

# UNAWAWARENESS OF MULTITASKING AS A SYSTEM

---

*Leader perspective*



# OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING



## UNDERSTANDING

the counterproductivity of multitasking



## REALIZING

the multitasking culture and workplace pression



## EMPOWERING

the ability and skills to create proper habits and protect team from multitasking



## DEVELOPING

practical knowledge on managing multiple tasks of the team

*snail*





# TABLE OF CONTENTS



## To understand inefficiency of multitasking

What have we learned so far?



## Multitasking culture

Why do so many people multitask?



## Unawareness of multitasking as a system

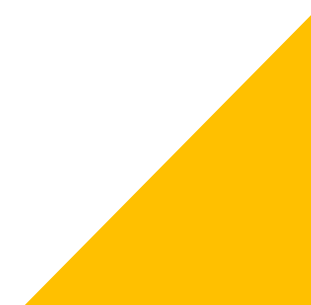
Why do we succumb to bad habits?



## Multitasking in your team

How to protect your team from multitasking and create positive working habits?

*snail*





# Shortly about multitasking

Our brains are **not capable** of focusing on multiple tasks at once. They simply aren't. We think they are, but what's happening is your brain is jumping back and forth between the tasks, focusing briefly one at a time.

Based on much research and experience, multitasking **can waste a lot of time** due to context switching which results in more **mistakes** due to lack of focus or divided attention.

**Don't multitask.** Don't damage your brain. Because that's going to have an effect on your work, obviously, as well as how you cope with the rest of the workload.



Watch what multitasking does to your brain



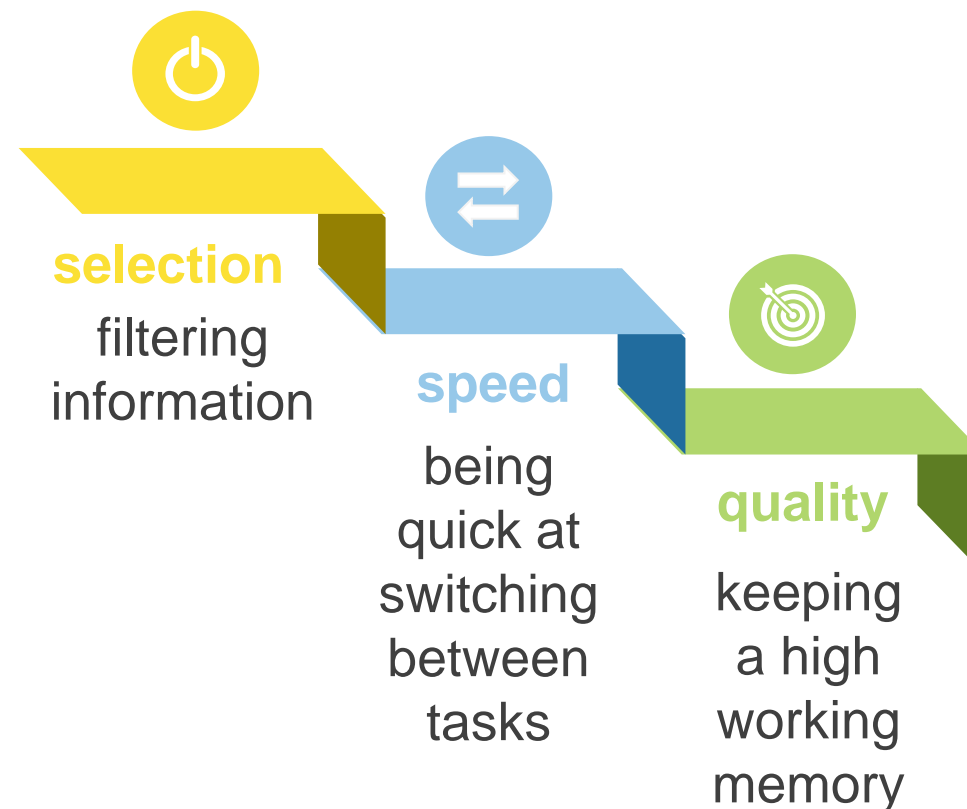
# Some benefits?

snail

According to Clifford Nass of Stanford University, multitaskers might develop some form of outstanding skills of:

However, they found out that these 3 points are not true. Nass stated that multitaskers are terrible at every aspect of multitasking.

They are bad at filtering irrelevant information and perform poorly at switching between the tasks as compared to more focused single tasks.





# Why do people do it?



snail

## **Sense of accomplishment**

A study published in the Journal of Communication suggested that people multitask because it makes them feel better. “Some people believe a myth that multitasking makes them more productive. These people seem to misperceive the feel-good sensation they get from multitasking. These people are not being more productive, but they just feel more emotionally happy or satisfied from their task.”

## **Competition to be the best**

Psychiatrist Edward M. Hallowell has described multitasking is “a myth where people believe that they can do several tasks simultaneously as effectively as doing one single achievable task. Speed is the modern and natural high.”

## **The habit of being in constant action**

Thanks to the quick switching between small tasks - you give yourself another dose of dopamine and you keep the immediate reward. Action addiction is not synonymous with hard and persistent work. Rather, it is being constantly busy.



# Multitasking culture



## **In our present society, most people will praise when someone is able to multitask**

People find it very good if someone can accomplish tasks by multitasking. A multitasker will always justify that they are getting many tasks done in a day, which saves time, money and energy.

