A PACIVA GUIDE · 2026

The Collaboration Tax

How the best teams do more in less time.

Most of the day is not the work. It is the meetings, handoffs, and interruptions in between, about $13,500 per employee a year. This guide shows how to lift productivity, cut the Collaboration Tax, and speed up every outcome.

Less busywork. More work.

paciva.ai/resources

WHAT'S INSIDE

What's inside

Purpose

The overhead is not the work. It is what happens to the work on the way through the building. This guide puts a number on it, then shows how to cut it.

OVERVIEW

It should have taken two days.

A marketing lead needs one landing page live. The copy is already written. On paper it is a two-day job. In practice it takes eleven.

The draft waits on design. Design waits on a logo file. Legal flags a claim, which starts a thread, which becomes a meeting rescheduled twice across three time zones. Someone asks for a status, so the lead writes the status instead of the page.

Most of the elapsed time was not work. It was waiting, sorting, re-explaining, and chasing.

01
The shape of modern work

01 THE SHAPE OF MODERN WORK

You cannot do your job without a dozen other people.

Collaboration is not a feature of modern work. It is the structure of it. Connection became constant, and keeping everyone aligned became the job.

30%
of meetings now span multiple time zones

65+
attendee meetings are the fastest-growing category

9%
of the work year is lost to context switching

60%

of the workday goes to work about work, not the job.

Asana named it. It is the majority of the day.

Communicating about work, searching for information, switching apps, chasing status. Not spam, not idleness. The connective tissue of collaboration, and it consumes most of the time you have.

Source: Asana, Anatomy of Work Index

Where the workday actually goes

Working through other people is not the exception in the day. It is the majority of it.

We have a name for the sum of that cost: the **Collaboration Tax**. The price a team pays, in time, money, and focus, for the fact that work has to pass through people. Everyone pays it. Almost nobody measures it.

Source: Asana. Per worker, per year: 103 hours in unnecessary meetings, 209 hours on duplicative work, 352 hours talking about work.

$13,500

the Collaboration Tax, per employee, per year.

And nobody put it on the budget.

Start with the measured floor: four hours a week reorienting between tools is $7,550 at the BLS average wage. Add unnecessary meetings and AI rework, none overlapping, and the modeled total reaches about $13,500.

Methodology: HBR toggling study, Asana meetings, workslop via HBR. BLS $36.30. Paciva modeled.

03

The interruption tax

03 THE INTERRUPTION TAX

The best hours belong to someone else's agenda.

275

interruptions a day, one every two minutes

23 min

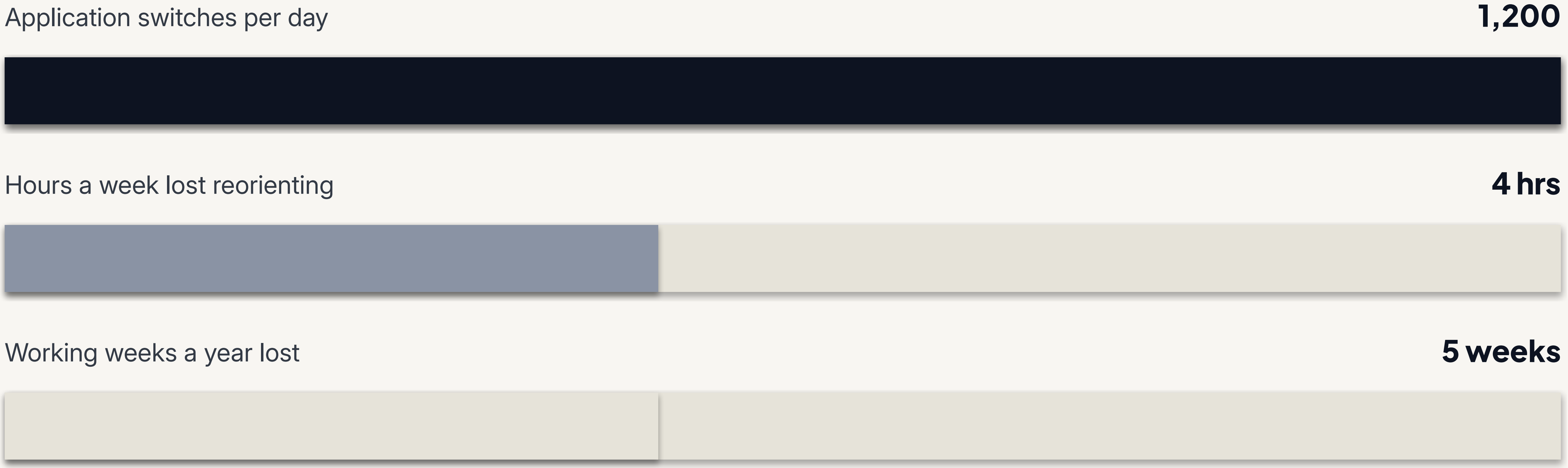
to refocus after each significant interruption

The cost is not the interruption. It is the recovery. 48% of employees and 52% of leaders say their work feels chaotic and fragmented. The question is not how to focus harder. It is why the interruptions reach you at all.

