

# SmartBlog on Leadership

Engage. Innovate. Discuss.



## [Are you suffering from “rush” syndrome? Take this 7-point quiz](#)

By [Joel Garfinkle](#) on July 21st, 2014 |

In many workplaces today, there seems to be a reward for looking busy. The more overwhelmed you are, the bigger your payoff.

But what is the real payoff? If you're a **chronic rusher**, a confirmed multitasker, what's your reward? Perhaps more important, what is the quality of work you're producing? And what, if anything, should you do about it? Ask yourself these seven questions:

### Statements Contributing To Rushing

- 1 Do you feel your projects are more important than those of your colleagues?
- 2 Do you feel irritated when other people take too long to get things done?
- 3 Do you **habitually rush from one activity to the next**?
- 4 Do you push your people to get things done faster?
- 5 Are you impatient when listening to other people talk?
- 6 Do you often feel there's no way you can get it all done?
- 7 Does your workplace culture reward busyness?

And now the bonus question: When was the last time you focused on a single task until it was completed? If you can't remember, or if you know it's been weeks or even months, take time right now to evaluate your work. Measure quantity versus quality. Consider mono-tasking versus multitasking.

There have been many scientific studies on how the human brain performs when multitasking. Some activities lend themselves to multitasking and some do not. In order to be effective, one of the tasks must be relatively routine or mindless. Listening to an audiobook while walking on a treadmill, for example. However, when tasks have similar components, the effectiveness disappears. You can't do a good job of answering an e-mail while talking on the phone, for example, because both activities involve communication; doing both causes your mind to go into conflict. ([NPR, Morning Edition](#))

If you answered “yes” to even some of the questions above, you probably already know that the quality of your work, as well as your satisfaction and overall well-being, is not where it should be. How can you shift to a more mono-tasking mindset?

Implement these three ideas and watch what happens.

1. **Work in batches.** Your brain functions better when you divide your work into manageable batches. Group similar tasks together so that you work on multiple tasks, but do them one at a time. Don't spend an entire day working nonstop on one task. Spend 15 minutes answering e-mails and then switch to a major job, such as a report or presentation. Later, switch back to a more mundane activity. Breaking tasks up allows your brain to breathe, so to speak, and it will reward you with higher quality work and more satisfaction with your achievements.
2. **Manage your to-do list.** Crossing things off your to-do list gives you a sense of accomplishment, doesn't it? Often we attack the simplest tasks first, because we can power through them quickly. (There's that "rush" thing again.) Reverse this trend. Look at your list and highlight the **top two or three most important things**. Do those first. If you do this consistently, you'll always be working on your top priorities. And guess what? Some of those petty little things at the bottom of your list may just disappear on their own.
3. **Just say no.** Saying yes to every invitation, opportunity, or assignment makes us feel busy and important. But **learning how to say no** to certain things can free up your mind and your time to focus on high-quality, high-reward work.

Say **no to meaningless meetings** — those regular get-togethers that are designed to make people look busy but accomplish very little. Say no to time-sucking irritations, like the co-worker who stops by every morning with his coffee in hand just to chat. Or that annoying ping that alerts you to incoming e-mail.

Start today. Pick one of these three ideas and implement it in your work life until it becomes a habit. Then move on to the next idea and do the same. Ultimately, you'll be saying yes to greater job satisfaction and a lot less "rush."

*Joel Garfinkle is the author of "**Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level.**" As an **executive coach**, he recently worked with a leader to improve her executive presence, boost confidence and increased respect in the workplace. You can learn more about his **Executive Presence Coaching Program**. Over 10,000 people receive his Fulfillment@Work newsletter. Receive his e-book "41 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now" when you **subscribe**.*