



Timely Information for Personal Success

Multi-tasking Tips

By Michael Guld

Many of us are being asked to do more than ever in the workplace, which often leads to frustration and stress. While you may not be able to control what's being thrown at you or asked of you, there *are* ways to effectively multi-task.

First, you must acknowledge three basic truths: *You'll never get it all done; your day will not always go the way you planned; and everything takes longer to do than you think it will.* If you focus too much on what you don't get done, you'll never feel like you're doing a good job, and that's not healthy. Instead, try effectively multi-tasking by managing each of these areas:

❖ **Goals:** Before deciding what to work on, you need to know what you're working *toward*. If you have not established goals, you can't celebrate when you achieve one! Determine where you spend the bulk of your time in a typical day and decide whether it's helping you attain your goals. You may need to change what you're working on.

❖ **Priorities:** The most important decisions you make during the day are what actions to take – and which ones *not* to take. In choosing what to work on, you must distinguish between the “urgent” and the “important.” They are not the same! Start working on “urgent” matters early before a deadline approaches.

❖ **Focus:** Everyone *wants* a piece of your time, but not everyone is *entitled* to it! Schedule meeting times whenever possible. Since, “*Do you have a minute?*” rarely turns out to be that short, you might respond, “*Yes I do ... but it will have to be after 3 p.m.*”

❖ **Expectations:** A lot of workplace stress could be alleviated if people were more realistic about what they can actually get done in a given day. In addition to prioritizing, determine how long it takes to complete a given task, and reset deadlines and workflow as necessary. It's not about how many hours you work, but what you *accomplish* during working hours. ■

Michael Guld is an author, speaker and entrepreneur.





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Healthy Recipe: Moist Pumpkin Bread

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 stick unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup canned pumpkin
- 1/4 cup (each) nonfat, plain yogurt; honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon (each) baking powder; cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon (each) salt, ginger, allspice

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 170
- Carbohydrates: 33 g.
- Sodium: 77 mg.
- Fat: 4 g.
- Saturated fat: 2 g.
- Fiber: 1 g.

DIRECTIONS:

- ❶ Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Spray a bread pan with nonstick cooking spray.
- ❷ In a bowl, use electric mixer to beat together the butter and sugar on high speed until smooth. With the mixer on low speed, add the egg and combine. Add pumpkin, yogurt, honey, and vanilla and combine until smooth.
- ❸ In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder, cinnamon, salt, ginger, and all-spice. Fold this mixture into the pumpkin mixture and combine until smooth.
- ❹ Pour into the prepared pan and place in center of oven. Bake for 45-50 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean.

Serving size: 1 slice of bread.

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Questions and Answers

Why are Cell Phones so Distracting?

Q: Why is it considered so distracting to talk on a cell phone while driving, but not necessarily distracting to talk to a passenger?

A: First, talking on a cell phone while driving can be disastrous. Experts estimate that talking on cell phones while driving causes roughly one-third of all traffic accidents in the U.S. each year. The rest of your question has to do with how our brains process information. Studies using driving simulators have compared cell phone conversations with those that occur in person. Cell phone conversations don't vary much in response to changing traffic conditions (probably because only the driver is actually aware of what is happening on the road). In contrast, drivers and passengers tend to stop talking when a traffic problem develops. In addition, passengers often become another set of eyes and ears, helping the driver navigate. Even the smartest of "smart phones" can't do that!

- Source: Harvard Health Publications.

Whistle, but Don't Tweet While You Work

❖ *Know what's allowed.* Make sure you understand and adhere to your company's social networking policy.

❖ *Keep it professional.* Use social networking sites while at work to make connections with others in your field or follow industry news – not to catch up with family and friends.

❖ *Stay positive.* Avoid complaining about your manager and co-workers. Once you've hit "send," you can't take back your words, and there's a chance the message could be read by the very people you're criticizing.

❖ *Polish your image.* Tweet or blog about a topic related to your profession. You'll build a reputation as an expert in a given area, which could help you advance in your career.

❖ *Be careful when "friending" in the workplace.* First, never friend your boss, as this can become awkward. Second, you might be friended by an acquaintance you don't want to connect with, but it might be best to accept friend requests from colleagues to avoid slighting them. However, add them to a "work" list and adjust your privacy settings so you can separate your job from your personal life.

❖ *Monitor yourself.* Even if your employer has a liberal policy about social networking, limit the time you spend checking your Facebook page or reading other people's tweets to avoid reducing your productivity. ■

Source: Robert Half International (www.rhi.com).