

# Workplace A.D.D.

A SPECIAL REPORT ON DISTRACTION AT WORK

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If this content interests you, take a look at the new book by our founder Curt Steinhorst. It's called *Can I Have Your Attention : Inspiring Better Work Habits, Focusing Your Team, and Getting Stuff Done in a Constantly Connected Workplace*, and is a much more comprehensive guide to this material.

**Want a free chapter?** [Get it here.](#)

Stay focused,  
Curt Steinhorst & The Focuswise Team  
(972) 282-8050 | [info@focuswise.com](mailto:info@focuswise.com)

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**focuswise**  
in participation with  
Curt Steinhorst

# read on, warrior

YOUR JOURNEY TO SUCCESS BEGINS ON THE NEXT PAGE

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from FocusWise



## 1: You are being swindled

Quick. Check your pockets. Retrace your steps. Take a look all around you, because something very valuable is being stolen from you. But it's not your wallet or your phone, or your credit cards or your identity. It's something worth even more than that. *It's your attention*, and it's being taken from you all the time. And it's not just *your* attention that's being stolen—it's also your employees' attention, your organization's attention, and the attention of your customers.

We have entered an age of distraction. Today, we only average three minutes of sustained work before an interruption comes along to distract us. And once we're interrupted, research shows that it takes us twenty-three minutes to fully return to our original task.

At home, sixty percent of people spend more time staring at a screen than talking with their partner. Eighty-eight of people actively entertain a second screen while watching TV. Take a moment to let that set in—many of us can't even remain focused on the device that used to be considered the cause of our ADD.

**Few things matter more than your attention.** It holds the power to unlock your potential. It can be the source of your success at work and

the key ingredient to great relationships. Yet, distractions are working around the clock to steal your attention away from you, along with your time and energy. And they're doing a pretty good job.

Simply put, your attention supply, your employees' attention supplies, and your organization's attention supply aren't adequate anymore for meeting today's information demands.

*This is the single most pressing issue in today's work environment.*

This special report is designed to help you and your organization with attention management. It will help you understand

### PERSONAL LIFE HELD HOSTAGE

60% spend more time on their computer than with their significant other.



People over 18 spend 11 hours a day connected to digital media.<sup>6</sup>



88% of people use a second screen while watching TV.<sup>7</sup>



### DISTRACTIONS MAKE US FEEL WORSE

73% of respondents believe their devices contribute to **stress in their lives**.

61% of those surveyed report feeling **jealous, depressed, or annoyed** after checking updates.

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the costs, the causes, the consequences, and the cures for the biggest issue facing us today.

First, let's talk cost.

*It costs you time:* Every time you move your focus from one subject to another, you pay a 're-orienting tax.' This is why it takes us 40% longer to complete each task when we attempt to juggle them together. In other words, you are losing the equivalent of two workdays in productivity every week!

*It costs you work quality:* Distracted work reduces the quality of your performance by the same amount as skipping an entire night of sleep.

*It costs you meaning:* 1/3 of workers do not have time to think about the purpose of their job. In the rush to answer emails, respond to texts, chat with colleagues, and dodge phone calls, we do not create the space necessary to consider the why of our work. No wonder 70% of US workers feel disengaged. And do you know what disengaged workers do? They flock to places where they can find meaning, like Facebook where they receive endless updates from friends and family.

Attention is one of your most precious resources. How you allocate it will govern the depth, or shallowness, of your relation-

## YOUR BUSINESS SUFFERS



### 40% REDUCTION IN WORKER PERFORMANCE

That's **3 hours** per work day due to distractions!<sup>2</sup>



### BRAIN BOMB

When distracted, the IQ of a Harvard MBA drops to the level of an **8 year old**!<sup>1</sup>

### SHELLING OUT THE DOUGH

Businesses waste **\$10,375 per employee annually** on interruptions.<sup>3</sup>



Studies found that it takes **23 minutes** to return to an original task once interrupted:<sup>5</sup>

ships. How you decide to prioritize it will make you better, or worse, at your job. What you do to take care of it will reinforce your sense of meaning — or cause you to lose sight of it. The steps you take to confront it will separate your organization from so many others that have gone the way of distraction, or it will guarantee that your organization blends in with the pack.

