

# Increase Your Productivity & Generate More Revenue



Why focusing on your core competencies  
can help your bottom line

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## INTRODUCTION

**Like many independent or small business owners, you probably wear many hats (or maybe even all the hats) within your company. This often means dividing your time between your craft and other administrative or business operations.**

While admin or operational jobs are essential to keeping a business running, they also take up valuable time you could be using on other projects—projects that generate revenue.

In this eBook, pros share their tips for finding creative ways to be more productive so they can spend time focusing on the jobs they enjoy the most or generate more revenue. We've created a worksheet to help you calculate exactly what your time is worth and whether you could be generating more revenue by spending less time on business operations and more time on your core competencies. You'll find it at the back of this eBook.

“

The key is identifying your own strengths versus what can be delegated.”

Yekii Killion, Black Cat Interiors.



# Productivity Tips

“

I have a weekly schedule to help keep me efficient. Mondays are for administrative work; Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are for client work; and Fridays are open so I can schedule as needed.”

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Andrea Lynn Orndorff, A. Lynn Design



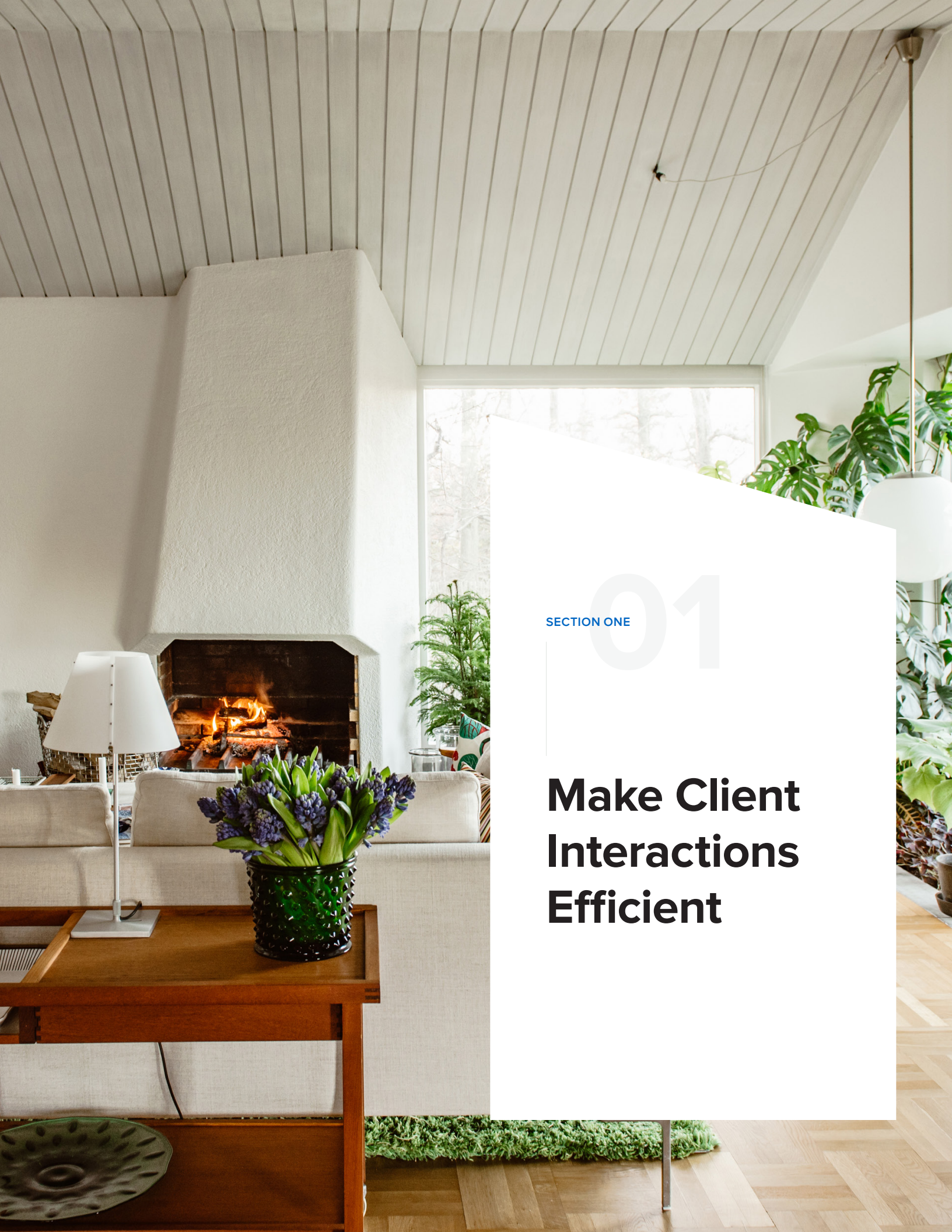
“I dedicate time in my daily schedule for email. At the beginning of the day I determine what is urgent enough to answer right away, and what can wait until the end of the day. Now I’m not spending all day trying to dwindle my inbox down.”

