

Strategies for time management

[Business](#), [Management](#)



What comes to mind when you think of time management? Project planning? Task prioritization? If these are words that you connect with time management you're not wrong. Both of those are extremely important for effective time management. However, another substantial component of time management is procrastination. Periodically we encounter so many other things to fill our time that we never end up spending time on our project.

Our gadgets and all the digital things we look at on them are designed to not let us engage in a single task. Interruptions as brief as few seconds are enough to cause disturbance and continuity while we are performing any task. Research shows that merely having a mobile on the table is sufficiently distracting to reduce empathy and rapport between two people who are in conversation. Can you do your homework, while checking your email, in between snaps and text messages, with music in the background? What actually happens when you do sit down to work? It is possible you start with the best of intentions. But, after 20, 60, or 90 minutes, you discover you haven't really made much progress at all. Or maybe you have fallen into the trap of multitasking, where you assume you are getting work done because you feel busy, but in truth, you are distracting yourself from real progress by hopping back and forth between several tasks.

Multitasking could be described as diverting one's attention rather than actually doing two different things efficiently at the same time. Several studies have revealed that there is a downside to multitasking. One study from Stanford University reported that people who multitask are more easily

distracted, less productive, score lower on tests for recalling information, and make more errors. (Gorlick, 2009)

So, how can you make a change? Rather than multitasking, why not try monotasking? Today I am going to talk to you about the importance and efficiency of monotasking over multitasking, as well as suggest some strategies to incorporate monotasking at work. At one time, “ multitasking” was the buzz of the day. If you couldn’t write that long report, tidy your desk, do the household chores, judge your emails, receive the phone calls and eat a sandwich all at the same moment, you were just not working effectively. While multitasking occurs almost automatically in certain situations, such as childcare and household chores, studies have shown that these multitasking activities aren’t productive and they stress you out, leaving you tired and exhausted. On the other hand, there are plenty of times where monotasking is effective.

What is monotasking, exactly? It’s a reminder to focus on one task at a time. Constantly switching attention between multiple tasks may seem like something we can learn to be good at, but it is much more likely to degrade our performance on any of those tasks. Using monotasking approaches to time management encourages short, concrete tasks that are the sole focus of your attention for a block of time. G

enerally speaking, monotasking is more efficient than multitasking.

Multitasking requires being involved in a number of different tasks at a time, diverting your attention, disturbing the focus, and producing less effective results, whereas monotasking enhances focus and time management, while

minimizing interruptions. It can actually be a bit more challenging than it sounds, especially after becoming accustomed to multitasking. However, there are a few very basic strategies can help get you on the road to more productive work blocks.

Strategy 1: Plan for monotasking

When you sit down to work, set a concrete goal, then ask yourself:

- What am I specifically trying to accomplish right now and why is it significant?
- What obstacles might I face, and how might I address them so that I can still make progress toward my goal? When you are finishing up your work, try responding to the following questions:
 - What progress have I made?
 - What new issues need to be addressed?
 - How should I proceed next? Be sure to write down these questions and answers. After all, time management is about saving time and energy. It's a waste of time to have to try to recall what you were doing the last time you worked on your project.

Strategy 2: Remove distractions in your work environment

This is easier said than done. Anything that involves focus is difficult when you are surrounded by distractions. And, unfortunately, we don't always have access to the perfect work environment. There are some helpful suggestions that can help eliminate some of the distractions in your workplace, though:

- Close your email and silence your phone. Really, shut everything down. Even seeing a notification that someone is trying to contact you will make it difficult to focus.
- Use apps to lock down your browser and use various desktops on your computer to separate programs from each other, omitting things that aren't relevant to your current task.
- Listen to a white noise or background noise generator to prevent other noises from interfering with your focus.

Strategy 3: Set time limits

It's considerably easier to stay focused if you merely have to do it for only a brief period of time. For example, work for 25 minutes and then take a 5-minute break.

Strategy 4: Clear your brain

Do you ever find it difficult to focus because you have other ideas popping into your head uninvited? To make sure your ideas don't get lost in the shuffle, take some time to write down all of the things competing for your attention. Hopefully, having these ideas stored somewhere will relieve you of the pressure to remember everything and allow you to focus on one thing at a time.

This way, if you come up with a new idea while you're working on something else, you don't have to stop and switch to that task right away. Simply jot it down and continue what you're doing. You can return to the new idea later.

Summary

The most effective way to make progress is to set distinct goals and do manageable pieces of focused work to make progress on those goals. Don't trust yourself to remember everything and don't make the mistake of waiting for big chunks of time. Do one thing at a time, focus for a short while, then move on to something else! You'll be done before you know it!