

# At Your BEST

on and off the job

July 1996

TOOLS FOR MANAGING WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE

## Interruption Management

**H**ave you ever felt like the last place in the world you can do your work is *at work*? Here's a two-step process to regain control over your time—and communicate your intent to stay focused:

**First, become aware of interruptions.** Added together, interruptions can be a major time waster. If seven people ask you three questions a day, you'll experience 21 interruptions a day and 105 a week, or almost three disruptions per hour in a 40-hour week.

**Second, classify the type of questions or requests you receive,** advises Jeff Davidson, MBA:

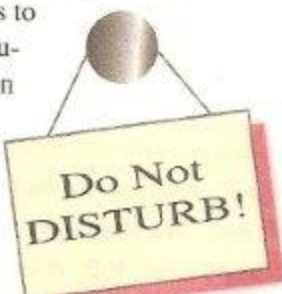
**Level 1:** These don't require your personal reply. "You'll find the answer to that in (this file, or the policy manual)" becomes your reply. Don't stop working for a Level 1 interruption.

**Level 2:** These are questions that should be answered by a co-worker or another department. Responding with, "I think you'll find that (so-and-so)

would have that information for you" again saves you time, while identifying sources for future reference.

**Level 3:** These require a straightforward "yes" or "no." Although they need your feedback, don't be tempted to add non-essential info, turning short distractions into large interruptions.

**Level 4:** This type of interruption requires input. If you're involved with work that will suffer from interruption and the query is not urgent, make an appointment to discuss things at a later time. This strategy allows you to take time when you have it, gives you time to prepare an answer, and provides time for co-workers to ponder creative solutions. If the situation requires immediate attention, move to prioritize needs, stay on track, and set a time limit. ●



Do Not  
DISTURB!