Read on and learn how to use the factors that influence attention to take command of your life, or you can let it be controlled by a thousand distractions.

The choice is yours.

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## 2. Your market's new currency

You've likely heard the expression, "The ADD workforce" to capture the majority of people who drive today's economy. You may have even used the expression yourself. But have you ever wondered what exactly has brought about this new "ADD workforce"? If you have, you might be surprised at just how deep the answer goes.

The "ADD workforce" is the result of a massive cultural shift towards a new kind of economy—an economy that buys, sells, trades, and competes over people's attention. No longer are we living in an information-driven economy. Those days are gone, but few have come to realize this fact.

In this new economy, attention is the primary currency. This has fundamentally altered the way we engage, communicate, and relate to one another. It's changed the way we sell and the way we live.

*But wait, you might interject—hasn't attention always been something valuable to people?* Yes, it has. In fact, as far back as you can track the word *attention* in English (all the way back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century) you can find instances of people using the phrase "pay attention." That's because attention has always been such a valuable commodity to people that whenever they've talked about it, they've referred to it as a form of payment. We only have so much of it to spend, like money. But for the past 600 years, this was only a metaphor. Today, it's much more than that. It's a reality. Attention has actually become our currency.

*"Attention is the real currency of businesses and individuals," writes Tom Davenport. "Those who don't have it want it. Even those who have it want more. You can trade it: you can purchase it ... And attention can be converted into other currencies."*

But what makes our current situation unique that this dramatic shift would happen NOW? The answer: attention is scarcer today than it's ever been before. It's harder to come by, harder to keep. It's a scarcer commodity now because of the **overabundance of information that's been made available to us, and also because of the historic rise of new technologies that are uniquely designed to capture our attention.**

We have the full array of knowledge available to us as at every moment. Think about the implications of such a reality. We have witnessed the end of the age of the bar bet! We no longer have to just 'agree to disagree' on random, spurious facts claimed over drinks. Now we reach for our phones and, within seconds, debates over which designer Jennifer Lawrence wore to the Oscars or which European country Sigmund Freud was born in are resolved!

In 2008, the average person daily consumed more than three times the amount of information as the average person in 1960. And though the study that revealed this fact hasn't been updated, experts believe that the average person today has doubled their information consumption since 2008.

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This inundation of readily available mass information has created a new problem that we are not well equipped to deal with. Herbert Simon puts it this way:

*In an information-rich world, the wealth of information means a dearth of something else: a scarcity of whatever it is that information consumes. What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.*

**Herbert Simon**

And a poverty of attention creates an attention economy.

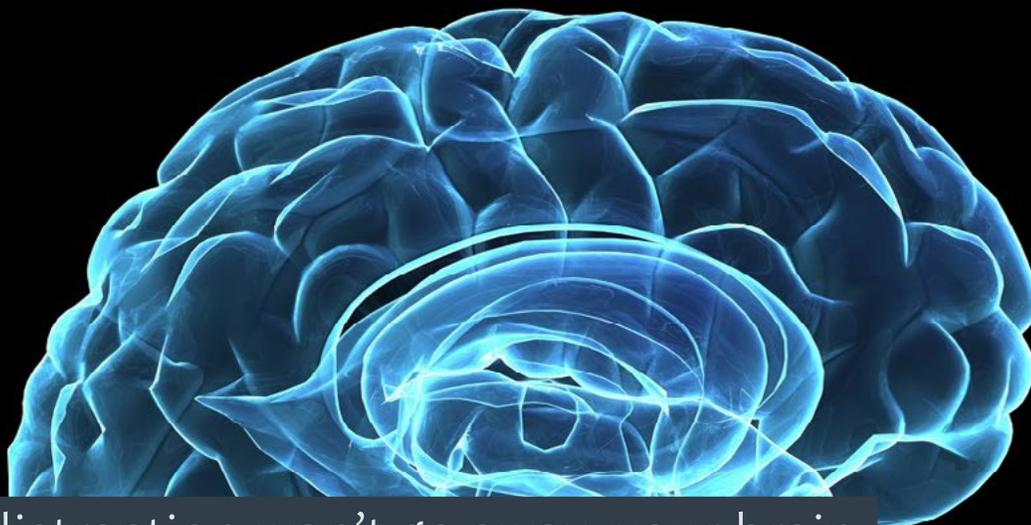
## **Attention is our scarcest resource.**

