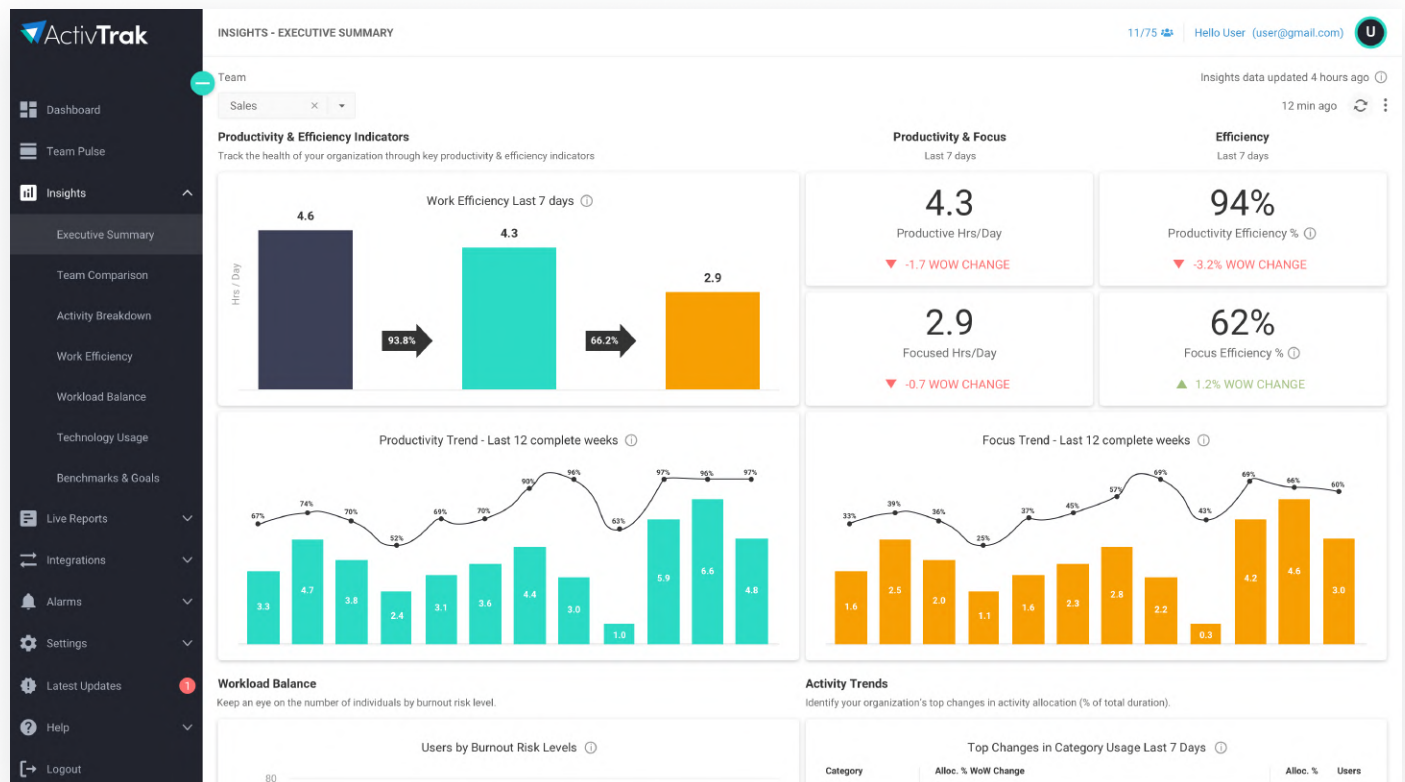
Example of a workforce productivity analytics dashboard from ActivTrak

Workforce productivity analytics solutions collect and analyze digital user activity data to help organizations understand productivity drivers like time management, technology usage, focus time, context-switching and more. Gaining visibility into these productivity drivers, with the ability to view trends, benchmarks, summaries and team comparisons, can provide valuable insights to help organizations improve business outcomes.

