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THE CLARITY CEO'S
FOCUS GUIDE
For Business Owners & Entrepreneurs

Disclaimer: The Clarity CEO's Guide To Focus – For Business Owners & Entrepreneurs

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This ebook contains information on how to overcome distraction and retake control of your focus so that you work towards the import things in your three lives – Your Business Life, Your Career Life and your Personal Life. The information herein is only a small part of The Clarity Code System that enables Entrepreneurs, Intrepreneurs and Business Owners to Live a Larger Life.

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Introduction

SBOS.

We all suffer from it. Shiny Bright Object Syndrome is the desire to always be looking for / at the latest and brightest thing that catches our attention. Usually it a 'thing' that promises us that we can achieve something with little or no effort or that it holds the missing piece of knowledge that will let us streak to the top or make millions or…The truth is that SBOS is but one of the myriad causes of distraction and a lack of focus in our various lives – our business life, our career life and our personal life.

Our digital age is full of distractions and things that clamour for our attention and draw us away from the work we are supposed to do and the life we are supposed to lead. Our most important asset is time and our attention and focus are the two most important tools we have to wring the maximum value out of it.



Being able to focus on the things that matter, the things that make a positive difference in your life is a skill that you should cultivate because once mastered you will be able to transform your life.

This e-book is full of ideas and tactics to help you retake control of your mind and your focus so that you can become happier, more productive and more involved in your life.

One of the greatest challenges of the modern world is the inability to focus long enough to achieve the things we need to or want to. It's a world full of distractions, which prevent you from having a productive day, from getting and staying fit, from looking after your health, playing with your kids or just enjoying life. It is a chaotic world and one that that makes it increasingly harder to find and enjoy calm and quiet in its midst.

Being able to focus will give you greater peace of mind, as you take on the world at your own pace. It will help you simplify things and focus only on the things that will have a significant impact on your life. Like Jonathan Goodman of Viralnomics (http://www.viralnomics.com/) says 'Focus is a maximiser trait.'

Once you learn to focus, you will procrastinate less, value your time more, resent anything that wastes it,

and more importantly you will feel better about yourself and your life because you will a sense of achievement every single day.

You will appreciate the smaller things in life more and be able to deal what life throws your way more effectively. You will spend more time on the things that matter, reduce the amount of time wasted on things that do not serve your desires and goals.

Learning to focus is what you need to do – learning more can wait until you have learned to focus first.

Understand that many seek focus but few achieve it for long periods – more often than not focused effort is short lived because things get in the way – the new TV show, that new blog post, those kittens on Face Book…

From this ebook you will learn more about how to focus, how to identify the things that matter, and come to value having more simplicity in your life. It will introduce you to the concept of micro habits and habit stacking and we will discuss a phenomenon called Decision Fatigue.

Developing focus and retaking control of your life begins with small steps, ones that you can easily achieve. By mastering the ability to focus on small things first, you'll be surprised to see how quickly you can transform areas of your life for the better.

A Word on Work Life Balance

This is one of the greatest lies that has been promulgated the last 3 decades – there is no work life balance – there is only life and where you chose to direct your attention and your focus. The idea of balance is intellectually bankrupt. It doesn't exist. Instead of seeking balance, seek periods of ardent focus followed by periods of chaos. Enjoy both. Plan for both times.

Chapter 1: Why Seek Focus?

It doesn't matter if you're pursuing life as a creative person, such as an artist, designer, writer, musician, or photographer. It doesn't matter if you sell Real Estate, do accounts, drive a truck, landscape gardens, heal the sick, trade stocks or coach a sports team.

What matters is that each of us need the power to focus on the things we decide are truly important to us.

Your ability to think is your most precious business asset.

And even when you can switch between tasks, will you be able to do something effective? It will waste your time and attention, and send you home at the end of the day feeling frustrated because you could have accomplished more if only you were not so unfocussed…



Distractions can ruin creativity and performance in a snap. You can't create anything or be effective at your work if you keep replying to emails, posting on Facebook, or reading a blog.

Distractions include coffee dates to "pick your brain", emails with exciting offers of "opportunities" or partnerships, and offering high-priced coaching or consulting.

None of the above are bad in themselves – it is your decision what is and is not important. But that is a decision that is best made consciously or else you will get carried along in the noise…

It all comes down to you. What's important to you in your lives? Your Work life? Your Career life and your personal Life? Is what you are doing accomplishing the things you want in each of these areas or are you so lacking in attention that you are just drifting along and going with the flow??

I'm not telling you to forgo social media or gaming. Or to walk away from emails, snapchat or texting. Instead I am urging you to think about what aspect of your life and business you want to maximise. Everything that you do within reasonable bounds (like the law and being able to continue to live in our Society) should be aimed at helping you achieve your goals, satisfy your needs and reduce your wants in each area of your life.

To decide to do this requires a conscious decision – and that requires focus.

Having a wide focus or no focus at all is the same as overcommitting to too many projects at once, trying to please all of your customers, doing everything for everybody, being available for contact all the time in both online and offline channels, and more.

All the time spent on communicating with other people or entertaining other distractions is time spent away from your creative and productive process. Being connected does help in encouraging your creative power, as you learn new ideas from other people and listen to their feedback, but you need to spend time on creating and creating alone.

You can do that by making time for each process – for communicating and for creating. When you separate these processes, you can focus each time on a specific process. Your time for creating will be spent actually creating something, making you more productive. Separate your interests and savor the time spent for each one of them.

