



From Distracted to Productive:

Finding Your Focus in a Hyper-Interrupted, e-Distracted World

Presented by
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SQUIRREL!



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So why are people so distracted???

- E-mails
- Text Messages/IM
- Smart Phones & Tablets
- Voice Mail
- Faxes
- Social Media
- “Snail” Mail
- Office Clutter
- Traditional/Streaming Media/News
- Interruptions
- Even Family & Friends (and dogs!)
- The “Rise” of A.A.D.D.

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The Squirrel Syndrome!

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Agenda of Program (What I typically cover)

- Introduction
- The Shocking Cost of Interruptions
- Managing E-mail Insanity & Other Inputs
- Keeping on Task When Dealing w/ Interruptions
- Strategies for Managing Electronic Interruptions: text, IM, also Social Media, Streaming, Apps, etc.
- Creating “Interruption-Free” Productivity Zones
- Handling “Interrupters” More Proactively
- Multi-tasking vs. Single Tasking! (and “The Flow”)
- Sharing These Strategies With Others (Without Interrupting Them!)

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Up Front Disclaimer

- Your job may make some of the ideas shared unusable
- Goal is to give you a large number of ideas so you can find a few that might help
- Realize that some may not be feasible – find the ones that can help you in your job/career situation

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Let's Talk Electronic Interruptions, Including E-mail!

The Harsh REALITY

2 HOURS

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**The Two
Key Ways
E-mail
Owns You:**

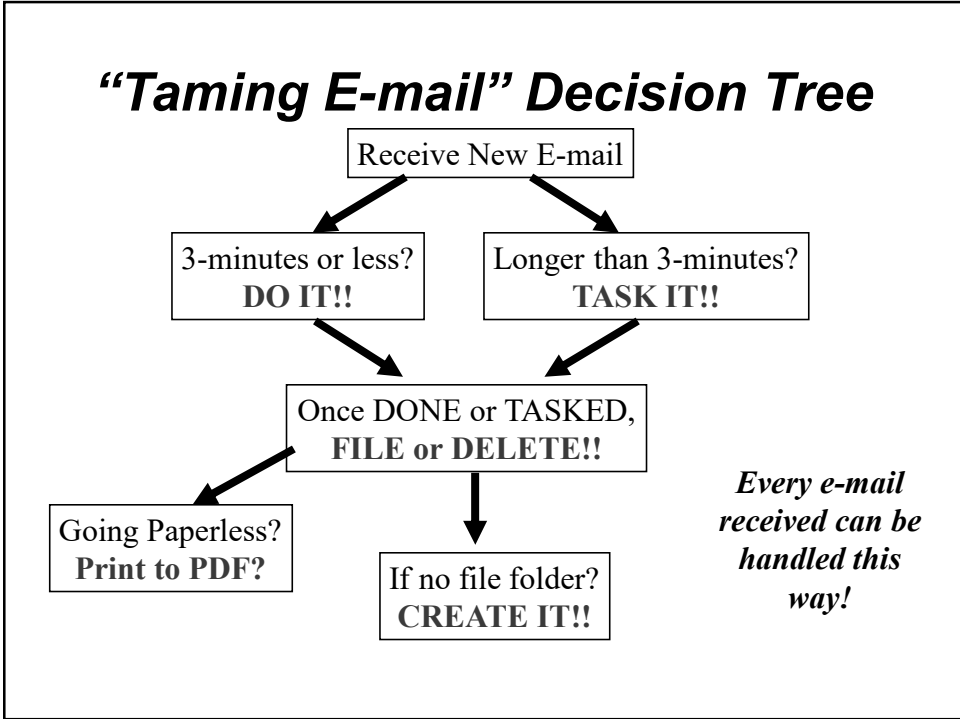
- Checking far too often
- Reading same messages over and over again

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First Thing: Don't "Bling"!!