Source: Microsoft 2025 Work Trend Index; Gloria Mark, UC Irvine.

04 THE TOGGLE TAX

The stack meant to connect us fragments us.



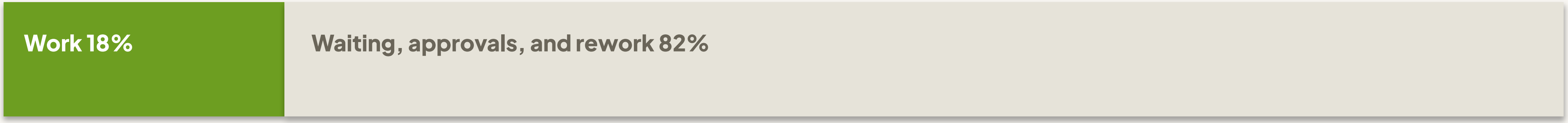
The work did not get more complex. The number of places you have to be to do it did. People become the integration, fetching from one app and pasting into the next.

Source: Harvard Business Review, 2022. APA: chronic switching can consume up to 40% of productive time.

05 THE HANDOFF COST

The expensive part is the waiting.

A task that needs three people is not three people's time added together. It is three queues, and the work sits idle in each one. The elapsed time balloons even when the actual effort is small.



The cost is the queue time between the people it passes through, not your time on the task.

Illustrative, based on handoff and queue patterns in Asana, Anatomy of Work Index.

What the Collaboration Tax costs, by company size

On the measured floor of $7,550 per employee per year.

Company	Headcount	Collaboration Tax per year
Single operator	1	**$7,550**
Small team	10	**$75,504**
SMB	50	**$377,520**
Mid-market	250	**$1.9M**
Large	1,000	**$7.6M**
Enterprise	5,000	**$37.8M**

Count meetings and AI rework and a 250-person company passes $3.4M a year. That is a department. Paciva modeled, BLS $36.30.

“

The tax nobody argues about is the one nobody measures. The overhead is not the work. It is what happens to the work on the way through the building.

Jeremy Mays, Co-founder, Paciva

When the day fills with busywork, the work moves to the night.

If the hours belong to other people, the real work has to go somewhere. It goes after hours. Run that long enough and the cost stops being time and starts being people.

40%
review email before 6 am

+16%
more meetings after 8 pm, year over year

~29%
are back in the inbox by 10 pm

Source: Microsoft, 2025 Work Trend Index. The majority of knowledge workers report being close to burnout.

08 AI, THE BIGGEST LEVER

AI is the biggest lever on the Collaboration Tax, in either direction.

THE SENDER cheap

Drafts, memos, and decks in seconds

More output, more messages

The appearance of finished work

THE RECEIVER expensive

41% received workslop last month

1h 56m to resolve each instance

$186 per worker, per month

Used to generate, AI is cheap to send and expensive to untangle. Used to remove the work, it gives the time back.

Source: BetterUp Labs and Stanford Social Media Lab, via Harvard Business Review, 2025. Over $9M a year for a 10,000-person company.

95%

of organizations saw no measurable return on generative AI.

Not a verdict on AI.

Most of it was pointed at producing more, not removing the work. The return comes from the AI that cuts the Collaboration Tax, the kind that gives the hours back instead of filling them.

Source: MIT Media Lab, 2025

THE PATH FORWARD

Measure, reduce, reclaim.

1

Measure

Put a number on the hours your team spends on busywork instead of building.

2

Reduce

Cut the meetings that could have been a decision and the handoffs that could have been direct.

3

Reclaim

Give the recovered hours back to the work only your people can do.

The work is not the problem. The incentives are. Meeting tools earn more when you meet more. Chat tools earn more when you message more. Nobody in that equation gets paid to reduce the busywork. That is the gap Paciva was built to close.

TAKE BACK THE DAY

Get the work done, not the busywork.

Paciva is an executive assistant. For a person, it runs your communication and gets your work done. For a team, it takes on the busywork that today falls to whoever is stuck in the middle.

Screens the interruptions
Answers low-value inbound and batches the rest.

Runs the scheduling
Finds the time across calendars, or replaces the meeting with a decision.

Carries the handoffs
Chases approvals and moves work so nothing sits idle.

Writes the status
Drafts the update from what actually happened.

Less busywork. More work.

Try Pax at paciva.ai/start

SOURCES AND CITATIONS

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