Unlike employee monitoring which tends to focus on answering the question "Are my employees working?", workforce productivity analytics dives deeper to provide insights into how time is spent, how teams interact, how technology is used and how employees can improve focus, all helping to answer the bigger question "How can productivity be optimized". Business leaders, teams, and individuals can now leverage data-driven insights to collaborate on ways to improve productivity across an organization.

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Business Trends Driving an Increased Focus on Productivity

Remote Work

The trendline of remote work has been growing exponentially, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. The types of flexible work arrangements offered by organizations have diversified and now include telecommuting, hot desks, flex-time and the gig economy powered by domestic and offshore freelancers and consultants. Surges in the remote workforce are driven by many factors including access to larger talent pools, improved work-life balance for employees who can avoid a physical commute, pressure to meet global business demands, cost savings for employers, and ensuring safety during a pandemic, weather emergency, or other crisis. According to Upwork, by 2025, an estimated 32.6 million Americans will be working remotely, which equates to about 22% of the workforce[1].

Digital Transformation

The acceleration of digital transformation in the workplace has introduced many new applications to facilitate collaboration, and move manual processes into the digital world. This brings advantages in terms of efficiency, however, it poses a cost management challenge. Global digital transformation spending is forecast to reach $3.4 trillion in 2026 with a five-year compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.3%[2]. In order to protect that investment, employers need the means to track and measure technology usage trends.

[1] https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/remote-work-statistics/#sources_section

[2] https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS49797222

Lean Operations

Due to increased global competition and economic uncertainty, almost all organizations are looking for ways to reduce business waste by identifying and cutting unnecessary costs. This includes streamlining inefficient processes, maximizing human resources, and eliminating underutilized software licenses.
As app and software-as-a-service (SaaS) tools grow within a company so, too, do their costs. Without visibility into software usage, organizations often pay for underutilized subscriptions and license fees. The cost for the unused licenses alone was said to be putting a $45 million drain on the companies every single month, which each year adds up to almost $537 million worth of wasted software[1].
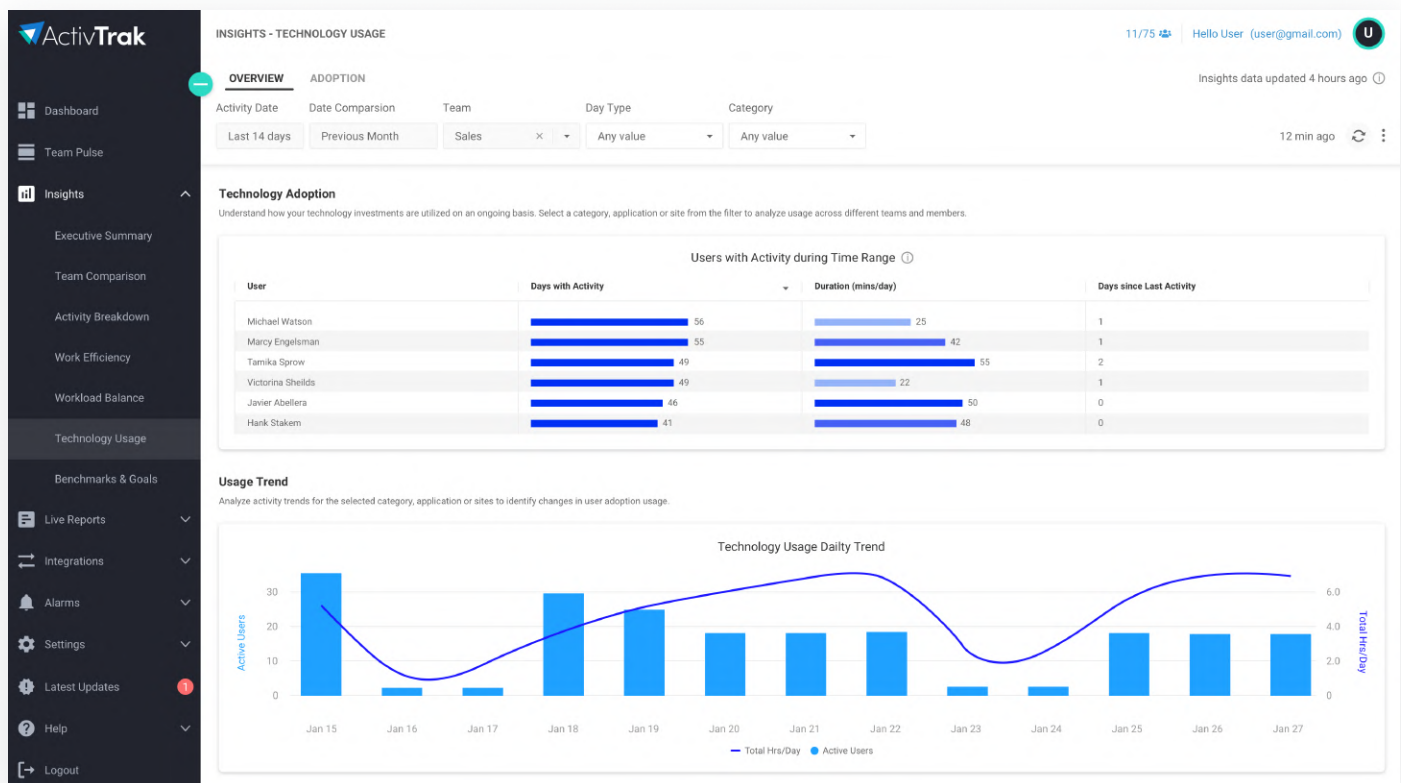
Example of technology usage report in ActivTrak