And, as is true of any scarce resource, everyone wants yours. Your friends want it. Your family demands and deserves it. Your colleagues ask for it. Your customers require it. Other companies would like to take all of it from you. Your success in today's market, then, will be determined by how well you can manage and effectively allocate your attention.

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## 3. Why distraction won't go away: your brain

So, how do we better manage and allocate our attention? First, we have to understand how it works.

Right now, you quite literally have an endless amount of options for where you can direct your attention. You can focus on the text you just received, the comfort of the seat you are sitting in, your sore calves from yesterday's long overdue jog, the smell of coffee from the break room, or, hopefully, this text. Here's what you can't do: focus on any two of them at once.

Our brains are only capable of devoting active focus to one sphere at a time. However, within that one sphere, the number of objects people can hold in attention varies, and depends upon their past experiences within that sphere. For instance, the professional drummer can tap the bass with his left foot, the cymbal with his right foot, and myriad other drums with his hands all at the same time. I, on the other hand, completely lose rhythm by merely adding a toe tap while shaking a maraca. But neither the professional drummer nor myself can successfully respond to an email while doing whatever amount of drumming is already in our wheelhouse. When it comes to attention, we are single-sphered creatures.

What this shows us is that none of us are efficient at "switch tasking"—moving back and forth from one sphere of attention to another. There's a reorienting penalty every time we switch spheres. Example: If I have been reading an article but then decide to answer a phone call from my cousin in Philadelphia, once the phone call is over and I'm ready to read again, my

attention to the article has not gone unpunished. Something has been lost. What page was I on? What was the author saying before the phone rang? What was that thought stirring in my brain about the article? Switching our spheres of attention penalizes us by causing a 40% drop in our efficiency.

**The first key to attention management, then, is to reduce your "switch tasking."** The longer you can remain focused upon one sphere (until your goals within sphere are accomplished and you are ready to move to another) the better. But this is easier said than done, and the reason for the difficulty is that your brain has two different systems of attention that compete with one another.

Strangely enough, because of these two competing systems of attention, your brain has something in common with a mini-van carrying a family across the country on a road trip. That's right, your brain is like a family of five that's packed up its bags and piled into a van to make the long trek to the Grand Canyon. Just as this van flies down the highway so your brain flies through events all day long. And just as there are two conflicting groups of people in the mini-van — those having fun in the backseat, and those doing the driving in front seat — so there are two conflicting kinds of attention living in your brain — the system that wants to sit in the back and be stimulated by new and novel things, and the system that sits in the front and wants to accomplish goals.

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## SYSTEM OF ATTENTION #1: KIDS IN THE BACKSEAT

Our brain's first system of attention is centered on enjoyment, like kids in the backseat of a van. The sole task of kids on a road trip is to avoid boredom, so they look out the window for fascinating cars or funny looking animals, they play with toys and video game devices, and they poke and bother each other — all in the name of finding entertainment. Similarly, a major system of your brain is wired to seek new and novel stimulus, with a particular focus on finding pleasure and avoiding pain. Neuroscientists often call this 'bottom up' attention. As we go through life, this system of attention is always looking out for things that will excite us that we want to go towards, while also watching out for things that cause us pain that we naturally flee. Your immediate needs are driven by this system.

