



Interruptions for Trying to Work

How is Work Managed

The Problems of the Twenty First Century

- Distractions within the modern workplace are many and varied and constantly on the increase.
- There is a seemingly endless array of potential interruptions but many of the most common involve communication.
- As technology and the speed of information flow increases humans are struggling to keep pace.
- The consequence is the increasing instances of fatigue and burnout in our work forces. Stress is known to increase proportionally to the number of distractions.
- There is very much a need to work smarter in place of harder or longer.

Maximising Productivity

- A significant tool in the arsenal of work smarter is the minimisation of distractions and interruptions.
- It is reported that workers shift tasks on average every three minutes due to unwanted interruptions taking up 28% of worktime in the average day.
- Workers were also shown to take 30% longer to complete tasks with a two-fold increase in repetition of work due to errors.
- Productive work time has also shown to have decreased in those working from home.

(Alkahtani et al, 2020)

Taking Back Control

- The nature of human behaviour suggests people will come to expect us to behave in a way that we have initiated e.g. replying to messages immediately.
- This does not mean we should avoid answering messages, but we can change our behaviour to control the priority and time in which we reply to minimise distraction.
- The key becomes communication with others of your intention to answer as soon as it is convenient. Most colleagues are happy to comply if they understand you are attempting to minimise distraction.

Working Smarter: Email

- Avoid having the email tab open while you are working.
- Set your notifications to advise that you will answer within a certain time range.
- Reserve 5-10 minutes per hour for checking emails and prioritising responses (blocking).
- Utilising one-line emails is becoming more common and reduces interruption time for the sender and receiver.

Working Smarter: Instant Messaging

- Research on instant messaging demonstrated no effect on task accuracy of participants but negatively affect task completion.
- Ensure the device is not in eye line and on silent. If required for work purposes check at intervals that fall into the natural flow of work between tasks.
- If a compulsion is felt to answer a message immediately, practice delaying the response till the next break in workflow.
- When messaging, if a compulsion to expect an immediate answer is felt, practice sending the message then not checking for a reply till the next break in natural workflow occurs.

Working Smarter: Involvement

- Ensure your work environment is comfortable, well-spaced, well ventilated and if possible, away from high traffic areas.
- If office based, have partitions placed so there is no eyeline to other colleagues.
- Limit discussions to meeting rooms and designate the office as a reduced noise area.
- During time critical tasks initiate a do not disturb policy for limited periods of time.

Working Smarter: From Home

- Maintain a schedule and have a protected start/stop time.
- Work in 2-hour blocks and take regular breaks and try to get some sunlight.
- Minimise non-productive email time.
- Communicate your intention to work to others in your home.
- Follow approved codes of practice for computer setup and use.
- Reserve one room for work (not the bedroom).