Aside from spending time for your creating process, you also need free time for the sake of your happiness, stress levels, and peace of mind. It's important that you be completely disconnected and experience real solitude. You can nap, write, run, read, listen, watch, or engage in quiet conversation with loved ones.

Know your priorities and identify the five powerful action steps that you intend to take to move your initiatives forward each day. If you go to a tree with an axe and take five whacks at the tree every day, it doesn't matter if it's an oak or a redwood; eventually, the tree has to fall down. - Jack Canfield

Chapter 2: The Importance of Stepping Back

Distractions of All Kinds

The so-called Information Age is also the Age of Distraction.

Although the human world has always been full of activity and distractions, it has never been as incessant as it is now. There is no let up on the demands for our attention. And when attention is gone, the ability to focus disappears as well…

Easy access to information is beneficial and a good thing – but it has become too easy with information

coming at us from every direction, via every device and through an ever increasing array of Apps all designed to make life 'easier'…

At work, the emails flood in, (a1l requiring immediate responses of course!!), smart phones flash alerts, text messages appear, instant messaging and social media both send notifications; you still have to contend with open browser tabs, actually doing some work; the demands of the people around you and the one who aren't like clients and partners alike, and the reading materials from gadgets and paper sources.

No wonder you find it hard to focus.



Then when you get home, you'll have to scan through 100's of TV channels to find something to 'relax to'; be bombarded with screaming ads; try to ignore that your computer is on, where additional work is waiting, social networks are calling for notice; family or other people are texting or calling you, and your kids and partner would like some of your time as well. No wonder your stores of attention are shot and your ability to focus on anything more than another glass of beer or wine has left as well.

Even worse for your ability to use your attention effectively and to focus in a way that is beneficial you are subjected to a darker side of online as well.

Engaging in online activities creates addiction s it uses our biochemical reward system against us. Every Face Book like, every Twitter mention, every Instagram shot with us in it – all of them cause a release of dopamine the feel good drug. Not in huge quantities but big enough that we sit watching TV with our partner and kids and everyone is on their phone or tablet getting their little reward releases…

It may make you feel good to receive an email, get Facebook likes, or see retweets. But these things only end up eating a lot of your time, your attention and your focus.

Although it's a good thing that the Internet is growing and that everyone seems connected, everyone seems to be running out of free time too fast.

The sheer volume of data that we are exposed to daily is not just overwhelming but it is also noise.at a

level that we cannot possibly give proper attention to. (It is said that the Saturday edition of the Sydney Morning Herald (or your own town's newspaper) contains more information than a medieval peasant learnt in their lifetime.) Data and information is everywhere and at our fingertips with little to no effort or even conscious thought. There is just too much going on and we want to be on top of it all.

This erodes our ability our ability to make decisions. Like a muscle our ability to make decisions can be overused and when we are constantly bombarded with things calling for our attention we have to decide multiple times per minute in many case which to respond to and which to ignore…

This means that our focus suffers and we fall into the trap of multitasking.



Another shock – like work / life balance, multitasking is a lie. For Males in particular and for most Human Beings in general.

What we think is multitasking is really *task switching* and each time we switch we split our attention that bit finer and our focus that more widely. It can take as long as 15 minutes after reading a text message to be able to refocus on the activity you were doing prior.

Being connected also seems to be naturally growing as a part of a lifestyle. You 'have' to be connected anytime, anywhere, at home, in the car, at work, and on the train.

But we now need to begin to assert some control over this sense of connection to avoid excessive distractions.

To test your tendency to be distracted, how many times did you stop reading this portion of the book to do other things? To check an email? To give in to a visual or audio distraction? To talk to other people?

In a world free of distractions, you would have answered "zero" to all these questions, but the real world really is full of distractions of all kinds.

And if you decide to connect less it will likely be difficult. Firstly we have the dopamine monkey on our back then we have the expectations of friends' family and workplace for us to be available pretty much 24 /7. Lastly you have to contend with the fact that this is what you have become used to. It has become a habit.

It is time to create some new ones.

There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction. - John F. Kennedy

Chapter 3: How to create more Focus – Use the 2- More Rule®

Too often in an attempt to turn things around we try to change everything at once or at least try to make major changes in a number of areas of our life.

And we fail because we try to change too much too soon.

Regaining control of your attention and your focus will require the creation of new habits to replace the ones that have currently taken over.

The 2-More Rule® is a simple way to start to regain control for your attention and your focus. It also works great to dispense with procrastination. In fact it could not be simpler.

This strategy has the goal of stopping you task switching so often and to make it easier (over time) to stay focused on the things you should be doing.

Here's how it gets put into action…

Most of the tasks that you procrastinate on aren't actually difficult to do — you have the talent and skills to accomplish them — you just avoid starting them for one reason or another.

The 2–More Rule® overcomes task switching and defocusing by making it so easy to stay with what you are focusing on that you can't say no.

When you are involved in a task that either moves you closer to achieving your goals or is something that you have to get done and the urge to check an email, have a look at Face Book, send a text or reply to an instant message makes itself known then simply stay with what you are doing and completing 2 more items before giving in to the distraction.

That's it.

Writing a report? – Write 2 more sentences.

Preparing for a meeting? – Do another PowerPoint slide

Reading? Complete 2 more pages

Digging a ditch? – Two more shovelfuls out

Loading a truck? – load on 2 more boxes

You get the idea. Just as your ability to focus gets weakened the more we give in to distractions the stronger it gets when we defer giving them attention.

As time passes you will get better and better at staving off the distraction and staying focused.