**Celeste Jackson**, Celeste Jackson Interiors



“By working with the same vendors as much as possible, selecting products goes more quickly because I am familiar with their offerings. And, as we already have a professional relationship, I don’t need to meet with them as often.”

**Megan Dufresne**, MC Design



SECTION ONE

01

# Make Client Interactions Efficient

# Cut to the Chase

Having a consistent lead screening process when handling new inquiries can help you identify only those clients who fit your ideal client profile. When calls come in, use a questionnaire to determine the project's scope, location, budget, timeline, and the potential client's expectations.

This will help to make sure the client is serious before you invest too much time or energy, and doing an initial screening over the phone can save yourself from spending time on the road and meeting with a prospective client that may not pan out or who you're not interested in working with.

We know it can be scary to turn down business, but declining gracefully could save you time long-term and open up your schedule for more opportunities.



“We decline projects when the scope is either too small for us to be cost competitive, the required skill set to execute the project scope differs from our core skill set, or when we get a sense that clients have unrealistic expectations about budget or schedule. Not every client or project is right for us, nor are we right for every client or project. Declining projects that aren't the right fit frees up time to work on projects that are—projects that you're good at, that you can earn a reasonable profit from, and that produce happy clients who promote you to their friends.”

**Timothy Cleary**, Charles Ross Homes

# Get on the Same Page Faster

Many pros start Ideabooks with their clients and encourage them to save photos of their research to it. Doing so can help you get on the same page with your client quickly. When clients share visuals of what they like, you can understand their desired outcome for their project, even if they can't verbalize the exact style or look they want.

Not only can Ideabooks be used remotely, but whenever is convenient for each of you. This can help eliminate unnecessary back-and-forth between you and your clients.

Houzz Pro members can access 3D rendering and a Moodboard tool that allow them to give clients a preview of their design with products you can source directly from Houzz.



“Without Ideabooks, clients would have a hard time describing what they wanted. We would generate a rough sketch and then refine based on feedback. This process could take weeks, but with Ideabooks it's much faster. Clients can pinpoint features or images that they like, and we can discern likes and dislikes to more easily draft a design that is to our client's liking.”

**Kellee Dauner**, McAdams Remodeling & Design

# Optimize Communication Channels

Creating email template form letters that can be used over and over for common situations (like requesting reviews or responding to new inquiries) can save you time from writing out the same letter multiple times. Keep all of your templates in a document on your computer and copy and paste as needed.

Studies show that responding to inquiries within one hour increases your chances of having a meaningful conversation with the decision maker by seven times. However, we know it's not always realistic to respond in detail right away, so consider setting up automatic responses to emails or inquiries that come in after hours to satisfy the potential client's need to know that their message was received, while giving you time to wrap up what you're doing.

Houzz Pro members get access to inquiries from homeowners on Houzz, and with the mobile app, we'll send you notifications whenever you get a new message. You can use the lead management tool to easily communicate and begin the sales process.



“When a potential client fills out the interest form on our website, we have an automatic email response that says we will get back to them within 48 hours, which accounts for weekends and when we are on the road. We get 75% of our new client contacts this way, and the automatic response gives us some breathing room to schedule the initial consult call where we can most effectively sell our services.”

**Bridget McMullin**, The McMullin Design Group



SECTION TWO

02

# Streamline Business Tasks

# Find a Complementary Pro

Enlisting another professional to provide services that you're slower at because it's not your primary skillset can help free you up to focus on your areas of expertise. Keep a directory of past pros whom you've met or worked with in the past so you can reach out to them in a pinch.

For free help with sourcing products, the Houzz Trade Program offers a team of dedicated sourcing specialists who can recommend products and put together quotes based on your requests. In addition to securing the best trade discounts for you on millions of products, our team can coordinate order consolidation and timely shipping that works with your deadlines. [Learn more here.](#)



“

I use freelance draftsmen when I get overloaded and need help meeting a deadline. Freelancers carry out the pragmatic stuff I don't have time for, so I can work with the other pros involved on a project and manage my business.”

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William Rossoto, Rossoto Art LLC



# Maintain your Online Presence

An effective website has to be consistently updated, search engine optimized (SEO), mobile-friendly and secured with a secure socket layer (SSL). However, best practices for maintaining all of those features change all the time and making sure your website checks all of those boxes all the time can be time consuming.

Houzz Pro Website Services can provide your business a SEO optimized, mobile-ready and secure website so you can maintain your digital presence easily. It will pull content like photos and reviews directly from your Houzz profile so your information and brand is consistent.

