10 Steps

to **Taming Interruptions** and **Preventing Rework**

Behind meetings, interruptions and rework are the leading causes of wasted time for many GFOA members. Our poll showed that more than a quarter of respondents rated interruptions as the most annoying source of lost time at work—again, right behind meetings. Rework—when you have to do a task over again because it wasn't done right the first time—is pretty annoying as well and is a frequent consequence of interruptions.

Here is a checklist with 5 recommendations to minimize interruptions and 5 recommendations to avoid rework.

1 **Designate physical no-interruption zones in your office.** This could be dedicated physical space or an agreement to respect time blocked out on calendars as "no interruption."

2 **Create checklists** that describe critical but easily overlooked tasks for work processes that are interruption prone.

3 **Adjust the settings on your electronic devices and apps** to eliminate cues (beeps, lights, icons) to engage in low- or no-value activities.

4 **Find ways to make using your devices and/or apps slightly more unreachable**—just enough that checking them is no longer habitual but now takes conscious effort.

5 **Create opportunities for the necessary occasional diversions** from work that have less potential to degenerate into long periods spent on unproductive apps. Examples might be keeping an enjoyable book or magazine nearby for a planned break.

6 **Collect data on work defects,** including where in the process the defect is discovered, where the error that creates the defect occurs, and how common it is.

7 **Strive to understand what truly caused the defect.** Conduct a simple root cause analysis by using "the 5 Why's" or similar approach.

8 **Establish written standard operating procedures** that describe clear standards for how processes should be performed.

9 **Use visual controls** such as conditional formatting and check cells in Excel, and visual warnings for values for out-of-parameter values in the ERP system.

10 **Employ mistake-proofing strategies** to avoid rework, including using data validation rules and locking cells in Excel, as appropriate, and using automated entry of fields to eliminate human intervention.

For more information on how to reclaim wasted time at work, visit **gfoa.org/timebackchallenge.**