## SYSTEM OF ATTENTION #2: THE PARENT IN THE DRIVER SEAT

Our brain's second system of attention is centered on tasks, or the desire to accomplish goals, like a parent in the driver seat trying to get everyone safely and soundly to the destination. The goal of the driver is completely different from that of the kids. Everything the parent who's driving the car sees — everything that comes across their line of sight — is either a threat or an aid to their goal, and they have to work hard to push away the threats in order to focus. Similarly, a major system of your brain is wired for executive functions. Neuroscientists call it our "top-down system", or "executive control," because it allows us to make active decisions about where we will focus. You can choose to file your taxes, or at least fill out the extension. You can will yourself to wash your car and change its oil. You have the power to take control of your attention so you can finally put that scrapbook together of the Disney vacation your family took 6 months ago. Your future self loves it when this system of your attention wins.

Our lives see positive results when we aren't switching tasks too often. Our lives also see positive results when the parent in the driver seat of our attention takes control and hushes down the crazy kids in the backseat of our attention. **But, to help this part of our focusing system to win the battle, we need to understand the four factors that are always influencing the arena of attention.**

I call these crucial factors the Four E's.

### ENERGY:

The top down system requires far more mental energy. The frontal lobe is the area of the brain that Dad uses to drive. It runs on glucose, which is a valuable and depleting resource as the day goes along. The more of it we have, the easier it is to focus. Understanding the role of glucose in your ability to focus has dramatic consequences on how you shape your work. Here's one practical way to use your energy more effectively: Complete your most mentally exhausting tasks early in the day. Don't spend your morning responding to emails. Spend your morning pumping out that hefty proposal, while leaving the inconsequential emails for the afternoon.

### EXPERIENCE:

Your brain constantly changes based on your prior experiences. Scientists call this neuroplasticity. Let's use a 16 year old for example. They know everything in the world. Just ask them. Yet, they can't merge into oncoming traffic without causing everyone else to scream in sheer terror. 16 year olds simply don't have the experiences to effectively interpret the thousands of pieces of data coming at them. It's all new and novel. On the other hand, the more active focus you give to a particular sphere, the broader you will be able to focus within that sphere. Distracted work, unfortunately, leads to a need for more distraction required by your brain to keep you from feeling bored. Your experiences shape your focus.

The great news? We can actually train our brains to improve focus. BUT, it takes training. For instance, practicing mindfulness (which is the non-religious way of saying prayer or meditation) just ten minutes a day has shown to dramatically increase one's ability to have sustained focus.

### ENVIRONMENT:

We are wired for distraction — our sensory system always wants to be stimulated. This makes perfect sense for survival. If you are in the jungle, the earlier you hear/see/smell the lion who views you as potential lunch, the better your chance of avoiding such an unfortunate fate. However, despite CareerBuilder.com's hilarious Super Bowl commercial featuring chimpanzees as co-workers, we no longer typically come into

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contact with various species who can end our lives. Our brain has not been so quick to adapt. Thus, we are easily distracted, so we must find other ways to dull our search for environmental distractions. The best way to limit those distractions is to ensure our environment doesn't contain them. In today's world, the most important 'environment' to control is your virtual environment. Email is a cesspool of distraction, always offering a new potential reward from the next inbox notification.

## EMOTION:

Emotions drive attention. If you don't care about a subject, you won't focus on it. This makes work quite difficult, particularly in a world where seventy percent of the workforce is not actively engaged in their job. Why do you find yourself checking Facebook when you should be finishing the project? Because your family is on Facebook. Your friends are on Facebook. The classmate from senior level English (who you didn't even talk to then) is on Facebook – and they are skiing in Europe! To successfully direct our attention, we must find ways to actively engage our emotions in our work.

## **Attention is a powerful resource.**

Unfortunately, it's one that we cannot easily control directly. The good news is that by understanding and leveraging the four factors that dictate how well we allocate our attention, we can exercise the control that will make us excel at work, at home, and at everything in between.

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## 4: The distracted individual

Here's a short summary of what we know about you.