Houzz Pro members can work with a Client Success Manager who can set up and maintain both your Houzz profile and website for you. They will be happy to lend a hand with tasks like uploading and keywording photos, requesting reviews, and making sure you're maximizing your experience on Houzz



# The Value of Your Time Calculator

To know what your time is truly worth, you'll need to do some math—but don't worry, we'll walk you through it! Grab a calculator and get ready to crunch some numbers.

At the end of this exercise, you'll be able to identify how much your time is worth and how much more revenue you could be generating if you optimized your time.

## Find Your Hourly Rate

- A.** First, we'll calculate the amount of revenue you bring into your business for the year. How much revenue did you generate last year?
- B.** Let's estimate the total time you spent working last year. How many total hours did you work?
- C.** Determine how much money you're making every hour. Divide the total dollars by the total hours worked to find your revenue generated per hour with the box below.

**BOX 01**

<b>TOTAL DOLLARS:</b>	_____	=	_____	<b>REVENUE GENERATED PER HOUR</b>
<b>TOTAL HOURS:</b>	_____			

## Understand Your Billable Hours

It's good to know your revenue per hour, but it doesn't quite tell you what your time is worth. Chances are some of the hours you worked were sucked up by administrative tasks or other typical office duties—things that others who do not have your home remodeling and design expertise could be doing. A more accurate way to determine what your time is worth is to look at your revenue generated per "billable hour".

- A.** Billable hour is the time you spent doing the things only you can do—like working with clients, creating renderings, choosing furniture or materials, etc...
- D.** Look through work logs and invoices to see how much time you spent doing tasks only you could do (or estimate if you didn't keep track.) How many hours did you spend on those tasks?
- E.** Now take the total amount of revenue you generated (B) and divide it by number of billable hours.

**BOX 02**

<b>TOTAL DOLLARS:</b>	_____	=	_____	<b>REVENUE GENERATED PER BILLABLE HOUR</b>
<b>BILLABLE HOURS:</b>	_____			

# The Value of Your Time Calculator

## Identify Opportunity For Delegating

Chances are your revenue generated per billable hour (Box 2) is higher than your revenue generated per hour (Box 1). This is because you're spending time doing tasks that you're not getting paid for, like working on your website or making sure the books are balanced.

The next step is find out just how much time you're spending on tasks that could be delegated.

**F.** Take the total amount of hours you worked last year (B)

**G.** Subtract your total billable hours (D)

BOX 03

$$\text{HOURS ON ALL TASKS} - \text{BILLABLE HOURS} = \text{HOURS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN DELEGATED}$$

## Optimized Income

The number of hours you spent working on things that could have been delegated represents time you could be using to generate more revenue if you were to spend that time on tasks only you could do. Let's find out how much:

**H.** Take the total number of hours you spent working on tasks that could be delegated (Box 3)

**I.** Multiply that by your revenue generated per billable hour (Box 2)

BOX 04

$$\text{HOURS SPENT ON TASKS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN DELEGATED} \times \text{BILLABLE RATE} = \text{POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL EARNINGS}$$

# The Value of Your Time Calculator

## Action Items

Is the amount of money you're leaving on the table because you're doing tasks that anyone else could do enough to think about delegating some of those jobs?

Here are a few steps you can take immediately to get the most value out of your time as a skilled professional:

- 01** Identify the tasks you can delegate
- 02** Find services or tools to handle those tasks
- 03** Use the extra time to take on more projects

## Action Items

While delegating tasks certainly frees up your schedule, keep in mind that this worksheet is simply an exercise to help you visualize what's possible in terms of revenue. Before you outsource a task to a service or employee, ask yourself the following questions:

- 01** Will I be able to work as many hours as I delegate, or will I need to account for time training or managing?
- 02** If I outsource the task, will the cost of the service or employee to do the task be worth it?
- 03** Would I realistically be able to take on more work with my freed up hours?

# Share the Workload with Houzz Pro

If you want to spend more time on your core competency and less on administrative tasks, Houzz Pro can help. Members will get access to a comprehensive business growth and management system. Streamline projects with tools like our intuitive estimate builder and client collaboration tools like 3D rendering, timelines and dashboards. Members can work with a Client Success Manager who can handle the maintenance of your online presence, freeing up your time to focus on projects.

Plus, you'll get exposure to homeowners looking to take on home projects and analytics tools to gain a better understanding of what impacts potential clients.

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Whether you're looking to make each project more profitable, or take on more projects, Houzz Pro can help you work toward your goals by optimizing your operations. To schedule your interactive, online demo, call **1 (800) 640-6061** or email [grow@houzz.com](mailto:grow@houzz.com).



“Several of the projects we have converted from Houzz have been multi-hundred thousand dollar whole house remodels, and some smaller projects. Houzz gives us credibility so when we get a contact from Houzz and reach out, the homeowner already has a good interest level of who we are and what we do. We're also looking forward to using Houzz Pro for lead management within the CRM dashboard!”

**Max Christiansen**, Tru Builders

 **houzz** PRO