

Getting More Done

How To Avoid Distractions

A productivity guide for busy people
with lots to do

4 Ways To Get More Done – Guaranteed!



1 - I need more



2 - Busy, busy



3 – Let's pause for a moment



4 - Just so!

You And Distractions - The Modern Dilemma

How often are you distracted from your work? The answer probably is: more often than you would care to admit.

Like most people today you have a lot to do.

In fact, you have more to do than you can ever get done. When you finish one task there are always more tasks that need doing.

Your “To do” list always has more and more tasks to be added to it.

In short, you're a modern working person living in the modern world.

You'd like to change things

Of course you'd like to change things. Who wouldn't?

You'd like to stop all those interruptions and avoid distractions. You'd like it even better if all those crises didn't keep landing on your plate or on your desk. Then you'd be able to get on with all the things you want to work on.

I'm afraid life isn't like that. Unfortunately, there isn't a great deal you can do about the external world. There will always be interruptions. There will always be crises. You're stuck with them.

However, there are things you can do to change the way you work and the ways in which you think about your work. Those things are not about going and hiding in an empty room so that you can get on with your work. You are probably capable of distracting yourself, even if you have found that empty room, – and you almost certainly do.

Most productivity experts will tell you that if you want to know what is stopping you from getting things done, you should look in the mirror.

- They're often right, which is good news.
- If you're the source of your productivity problems, you're also the solution to them.

In this guide we're going to take a look at **four types of distraction** that people bring into their working lives, often without realising what they're doing. We'll also look at how to overcome them.

You're probably not suffering from all four types of distraction but even if you're only distracting yourself in one way, you will get a lot more done, if you tackle that distraction.

Your aim

Your aim, as you look at the four distractions, is to think about how much time you could regain if you dealt with each distraction. Let's call the time you gain **discretionary time**. Your aim is to generate as much discretionary time as possible. **Discretionary time is yours to use as you think fit. We all want more of it.**

Some Facts About Time

There are 24 hours in the day.

There are 168 hours in a week.

You have the same amount of time as every one else.

There is no extra time. You can't buy time. You can't slow time down. You can't make time, but **you can fritter time away.** You can use time badly.

Therefore, your only choices about what to do relate to how to use your time better. Trying to fit in more and more tasks only works for a short space of time.

- You are a finite resource. You have limitations to your capacity. Whether you can run 100 metres, one mile, a half-marathon or a full marathon, you have your limitations. Remember that.
- You are a human being and you work in different ways on different days. Don't treat yourself like a machine and don't expect as much from yourself on each and every day.
- You will work better and faster on tasks you find interesting.
- You will work better if you allow yourself to rest, to exercise and to eat properly.
- You are a human being capable of lots so help yourself to achieve. Give yourself the tools you need.

What's just as important as all of the above?

From today, help yourself to avoid distractions. Until you are running the organisation in which you work, that's just about the best you can do. Avoiding distractions will make a huge difference to your productivity.

*And now let's think about
getting more done.*

Distraction One: I need more

I need more resource.

I need more training.

I need more money.

I need more time.

I need more confidence.



These are not the most important words. What's really important is a single word that often comes next.

That word is "before".

I need this before I can do that. It's this belief that distracts you from taking action and getting closer to your goal. This belief can paralyse you. When you're tempted to say you need more ask a question. Are you sure?

Most people want to be sure that they can do something satisfactorily before they begin a task. Most people want to plan and prepare. It makes sense to do so. However:

- Are you over-complicating matters?
- Are you afraid to make a start?
- Are you afraid that you might fail?
- Are you afraid of what will happen, if you succeed?

- Are you putting off doing this task for reasons that really don't stack up?

Ask yourself the following:

Is the task I am planning to do viable with the resources I have? If it is viable, what's the real reason why I'm putting off making a start?

Overcoming distraction one:

If you stop worrying about what else you need before you begin, and if you stop over-preparing, and just get on with the task, once you believe it's viable, how much time will you save over the next week or the next month?

Time gained by overcoming this distraction	I've saved minutes/hours
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Distraction Two: Busy, Busy



Here you are, hard at work.

You never stop. You're working from dawn until dusk or even later. (Midnight approaches.)

You're so busy. You have no time to stop and think.

You're always reacting to crises and dealing with what's urgent.

You work so hard, and you get a lot done, but somehow there are always more tasks to do. You just never get on top of things.

Being busy is a **distraction** when being busy means that you don't focus on the important tasks, and you don't give the right amount of time to the things that really matter.

Dealing with distraction two is all about understanding the difference between **being efficient and being effective**.



- If you're efficient, you get lots done and you work quickly and well, efficiently.
- If you're effective, you focus on doing the right things, the things that will make a difference to your overall success.

If you're effective, you don't just get things done, you get the right things done.

Overcoming distraction two:

Ask yourself the following question.

Are the tasks you're working on the most important tasks for you to attend to? Are you spending time on the things that will deliver **most value** to your organisation, help you to achieve your personal and work-related goals **most quickly** and with the **least effort**? If you're not, there's some rethinking of how you use your time to be done.

Just think how much more you could achieve, if you spent your time on the really important things, or if you allocated some time each day to the really important things instead of working on lots and lots of tasks that may or may not matter very much.