When it comes to focusing, you are in above your head. Even if you happen to be especially gifted in the area of mental focus, no one is properly suited to handle the multiplied interferences of this day and age.

Your brain's attention constantly shifts from object to object, idea to idea. This happens naturally — researchers call it 'the wandering mind.'

It takes significant effort and discipline for you to gain cognitive control over your wandering mind. You must voluntarily and consistently disengage from the newest object of desire to focus instead on some greater goal.

Nothing, not one thing, is a better predictor of financial success than your ability to exercise cognitive control (check out the Stanford marshmallow experiment).

The number one casualty of the distraction epidemic is the individual. Companies lose money, but individuals lose that and far more. Our creativity weakens. Our emotional connections fade. Our relationships struggle. Our sense of purpose dwindles.

We live in a distracting world, **but you can learn to take your most valuable resource back.** By intentionally putting a few strategies in place, you can enrich your life and separate yourself from the competition along the way. You can reclaim

your time, energy, and focus and put them towards the things that matter most.

Some distractions are necessary — like emails, text messages, phone calls, and alerts. Others are guilty pleasures — such as Pinterest, Facebook, and Instagram. But all are costly if we aren't careful. And this only begins to scratch the surface.

Below is a list of the best strategies to re-gain your focus. Steal back your attention. After all, it belongs to you.

### TIPS: ENERGY FACTOR

#### #1 PRIORITIZE, PRIORITIZE, PRIORITIZE

The first rule of personal attention management can be summed up in one word: *prioritize*. Why? Your frontal lobe is the area of your brain responsible for focusing. It happens to function just like a muscle, which means it tires easily. Every time you overcome a distraction, you're sapping precious mental resources that you need to effectively ignore the next distraction.

So how do you prioritize? Remember: when the workday "does its worst", you should tackle it with your very best. The key to making the most of your frontal lobe is to start your morning by setting priorities in order of mental effort. In other words, leave the emails for later and pound out the proposal now. The earlier in the day, the more energy you will have, and the easier it will be to complete what you need to. Rather than allowing your day to be dictated by the external voice that is loudest (or

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pitchy-est), actively decide what work will require your best mental focus and begin with that. **To give your best for the day's worst, take on the harder tasks first.** Fight for the first two hours of your day. Set meetings for later in the day. Don't allow your most precious mental resource to be robbed by a boss or colleague droning on about a meaningless topic.

## #2 FUEL YOUR FOCUS

It turns out our teachers were right — at least when they told us to eat a good breakfast before tests. Our ability to properly focus takes a lot of mental energy. Protein in the morning will keep our brains running far stronger for far longer. So stop skipping the meal and begin to feed your focus. It's hungry.

## #3 NO SLEEP SUBSTITUTE

You always take the time to charge your phone. You're careful to charge your laptop, but do you show the same concern for re-charging yourself? You should. If you aren't getting enough sleep, good luck. Reading and sending work email on a smartphone late into the evening doesn't just make it harder to get a decent night's sleep, but new research findings show it also exhausts workers by morning and leaves them disengaged by the next afternoon.

### TIPS: EXPERIENCE FACTOR

## #4 BE THE PROPER YOU FOR THE PROPER PLACE

A wise man once said, "Wherever you are, be all there." Life requires all of us to wear different hats: hats for work, family, friends, church, and recreation. But it's so easy to wear the wrong hat at the wrong time. The challenge — multi-use devices confuse the environmentally distinctive roles we play. I work anywhere. I play anywhere. I deposit checks anywhere. We lose purpose and productivity when we try to do everything all of the time. We end up thinking about family and friends while we are at work, responding to texts from our co-workers while we are at home.

The solution? Practice being your *working self* while you are at work. Practice being your *family self* when you are with your family. In previous ages, a person's immediate environment dictated their task. If they were in the field, they were working. If they were in the house, they were playing with their kids.