- Resist temptation to constantly monitor
 - Turn off sounds
 - Turn off "pop ups"
- Instead, check at set points throughout day – SET A REGIMEN
 - To balance productivity with responsiveness
- Are you being forced to "bling"?
 - Ask for a "habit change"

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Cost of Interruptions to
American Business:

\$650 Billion/Year

Average Time Lost
Per Interruption:

4-15 Minutes

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Two Primary Kinds of Direct Interruptions

- The Phone Call (Text?)
 - You CHOOSE to Answer
 - *Voice Mail IS an Option!*
- The “Stop By”
 - They FIND You (if you let them!)
 - *Sometimes the worst place to get work done is your office/workstation/desk!*
- Indirect Interruptions – including electronic interruptions, will be discussed a bit later

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A Project Kick-Start: The “Next Step” Habit

- Never “backtrack” on a project
- Also great for interruptions
- Low-tech: The Sticky Note
- High-tech: Software/Cloud/ Smart Phone/Tablet
- Mid-tech: Come see me!!

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Let's Talk More About the Sticky Note

- Such a simple solution ...
 - Fast
 - Convenient
 - Often Appropriate
 - Be Careful If Someone Infiltrates Your System!



*Call Randy -
Project B*

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What about your
phone?

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Your Productivity Infrastructure: The “Killer” Suite Apps

Microsoft

- Microsoft 365
- Outlook Local Client (PC) or New/Web Outlook
- Office Apps: Word, Excel, PowerPoint
- Outlook.com App (E-mail, Calendar, Contacts)
- Microsoft ToDo/Planner
- OneNote
- OneDrive/Sharepoint
- Microsoft Lens
- Teams

LinkedIn?
Zoom?
GoToMeeting?

Google Workspace

- Gmail
- Google Calendar
- Google Contacts
- Google Tasks (or GTasks)
- Google Keep
- Google Docs, Sheets, Slides
- Google Drive
- Google Duo
- Google Meet

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*“Smart Phones
often make
for stupid
people.”*



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Smart Phone Sanity

- Manage Your Attention – Own Your Device!
 - Check notification settings – phone, text, social, apps, etc.
 - *Consider special ringtones/notifiers – most and LEAST important people*
- Put it away if you really need to focus
 - Consider who you give your number/text
 - *Technology should be an enabler, not a disabler or distractor*
 - *Are you clinically addicted? (Can also be television, video games, social media, etc.)*

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By the way, **MANAGE**
your **DISTRACTIONS!**

Social, TV, Video Games, Sports,
Phones, Texts, Apps, *Friends*, etc.

50-150 x PER DAY!

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Other Electronic Interruptions

- Text, Voice Mail, IM – can be handled same time as e-mail – part of the same “regimen”
 - Like E-mail – Special notifiers for “Special” people? (Sounds, pop ups, etc.)
 - May require retraining others around you about “reasonable” expectations
- Social Media – this simply requires discipline (addiction?)

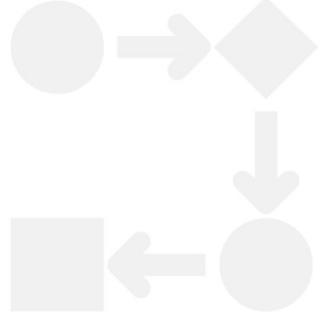
Interesting statistic about periodic social media use AT WORK

Are YOU interrupting YOURSELF?

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Get Into the Habit of Referring Back to Your Project List, Your Task List, and Even Your “Stickies” Throughout the Day!

They are your ANCHOR!



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BEWARE:

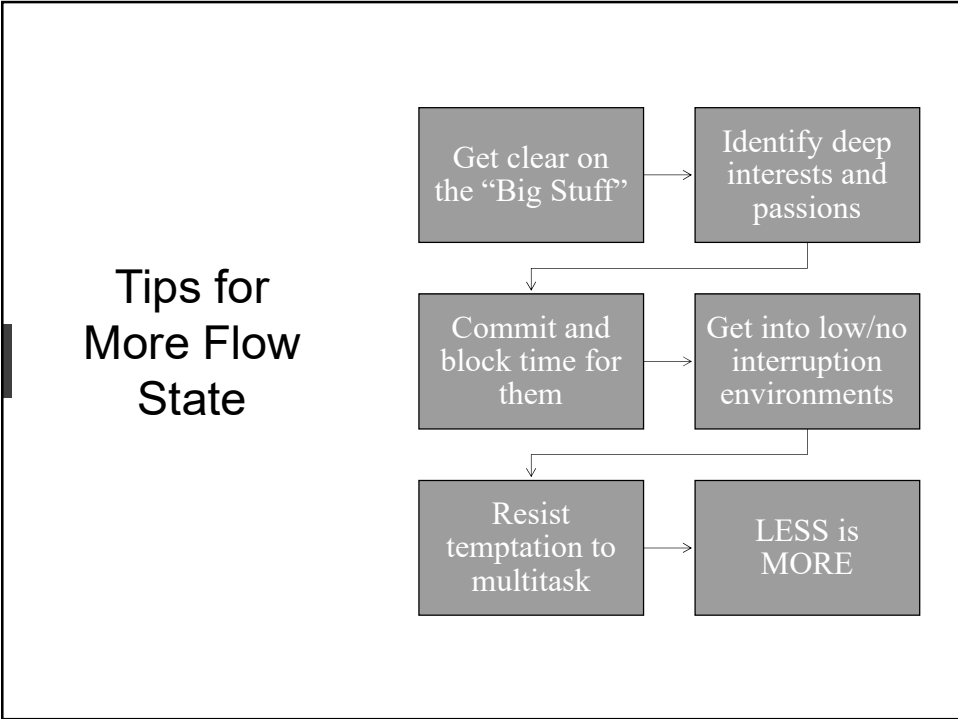
*The MYTH of
“Multi-Tasking”*

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BETTER:

*Find
“The Flow”*

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Strategic Time Blocking:

“Sacred” times for project / focus

Block your calendar proactively every week, and honor your own time blocks

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*“Sometimes the
very worst place to
get work done is
your desk or office.*

*People know they
can find you there.”*

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■

The Power of the Gatekeeper

- One easy way to greatly reduce interruptions – have someone stop them from getting to you!
- Obviously can take this too far
- Smart to protect your time and focus
- Be more deliberate – schedule meetings and even phone calls instead of allowing “stop by’s”

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The “Great Escape”

- Another great interruption blocker is your physical location:
 - Move to a conference room or empty cube
 - Telecommute (Hybrid?)
 - Sneak away! (Only give notice once again to “special people”)
 - They can't interrupt you if they can't find you!
 - Remember primary goal is to achieve desired outcomes for your firm!

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More on Physical Space

- Reconsider the old stalwart – THE DOOR
- Change your seating position
- Make your monitor a “blocker”
- Use blinds, plants, art, etc. to create more privacy

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Identifying “Frequent” Interrupters

Some are more likely to interrupt than others

This can also include family & friends

Develop strategies for each of those people

- Have them make a “talking points” list – consolidate interruptions to 1-2 daily
- Shared notes in “the cloud”?
- Get proactive with them – seek them out before they seek you out
- Avoid low-importance/casual interrupters

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Working Better With Interrupters

Get	Get them necessary training!
Enable	Enable them to make more decisions on own
Share	<p>Get information more shareable/transparent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share drives • Cloud tools • Even e-mail! • Other internal knowledge experts

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Are You An Interrupter Too?



Maybe you are
facilitating the culture



Worth a bigger
discussion?



Get
team/group/company
to acknowledge
issue, and create
agreed solutions



May require top
management
support (and their
behavior change
too!!!)

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Final Thoughts:

- Lots of info to chew on here:
 - Pick the ideas/strategies that work best for you
- Come back to your notes later to integrate more
- If an area of opportunity, consider a longer-form program in time management/personal organization
- Continue learning/practicing/perfecting your strategies
- Send me a note if you think of more!

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<p>Where to Get More Info:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Randy Dean's <i>Taming the E-mail Beast</i> (New e-book available on Amazon.com – search "<i>Taming Email</i>") • David Allen's <i>Getting Things Done</i> • Malcolm Gladwell's <i>Blink</i> • Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: <i>Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience</i> • Randy's E-newsletter: <i>Just send me an e-mail at randy@randalldean.com w/ "Timely Tips Please" in subject line – there is no cost to subscribe -- unsubscribe anytime</i> • Randy's LinkedIn Page: http://www.linkedin.com/in/randydean • Also on YouTube – search Randy Dean
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We're Done!!!

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