Once you start deferring losing your focus, it's easier to continue maintaining it.



This tactic may sound too simple, too basic as a way to turn the volume of distractions that you face but it does work.

The most important part of developing and embedding any new habit is getting started — not just the first time, but each time. It is about being consistent in the action that you take.

The 2–More Rule® isn't about the results you achieve, but rather about the process of actually doing the work. It works really well because anyone can do 2 More of anything at any time.

In other words it is designed so you can't fail.

Go on - Try It Now

Most advice you read, courses you take, webinars you watch and seminars you go to are exercises in consumption not practice. But it is practice that makes habits strong.

So try it now – read just 2 more pages before you give in to whatever distraction is hovering around calling for your attention.

Just 2 more pages….

Chapter 4: Disconnect

Of course an obvious way to avoid distractions and to maintain focus and control over your attention is to remove the source of the distractions.

This applies for electronics, people, noise and more besides.

In the case of electronics we can simply… disconnect.

Benefits of Disconnection

You can do a lot of things when you're disconnected. It will allow you to enjoy the following things:

- It will give you the chance to focus on your work, outcomes and goals.
- It will help you regain your focus on work and on other important things in life.
- It will reconnect you with people without any distractions.
- It will help you rest from the distractions of email, Facebook, Twitter, news, blogs, IM, and more.
- It will increase your productivity and your sense of satisfaction.
- It will allow you to read books.
- It will help you de-stress.
- It will give you more peace of mind.
- It will give you time to reflect on life.
- You'll actually interact more with the people and the world around you.

There are lots more things you can do to disconnect but you get the idea. Deciding to disconnect, or rather to reduce your connection to the world means a reduction in exposure to the million distractions we have allowed to encroach into our world and our lives.

Disconnecting lessens the stimulation of these myriad distractions and allows you to determine what you spend your attention on and where you focus your energies.

How you go about this depends upon how serious you are about retaking control of your lives and how distracted you feel you are. I do NOT recommend the more extreme methods for everyone but if you need to…

- You can unplug everything. Unplug your router, your Laptop or PC and disable your Internet connection. But it would be easier to simple unplug from the network either by turning off your Wi-Fi or removing the network cord.
- You can turn devices off and work in blessed peace.
- Follow a scheduled disconnection time daily. Set it at a certain time, for one to two hours minimum, and tell people about those times.
- Set up a DND (Do Not Disturb) on your office phone.
- Close your office door and put a sign on the outside saying that you are unavailable until a specified time.
- Do emails in 2 blocks – at 10AM and 4PM for example – and turn off the email program entirely.
- If you can't do that disable an email alerts and every device.
- Turn your Mobile to silent – without vibrate.
- Use a blocking software program such as Rescue Time to not only find out what time you spend where online but to then temporarily block the sites that distract you the most.
- Utilise the Pomodoro or some other timed focus technique.
- Find a place without an Internet connection. You could go to an office, a coffee shop or public libraries either without a wireless connection or turn yours off.
- Change your Go outside. Run, jog or walk without a phone and enjoy nature better with your partner,

child or friend.

- Shut off mobile devices. Do this when you drive or when you meet with someone to avoid interruptions.
- Connect and disconnect in intervals. Disconnect for 45 minutes, connect for 15, and such. You can connect to the Internet as a reward for focusing on what you're doing.
- Don't bring your work home. Once you have logged out of work, make sure to focus on matters outside of work. Focus on yourself or your family instead.



The unfortunate thing is that staying connected seems to have become an addiction. But you can beat that using these tips:

- Determine your triggers (the things that make you check Face Book, or check a news site).
- List these things down.
- Put the list where you can see it
- Use the 2-More Rule® each time a trigger arises
- Change the triggers, one at a time. Instead of opening your browser first up in the morning, you can get to writing instead right away.
- At home put your mobile phone in another room from where you will be relaxing (or working if you must!).

- Don't use a tablet or phone when in bed. If you have to use it make it a rule to use it elsewhere.

How to Reinforce Focus

Aside from making a habit out of disconnecting, you need to learn about focus habits and rituals. These refer to a series of actions that you need to do habitually until you do them automatically. Sometimes you can engrain them so strongly that they almost become compulsions.

By developing habits and rituals you are also developing your ability to focus and to keep your word to yourself. They also make it easier to find your feet.

So when you have to follow a ritual or you develop a habit, you can focus easier and more strongly. You perform better and more effectively.

Here are some habits / rituals that you can try:

- Use the ***5 by 5 Method*®** to plan tomorrow today. Simply in the last 20 minutes at work write down the 5 things that you will complete by 5PM the following day. Then put them in order and tackle them from toughest to easiest.
- The ***3 by 11 Method*®** is the same but as the name suggests it is tougher as it is 3 things completed by 11AM.
- Use a meditation App on your phone or tablet to start or end your day. It has been proven that as little as 10 minutes a day of meditation increases your ability to focus and deal with stress. One Big Mind is the App that I use.
- Spend your mornings quietly. Wake up before the other folk in your household. Don't turn on the computer and don't go online. Enjoy your breakfast and morning newspaper. Run around the block or meditate. Do nothing. Just slowly get you motor running.
- Go for a walk after your evening meal either solo or with your partner, a friend or one of your children. Take a phone but set it to vibrate so it is there for any emergency and then take in the sights you see. Enjoy the conversation.
- Don't eat your lunch at your desk – go for a walk and eat it outside or in the lunch room.
- Use the Pomodoro technique to refocus every 30 or so minutes.
- Learn to refocus. During the course of the day, you might get distracted. Once you are aware of this use a physical action to 'reset' your focus. This can be as simple as standing up and thn sitting down again.