**That's how the human brain likes it. Habits are developed in environmentally specific settings.**

## #5 PRACTICE 'NO PHONE ZONES'

The surest way to miss out on life is to spend it staring at a screen. Don't renounce your phone permanently — set a time every night when you agree to only check your phone if you get a call or text ... and you only respond if it's a pressing issue. My wife and I have 7-9pm set, with alarms to remind us.

### TIPS: ENVIRONMENT FACTOR

## #6 MAKE YOUR COMPUTER CALENDAR-CENTRIC

Copernicus famously told the world that the sun was the center of the galaxy even though everyone still believed it was earth. In the Copernican spirit, I say you should put your calendar at the center of your computer screen even though everyone else goes on prioritizing email. Siimon Reynolds, bestselling author of *Why People Fail*, offered this to me, and it's been game changing. While prioritized task lists are a huge step up from the "let my newest email tell me what's important" strategy, it's not enough. Take your priorities and assign time chunks to cover each one. **Your calendar, rather than your inbox or task list should now be the primary 'screen' on your computer.** As I use Google Calendar, I literally watch as the red line slides down my screen, reminding me that I am running out of time on this task before I must move to the next. For example, I have seven more minutes dedicated to finishing this article. This causes my brain to release the right concoction of chemicals/neurotransmitters to work as though I can't procrastinate any more—as though I'm up against a tight deadline.

## #7 UTILIZE ZENWARE

Can't resist the quick peek at Facebook when you are on a tight deadline? It's time for you to use technology to protect you *from* technology. Zenware is a type of program available on your smartphone, tablet and laptop that will turn off the internet during periods you must work. (My favorite is 'Freedom'.) It costs \$10, but it just might save you thousands.

### TIPS: EMOTION FACTOR

Have you ever tried to work while in the midst of personal crisis? It's incredibly difficult. Emotions are powerful. For many of

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us, they control our behavior. The good news is that they don't have to. The key is to not let them. Here are two scenarios where you can overcome the emotional impulse, and in doing so take control of your life.

## #8 KILL THE 'I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT' BUG

The best way to finish something you don't want to do is to *start*. Your emotional state doesn't have to determine your behavior. Don't feel like working out? Big whoop. Your feelings are fair weather friends, anyways. Once you start something unpleasant, feelings will fall in line. *It's amazing how much freedom comes from realizing this simple reality.*

## #9 OVERCOME EMOTIONAL MUTINY

Everything was going smoothly until you got blindsided by something unpleasant and now you can't get anything done. Few things can take your entire day hostage like negative emotions, but there's good news. Before bad emotions rob you of your focus, you have the power to disarm them. How you interpret a situation and emotionally respond to it is *up to you*. When things are unraveling, stop, disarm your bad emotion, and reframe things positively. *'I'm not angry with this person who cut me off; it just woke me up to pay more attention. Thank you decidedly-below-average-driver.'*

## Multi-tasking doesn't save time, it **sabotages productivity.**

### LET'S FOCUS

What you really want and need only comes when you take control of your attention. Effectively allocating your attention leads to



57% better at  
collaboration



88% better at  
**learning**



42% better at  
**socializing**



31% higher job  
satisfaction



31% more  
**innovative**

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## 5: The distracted organization

[2]

Here's a short summary of what we know about your organization.

Unless it's taken major steps to become intentional about the challenges of distraction, **it has become a victim of the attention economy.**

**It is unknowingly contributing to its own distraction problem** by being predictable. By falling into various forms of complacency, it is allowing itself to be a place that employees are easily distracted within.

**It underestimates how much it can achieve**, and how simple it can be to solve these problems and reverse the previous two statements.

### THE GOLDEN RULE OF ATTENTION

This is the golden rule of attention: *Interrupt Others as You'd Like to be Interrupted* — which is never while you're hard at work. Though we all like exchanging texts and funny emails with our co-workers, it often requires us to take off our work hats to put on relationship hats. It costs us time and confuses the mental “cues” we associate with our workspaces. Let your friends and co-workers be fully present at work, *then* ask them to be fully present outside of work. Encourage your office environment to embrace the golden rule of attention.

