

IMPACT OF INTERRUPTIONS

On page 119 of *Calling Bullsh*t on Busy*, I suggested you visit this page where you'll find the most recent data I've found on the impact of interruptions on the workforce.

Frequent interruptions lead to higher rates of exhaustion, stress-induced ailments, and a doubling of error rates.

With that in mind, think of the impact you will have the next time you are tempted to interrupt a colleague busily working away.

Ask yourself these 3 simple questions:

Does this absolutely have to be said?

Does it have to be said by me?

Does it have to be said by me now?

If the answer is no to any of these questions, why not practice some self-restraint and keep quiet? Your self-esteem and your colleagues will thank you.

COSTS OF INTERRUPTIONS AS OF MAY 2023

- 98% of the workforce say they are interrupted at least 3 or 4 times a day.
- An interruption of only 2.8 seconds doubles the rate of errors.
- 4.4 seconds of interruption triples the rate of errors.
- One minute of interruption is enough to wipe out your short-term memory, stopping work and mental progress.
- 63% of tasks are interrupted in open-plan offices.
- 49% of tasks are interrupted in private offices.
- Interruptions cost companies 720 hours a year per person working.

- It takes 23 minutes and 15 seconds to fully recover focus after an interruption.
- The average professional switches between 9.4 apps for their daily work.
- A typical employee sits through 5.1 meetings a day.
- Most workers spend 10.4% of their workday emailing and another 5.2% of their time messaging.
- The average worker only gets 2.24 hours of actually productive tasks done per day.
- A typical manager only spends 50.2% of their day on focused work.
- 95% of employees experience a drop in general work quality.
- 46% of workers say that 12pm to 3pm is their most distracted period.
- Most employees don't complain about interruptions, although men are more likely to do so (41% vs. 28% women).
- Men are more likely to have received training aimed at reducing interruptions (25% vs. 14% women).
- 75% of workers report feeling more productive when working uninterrupted.
- 57% of the workforce say a productive culture motivates them to do their best and 51% report feeling more confident in those environments.
- The top two sources of interruptions are chatty coworkers (80%) and office noise (70%).
- 86% of employees believe they are more productive when working alone, even only an hour or two.

DISTRACTIONS

- Curiously, among the workforce's youngest cohort, smartphones are the biggest distraction, with 69% acknowledging that checking a personal device interferes with concentration.
- 36% of millennials and Gen Z say they spend 2 hours or more checking their smartphones during the workday, or 10 hours weekly when they're doing something outside their job responsibilities.
- 62% of all workers spend an hour per day looking at their phones.
- 74% of Millennials and Gen Z report being distracted, and 46% say it makes them feel unmotivated. 41% say it stresses them out.
- 84.4% of people are distracted at work. The most common distractions are phone calls/texts (55%), the Internet (41%), co-workers (27%), and email (26%).

THE DUBIOUS BENEFITS OF INTERRUPTIONS

Two recent studies—by Puranik, Koopman, and Vough—try to frame interruptions as having both negative and positive impact, pointing out that interruptions can also create a sense of belongingness and connection with other people in the workplace. Great. I'm thinking there are plenty of ways for our teams and colleagues to feel connected that don't create the kinds of disruptions that most interruptions cause every day—to the tune of \$588 billion every year.

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