Making others more productive

Tom Rochette <tom.rochette@coreteks.org>

March 8, 2020 — e58d094e

1 Question

How can you make people more productive?

2 Answer

Start by asking your teammates to assess whether they are at their peak productivity or not. If they already are, ask them what you could do to help them be more productive. If they are not at their peak productivity, ask them what is making them unproductive. Make it your goal to help your teammates be as productive and efficient as possible.

Being unproductive is like slow software. If you want to improve it, you have first to start with profiling the program to have an idea of what is making it slow. Once you have a general idea of the cause of the slowness, you will want to focus on your biggest sources of slowness because they are likely to be the ones you can help improve.

In software development, the biggest source of productivity loss is meetings. Meetings break the flow of developers, they consume time and are generally easy to replace with a properly written document. If you can act as the proxy for multiple members of your team so that they do not have to attend all the same meetings you are attending, you can help them reduce this meeting fatigue.

Another source of ineffectiveness is back and forth code reviews. If you need to do multiple iterations of review to close a PR, this PR was too big. If you also end up having to do more than two back and forth, you should simply reach out to the author of the PR and do a pair programming session with them to resolve most of the issues you have with the PR in a single session.

Code depends on other code. It should be your first priority to make sure that code that is developed by others is not stuck in the PR queue for a long period of time because the author might be building on that code. The code in that PR may actually be used by code the author is already writing while waiting for the PR to be reviewed. If he needs to go back and fix things because of delays in the PR, this will make his whole development process inefficient. Having to wait or being blocked is an important source of productivity loss.

Help others avoid working on too many tasks at once. The brain does not handle multitasking very well and it generally leads to lower performance and higher error rate.