### SET GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Organizations unknowingly sabotage themselves by creating a culture that rewards attention eroding behaviors: poorly-timed meetings, 24/7 availability, commendation for immediate

response, and pushing ever more information across each other's virtual desks. It's time to meet together to set a winning game plan. Every organization will have different best practices based on your market segment, product, and work structure. The key is to have a plan.

### STOP EMAILING LIKE KINDERGARTENERS PLAYING SOCCER

If you want to watch an exercise in wasted energy, go to a Kindergartener's soccer game. They spend the entire game sprinting after the ball. Eventually, you learn that by spreading out and “kicking said ball to person who is relaxing with a mai tai” you can both save energy and score more goals.

Many of us do the kindergarten equivalent in our email interactions. ‘Where do you want to eat.’ ‘I don't care, you?’ ‘Thai?’ ‘Sure. When?’ ‘11:45?’ ‘Works for me.’ ‘So, what is convenient for you?’... seventeen emails later, you've finally arrived at a decision. This is just one of the thirty-seven ways that we feel productive, but waste our time. Your goal: how can I eliminate the need for future emails by structuring this email differently? e.g. ‘How about lunch at 11:45 at the Sushi place across the street?’

Finally, to play the organizational equivalent of world cup soccer, you must reward those who work smartly rather than those who spend the entire workday sprinting around the virtual office at full speed, distracting the rest of the team in the process. Celebrate the people who DON'T respond to emails

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at 1:00AM rather than those who do; honor those who send the fewest number of emails in a given week. Remember this: you can be busy, but that doesn't make you productive.

## USE ATTENTION-DEFIBRILLATORS

It just so happens that predictability is the greatest predictor of distractedness. If your organization has become predictable in how it goes about its regular business and in how it talks about itself, then there is little doubt that you have a distraction problem. When people become used to processes, especially to the extent that they can predict with a high level of certainty what will come next, then they tend to coast through work on autopilot. To work in "autopilot" is to only use a fraction of your focus — it means you're getting by even though you have fallen into a state of attention-arrest. How do you re-awaken or shock someone out of attention-arrest? You have to be willing to use attention defibrillators.

Below is a list of attention-defibrillators to help your organization re-gain its focus. Steal back your employees attention. After all, once they've clocked in, it belongs to you.

### DEFIBRILLATOR #1 **SAY OLD THINGS IN NEW WAYS**

Take a few moments to write down a list of answers to the following question: *as a leader, what do I do that makes me predictable?* Chances are, somewhere on your list is the way in which you say things. You have probably fallen into a habit of repeating the same advice, the same beliefs, and the same business principles in the same old ways. And even though your predictable sayings may be stock full of wisdom, their predictability is making them fall upon deaf ears. Surprise those you work with by communicating your ideas with fresh and unexpected language. Use a synonym finder. Utilize interesting examples and fascinating stories. Choose concrete words instead of abstract and obscure expressions. Say things like you've never said them before.

### DEFIBRILLATOR #2 **RE-ARRANGE PREDICTABLE EXPERIENCES**

Do you always organize your meetings with the same typical arrangement? If so, it's time breathe some life back into

them. Do you normally use Powerpoint? Try running your next meeting without it. Do you normally begin each meeting by reviewing data of some kind. Next time, begin with a challenging question, a substantive quote, or with a story from your life. Feel like really surprising everyone? Take all of the chairs out of the meeting room without telling anyone. Then, once everyone is surprised by the situation, announce that everyone will be standing for the meeting. There are a thousand different ways to stir up work experiences with the unexpected. Put this into practice, and you'll have their attention.

