

Meeting Recap: Managing the Pace with Grace

By Christina Eftekhar, Newsletter Editor

Jeff Davidson presented helpful ways to deal with the everyday stresses of too much information and too many choices to make in too little time. Not to be confused with time management, Jeff's strategies are designed for the technical writer faced with information overload and constant disruptions. If you've ever wondered why you didn't get anything done at work, keep reading.

Meeting Recap

- **What:** [Managing the Pace with Grace](#)
- **When:** February 16, 2012

Mega-Realities

Jeff presented four mega-realities that create a tumultuous world for technical writers and others who need to concentrate at work. The world's population grows at a staggering rate (one million people every four days). Every second a lifetime's worth of information becomes available. Our attention spans are down to about 3.5 seconds. And, finally, the overwhelming number of choices we must make each day causes the decision-making part of our brains to shut down faster than it should. It's no wonder we can't keep up with our favorite recreational reading—and, for many of us, our own blogs!



Spread Too Thin

Technical professional are pulled in many directions, often putting out others' fires before getting their own work done. Jeff cited studies that have shown interruptions and distractions happen every eleven minutes: the phone rings, someone stops by to chat, or you just *have* to refresh your Pinterest page. How does one find time to get his actual work done?



Because we are pulled in so many directions during the day, we feel like we have to multitask, believing that we can get more work done that way. Jeff showed that multitasking significantly diminishes our capability to accomplish anything. Sure, taking notes in a meeting or doing a small task while the printer churns is not a problem because they are routine, familiar tasks. But if we try to learn or accomplish a challenging task while adding other tasks, routine or not, this prevent us from getting either task done.

Strategies for a More Productive Day

Jeff recommends these strategies to get more done and feel accomplished at the end of the day:

Forsake multi-tasking and practice the art of doing one thing at a time.

- Whatever you're working on, get something as complete as possible. You will always come out ahead of the person juggling six things. Sometimes, if the large task is tedious, it will help the brain to switch to something easier, but always go back to the major task.
- Ask yourself, "What can I do today?" Focusing on one major task will help you prioritize your day. Maybe [these sticky notes](#) will help.
- If speaking with clients or coworkers on the phone, don't divide your attention with even seemingly harmless tasks because your ability to truly listen and focus is greatly diminished.
- Most people don't really get going until there's a crisis, with the biggest one being looming deadlines. Think about changing your personal due date to a week early. Yes, a week.

Create an interruption-free environment

- Even if you used all the time management techniques out there, everything falls apart if you allow interruptions and get sidetracked with shiny distractions. Prevent these productivity busters by trusting yourself in a room for 3-4 hours and see what you can accomplish.
- Look for the resources all around you. Can you leverage others' skills (stuff they can do but you don't like to do) to help deliver the work early?
- Find tools, technologies, and software that work for you and can you meet your new earlier deadlines.

Stay rested and get "good sleep" every night.

'Nuff said.

Focus on what you can do today.

The 'mega-realities' of life—too many people, choices, and distractions—will continue to exist without us. But we can choose where we give our time and attention.

Choose wisely.