

## Optimizing Communications Thru Mailing, Printing, Digital & Logistic Solutions

### Does Multi-Tasking Do What We Want It To Do?

The new norm in U. S. culture appears to be the assumption that multitasking is a necessary and valuable way of life, and many individuals aspire to greater competency and comfort with multi-tasking as a means to accomplish more each day. There are many reasons for these expectations to flourish. The overall pace of life is faster, technology has raised the bar on turn-around times and efficiency, and it seems like there are more options to schedule into each 24 hour day. Examples of common multi-tasking include:

- writing an e-mail while on the phone
- listening to a colleague while sorting through papers
- checking one's calendar while driving and on the cell phone

A growing body of scientific research actually shows that multi-tasking is extremely hard to do and can make one less efficient. It appears that trying to do two or more things at once or in quick succession can take longer than doing the tasks one at a time. The time that is lost is seen to increase with the complexity of the tasks that are being done. According to a study by the Families and Work Institute in New York, 45% of American workers believe that they are expected to work on too many tasks at once. The chronic stress of multi-tasking is actually linked to short-term memory loss.

Also in a study published in the Journal of Neuro-image, the point is made that managing two mental tasks at once, reduces the brainpower available for either task. This doesn't mean that we can't be effective doing several things at once, but it does mean that there is a cost.

Some of the warning signs related to the stress of multi-tasking include:

- short-term memory problems
- gaps in attentiveness
- the prolonged adrenaline rush of a stress response can damage cells that form new memory.

Lynn Battle in her article "Escape the Melodrama of Multitasking" gives the following suggestions:

#### Focus and finish

- Concentrate on one task at a time and complete it before moving on to the next.
- Try to handle each piece of paper only once, deal with it rather than shuffling it around on your desk.

### **Focus and finish (cont'd)**

- If you are in the middle of a conversation, don't interrupt it by starting another until you have finished the first.
- Learn to say no.
- Concentrate on the present.

### **Plan and prioritize**

- Slow down and take time out.
- Set aside some time in your day to plan your activities. Without this time, an individual will be responding to the urgent task, which is not always the important task.
- Build into your schedule time for yourself and consider it a priority.

### **Simplify and socialize**

- Look at what you are trying to achieve in your life.
- Consider what you can give up, (maybe for the short-term) in order to simplify your life and be able to better focus your energy.
- Tap into your support system.

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