- So refocus on the important tasks at hand every two hours or so. Close your browser, go for a walk, and clear your head, then look at your to-do list again.
- Focus, then rest. Do this alternating exercise to make sure that you stay focused. Focus for 10 minutes, rest for 2; focus for another 25, then rest for 5, and so on.

- Focus on two things. You can do this when you have two major tasks at hand, but don't make the switch rapidly. Focus on the first task for 20 minutes, then have a 5 minute reset, and then spend the next 20 on the next project.
- Try 'what my friend Travis Bell The Bucket List Guy (www.thebucketlistguy.com.au) calls a Compression Session and work on one project or task for 90 minutes straight. Then have a 20 minute break and do another one on the same or a different ask. It is unusual when you try this to get even 1 Compression Session a day completed and even focus experts rarely get more than 3. The good news is that even 1 gets a power of work accomplished.
- Connect, then focus. Set blocks of time for email checking and responding. For Social Media updating or for news catch ups. And stick to them. Then refocus. (I use 2 blocks of time a day for email and for Social media at 10 AM and at 4PM and for 80 Minutes maximum))
- End your day right. Enjoy your evening by disconnecting.
- Perform weekly focus rituals. Review your week, look at your projects, edit your to-do list, change your focus rituals to include only those that work, and review the rest of your professional and domestic life to see what needs changing.

The 3 Rules for Actually Sticking to Good Habits

These come via James Clear an Author and Speaker who has made the world of habits and habit creation his own domain. (www.jamesclear.com)

Here are the rules:

1. You have to start with a version of the desired habit that is incredibly easy for you. It must be so easy that you can't say no to doing it and so easy that it is not difficult at all in the beginning.[1]

2. You have to increase your habit each day, but in an incredibly small way.
3. Even after increasing your habit, all repetitions must remain easy. The total habit should be broken down into easier pieces if needed.

How Can You Use This in Real Life?

Here are some other ways you can use this strategy to build new habits.



Meditation. Wish you would meditate consistently and be more mindful?

- On day one, you'll meditate for 60 seconds.
- On day two, you'll meditate for 70 seconds.
- Continue this pattern, until you get to an amount of time that satisfies you or is too long to do at once. For example, 10 minutes of meditation might feel like a lot. Once you get to this point, break up your sessions into easier blocks. For example, meditate for 5 minutes in the morning and then 5 minutes in the evening.

Walking. Get a device that can measure the amount of steps you take in a day (a pedometer, Fit Bit, app on your phone, etc.)

- On day one, you'll walk 1,000 steps, which most people already do each day.
- On day two, you'll add 100 steps and walk a total of 1,100 steps. An additional 100 steps could be walking down to your mailbox and back — not far at all.
- Continue this pattern until walking more each day becomes time prohibitive. Let's say that this point is 10,000 steps in a day. At this point, you may want to break up your walking time into shorter jogging sessions.

Reading. Wish you were reading more books?

- On day one, you'll read for one minute.
- On day two, you'll read for two minutes.
- Continue this pattern until you're reading for a period of time that either satisfies you or is too long to do at once. For example, maybe reading for more than 20 minutes at a time is a stretch for you. If you want to read for 30 minutes, you can simply break it down into smaller 10 minutes blocks.

Flossing. Not in the habit of flossing?

- On day one, floss just one tooth. You are not allowed to floss two teeth. (Hat tip to BJ Fogg.)
- On day two, floss two teeth.
- Continue this pattern. After one month, you'll be flossing all of your teeth each day.

Do Small Habits Actually Amount to Anything?

James Clear tells us that these small gains can seem almost meaningless, especially in the beginning. But small habits can actually deliver incredible progress very quickly.

If you performed the examples listed above for one month, here's what would happen.

- If you started with 10 pushups and added 1 per day, you would do 775 pushups in 30 days.
- If you started with 1 minute of reading and added 1 minute per day, you would have read for over 8 hours in 30 days (enough to finish a 400 page book every month).
- If you started by walking 1,000 steps and added 100 per day, you would walk 77,500 steps (almost 39 miles) in 30 days.

Small, consistent progress adds up really fast.

Try the Three Rules for Yourself

In essence, if we want to direct our lives, we must take control of our consistent actions. It's not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives, but what we do consistently.

Tony Robbins

Sorting Through Priorities

For most of us, it's hard to find focus because there are too many things that we are trying to accomplish all at once. That's why you need to learn to prioritise things and to use the power of habit and ritual to your advantage.

Begin by reducing the number of your tasks. Choose the 5 most important tasks in your to-do list and deal with them first. Devote a block of your day to doing the rest of the routine tasks.

Among the most essential tasks, start with the one that excites you the most or is the most challenging – the one that will progress you towards your own goals.

Settle with a single task at a time. Eliminate all distractions. Start working on it for a whole of 10 minutes. Take a break, then focus on it for 10 minutes or longer, until you get the momentum of things.

Chapter 5: How to Avoid Distractions

Controlling the Sources of Distractions



There are more sources of distractions than ever before with multiple mobile devices all connecting to the internet and running a host of Apps.

It was not that long ago when people were complaining about being distracted by the phone (landlines!), memos, fax machine, solitaire on their PC, and co-workers. Now, we have to deal with emails, IM, blogs, online forums, social networks, news sites, mobile devices, Skype, webinars, virtual meetings, text messages, voice mail, online games, online TV, eBooks, online music, videos, apps, and more.

