

Now What? Focus

Overcoming the Distractions of a Very Distracting Time

The Power of Focus.

With so many of us working from home these days, there's been a proliferation of "home offices" sprouting up all over. For some lucky people, that could be a space designated just for work. Maybe it's a separate room with a door that can be shut, creating something of a quiet sanctuary in which to get stuff done. But for many, many others, that home office is also the kitchen table, the family room, the entertainment center, the bedroom, etc. Your home office may be shared by other adults who are also working from home, or teens who need to attend school online, or even kids who just want to play, color, watch TV, talk, etc. All of that can make focusing on any one thing—for instance, work—uniquely challenging.

Given this reality, the concept of multi-tasking seems to make more sense than ever before. In fact, it would be easy to consider it a mandatory survival strategy. You might be telling yourself, "I can get breakfast on the table, get the kids going on their studies/activities, get my spouse set up on his/her work—all while also getting my work done." Your mantra might be, "I CAN do it all!"

The research, however, would not be your friend on this. That's because research shows that multi-tasking actually destroys productivity.

- Trying to focus on more than one thing at a time reduces your productivity by as much as 40%. That's the cognitive equivalent of pulling an all-nighter.
- On average, employees who do the majority of their work on computers are distracted every 10.5 minutes.
- Being distracted by incoming calls or emails can lower employees' IQ by as much 10 points.

The good news is, research has also shown that the majority of distractions are self-inflicted. That means that each of us has more ability to control distractions and increase focus than perhaps we realize. While this may seem like an "easier-said-than-done" proposition, it's actually a critical competency that, if honed, can greatly increase your effectiveness.

Intentionally focusing on one thing at a time is not only more efficient, it also lowers stress and frustration. **It makes sense if you think about it. When we work on one thing at time, we tend to work on the right things.** So how do you do that? Here are some best practices:

- **Align the home team:** Get everyone who shares your home office space on the same schedule—have dedicated time for work, school, study or quiet (reading) time.
- **Prioritize first:** Start your day by prioritizing time for those things that will have the greatest impact on your work.
- **Turn off notifications:** This is an oldie but a goodie. Schedule time to look periodically. Rather than being a slave to the pop-up, create space to address what you can in 15-30 minute breaks a few times throughout the day.
- **One-tab:** Only keep one tab open at a time. Single tabbing forces you to commit to close (and finish or deliberately choose to pause). It also ensures you are intentional in your choices on what work deserves your attention.
- **Work offline:** If you have a task that doesn't require the internet, turn the WIFI off. You will be amazed at how much time you save.

- **Time your tasks:** Whether it be work, or a family break, be diligent about the time you commit. Focus during that time and don't get distracted. When it is time to move on, switch gears. You will discover you actually have a lot more unstructured time in the long run.

Even during normal times, there are millions of distractions vying for our attention. Today, with so much going on in the world, it's even harder to stay focused. Setting up a few basic habits like those listed above will go a long way toward helping you get more checkmarks in the "completed" column. Have a great week. If you need ideas, communications, tools or other support, Jenn and Ron are here to help you. Thanks!

What to read more:

<https://doist.com/blog/focus-work/>