

## Managing Your Workday Interruptions

Staying focused is vital to accomplishing your goals and being productive. During the workday, several interruptions may keep you from getting your job done. How should you deal with these types of interruptions?

### 1. Non work calls to your cell phone.

Unless you use your cell phone in your work, keep it turned off so that personal calls go to voicemail. Return urgent calls during a break in your work. Everything else can be returned in your free time.

It's important to let your friends and family know that you don't want to be bothered with calls at work unless it's an emergency. Once you stop answering calls at all times of the day, they'll get the hint.

### 2. Co-workers stopping to "chat."

If a co-worker stops to chat and you're busy doing something, kindly tell them that you're in the middle of a project and that you will stop by to see them when you get a minute. If you're not busy, it's ok to chat a bit if your company allows it. This can build camaraderie and good working relationships. You can always cut idle conversation short with the simple phrase, "I need to get back to work!"

### 3. People coming into your office or to your desk asking questions while you're working or maybe even while you are eating lunch.

Example - "This will just take five minutes."

Consider saying this, "I want to give you my undivided attention, so let me finish this work item, or Big Mac, and then I'll stop by to see you."

As with the "chat" interruption above, this allows you to control the time you invest when you actually do connect because you'll be at their workspace. You can walk away when you're done and not get trapped in your own office or cubicle.

#### 4. Handling e-mails or instant messaging.

Unless you need to regularly check e-mail in order to manage the tasks you're working on, I suggest checking it no more than 3 times a day. Once when you get to work to see if there is anything urgent for the start of that day, once before going to lunch and again at about 3:30 PM to process replies before the end of your workday. Also, consider disabling the alarm that announces arriving e-mail.

Keep your instant messaging turned off unless you use it in your work. In that case, react only to those messages that are urgent. Deal with less important messages when you're not in the middle of a project.

#### 5. Working on multiple projects.

Studies have shown that multi-tasking is actually counterproductive. Key in on one project at a time. You'll be more effective at getting it done in less time, and you'll do a better job on it. Your mental and creative energy will be focused and not distracted by what the other tasks may be demanding. Also, the sense of accomplishment from completing one task will energize you for the next project.

We all deal with interruptions in our workday, so it's up to us to manage them. Hopefully, these tips will help you remain more focused and productive.