So, how can you control the flow of these distractions?

For one, you need to be conscious about how much time you spend online. We've already mentioned a great tool for this: Rescue Time (www.rescuetime.com) it and other similar Apps will allow you to really determine where you are spending your time on-line and then make an informed decision about what you will do about it.

Choose what you want to do carefully and focus on the most important information and communications.

Start fresh. Disconnect now.

Here is another important axiom: You can do Anything, You just can't do Everything!

Likewise you can find out anything but it is impossible to learn / know / read / experience / play /watch or listen everything.

There's just too much information, from too many sources with too many people to communicate with, and too many tasks to finish. Once you admit this to yourself you will be much better positioned to intentionally, mindfully choose what to give attention to and to focus on.

You may also want to consider going on an information 'fast'. Daniel Priestley of the Entrevo Company and author of How to Become a Key Person of Influence (www.keypersonofinfluence.com) advocates not watching the news, or reading the news so he keeps his head space less cluttered and less full of negativity.

If you're worried that you won't know the bad things that are about to happen if you ignore messages, you will still know anyway. Family and friends will still tell you about an approaching storm, a possible economic collapse, or any significant event that might affect you.

In today's business world it is all but impossible to go on an information / communication fast. But you can utilise intermittent fasting. A fast is a complete cessation. Intermittent fasting is a reduction and usually time denoted. In the fitness world the most common intermittent fast is where you don't eat for 16 hours and do during the remaining 8. This is the approach that can apply to your 'Distraction Fast'.

You can fast by doing the following things either once per day or during a window of time that you decide – this may be 6 or 8 hours or shorter – up to you and the demands of your world…

So once per day check your email, social networks, IMs, and favorite websites, watch less TV, avoid your phones except to answer important calls, go online only to do necessary research.

Instead, spend your time reading those books and articles that you've shelved for a long time. Or catch up with people you have not been in contact with. The thing is to identify your distractions and alter how you interact with them.

Now you need to intentionally, mindfully choose your most important channels of communication. It could be email, cell phone, or Skype. Find out the most important news sites and blogs to visit for updates. Choose the right music, movies, and TV shows. Eliminate the things that you don't need one at a time per

day. This will help reduce your distractions.

Limit the time spent on even the online communications that you consider essential. It could be 30 minutes in your inbox, 30 minutes on your favorite blogs, or one hour of TV. List these priorities down and follow them to the T each day, until it becomes a habit.

- Reduce.
- Avoid.
- Eliminate.

Which you choose and to what extent is up to you. But remember we create new habits best if we approach change in small steps rather than going all out.

To fix your focus deficit it may be best to scale back each distraction a piece at a time…

By doing this you will come to realise that there is actually a life without screens that you can partake of and enjoy. Online is important and beneficial and unfortunately it is also too intrusive and uses our biochemistry against us (remember dopamine?)

How to Change Office Culture

Modern offices boast of being productive and efficient. However, workers are constantly interrupted by distractions, from emails and IMs to calls, calendar requests, meetings, and office chatter. All these distractions cause information overload and stress. They might even end up doing nothing at the end of the day, while paying attention to a lot of distractions.

You can create a more productive environment at work if you advise your employees or team to do these things:

- Tell them to figure out what to do for the day and settle with 3-5 important tasks. They should do this first thing in the morning.
- They should clear their desks and tune out all distractions to work on the first important task.
- They can devote about 30 minutes of your day to go through email and voicemail.

- They should focus on completing the rest of the tasks, with few interruptions.
- They should meet with you to look back on their day, discuss problems, and settle what tomorrow's tasks should be.
- They should learn how to disconnect, starting with your effort to shut down the Internet for a few hours every day.

Soon enough, all these changes will accumulate to major changes that will help you and even the people around you find focus. Just make sure to show them how it should be done.

Chapter 6: Set your Responses



Okay now we've covered off why Focus is important, what distractions are, some techniques and tactics to reduce them and how to form habits to assist you in becoming more productive.

Now you need to decide what your specific response will be what distraction. This means that you will have to identify and then override or replace existing habits.

The habit of response – to emails, voice mails, App alerts, Face Book notifications is usually unthinking and allows these things to destroy your focus and insert themselves into your life without much if any conscious thought.

Organisations are full of people who spend all day responding to emails and who go home feeling like they have accomplished nothing of worth during their day. They are right. They haven't…

But why do we feel that urgency to respond to things right away?

The need to immediately respond springs from a few places in our lives. Firstly we have been raised to be polite and common courtesy demands that we respond to communication from others so we don't appear rude… Likewise our work environment may have made us fear missing a contract, fear losing a client if we don't respond straight away, or be considered lazy if we don't get back to the Boss immediately…

Lastly modern communication is all about speed and we get caught up in being quick…

So how can you get rid of these drives to respond?

- Slow down. If you are checking your email only once or twice a day that is plenty of time to get back to others – if it is really urgent they will call you or work around to your office and see you…
- Prioritise who you will respond to and in what time frame. This will significantly reduce the stress out of the need to send replies to everyone as fast as you can.
- Tell people that the best way to get hold of you is by <insert your favourite method be it email or text or telephone>
- Let people know that you will respond, but if it's truly urgent then then they need to use your preferred method.
- Wean yourself gradually off the immediate response to every communication. Naturally triage things properly so that you remain effective and professional but slow down, make response times fit into your day don't fit your day to them.. Now that you know how your fears and the urgency to respond are ruining your life, free few hours of your day every day by not responding. Gain more control over when to give a response.