Data-Driven Mindsets

With the evolution from smartphones to smart watches to smart homes, the "smart organization" is a continuation of this trend. People are becoming accustomed to accessing data across many parts of their lives, including fitness metrics, sleep metrics, home energy consumption, and more. Metrics around workplace efficiency and productivity are a natural evolution of this appetite to gain a data-driven view into more parts of how we spend our time.

[1] https://www.techrepublic.com/article/half-software-licenses-unused/

Key Benefits of Workforce Productivity Analytics

Today's competitive business climate demands a new approach to workforce management, leveraging data-driven solutions that provide unbiased insight into employee performance, productivity, and engagement. Workforce productivity analytics solutions can provide these insights, helping organizations achieve the following benefits:

- **Data-driven views of employee engagement and productivity** that provide consistent, continuous measurement over time versus point-in-time surveys or potentially subjective manager assessments.

- **Visibility and consistent measurement of productivity** across teams and departments to facilitate workforce planning discussions and departmental hiring plans.

- **Identify unbalanced workloads and burnout risk:** Insight into employee work patterns can reveal that some workloads are light, while others are heavy. With objective data, individuals and managers are better equipped to advocate for more resources, fewer meetings, or more time to complete projects in order to avoid burnout.

- **More objective performance assessment:** Assessing employee effort and focus is not easy even if everyone is working in the same office, much less when teams are working remotely. Workforce productivity analytics offers a more objective, data-driven way for employees to get the recognition they deserve for consistent effort, or going above and beyond on a project.

- **Confidence in flexible scheduling:** Workforce productivity analytics solutions can provide leadership with confidence that remote work or flexible schedule arrangements are working for the company, as well as for employees, making it easier for companies to expand opportunities for employees to break out of the traditional 9-5, or in-office work requirements.

- **Understand software usage:** With visibility into how much time individuals and teams are spending using specific apps, or groups of apps, managers can understand what resources employees are using to do their work and identify opportunities to consolidate tools, or where additional training may be needed.

- **Obtain an audit trail when needed:** Workforce productivity analytics solutions can provide detailed activity logs which can support fact-based discussions to address performance concerns or problematic behavior.

The future of work is about transparency, open communication, and leadership response. Using workforce productivity data as the foundation for identifying problems and devising solutions takes the potentially harmful personalization element out of the equation. Instead, leaders are able to collaborate with teams on improvement opportunities and leverage these as a justification for additional support for new initiatives.

