Do Less and Achieve More – Notes

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Challenge the idea that to be a hard worker means doing everything as fast as possible and being accessible to everyone who needs us.

No such thing as multitasking.

Research shows we are never truly doing two things at once. What we really do is quickly switch back and forth between the two or three tasks we are *trying* to do at the same time.

It's not multitasking - it's multi-switching. It hurts the quality of your work and your productivity.

You can lose up to 40% of your productivity depending on how much you multi-task.

- It takes more time to get tasks completed if you switch between them than if you do them one at a time.

- You make more errors when you switch than if you do one task at a time.

- The more complex the tasks, the more these time and error rates increase.

Instead of trying and failing to multitask. Use your prime time on your most important tasks. Use the clustering technique (also called grouping or batching) for the other tasks.

Take all the time sucking tasks and do them at a scheduled time during the day. This avoids a ton of interruptions that keep you from achieving more.

Accessibility:

I agree you need to be accessible and a team player – but let's challenge the idea the you need to be immediately accessible ALL THE TIME!

Research and real life proves that actually hurts the quality and productivity of your work AND the work of the people who keep interrupting you.

Focus on your most important thing:

What is the most important thing to do today that is in line with your passionate purpose? Do that first!

> "What's the ONE Thing I can do such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?"

> --Gary Keller from *The ONE Thing*

Focusing on the most important thing we need to do is the key to a productive, rewarding day.

Concentrated Focus time

The best time to do this is first thing in the morning. We are going to start with blocking out 2 hours every morning for this and the goal is to do 2 Concentrated Focus segments a day for a total of 4 hours.

You might think this is nuts, but once you try it and see the results you are going to wonder why you didn't do it sooner.

Can your company really not get by for 2 hours without you being interrupted? If that's true, then you need to spend some time training your staff to work independently. It will take time at first, but save you enormous time in the long run.

Rules for CF time:

1) Ask yourself: What is the most important thing that if you got it done today would make the biggest difference to your life and your business?

2) Do that first.

I know sometimes "things come up." But you need to schedule time for your most important activities or something will always "come up."

During these 2 hours there are no interruptions.

- Close your door if you have one.
- Put a "Deep in concentrated focus time" Post-it note outside your cubicle.
- Close all email programs.
- Mute all chimes, ringers, and pings.

- Turn off visual alerts and social media messaging.
- During your concentrated focus time this is all you do.
- Nothing else is allowed to take up your focus and time.

Set a timer for one hour.

Do nothing else except your most important thing.

Then take a break to stretch, walk around the building or up and down the stairs, and just clear your mind and think for 10 minutes. Then repeat the process. Do it for at least 2 hours of each morning.

Do not start the day with email.

 It will lead you to let every one else run your day and distract you from your most important thing.

Let everyone in your company know you are changing the way you handle your email. Set up an auto response on your email and the signature of your email to say something like this:

In order to be as effective and efficient as possible, I only answer my email twice a day - after 11:30am and 6:45pm CT. If there is an emergency, you may call me.

In very special circumstances, you may need to check your email 3 times a day. But if you're telling me there is no way this will work for you, I have a question:

If you check your email three times a day, are you really telling me your customers and coworkers must have your returning emails more then every three hours?

If that's true, what can you do to change that? What training can you do for your co-workers? What expectations can you set up with your customers so they understand what better quality and quantity of work for them you can get done when you focus instead of being tied to your email?

Remember, do not start your day with email.

You took care of all email at 4pm the night before. You'll handle email again at 11:30am AFTER you work on your most important thing. If there is truly an emergency, they can call you.

Your co-workers will get the message if you explain it and stay true to it. You might even get some people to do it with you.

Techniques to improve your Concentrated Focus Time:

- Chop your most important thing into chunks, and set a specific timetable for accomplishing each chunk. Give yourself half the time you think it will take. Make it a competition with yourself to see if you can meet the deadline. Treat it like a real deadline and you will be pleasantly shocked at what you get done.

- Imagine it's the day before your 2-week vacation to China. You will have no work connections, no Internet, no phone. You must get it done before you leave. Work on your most important thing like that.

- Get an accountability partner who will force you to pay up, literally, if you allow interruptions in your CF time, work past a certain time, or take too long on something. Bet him lunch or real money.

Use the 80/20 rule

20% of the work you do gives you 80% of the impact and effectiveness.

If you run your own company:

Focus 80% of your time on the work that matters most and delegate the rest to the greatest extent possible.

If you're a team member:

Get with the boss and have him outline your Top three things that are most important to the company.

Get him to sign off on letting you spend 80% of your time on that.

Use your CF time on those things.

As you show your boss how much important work you're getting done, see if he will delegate some of your less important work to someone else. (You will be surprised how often the answer will be yes.)

Use the other 20% of your time to do the less important but necessary tasks of your job.

Let's GO!