Break Free from Keeping Up with Information

As mentioned earlier – you do anything, just not everything.



It is impossible to stay on top of every piece of information that comes our way.

If you're worried of looking ignorant, set up your own news feed that caters for current events. I am not a big fan of Soccer but one company I ran had a staff who were soccer crazy. So I made a point of getting hold of scores and stand out events for each week's main game. In this way it was easier for the staff to see me as one of their own and not an outsider.

The lesson here – especially if you are a manager or in sales – is to be strategic in the information that you gather in order to be more effective in your role. And be even more

selective and strategic in the information that you chase that supports your own goals.

Focus on the important things that really matter to you whilst remaining effective in your career..

Use the intermittent fasting approach to stay up to date but not slavishly.

If you're really worried, read the headlines of your favorite news sites, then tune out for two days before checking these sites again. Repeat this until such time when you can spend more days being tuned out and see if something bad happens. It is unlikely that anything will and this will help you break free from the urgency of staying updated.

Controlling Your Time with Your Inbox

It's a common habit to leave your inbox open most of the time, at home or at work. However, doing so will keep you distracted since every time a new email comes, you'll stop what you are doing to check it and even respond to it.

To avoid spending excessive time in your inbox, follow these tips:

- Turn off the email program.
- If this is not possible then turn off all alerts. Do this for your mobile devices as well.
- Set up a good email filing and sorting system. Set up rules within your email program so it sorts your emails for you. Then you can focus on the relevant ones and leave to 'nice to know' or 'gee that's interesting ones to later. Or maybe even never.
- Make a to-do list out of your inbox. Read your emails and list down all the tasks you find in them. Do it on a notebook, Notepad, or programs such as Task paper.
- As we've mentioned before only open emails at scheduled times. Find the most convenient time for you to stay available through email. Depending upon your business and role within it this may once every 90 minutes or twice a day for example.
- Work on your computer with the current program in full screen mode so that is all that you see.
- Close your browser.

Healthy Distractions

We have railed about distractions and how they destroy your focus and spend your precious attention on non-important things. In general distractions are just that – negatives in your lives.

However consider the concept of a welcome distraction.

Sometimes being distracted can actually enhance your focus.

Distractions can:

- Give you a mental break when you are stuck and need to change gears.
- They can relieve stress from your mind and let you relax.
- They can inspire you, especially if you are distracted by reading articles and books, possibly giving you new ideas or a source of motivation.
- They can be fun and may even let you find new things to enjoy.
- They can help you reset and then to refocus on the task at hand.

So how can you let welcome distractions into your life?

- Be clear on what is and is not important in your lives (Business, Career and Personal)
- Look for non-core things that can act as welcome distraction. A client of mine is serious martial artist and he uses you tube videos of people sending up the serious side of them as a point of relief. (Master Ken is a particular favourite) Allowing him to mentally reset and refocus.
- Spare a few hours of your day to focus on important things. Avoid communicating online.
- You can program in 'Welcome Distraction' time into your work day. May be you indulge during lunch or at a set time when you know you will need to rest.

Find more ways to balance your life between focus and healthy distractions.

Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes

off your goal. - Henry Ford

Chapter 7: How to Simplify Everything

In becoming more adept at focusing your attention on the things that are important to you we should consider the idea of simplicity.



No I am not suggesting that you adopt a minimalist life style like Leo Babuta of Zen Habits fame (www.zenhabits.net) but one way we get distracted easily is that we can't find things when we need them and in looking we come across other things that grab our attention and BANG! Our focus is lost or transferred elsewhere…

Clearing the Clutter

Einstein supposedly sang the praises of a cluttered desk and messy workspace. But many studies have shown that this just does not work for most of us.

Imagine your workplace is busy office. Your desk is cluttered and you use a sedimentary filing system. Your room is untidy with stacks of papers on every surface and you have to move things just to use your mouse on your PC…you have to field calls from phones that never seem to stop and you have social media and email notifications popping up, someone contacting you on IM, and other people dropping by to 'just pick your brains'…calling your attention.

How likely is it in such an environment you would be prone to constant distraction?

Would you still be able to effectively get on with your work?

Not likely.

Now David Allen of GTD (www.gettingthingsdone.com) has an entire system that use reams of paper folders and a dedicated process to cut the clutter and make your workspace less cluttered. It works. But it also has a learning curve attached. I believe that it is well worth reading his book on his system but you don't have to master this in order to make your environment more distraction resistant.

You can get started by making small steps, such as the following:

- Tidy up your desk. Choose only five of the most important items to be placed on your desk. It could be your computer, a photo frame, water bottle, and paperwork.
- Put the other items away, take them home or temporarily place them on the floor.
- Ruthlessly sort through the papers on the desk. Throughout as much as is sensible. Set up and use files for the rest.
- Deactivate computer & mobile device notifications. Familiarize yourself with the settings of your email, IM, mobile device, social networks, and calendar to turn off notifications that might interrupt your work.
- Put your mobile phone onto silent or to vibrate.
- Activate 'Do not Disturb' on your desk phone.
- Put a sign on your door / cubicle wall saying you are unavailable until a specified time
- Listen to soothing music and use headphones. Buy a CD or go to iTunes to build your collection of relaxing music that will put you in a peaceful mood. Or use an on-line service (try www.focusatwill.com)
- Use headphones to drown the surrounding noise.(and to stop from bothering others – depending upon your workplace)
- Reduce the number of icons on your desktop to the ones you need to use to get things done.
- Remove all application shortcuts and use a launcher program instead that will only require you to type the name of the program, folder or file that you want to open after a few keystroke combinations.
- Store all your files into My Documents with a decent file tree that makes sense to you so you can easily find things.

