

What is 20 Time?

20 Time is based on the theory and practice that many successful and innovative companies call 20 Time. It is often referred to as a form of "radical autonomy." In an attempt to maximize employee productivity, innovative companies began to experiment with new ways to motivate their workers. As part of these experiments they developed new ways for employees to divide their work time spent on various tasks. After much experimentation, they discovered that employees were the most motivated and most productive when they spent most of their time on assigned tasks and some time on a project that they were passionate about. More specifically, they learned that the magic ratio was 80/20. That being 80% of their time is spent on assigned tasks the company requires and 20% of their time is spent on a Passion Project. Hence 20 Time.

The concept of 20 Time is not a new one. You may be surprised to learn that 3M (a company most recognized for tape) started it in the 1950's with their 15% Project. The result? Post-its and masking tape. Fast forward 50 years and Google is credited for making the 20% Project what it is today. Google asks its employees to spend 20% of their time at Google working on a pet project...a project that their job description doesn't cover. As a result of the 20% Project at Google, we now have Gmail, AdSense, Google News, and my favorite, the Google Teacher Academy. Using 20 Time in the workplace allows innovative ideas and projects to flourish and/or fail without the bureaucracy of committees and budgets.

Basic Requirements

1. You must COMPLETE one Passion Project per semester (or one per year if you continue with the same project throughout). To quote Kevin Brookhouser, "Failure is an option, but failure to deliver, is not."
2. You may only complete ONE Passion Project per semester (if you finish early, your problem was too simple. I will be sure to help you avoid that)
3. Your project must be problem/solution oriented
4. Your problem must be complex (see Problem Formation Help below)
5. Your project must reach a broader audience in a tangible way
6. You must be able to answer the "So what?" question. Why is your project important?

Problem Formation

In order for the Passion Projects to be successful, we have determined a few key issues to address during the Problem Formation phase.

1. Projects must be Problem/Solution oriented. The problems can be mechanical, social, practical, etc. The goal here is to have students create a problem with a built in purpose.
2. It is essential that students are tasked with formulating their own Problems. The inquiry process is far more meaningful for students when they determine a problem and work to find the solution. This process mimics the situations they will encounter in a modern profession.
3. The problems must be complex. If your problem has an answer, it is likely to simple. There will likely be a number of potential solutions to the problem; they will discover one of them. The only exception may be complex problems that are scientific or mathematical in nature.