

THE “MYTH” OF MULTITASKING EXERCISE

Purpose: To have people experience the “myth” that multitasking make you more productive

Supplies: Blank piece of paper and a pen. Facilitator has a stop watch.

Process: Have people take their piece of paper and turn it to landscape mode.

Have everyone write across the top of the page in their highest quality print, “**I am really skilled at multitasking**” so the sentence fills the page from left to right.

Have them draw a line under the sentence and tell them we are going to a timed exercise with this information so listen to instructions first. When I say start, rewrite the sentence above in high quality. After finishing the sentence, that go back and put a “1” underneath the “I”, a “2” underneath the “a”, a “3” underneath the “m” etc. until you have the number 30 underneath the “g” at the end.

The facilitator will read out loud the stop watch times in five second increments. We they finish they should write down the next five second increment time the facilitator calls out and circle it.

Once everyone is done, may sure everyone has written down their time. Tell them to draw a line underneath numbers and we’re going to do the exercise again only differently. The end result will be the same but using a different approach.

This time, instruct them to write the “I” first then go underneath and put a “1”. Then go back up and add an “a” and then go back down and put a “2” until you alternate back and forth between letters and numbers until they end with putting down a “g” and then the 30 below it. Make sure you expect them to have the same sentence and number quality as it the first attempt. Once completing this alternating approach, ask the to write down the next five second timed increment you call out and circle it.

Look at examples one and two on the next page.

Example - Attempt One



Example - Attempt Two - Alternate between letters and number



Discussion: Ask the group how they felt during the two different attempts.

Did one feel easier than two? Why?

Usually the first attempt is faster with higher quality and less stress.
Why?

Lesson: What we typically think is multitasking is actually switch tasking, moving from one task to another and then back. Every time you switch from one task to a different task we lose something in transition. When we switch back, we lose something again.

The myth is that we are being more productive with multiple things going on at once. The reality is we are slower, less productive with higher stress and lower quality.

We should instead use batch processing where we focus on one thing at a time to some level of completion before switching to another batch. For example, answer only emails for a period of time. Once the emails are done, turn off email and for the next hour focus only on developing a presentation for next week's meeting.