

RECRUITER A.D.D.

In the manufacturing economy, time was the currency. Systems were designed for maximum efficiency and effectiveness was simply how much time could be dedicated to the process. The assembly line was the perfect example. In today's information environment, knowledge is critical and attention is the currency. Directing our attention in the right places for the right amount of time and focus is the key to effectiveness. I have created a checklist to read (if you have already been distracted in these first two sentences, then odds are strong that you suffer from R.A.D.D.!) over and assess yourself.

- You are frequently distracted from your current activity, by others, or by your own lack of focus
- You finish your day and are surprised how little you actually accomplished despite the fact that you felt busy all day. You were on the phone "all day" but then the report comes out and you barely cracked two hours!
- You have a to do list of important items but always seem to be distracted with more "urgent" activities
- You find it difficult to fully focus on another person without thinking of other matters
- You check and respond to your email, text messages, instant messengers, etc. constantly
- Other people get frustrated with you (verbally or nonverbally) because you answer your phone or text back message in the middle of meetings or conversations with others
- You feel a sense of "information overload" frequently
- You think you are a great multi-tasker
- You are addicted to urgency and pride yourself on being the best "fire fighter"
- You love the feeling of being in the "zone", the "moment", the "now" and realize how effective and efficient you are during those times but are frustrated by how infrequently you truly find yourself in that place

If you checked the box to most of these then you may be suffering from Recruiting Attention Deficit Disorder. The good news is that it is curable and you can fill your own prescription! The ironic part of this condition is that those who suffer worst from this actually think that it is a strength because they can get so much more done than others due to their incredible efficiency and ability to multi-task. However, effectiveness IS NOT THE SAME AS EFFICIENCY. Since you attended a meeting and sent out three emails during the "boring parts", you now feel efficient. However what about the unintended consequences of how others perceive you? Do they think that you believe you are more important than them? That your time is more valuable? That you have a "me complex"? What if you happened to miss the one thing that ultimately had negative repercussions?

You see, multi-tasking is a myth. While walking and chewing gum may be easy and not be a problem, most other times are unnecessary distractions. There are some times when multi-tasking and bouncing from one activity to the next is both unavoidable and necessary. You can either spend your time coming up with examples to justify your actions or realize that the MAJORITY of times you find yourself busy, multi-tasking, and rushed are self-created and counter-productive in the long run.

Let me demonstrate by a couple examples that you will relate to. The first is those people who are driving down the highway and talking on their phone who get so distracted that they miss their exit, miss a sign and get pulled over by a person in blue, or hit something unintended. All of these are unintended consequences. All of them cost more time than was saved. Ok, so maybe you have that one down and it is not an issue. So, imagine going into a fitness club and seeing a person walk briskly from one machine to the next. First you see him on the bench press he does one rep and then goes to the pull up machine where he does two of those. He then races to the treadmill and runs on it for 20 seconds. He hops off and walks over to the stretching area and gets on the floor to do three sit ups. He gets up and walks over to the leg press where he does two reps on that machine. He then pops up and goes back over to the cardio area where he jumps rope for three rotations. He then decides to do three bicep curls followed by one push up. This kind of madness continues for an hour. The man then comes over to you and describes how busy he was the whole work out. He did over 25 types of exercise in an hour! He was the most efficient person in the gym! Unfortunately, he was completely ineffective and all he accomplished was being busy and maybe burning a few calories running from activity to activity! THIS IS EXACTLY HOW WE LOOK AT TIMES WITHOUT ACTUALLY REALIZING IT!

Perhaps you are capable of being fully focused but are easily distracted by others. You are that person at the fitness club who is at the club for two hours and only exercise half the time because “others” are constantly distracting you with their idle chit chat. No matter what the cause, never forget YOU ARE THE SOLE AND UNCONTESTED AUTHOR OF YOUR LIFE AND YOU GET TO WRITE A NEW CHAPTER IN IT EACH DAY YOU ARE ALIVE!!!

As I like to say, your inbox will be full the day you die and life will somehow go on!!! As is the case in any problem, the first step is recognizing that there is one. The good news is that slight changes can produce profound results for yourself and those around you. By implementing many of the suggestions that follow, you will find yourself in the “zone” more frequently. You will find yourself much more effective. Others will experience you as being fully present more frequently and relationships will deepen. People outside of work will feel the same and you may find yourself taking less medicine for ulcers, headaches, high blood pressure, and the like. If relevant, you may also find yourself drinking and or smoking less!

Please review and implement some of the action items on this list and watch your productivity soar and your stress plummet!

1. Create platinum/golden hours in your office

Establish certain times each day that no one can distract you or each other. In recruiting 9:30-11:00 and 2:00-3:30 are pretty good times. The only distractions or interruptions should be emergencies.

2. Create a running task list of administrative activities

As your day unfolds, pick a time before lunch and one at the end of the day to handle them as opposed to as each one arises. (Examples include sending a candidate profile/resume to a client, sending off a fee agreement, typing a letter to a new client, etc.)