### DEFIBRILLATOR #3 **MEET IN MOTION**

Is your team struggling to find its creativity? The problem may be the calm before their brainstorm. Research shows that physical activity before or during mental work actually increases helpful brain cells. The best answer to "writer's block" can be a "runner's high", or just a simple walk outside. *Try this: rather than meeting in the conference room, start meeting on the sidewalk.*

### DEFIBRILLATOR #4 **MORE TREES. LESS BRICK.**

Are you familiar with the experience of feeling completely unable to concentrate due to mental fatigue? Well, psychologists studied people at that precise moment of exhaustion, and what they discovered is fascinating. Group A then took a short walk through a busy downtown. Group B walked through various natural environments (parks, etc). Guess what happened? Group A's walk did not help them at all upon returning to work, but Group B proved to have significantly better results in their ability to focus on key tasks.

Even reviewing photos of nature can have the same effect, according to the Attention Restoration Theory. If your mind is in a constant state of chaos, review photos of nature, or take a walk through the local park. Your work will benefit.

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## 6: Closing thoughts

Now, it's probably safe to say that no one here today needs to be convinced of the benefits of modern technology. No one's suggesting we move backwards, throw everything that's modern out the window to go back to the "good ol' days". No — we're thankful for all the tools that have given us such efficient communication and accelerated methods for doing business, not to mention all of the incredible medical advances, etc.

But if we don't become aware of the importance of our attention, then we'll end up being the worse off for it. We all want to enjoy the benefits of the information age, of this seemingly magical time of technological advances, without being overrun by it, without suffering in our relationships and in our work because of it. But to do that, we have to become proactive. That means actively making decisions in your organization about how you want to engage your technology. It means setting boundaries personally so that your digital tools gives you what you want without costing you what is too valuable to lose.

As someone who both studies and develops the research, works with corporate clients and individuals, and struggles with medically diagnosed A.D.D., I can assure you that the strategies presented in this report can dramatically re-shape your work and personal life.

We don't want to stop there. We exist to help you succeed in meeting the unique challenges of today's hyper-connected world. Please contact us at [info@focuswise.com](mailto:info@focuswise.com) for more information about how we can support your goals.

**Thank you for your attention. I know how much it's worth.**

Curt Steinhorst

# Workplace A.D.D.

A SPECIAL REPORT ON DISTRACTION AT WORK

from FocusWise



## 7: About Curt and FocusWise

### ABOUT FOCUSWISE

FocusWise helps reduce distraction and improve communication at work. That sounds simpler than it is.

We've studied how the digital age has completely eliminated the boundaries and friction for communication. When used properly, this is an incredibly powerful advantage. But when communication technology is mismanaged, our biggest ally becomes our strongest enemy.

Our research is clear: nowhere is this issue more critical than in the modern workplace. Professionals in every industry face an unprecedented number of distractions from the very tools that have advanced their careers. Each year, technology improves portability, spreads data connections farther and faster, and offers up a slew of new apps, devices, and workflows — all at the expense of our ever-decreasing ability to focus on what's most important.

FocusWise is here to make sense of this mess. This means sharing research, codifying best practices, consulting with leadership, educating teams, and providing resources.

Most importantly, it means cultivating a community of accountability — where professionals help each other commit to pursuing better focus for bigger success. To succeed, individuals must learn to manage distractions, while organizational leadership must create intentional agreements about communication best practices.

### ABOUT CURT STEINHORST

Curt Steinhorst is on a mission to help today's workforce win the battle against digital distractions. Having spent years studying the impact of tech on human behavior, he now equips professionals across the world to work smarter and stronger in this constantly-connected age. As a leading voice on strategic communications in the age of distraction and a certified speaker at the Center for Generational Kinetics, Curt speaks on average more than 90 times a year.

He has spoken to prestigious audiences across the globe that include JP Morgan, Nationwide, McDonalds, Honda, United States Naval Academy, and even Taylor Swift's record label.

As a business owner, entrepreneur, and founder of FocusWise, Curt sees how lack of focus impacts today's workplace and its leaders. Curt's fascination with distraction is not simply professional. Diagnosed with ADD as a child, he's worked tirelessly to overcome the unique distractions that today's technology creates. As a father, Curt understands how profoundly digital connectivity is transforming people of every age.

He is currently working on his first book.

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