If you're tempted to say something about your ability to multi-task, stop. You will cause yourself more problems in the long run, if you try to do everything at once.

Time gained by overcoming this distraction	I've saved minutes/hours
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Distraction Three: Let's Pause For A Moment!



I'm not suggesting that you're taking time off to look and look again at the task in hand.

I am wondering if sometimes you put things off, and decide not to take action, for what seem like **really good reasons**. In other words, you can probably persuade yourself

that:

Now is not the right time.

I am not ready for this.

Doing this would be risky. Do we want to take this risk?

Are we getting too far ahead of people's expectations?

Is there really a need for us to make this change?

Shouldn't we carry on as we are? After all, we all know what to do.

It is always difficult to overcome the arguments for doing nothing (even if it is just deciding not to go through a door).

It's worth thinking about your attitude to risk as you consider options for taking action. Your attitude to risk plays a big part in how you manage your working life and how successful you are likely to be in your profession or industry.

If you're risk averse, you may fall victim to "analysis paralysis". This means you endlessly evaluate and assess and look at options – and fail to act. You tire yourself out so your way of thinking is the distraction.

It's important to think about risks, but it's important too to learn how to:

- manage risk
- work out the risks of not doing something
- become clear on the benefits of taking action.

You can never eliminate risk. There is no risk-free course of action or inaction. You can minimise risk by preparing for all eventualities.

One writer summed this up as:

“Hope for the best, but plan for the worst!”

Overcoming distraction three:

How much time do you spend evaluating options, thinking about risks and looking at what could go wrong? How much time do you spend planning and then not taking action?

If you could plan once, analyse once, assess risks once ... and then take appropriate action, how much time could you save?

Time gained by overcoming this distraction	I've saved minutes/hours
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Distraction Four: Just So!



This is the key to overcoming distractions.
Do things well but don't aim for perfection.
Nothing is ever perfect.
Forget:
It's got to be right.

It's got to be perfect.

Don't get caught up with the following:

There are mistakes that need correcting before ... *(add the relevant statement)*.

This could be done so much better.

We could improve this even more if we spent more time on it.

There are better ways of doing things than thinking like this. Let's do some more planning.

All of the above may be true, but if you strive to be perfect, you'll never get anything done.

No one can achieve perfection. Trying to be perfect is a distraction and a time waster. In the real world it's important to consider what's possible, **not** perfection.

What's important is to work out what will work.

- You could do more, but is that really necessary?
- You could do more, but how much will it cost to make a minor improvement? *(Consider time and energy.)*

- You could do more, but will any one notice if you do – or if you don't?

Remember that in most situations: “Good is good enough.”

Let's say you've done a good job and it's cost you three hours of your time. You could spend another two hours to achieve a little bit more, but is it worth it? Is it always worth it? Will anyone notice? Will anyone care?

Overcoming distraction four:

Most people want to do a really good job. Most people want to work to high standards. Yet, most situations demand good work, and good service. In most situations, good really is good enough.

How much time could be saved if sometimes you accepted that doing a good job is just fine?

Time gained by overcoming this distraction	I've saved minutes/hours
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You're Creating Discretionary Time

So how much time in a typical week have you managed to pull out of your schedule? How much more discretionary time have you created as a result of thinking about **these four distractions**?

I hope it's at least an hour per week. I'd like it to be more.

However much, or however little, time you've created. It's discretionary time. It's time you can now use in whatever way makes sense for you.

- You could use it to get a really important task completed that you just haven't had time to think about.
- You could use it to slow down and do some serious planning, so that you will be more in control of your time and your achievements in future.
- You could use it to take a break. (Taking an hour off, or a couple of hours off, is allowed.)
- You could use it in any of a number of ways that will give your satisfaction.

It's up to you.

Keep a note **below** of how much discretionary time you're creating for yourself in each of the next four weeks by following the advice in this guide. Keep track, too, of how you're using that discretionary time.

Your Time

Week one Using the time....	Week two Using the time....
Week three Using the time....	Week four Using the time....

In which of the four areas do you need to do most work?

Answer that question, and you will go a long way towards starting to work more productively.

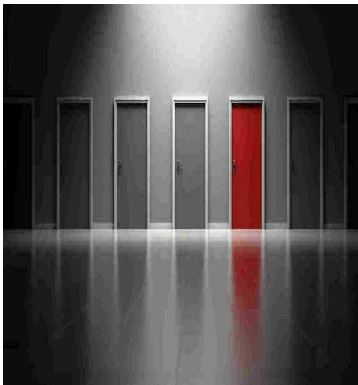
And The Images



You need more. That may not be more blue beads. But do you distract yourself by claiming you cannot proceed without more of ... *(you supply the resource: time, equipment etc)?*



How do you use your time? Do you know where your time goes? Do you use your time well? *(Probably not, because we all make mistakes with this one.)*



Let's pause and take stock. Maybe you think you are wasting time by stopping and thinking. **Remember the quick decision is not always the best decision**, even if it is only deciding which door to go through.



Find the key to success. For some people it will be to stop trying to do things to perfection. To others it will be stop putting off making a start on something or refusing to ask for help when needed. Find your own key and succeed more.