**[Distractions at Work?](http://www.fropki.com/distractions-work-vt11750.html" \l "p68922)**

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**When you leave home, you have a clear work agenda outlined for the day. Once at office, things don't work as smoothly. You inevitably fall prey to umpteen distractions that consume your time, energy and concentration.   
  
You receive phone calls from friends, text messages, e-mails and more. Besides these, you have may have to tackle a customer/ client crisis, co-workers who need your help or just want to chat or emergency meetings that disturb your schedule. Then, there's your boss who constantly wants updates for various projects.  
  
Sounds familiar? Here are some tips on how to tackle workplace distractions and use your time at work more effectively:  
  
e-mail  
  
Access your e-mail only at certain times of the day. Doing it as your day begins will give you a headstart.  
  
If at all possible, never touch the same e-mail twice. Avoid the tendency to go through the same mail again and again.  
  
Do not open your mail unless you have time to read it and take some action on it, ie reply to it, delegate it, save it or delete it.  
  
Create separate folders  
  
Avoid a flooded inbox by creating separate folders for your boss, special projects, clients, colleagues, etc. Learn the Traffic Light principle:  
  
Red folder: For mails from the boss, clients, projects that are on the verge of completion and deadlines that you need to meet.  
  
Yellow folder: Meeting highlights or minutes can be placed in a yellow folder for your perusal at a later date. These are the types of things that can be read during free time, lunch, while backing up files, printing, etc.   
  
Green folder: This can be your 'On the move' folder. Store all the mails, articles and presentations you will need to carry in the next meeting or a client review.  
  
e-mail management tips  
  
As far as possible, attach the old message when replying to an e-mail. Try using the 'Reply with history' option in your mail if available.   
  
This feature is offered by some e-mail providers like 'Lotus Notes' and enables you to automatically attach all the original e-mails that may have been exchanged so far.   
  
Select the reply option and you will see a 'drop down menu' with several options. Choose 'reply to all with history' or just 'reply with history'. This will help the recipient remember its original content.   
  
Use e-mail tools such as auto-responders and the 'Out of office option' in case you are away for a long time. This will make sure that people who mail know of your status and can possibly stop mailing you during that period.  
  
Auto responders will allow you to get back to multiple people without having to invest any time at all. To learn more about auto responders, you can visit:  
  
\*Replymailautomator  
\*Yenomarketinginc  
\*Myautoresponderpro  
  
For long or complicated e-mails, type your message in MS word and copy it to your e-mail. This allows you easy access for editing and retrieval and also saves you time.  
  
Quick tip: Don't provide your official e-mail ID to friends and do not send forwards to others on their official IDs as far as possible.   
  
Online chat  
  
There are several service providers who provide online chat services (also known chat clients). Rediffbol, Yahoo Messenger, MSN, AOL, etc, are some of the popular ones.  
  
Remember that co-workers, customers or supervisors may be nearby, so be tactful in your conversations.  
  
Should you chat at all when in office? What is the company's policy? Some organisations monitor the online activities of their employees. The last thing you want is to be caught flirting with the cutie in the next cubicle.  
  
Use chat only for business communication. When you don't want to be interrupted, you can use the following options:  
  
Select the 'Away' option  
Select the 'Busy' option  
Appear offline ie you can only see who all are online but cannot chat with anyone.  
"I prefer to appear 'busy' on MSN while talking to my clients over the phone so that I am not interrupted by friends/ colleagues who may try to initiate a chat session," says Noida-based Amita Pandey, a 23-year-old technical support associate with a leading BPO.  
  
  
Phone calls  
If friends or spouse often call you 'just to say Hi', then start by informing them of your work timings. Give them a convenient time to call you like, say, later in the evening unless it is very urgent.   
  
Don't give your cell number to everyone  
  
You must aim at keeping your number as private as possible.  
  
Limit the number of incoming calls by distributing your number to fewer people.   
  
Avoid printing your cell phone number on your business card. If possible, try to print a landline number on your business card unless you are self-employed and need to get in touch with customers directly.  
  
Provide your cell phone number only to select work-related people: business contacts, clients, the boss and fellow employees.   
  
Get a caller ID  
  
A caller ID service will provide you with the luxury of screening your messages; consequently, you'll be able to limit the time you spend answering unimportant calls.  
  
"I never pick up phone calls from unidentified numbers when I am at work," says Shelly Jain, a Delhi-based consultant with NIIT.  
  
  
Switch to voice mail  
Let calls go into voice mail. Return calls when you have a set time to talk. Chalk out a 30-45 minutes slot to return all phone calls. Keep a notepad handy while calling back to jot down important parts of the conversation.   
  
Checking voice messages can also give you time to prepare for what the caller wanted and avoid having to call back and forth. Letting your voice mail pick up your calls gives you an uninterrupted hour or two which can be extremely productive.  
  
Most phones have voice mail as an inbuilt feature. Some service providers will charge between Rs 1-2 per voice mail left for you. Sometimes, it is a part of the basic offering or part of the plan you subscribe to, so you don't have to pay any extra. You may have to pay a small subscription fee to activate this service every month. Do check with your service provider for details.  
  
The 'Do not call' option  
  
Calls from your mobile service provider/ bank?  
  
Most banks and cell phone companies offer a 'Do not call' service. Just visit their Web site and, under customer preferences, type your phone number and choose the 'Do not disturb' option. This will reduce those pesky sales calls to a large extent.  
  
SMS  
  
This is a necessary evil that comes with the convenience of having a cell phone. There are jokes, tit-bits, pictures and everything else that one can think of that gets exchanged over an SMS.  
  
Don't reply to jokes or forwarded messages and, soon, you will stop getting them from your friends. Your attempt to be polite may be costing you an extra hour at work everyday. Not worth it!  
  
If it's not a forward, do you need to reply immediately? Not really. If it's an emergency, you would have received a phone call for sure.   
  
What if it is your boss or colleagues? The clich&#65533; 'What goes around, comes around' stands true. If you keep texting them, then you are sending a strong message that it is your preferred mode of communication.  
  
This is for the benefit of those around you: Deactivate the SMS ring tone and just put it on silent. You may like it but it can be quite irritating for others to listen to the same Himesh Reshammiya track or a baby gurgling every time you receive an SMS.**

**Pretend that every single person you meet has a sign around his or her neck that says, Make Me Feel Important/good. Not only will you succeed in sales, you will succeed in life……!**