How To Leverage Workforce Productivity Data

Workforce productivity analytics tools collect and analyze user activity data, including application and website usage information, and provide summaries, trends, and benchmarks that provide valuable insights.

With these insights, organizations can answer key questions like these:

Productivity

- What does workforce productivity and engagement look like, and how can we improve it?

- When are employees most productive throughout the day or week?

- How much time is spent on focused work?

- Are employees consistently engaged over time and/or distracted frequently?

- Are employees more productive working remotely vs. in an office?

- Which employees are at risk of burnout?

Example of productivity trends and summaries in ActivTrak

Activity & Application Usage

- Are employees working on activities aligned with their roles?

- Can we consolidate the tools that employees in similar roles are using to save on licensing costs or simplify workflows?

- How does app usage vary between more and less experienced team members?

- Is more training needed to increase adoption of new or existing software?

- What software licenses and tools are used consistently and which can we discontinue?

- Are unapproved applications being used that could introduce compliance or data privacy risks?
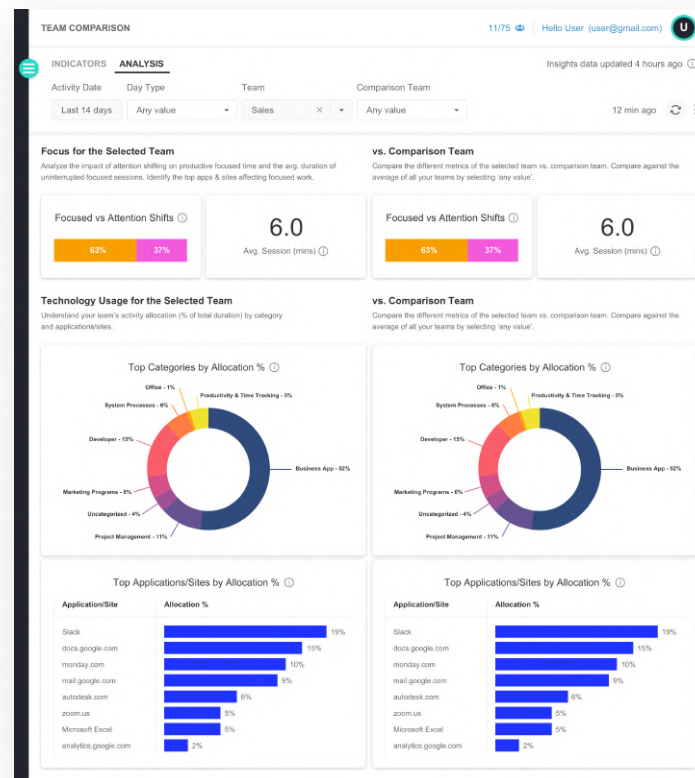
Focus, Collaboration & Multi-tasking

- How much time is spent on focused work vs. collaboration and multi-tasking?

- Are messaging apps causing increased context-switching and distraction?

- How much time is spent in meetings?

- Are teams using collaboration tools regularly?

- Should we carve out certain times of day for focused work?

- How do these trends differ between newer and more experienced team members?

These data insights pave a roadmap to address opportunities and challenges to ultimately achieve better productivity outcomes for both employers and employees.

How to Engage Employees in Your Workforce Productivity Program

Measuring productivity doesn't have to be hard, and it can (and should) be done in a transparent, collaborative way that promotes trust with employees. Workforce productivity is not about surveillance or tracking but rather about sharing insights and collaborating on solutions that can improve productivity organization-wide.

These are the three (3) key areas you need to keep in mind to ensure your rollout of a workforce productivity program is a success:

1. **Be transparent** about your intent and how the data will be used throughout the process.

2. **Communicate and communicate often.** Communication is critical prior to your implementation, throughout your implementation, and on an ongoing basis to share insights and capture feedback.

3. **Encourage ownership in the results.** Include your workforce in not only the findings, but also the solutions. Emphasize a culture of continuous learning and performance improvement.

Remember, culture always comes first. Through focusing on areas 1–3, you've made it clear that transparency, improvement, and collaboration are vital to the culture of your organization. Reinforce this messaging wherever possible.