- Declutter your furniture, walls and floors. Sort through all the things on the floor and keep those things that you need out have sight. Do the same thing to your walls, while keeping only valued family photos or artwork on them. Chairs are for sitting not file storage…

Do these things one small step at a time and you'll eventually see a major change.

Take It Slow

Modern life seems to be breakneck in pace, speedy in action and downright scary in demands. It seems that everyone is caught up in the fast lane.

A sure sign of this is the common belief of people to think that they are multitasking when they are only task switching.

The old Road Safety campaign said it best: 'Speed Kills.'

Not just lives but dreams hopes and goals. Trying to respond instantaneously (as we have already seen) kills focus and attention.



Slow Down.

Again it has been mentioned before but it is worth repeating. Control of your lives, better focus and more available attention for the important things thrives on slowing down.

If you want to achieve your great things, you need to slow down. Rushing everything will only make more room for errors. Move slower but strategically and accomplish the right things.

Here are some more tips on how to slow down a little:

- Reduce your to-do list to the most essential tasks, about one to three of them. Do them first before doing routine tasks.

- Use the ***6 –pad system®*** where you assign 1 pad as a To-Do list for each of: Personal, Someday / Interests, Major Client 1, Major Client 2, Projects, and Management
- Schedule fewer meetings.
- Hold meetings standing up (amazing how much sooner they get finished – (I know we are talking about slowing down but in the case of meetings brevity allows the time to slow down for other more worthy pursuits!)
- Disconnect at times. Start disconnecting for short regular periods of time, until you can do it easily and use the new time to focus on those things of import to you.
- Become a student of travel times and ensure that you leave enough leeway to arrive at any appointments with 10 minutes to spare and no rushing to get there.
- Uncram your diary. Set aside a day each week for appointments and let people know that this is the best time to get to see you. Schedule each meeting for 30 minutes with a 15 minute spacer.
- Allow yourself permission to recognise that John Lennon was right and 'Life is what happens whilst you are making other plans.' In other words – you won't always get to finish what you start when you want to and this too is okay.
- Get rid of the fluff and the things you do that don't serve your larger purpose. Create a To-Don't List® and use it to eliminate, automate or delegate tasks like these to others.
- Be conscious of what you do, who you meet, what your surroundings look like, and more.
- Don't overcommit. Choose four to five essential commitments and let go of the rest.

You will feel happier and more satisfied if you don't rush everything in life. More focused and more productive.

Avoid Negative Focus - Go with the Flow

No matter how much you plan your life, there are things that are simply out of your control. Try to avoid letting yourself getting angry or disappointed as this only adds stress to your day. And stress itself is a



major cause of distraction or in fact negative focus.

Think about it a major deal falls over, a client goes with someone else or you are fighting with your children – all of these things can lead to stress and negative focus.

Negative focus is where you find yourself focusing (almost obsessing) on things that you either have no control over, have dented your self –image, or you can't alter because time travel is still in the realms of Sci-Fi.

Rather try instead, to learn to embrace these things and just go with the flow. Then, focus on your dynamic environment. It helps to do these things:

- Admit that you can't do everything.
- That not everything is yours to control.
- That sometimes bad things happen to good people.
- That despite great planning and solid intentions clients choose others for no apparent reason.
- Yes sometimes your Boss is acting like and As*hole.
- Be conscious to warrant change.
- Take a deep breath every time you feel frustrated, angry or stressed.
- Get perspective to learn to let go of things that you can't control.
- Practice going with the flow, until you excel at it.
- Laugh it off, even if it doesn't seem funny.
- Know that you can't control other people.
- Acknowledge imperfection and change.

- See life as a dynamic machine. Life is ever changing. Don't fight it.

Going with the flow should not be confused with just drifting along aimlessly rather it is consciously recognizing those things, those circumstances where you have no sway and accepting them so you can focus on the things that you exert influence over.

If you don't know where you are going any road will get you there – Lewis Carroll

Doing Things Effortlessly

Again to do things with less effort does not mean just floating along… It does mean adopting and practicing the tactics and techniques in this book until they become second nature. Like driving a car practice makes it easier to automatically do the required things so you can focus on the bigger picture.

To achieve the power of focus, you need to learn how to do things effortlessly – or at least with less effort. It's not always right to address your difficulties at work by giving into your distractions just to avoid dealing with them.

Instead, try to flow like water, effortless in its movement, following the pull of gravity and the contours of the landscape that it passes through. Water doesn't force things, yet it's powerful and graceful.

Learn how to be effortless by keeping these tips in mind:

- Try to tie what you do to your passions in life.
- Become a Ninja at avoiding distractions and using attention and focus.
- When you're about to do something you don't like change course and find something that you do like, while still getting to the same destination.
- Don't try to force control over uncontrollable things.
- Feel the moment. No woo-woo stuff but try to present in the moment when difficulties arise.
- Keep an eye open to all the possibilities, consider them all instead of fearing all the choices, and

follow your intuition.

- Be flexible.
- Find the sweet spot to maximise effectiveness and minimise effort.
- Confront the difficult and deal with the easy things now.

