Disruptions Log

Template

One thing that gets in the way of effective time management is disruptions. Whether these disruptions come in the form of people approaching your desk, a phone call or email, they all prevent us from managing our time and getting things done. Disruptions can be frustrating, and we often waste a lot of time dealing with them.

There are a lot of ideas out there on how to deal with disruptions, but before you manage or minimize them, it’s a good idea to find out where they are coming from and why.

Step 1:

Each time you get disrupted (meaning each time you have to stop a task because your attention is drawn away) fill in the Disruptions Log. Here is what to record:

* Time – What time did the disruption occur?
* Type – What exactly was the disruption?
* Action – How did you deal with the disruption?
* Why – Was the disruption valid or urgent?
* Duration – How long did it take to deal with the disruption?
* Impact – What was the impact of the disruption on you?
* Reflection – How would you manage the disruption differently next time?

Do this for at least one day, preferably up to five days and then analyse the data. Look for trends and also look at how much time you have spent dealing with disruptions. Use the data to proactively put fixes in place to reduce or remove as many disruptions as you can. This will go a long way in improving your time management so you are more focused and productive.

Tips for getting the most value recording a personal disruption log.

* Record as much detail as possible about the disruptions.
* Update your log as a disruption occurs – don’t try and remember all the disruptions at the end of the day.

Day 1

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| Time | What was the disruption? | How did I deal with the disruption? | Was it valid or urgent? | How long did it take to deal  with it? | What was the impact of the disruption? | What would I do differently next time? |
| 08.40 | Colleague stopped at my desk to say hello. | I had a quick chat with them. | No | 10 mins | Was nice to have a chat, but I had just started working through my emails for the day, so it stopped me and then I had to remember where I was up to. | Suggest we catch up at lunchtime. |
| 09.25 | LinkedIn notification on my phone. | I quickly looked at the notification and commented on it. | No | 10 mins | It broke my concentration on the presentation that I was writing. Then it was hard to start back again. I then went and made a coffee as I was already distracted. | Turn off notifications during the workday and check at the end of the day. |
| 10.05 | Personal phone call. | Took the call. | No | 15 mins | I was still trying to write my presentation, so it stopped me and made it harder to start back again. | Not answer the call and check the voicemail/call back when I had completed my work. |

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| 10.15 | Numerous email notifications. | Checked my emails. | No | 45 mins | I dealt with the emails and put off working on the presentation that I needed to complete today. | Turn email notifications off. Set up regular times in the day to check my emails – either last 10 minutes of every hour or once I have finished a set task. |
| 11.10 | Phone call from my manager. | Took the call. | Yes | 30 mins | I had to stop working on the presentation. They did give me information that I needed for the presentation, but it meant I had to re-write some areas as I was originally off-track. | I should have asked for the information I needed earlier, allowing time for my manager to respond and ensure I received it before starting my work. |
| 11.35 | Ambulance siren outside. | I looked to see if I could see the ambulance and what was going on. | No | 2 mins | It did interrupt me but as it was quick, I was able to get straight back into what I was doing. | I should try to ignore the sirens. |
| 12.10 | Colleague stopped at my desk to ask for help with a project. | I stopped what I was doing to help him. | No | 20 min | I had to stop doing my work and it put me behind. | I would ask them to come back at a more suitable time or arrange to have lunch with them to discuss it. |
| 13.30 | Urgent email notifications. | I switched task to answer the email. | No | 15 min | It stopped me working on what I had planned to work on, but it was an urgent request for a project, so I wanted to answer it. | It wasn’t urgent enough that it couldn’t have waited until I had finished my work in the next hour. This wouldn’t impact my focus if I turned off email notifications and  checked emails at specific times. |
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Step 2:

Analyze your Disruptions Log. What trends do you notice? What does your Disruptions Log tell you?

• I spent around 3.75 hours dealing with disruptions!

• 75% of these disruptions were not valid or urgent!

• I worked back late as a result of these disruptions

• My focus kept getting interrupted

• I was working reactively rather than managing my time proactively

• There are some clear strategies I can put in place to minimize disruptions

Step 3:

How will you manage or minimize disruptions more effectively? What specific strategies will you put in place?

• Have a schedule – plan your day (including when you will check emails, social

media etc.) and be disciplined in sticking to it.

• Get enough sleep – seven to nine hours is recommended.

• Eat heathy – nutritious, well-balanced food is proven to support focus.

• Use music – listen to motivational music so you aren’t distracted by background

noise.

• Turn off notifications – schedule time to deal with emails, messages and social

media. Control your incoming emails and messages; don’t let them control you.

• Turn off your phone – turn it to mute or off when working on an important piece

of work.