



The Myth of “Multi Tasking”

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When you are giving a presentation to your team, or to a client, how do you feel when you notice that one or more participants are looking down at their I-Phone or Blackberry devices? How valued do you feel when you are speaking with someone on the phone, and you notice that they are talking “off line” to someone else? Or you hear the clickety clack of their computer keyboard in the background, when you know they have no reason to be typing related to your conversation? What goes through your mind when you are having a face to face conversation with a friend and he reaches to his belt and pulls up his cell phone to check the source of the call causing the phone to vibrate? (or ring?)

In each of these cases the other person may be thinking she/he is multi tasking. In reality they are focusing their attention on something besides you and your needs or your information.

The proliferation of electronic devices, e-mail and Internet blogs, has led to the idea that people can do two or more things simultaneously. This is a myth!

To illustrate: close your eyes (after you read this) and imagine a large elephant, then open your eyes. Now close your eyes and imagine a fuzzy little lion cub. What happened to the elephant? It disappeared while you were thinking of the cute little lion cub. Your mind can only hold one thought at a time. So when you think you are “multi tasking,” you are just shifting your attention from one task or issue to another, then back, which is not only inefficient – it is unproductive.

There is such a thing as “multi processing.” That is, you can have many projects and tasks in stages of progress at one time. To be effective at multi processing, you need to do a little planning, and you need to have a system for projects or tasks in progress, so you can trust that the next step will come up for your attention at the right time. Using such a “system,” that your mind trusts, will enable you to temporarily forget the details, with confidence that they will come back for your attention at the appropriate time.

We call this process, “Time Activate.” Whether your system uses Outlook, Act, GoalMind, a Google or Yahoo calendar, CalendarStar®, or a paper planner, the principles are the same. When something needs your attention in the future, Time Activate it. Use your system to tell you three “W’s” or pieces of information:

- What to do
- When to do it
- Where the information is to get it done.

The last “W” enables you to take the paper off your desk and put it away, or the e-mail from your inbox and put it in a specific e-mail folder. Time Activating makes you an effective “Multi-Processor.” Now you can focus on the people or tasks at hand.