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Forsake your electronic leash

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This is a guest article by Jeff Davidson

Nearly everybody I encounter proceeds as if they are constantly at risk of missing out on something by not being near their smartphone or other communication device. Sadly, such individuals can't consistently muster the concentration levels necessary to execute their tasks. The notion of being immersed in a project with no possible distractions is seemingly out of the question. That mindset represents irrational thinking for many reasons.

On most days, most of the time, no call is coming that is so critical that you have to be attuned to communication devices around the clock. Even when a large opportunity does come your way, if you position yourself correctly, you don't need to be overly concerned with having to answer the phone call or the inquiry the moment it comes.

Establishing notable differentiation in what you offer in your target niche increases the probability that callers and inquirers who are seeking your product or services will not jump ship merely because you weren't available the first moment they made contact. Indeed, my entire career as a speaker has been based on this concept. Wherever you happen to be along your career journey, when you differentiate what makes you unique and are better than the competition, the obsession with being available the moment anybody inquires vanishes.

Suppose you haven't clearly differentiated your product or services. Even then, you don't have to be totally attentive to smartphones and mobile devices around the clock. You merely need to establish a tradeoff between the times when it makes sense for you to concentrate on the task at hand, versus those times when you are available to all inquiries.

You can offer automated or posted messages that tell inquirers the best times to reach you. Most people can understand and respect that. Yes, there will be instances when the inquirer goes on to the next party down the list and you lose that opportunity. That, however, cannot be the rationale for your being a slave to communication technology around the clock.

Missing a phone call does not equal death. Missing an opportunity is not the end of the world, even missing a large contract because the inquirer went to the next party on the list. Conversely, what is the toll taken on you for being available 24/7? How effective have your solutions been for clients when you are not able to focus on the task at hand, offer your complete and undivided attention, and hence do your best work?

As we proceed into an ever-faster future of greater technological capability, the risk of missing

something important versus being able to do our best work will become a larger issue for more of the populace, more of the time. It's vital to establish parameters now as to when we will maintain "an open-door policy" of being accessible via electronic communication, and when we will safeguard our ability to focus and concentrate by removing or at least limiting any such intrusions.

You owe it to yourself to have quiet, uninterrupted stretches throughout the day and the week when you can think, evaluate and make the kinds of decisions that a person of your experience, talents and capabilities is capable of effectively executing.

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.