

15 Tips for Reducing Distraction/e-Distraction

By Randy Dean, MBA

The E-mail Sanity Expert®

(As featured in his May 2018 **Timely Tips** E-Newsletter – see information on how to subscribe below.)

I now lead a very popular keynote and workshop program called “From Distracted to Productive: Finding Your Focus in a Hyper-Interrupted, e-Distracted World.” At the end of this program, I provide this list of 15 tips below for reducing your overall distraction and finding your focus and productivity again. Just integrating a few of these tips may help you find much more sanity in your work day and life!

1. Set special notifications/sounds for your most important e-mailers, phone callers, and texters. *Here’s a YouTube tutorial I created on doing this:* <https://youtu.be/K8zSp0RLnUw> Don’t get distracted by everything coming in, but only by the most important things/people.
2. Check the rest of your inputs (e-mail, voice mail, documents & e-docs, etc.) on a time-based regimen throughout the day that you decide is right for you and your job! *Here is another YouTube tutorial on how to process those new inputs using Outlook:* <https://youtu.be/YMhkNcBt9k4> and *here’s one for Gmail:* <https://youtu.be/5Y4cxK4ap-Y>
3. Stop checking e-mail first thing each morning! Instead, check your calendar for today and a few days ahead to prep for what is coming, and then build a smart, prioritized task list for the day that reflects your key responsibilities and projects. (This should only take 3-5 minutes.) Have a plan for your time and your tasks before checking your inputs.
4. When transitioning between active project/activities/events, before leaving something for something else, make a note of what you need to do next on the FIRST THING before giving your full attention to the NEXT THING. This way, you can easily remember where you left off on that first thing when you come back to it. Actively add items throughout the day to your task list, calendar, and/or sticky notes before you transition to something new.
5. Related to that, if you get an unexpected phone call or “stop by”, ask for a “quick second” from that interrupting party so that you can once again take a quick note (grab that sticky note!) of what you need to do next *before* giving them your full attention on their new matter. (This will actually help you with also being a better listener and customer servant.)
6. Take advantage of mobile technology (laptops, tablets, smart phones, mobile hot spots, etc.) to find places and times when you are much less likely to be interrupted. Periodically get away from where people can easily find you so you can get your most important work done. Remember, *sometimes the worst place to get things done is where people know they can find you!*
7. Consider the layout of your office/workstation/desk. Does it make it easy for people to interrupt? If so, periodically physically position yourself and your equipment to reduce easy distraction/interruptions. (Or, just close the door if you have one!)
8. Own your phone and apps rather than letting them own you. Manage your settings and notifications to turn off the incessant “blinging” and push notifications from your apps and devices. Watch to see which apps are bugging you the most, and silence or delete them! (My life improved dramatically the MINUTE I turned off notifications from Facebook and Twitter!

9. Put your most distracting apps “out on the wings” of your phone/tablet, while putting your productivity tools (e-mail, calendar, contacts, documents, task list, notes app, etc.) on the “center panel” of your device. Make it easier to be focused and productive.
10. Or, don’t even download distracting apps. Check to see if there is a good mobile web site option from that content provider. Then, just bookmark it in your mobile browser, so you only get that content when YOU go to look for it (I did this for both CNN & ESPN.)
11. Consider a social media diet/regimen. Evidence shows that those that check social media the most are more anxious and/or depressed. But those that check it only occasionally are actually more productive. Limit your exposure to social tools/media, and keep it positive in nature. Block or delete those people/organizations that are too intrusive and/or negative.
12. Also, consider reducing your social media channels. Pick one or two that you will use as your primary apps, and don’t bother with the rest. The more social media apps/tools you use, the more time you will waste just trying to keep up with everything and everyone.
13. Consider a clutter clean-out. If you often find yourself looking for stuff on your computer, on your desk, or in your office (and not finding it quickly!), that means your clutter may be killing your productivity. One of the best things you can do is clean up and clear out your clutter. Here is an article I wrote on clearing up your physical clutter:
http://www.randalldean.com/Paper_Office_Clutter_Reduction_Article.pdf
14. Similarly, consider an e-mail inbox clutter reduction. The less you have in your inbox and the better organized you have your saved e-mails, the easier it will be to be efficient when managing your inbox. I usually have 10 or less e-mails in my inbox proper, but I actually have literally thousands of e-mails at my quick disposal in my related e-mail file structures, and I know how to find them quickly! Here’s another article on efficient e-mail inbox cleanup: http://www.randalldean.com/Efficient_Inbox_Cleanup_Process.pdf
15. Set up hands free driving tools on your phone. My phone now automatically switches to driving mode once it senses I’m going over a few miles per hour. It then announces phone calls, including who is calling me if they are in my contact database, giving me the option to answer or ignore, and also gives an option to hear and respond to any text messages received – ALL WITHOUT HAVING TO LOOK AT THE PHONE! Don’t be a statistic (3,000 deaths per year and more than 30,000 injuries *in the U.S. alone* due to distracted driving!)

Just referring to the checklist above (both for bad and best practices), and possibly sharing it with others in your work group or team, might help greatly reduce your overall distraction and e-distraction. Remember to own your devices, own your software, own your e-mail, and own your attention!

And if you’d like to learn more about my program, “From Distracted to Productive” and my other programs, as well as see a little video snippet of one of my presentations, please visit my web site: <http://www.randalldean.com> You can even get access to recent full-length webinar replays on many of my programs (for a fee) here.



Randy Dean, MBA, *The E-mail Sanity Expert*®, has been one of the most popular expert speakers on the conference, corporate, and university training and speaking circuit for several years. The author of the recent Amazon e-mail bestseller, *Taming the E-mail Beast*,

Randy is a very popular and engaging time, e-mail, and technology management speaker and trainer. He brings more than 25 years of speaking and training experience to his programs, and has been very popular with programs including Taming the E-mail Beast, Finding an Extra Hour Every Day, Optimizing Your Outlook, Time Management in "The Cloud" Using Google and Other Online Apps, and Smart Phone Success & Terrific Tablets. Learn more at <http://www.randalldean.com>.

You have permission to reuse, reprint, and/or edit this article for space if you include the paragraph above.

NOTE: You can subscribe to Randy's monthly **Timely Tips** e-newsletter – where he features one time-saving tip and one smart phone/tablet featured app each month – by simply sending him an e-mail at randy@randalldean.com and putting "Subscribe" in the subject line.

You may also want to check out or even subscribe to **Randy's YouTube Channel** at <http://www.youtube.com/user/JanaRandyDean> where he often posts some of his favorite technology tips, snippets from program sessions, info about popular programs, and more.

You can join Randy on LinkedIn at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/randydean>

You can follow Randy on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/timelyman>

Like Randy's Taming E-mail Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/tamingemailbeast/>

(Wait, did I just break my tip above about having too many social media channels???)