Be Transparent:

Build trust and get buy-in

Most experts recommend being upfront about your workforce productivity analytics program including what data you plan to collect and how you intend to use it. The software is meant to provide insights to improve your business, not to spy on employees. When choosing a workforce productivity analytics solution, organizations should consider how each solution will help them protect employee privacy while gathering the data and insights needed to improve productivity. Trust and transparency are essential to building a healthy workplace culture, and your workforce productivity solution should align with those goals.

Communicate: How to inform employees and managers

We recommend a phased approach to communicating a workforce productivity program to your organization, starting with sharing plans with people managers in your organization since they will likely be power users of workforce productivity analytics and will be responding to questions from their teams. After you've explained your workforce productivity program and your goals to the leaders in your organization, we recommend inviting employees to a "town hall" style meeting where you can explain the goals you have for using workforce productivity analytics and answer their questions.

To help introduce a workforce productivity program to your organization, we've developed a set of templates geared towards addressing questions that employees and managers are likely to have. Keep in mind these are templates that can be customized to best suit your organization and goals. You can download the templates here.

Encourage Ownership: Share the data to drive continuous improvement

Workforce productivity analytics data is meant to be shared organization-wide, so that individuals and managers alike can collaborate on goals and solutions. Not only does this promote trust, but by analyzing their own data, employees are empowered to self-manage and make adjustments and improvements without manager intervention. Roles vary and so, too, do the ways each team member performs their work. What defines a successful, productive salesperson is much different than what defines a successful, productive engineer. Avoid comparing apples to oranges and instead baseline and analyze metrics for similar roles and teams. If you are concerned about any data you see, don't make assumptions. Rather, we advise speaking with an employee to clear up possible misunderstandings before jumping to conclusions or taking any corrective actions.

The data insights within your workforce productivity analytics solution should be referenced weekly, and ideally daily, to drive well-deserved recognition and propel ongoing conversations within teams about key areas of improvement. It can also help facilitate healthy conversations between managers and employees around work habits and schedules, preventing costly disengagement, burnout, and turnover.

Ensure a Culture of Continuous Productivity Improvement

In order to cultivate a culture of trust and transparency, while respecting employee privacy, your use of workforce productivity analytics must prioritize insights and collaboration versus oversight. While the above outlines our recommended approach to implement a workforce productivity tool within your organization, note that your use of workforce productivity analytics will be an ongoing process. It should be used as a tool for employers and employees alike to identify key areas that can unlock valuable productivity improvements.

Conclusion

Due to the rise in remote work, rapidly changing global business demands, and pressures on operating budgets, workforce productivity solutions have become a critical component to business continuity and success. Having clear visibility into how employees and teams get work done – whether in-office or remote – is key to improving productivity and efficiency. Workforce productivity analytics software uses real data so you can easily establish productivity benchmarks and track your progress to goals with at-a-glance dashboards and easy-to-understand reports. By being transparent with employees about using workforce productivity analytics and by following the other best practices outlined in this guide, workforce productivity programs can facilitate more sustainable and productive workplaces that benefit both employers and employees.

ActivTrak Workforce Productivity Analytics

ActivTrak is a cloud-based workforce productivity analytics solution that collects and categorizes user activity data to provide insights that help teams improve productivity. The easy-to-use reports and dashboards in ActivTrak enable managers and teams to:

- Measure productivity trends across teams and individuals

- Assess workload balance and burnout risk

- Identify how and where to build more focus time into daily schedules

- Understand which applications are being used most/least

- Keep a pulse on engagement levels of remote and in-office team members

- Use historic benchmarks to set and track goals for focused and productive time
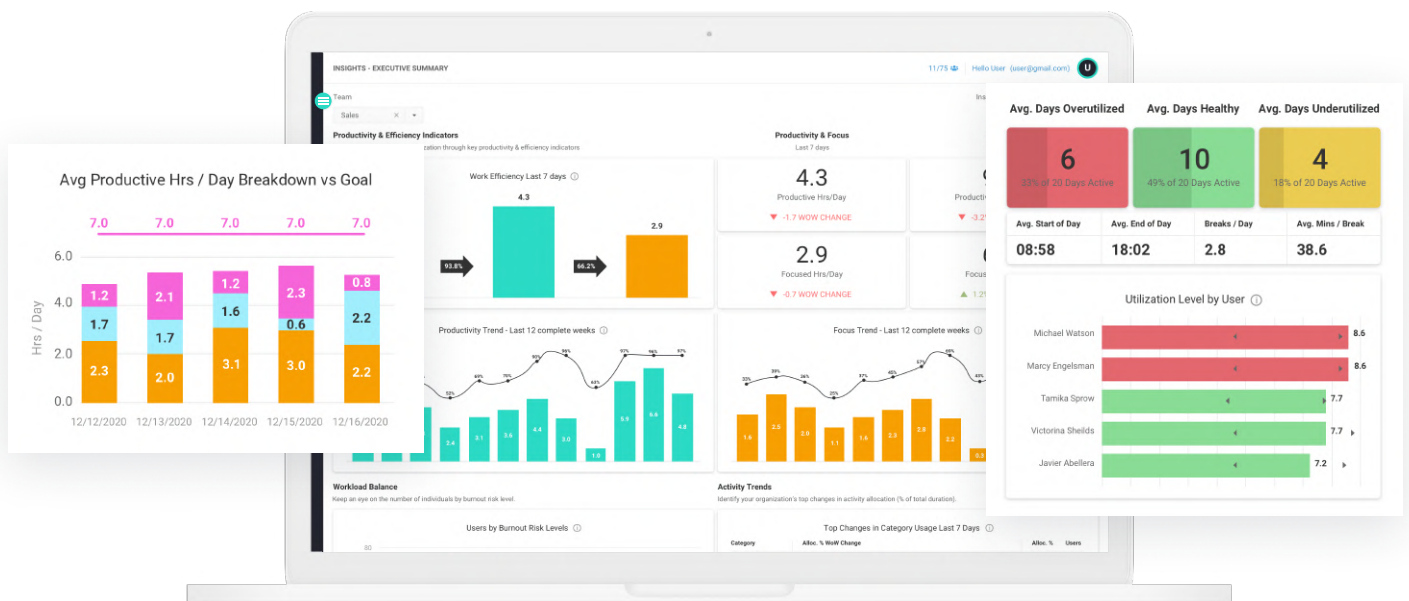
Checklist: Getting Started for FREE with ActivTrak

✓ Read the Ultimate Guide to Workforce Productivity Analytics

Congratulations! You've already completed the first step.

☐ Develop your goals and KPIs

As with any new program, it's critical to understand what your goals are before getting started. Just as important is outlining what success looks like. How will you measure your progress towards these goals?

☐ Plan on transparency

How will you communicate the rollout of a workforce productivity program to your team members? Download free templates to help you communicate your workforce productivity program here.

☐ Sign up for a Free ActivTrak account

With ActivTrak, you can measure the productivity of up to 3 users for free. To see the productivity of additional users and to unlock advanced features, you can always upgrade to one of our paid plans. **Create a free account here.**

☐ Install the agent

On every device you wish you to collect productivity data from, simply hit the blue "Download Agent" button within the ActivTrak app. You can also remotely install agents on devices. To learn more about agent installation, click here.

☐ Customize your account

After the agent is installed, you can customize your instance to best meet your needs. This includes naming devices and users, creating groups, assigning productivity labels and categories to websites, setting custom schedules, and more. To get detailed instructions on setting up customizations, click here.

☐ Review dashboards & reports

The ActivTrak dashboard displays key summaries of the extensive and more detailed reports available in other areas of the app. If you just want a quick snapshot of your organization, the dashboard is the place to go. For a deeper analysis, run out-of-the-box or custom reports on your data. You can even query and integrate your user activity data with BI tools such as Microsoft Power BI or Tableau by using ActivConnect tool, an add-on to our paid plans.