3. Loosen your electronic leash four times a day

Set up a special ring on your cell phone from the critical people (kids, certain client, etc.) Turn off any instant messages. Shut down your email. You should have four different time blocks between 45 minutes and one hour each. Each one is a time to fully focus on a specific activity that you have predetermined for that time. Recruiters may designate an hour for each and spend one hour in new client calls, one in client follow up calls, one in new recruiting, and one in follow up recruiting. If there is never more than a few seconds between each call then achieving 4.5 hours of market connect time in a four hour time period is both realistic and highly effective! Imagine what could be done with the remaining time!

4. Establish the times where distractions are acceptable

Educate your environment when it is best to get with you by phone or in person for activities that are not both urgent and critical.

5. Put your “big rocks” in first

Make a list of all your current important projects that are not urgent. They could be reading a book, creating that marketing letter you wanted to try out, creating that list of all the sites in your market, etc. Now assign at least two one hour slots a week to do them. Keep these appointments with yourself the same way that you would with a client. DO NOT allow yourself to book anything during those times unless it is a TRUE emergency. If you don't begin to do some of the strategic work now, when will you? An attic is easier cleaned by a few boxes a week than the entire attic in a whole weekend.

6. Minimize multitasking

Practice being fully present and engage in one activity at a time. If someone pops into your office while you are typing an email, ask them to send you an email to schedule some time so that you can truly focus on their needs at a time that is mutually convenient. What makes typing an email, writing a letter, or even just thinking an activity that can so easily be interrupted? Would you or others begin talking if you were on the phone talking with someone else? I doubt it! So, why do those other activities not require the same level of focus? I doubt a doctor is checking emails or taking phone calls in the middle of surgery. I suspect a lawyer is not constantly checking his blackberry while the opposing counsel is grilling his client. What makes what you are doing less needing of your won concentration?

7. Plan your day

By having a plan each day, you will spend your time executing rather than figuring out what to do next. If a recruiter spends three minutes in between each call deciding who to call next and has 60 calls a day then he/she will spend 180 minutes (three hours a day!) thinking of what to do next as opposed to executing what is next.

If the planning takes 30 minutes, then over 2 hours will be saved. Two people go into a grocery store and one has a list with exactly what to buy and the location of each item and the other has simply a mental idea of what to get. Which one do you think will accomplish the task more efficiently and effectively?

8. Practice mindfulness

When a professional basketball player shoots free throws with 20,000 people screaming at him and waving brick signs, he must get to a place of complete focus. Phil Jackson, who led the Chicago Bulls to six championships called this “mindful basketball”. We too must learn to get in our zone through “mindful recruiting.” Meditation, breathing exercises, yoga, concentration exercises and reading books on this topic can all help you.

9. Create blocks of similar activities

We all like diversity and variety. However, just as a good meal has a certain flow, so should a day. Try and plan activities in such a way that complimentary activities can be done in groups. Business development activities, operational activities, etc.

10. Find the right work/life balance

Just as your time at work should have focus and intensity in each activity; so should your time away from work. Being fully present in all your interactions includes those outside of work. When you find your mind drifting to work related activities while with friends or family, remind yourself to focus back on the people or activity at hand.

One day I returned home from work and went upstairs where my son was busy playing Nintendo. He was so intense that only after five or six “Hello Dylan’s” did he finally respond with a “Hey dad!” I told him to come downstairs to eat dinner and he said he was busy playing his game. I shared with him that he could do that later. He said he could eat while playing (another multi-tasker) and I said that he had played it plenty, and life was not only for playing Nintendo. He responded that if it was his life and he enjoyed playing, then why could it not be just Nintendo? I did what my father did to me, and his to him, and for generations past. I said “Because I said so! Now do what I said or I’ll _____!” What I really thought was how wonderful it would be to live “life in Nintendo!” How cool would it be if every moment in our life would be like his experience playing Nintendo? I suspect one day we will all look back and wonder how much time was squandered engaging in activities where we were doing anything but “playing Nintendo!” It was at that moment about 6 years ago (he is now 15) that I realized the importance of “living in Nintendo!” The biggest problem I have now is that I am so focused in each interaction and experience I have, that others find it impossible at times to get my attention away from what I am doing and that my sense of time evaporates causing an issue with promptness. So, with one strength comes an inherent weakness and a new set of challenges to address!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jeff is the Co-Chief Executive Officer of Kaye/Bassman International and Next Level Exchange and Co-Managing Director of Sanford Rose Associates®. Jeff has helped Kaye/Bassman-Sanford Rose Associates grow into the 11th largest search firm in the Americas and Next Level into the world’s largest training firm exclusive to the recruiting industry with over 1000 clients in 30 countries.



During his 25 year tenure in the industry, he was named one of the most influential leaders in the staffing industry as well as awarded the 2013 Knutson Memorial Award for Lifetime Achievement in Recruiting. He is considered an industry expert having appeared on CNN, FOX, Bloomberg, and NBC; and is quoted regularly in publications including USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, Business Week, Time, and Fortune. Jeff is also a frequent speaker within the staffing and human resources community and been featured in dozens of international training meetings and videos. You can email Jeff at jeff@nextlevelexchange.com.

