

THE **Organized** Executive

Keeping it together in a chaotic world

Focus on the Task at Hand

by Jeff Davidson

A study published in *Science* magazine suggested that people spend 47% “of their waking hours thinking about something other than the activity they’re actually involved in.” What’s worse, that mental meandering makes them more unhappy than others who are able to focus on the task at hand and don’t allow their minds to wander.

That finding has staggering implications for all businesses and industry, and particularly for your own career. If the typical career professional spends nearly 50% of his or her time focusing on something other than the task at hand, then to improve productivity, simply increase concentration, for a benefit of 10%, 20% or 30%.

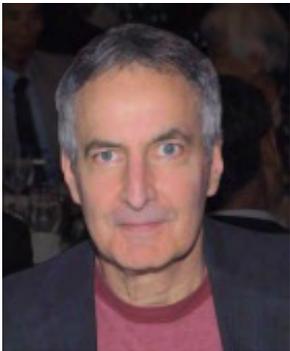
As you compose your daily to-do list, consider the number of times daily that you stray from what you set out to do. Is it because you have too many items on your to-do list, or perhaps because you didn’t accurately estimate how long it would take to accomplish each? Or is it because throughout the day you allow yourself to stray, and your mental meandering consumes valuable chunks of time that could be applied to the task at hand?

We’re all more informed than our counterparts of a generation ago. In our own careers, has a new level of cultural and social awareness translated into greater productivity and promotions, or an enhanced cultural and social environment?

Being inundated with external information, or constantly being engaged in mental meandering,

doesn't contribute to our daily goals and objectives or to our overall career paths. We are not more productive managers and employees as a result of our lack of concentration and focus. Indeed, we are just the opposite.

Take a cue from those who've learned to increase their powers of concentration by intentionally insulating themselves from potential distractions. You'll get more done in less time and feel better about your accomplishments as well as about yourself.



Jeff Davidson, “The Work-Life Balance Expert®,” has written 59 mainstream books, is an authority on time management, and is an electrifying professional speaker. He is the author of Breathing Space and Simpler Living. He believes that career professionals today in all industries have a responsibility to achieve their own sense of work-life balance, and he supports that quest through his website www.BreathingSpace.com.