Chapter 8: How to Will Yourself to Focus

Pursuing Single Tasks and Improving Productivity



Multi-tasking is a lie but one that has become all too often associated with seemingly being productive. Again – it is not possible except for the rarest of individuals and then usually Mothers tending to several under 5's…

Pretending to multitask is not a productive way of working. It really means task switching and the more you do this the harder it is to focus on each new task, the more you attention span diminishes and the less productive you become. Like it or not our conscious minds are designed only to handle one thing well at a time.

That's why it's best to focus on a single task at a time wherever possible. Doing this this way – whether at work or at home – means that you can focus better, improve your effectiveness, develop your expertise in what you do, and produce quality work. It also feels good to lose yourself in something that you feel is worth doing.

You can lead a full life, full of single tasks by doing these things:

- Be aware of the things that you are doing, right from when you start doing it. Stop yourself from switching to another thing. Mindfulness is the latest buzzword in management circles but as a way of doing things many folks have been doing it for centuries without coaching…
- Eliminate distractions. If you're going to research, focus on it alone. If you're going to read a book, do nothing except read the book.

- When you feel the urge to be distracted use the 2-More Rule®
- Choose your tasks wisely. Always ask yourself "Am I doing something worthwhile?" If not, proceed with the important tasks.
- Pour your everything into the task at hand. If you're going to talk with friends, talk and listen. If you're going to lose weight, eat healthy and exercise as much as you can.
- Practice. Once you get your drive going, practice it every single day until you're good at it.

But how can you boost your productivity if you choose single tasks?

- Choose only the biggest and most important tasks every day, the ones that you really need to finish to create an impact on your work and life in general.
- Don't go straight to your distractions first thing in the morning. Instead, prepare a to-do list. UIs e the 5 by 5® method.
- Get rid of distractions.
- Finish your tasks one by one.
- Stop yourself when you feel the temptation to check your inbox or log into your social network accounts. Use the 2-More Rule®
- Don't stop doing the most important tasks until they're done.
- Take note of things that you can't do now or think of doing later so you won't forget them.
- Take a break and de-stress by breathing deeply in and out.
- Use the Pomodoro protocol or try a compression session.

Benefits of Walking on Disconnection and Focus

Did you know that you can boost your focus and productivity immensely just by walking.

You can follow this walking routine to help you regain your focus:

- Walk for about 30 minutes to a destination – a library, park, coffee shop, or café.
- Don't be online whilst walking.
- Read or work for 40 minutes, from writing and reading to taking notes or responding to emails.
- Walk back to where you came from.
- Repeat this schedule.

Walking and disconnecting are worth trying because you can refocus and can think better after sitting all day long. It will also help you clear your head, enjoy what nature has to offer, and take a break from stress. It will even help you improve physically. After walking, you'll know how to focus on work again and waste less time on distractions.

Conclusion

Being focused is a great challenge in these *uber* connected times when distraction comes at us from all sides. But despite us needing to have more focus in our lives we have to be pragmatic and realise that the very sources of distractions, from mobile phones and the Internet; to people trying to talk to you - are things that we can't also do completely without. This means that you just need to turn down the volume – both of noise and information - by learning to limit their impact on your life.

As this book has discussed, learn to go with the flow. Don't try to control the uncontrollable. Be flexible. Be strong in the face of distractions. Only then will you be able to focus and be on the way to achieving the goals you want in your Business, your career and your personal life.

If you would like to know more about The Clarity CEO and the programs offered in 'Cracking the Clarity Code' please contact him via his website www.theclarityceo.com or by emailing info@theclarity ceo.com

Geoff Hetherington
The Clarity CEO

THE CLARITY CODE:

Most people think that having less is normal – less time with loved ones, less money than you deserve and less control over your life than you need…But really there is a way to regain control of your life and its facets – a way to have less stress, more money and more time…

If you just crack the code to clarity you will be able to detangle your life and identify a defined path to follow, techniques to develop and strategies to use that will enable you to live a happier, wealthier, healthier and more fulfilling life.

In this session you will learn:

- The 3 stages to cracking the code and achieving clarity
- How to identify the areas of your business, career and life that need the most attention to set you free
- The 4 numbers everyone must know to organise their life
- The difference between skill and passion and why it matters
- How to be an employee and still achieve a larger life through clarity



BIO:

Geoff Hetherington is the Clarity CEO – the Global expert on attaining Business & Personal clarity.

Geoff specialises is keynote presentations at large corporate conferences and business off-site workshops that give concrete actions to take, and inspires owners, management and teams on how to develop this vital skill in both their working and private lives.

He has recently focussed on professional service firms like Financial Planners, Accountants and Aged Care providers.

He believes that owning or managing a successful business is the best way to ensure that you and your family get to live a larger life. And the surest way to success is to obtain absolute clarity of your business and personal goals, skills and resources.

Note: Geoff does not present just the typical goal setting methodology but a proven system that enables people to work less and play more with less stress.

Described as' irreverent and insightful' Geoff has a background as an internationally experienced senior executive with over 30 years' spent as a CEO, General Manager, and Sales & Marketing Director across industries like: Retail, Pharmacy, Consumer Electronics, Fitness / Training, Not for Profits, Construction Supply & Telecommunications.

He launched the Telstra Next G network in non-urban Australia with the largest experiential marketing campaign ever undertaken in this country and spent 5 years in Indonesia running 5 companies with a half billion USD in sales.

Through his consulting business - Dancing Blind Man - Business Advisors - he diagnoses and tune-ups businesses so that the owners and management regain control, increase profits, and get back more time.

If you would like to know more about The Clarity CEO and the programs offered in 'Cracking the Clarity Code' please contact him via his website www.theclarityceo.com or by emailing info@theclarity ceo.com