

# Constant Interruptions: The Blame Game

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The ever-increasing array of technology available to workers today accounts for the brunt of distractions we face. Technology, however, has always been with us in one form or another. *Self-management* capability is the deciding factor as to whether or not technology is intrusive.

Smart phones and other mobile devices that connect us to all corners of the globe represent an unprecedented challenge. Concurrently, we must understand and consistently acknowledge that with all technology comes benefits and detriments, as explained by the late Dr. Neil Postman in his book, *Technopoly*.

## **The Good *and* the Bad**

Technology manufacturers, advertisers, and dealers are adept at helping you focus on the benefits – especially in case you happen to become one of the world's expert users of the system they offer. How often, however, do you read about the downside of acquiring new tools and technology? In another of Dr. Postman's books, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, he eloquently observes that at the turn of the 21st century, it was understandable and even excusable that people didn't fully understand the impact that automobiles would have on their lives. It was difficult for people in 1912 to foresee interstate highways, drive-in movie theaters, fast food drive-throughs, and other business and social developments.

Early cars didn't contain radios or cassette players or, obviously, CD or DVD players. The impact that the automobile had on society was, and continues to be, enormous. Most of the populace lives and works based on some logistical formula related to transportation and in most cases that happens to be their own automobile.

Flash forward 100 years, and consider the impact of the smart phone on people in general and on career professionals in particular. Today, based on Dr. Postman's earlier observations, it is *inexcusable* for individuals, as well as the organizations that employ them, to proceed as if smart phones and other communication devices do not have a massive impact on how people work and live.

## **The Threat of Constant Interruption**

The ability to gather news, to call, to text, or to instant message virtually anyone in the industrialized world profoundly impacts our ability to focus, concentrate, and do our best work. As cell phone ringers go off in church, at the opera, in movie theaters, and everywhere in between, we are constantly reminded that people do not inherently understand how to manage even the fundamental aspects of the technologies that they have adopted.

Like Pavlov's dogs, we find it immeasurably rewarding, to discover, with a few clicks or a few taps, who's gotten in touch with us lately – who has noticed us and who has acknowledged our existence. From Facebook, to Twitter, to legions of other social sites and social networks, each of us is potentially exposed to more communiques in the course of a day than our forefathers could have conceived.

It is possible to be addicted to nearly anything, including checking for messages, so it's understandable that workers face unprecedented challenges in terms of staying focused, addressing the task at hand, and striving for completion. Each of us needs to be more vigilant than ever before in approaching our tasks. Our professionalism, our productivity, and our personal effectiveness depends on it.