## **Confidence that improving multitasking skills is the best way to be efficient at work**

Today leaders and employees alike are facing an influx of tasks and duties, and are encountering various challenges and distractions along the way. Many of them believe multitasking is a valuable skill that should continuously be improved upon in order to maximize productivity and success. They persuade that improving multitasking skills is the best way to achieve the level of productivity organizations are striving for.

## **Unawareness and social acceptance**

Further, we were led to believe that there's nothing wrong with doing two or more things at the same time. With the amount of work and pressing deadlines, there's no time to waste.



# Unawareness is harmful



## Must-do

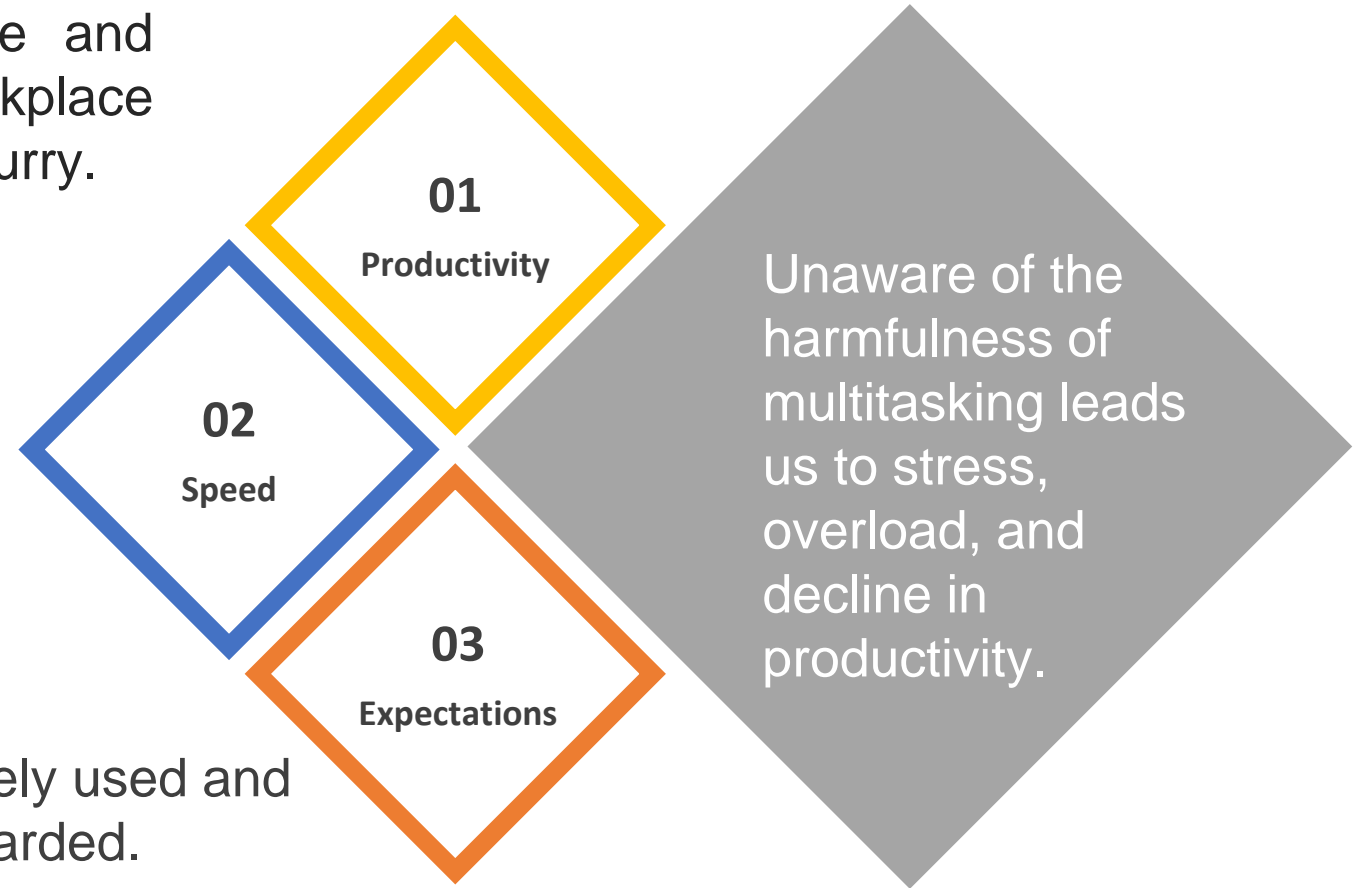
We often treat multitasking as a must. Time pressure and expectations in the workplace force us to permanent hurry.

## Illusion

We are under the illusion that when we switch between two or more tasks, more work gets done faster.

## Usualness

This style of work is widely used and even cultivated and rewarded.





# Impact on your team

snail



Managers often are not fully aware of their good and bad influence on team



**Their work habits can impact those they supervise**



The transition from individual contributor to manager expands the influence of a person's work habits



**The more senior they become, the more this influence is amplified**



Manager emails their team on Sunday evenings



**Team members are more likely to be online then too (even if it isn't a manager's intention)**



Leader emails during meetings



**It is 2.2 times more likely to have direct reports who multitask in meetings**



Emailing during off-hours and multitasking in meetings



**Significant and often undesirable ripple effects among a leader's team**



# Multitasking managers

snail

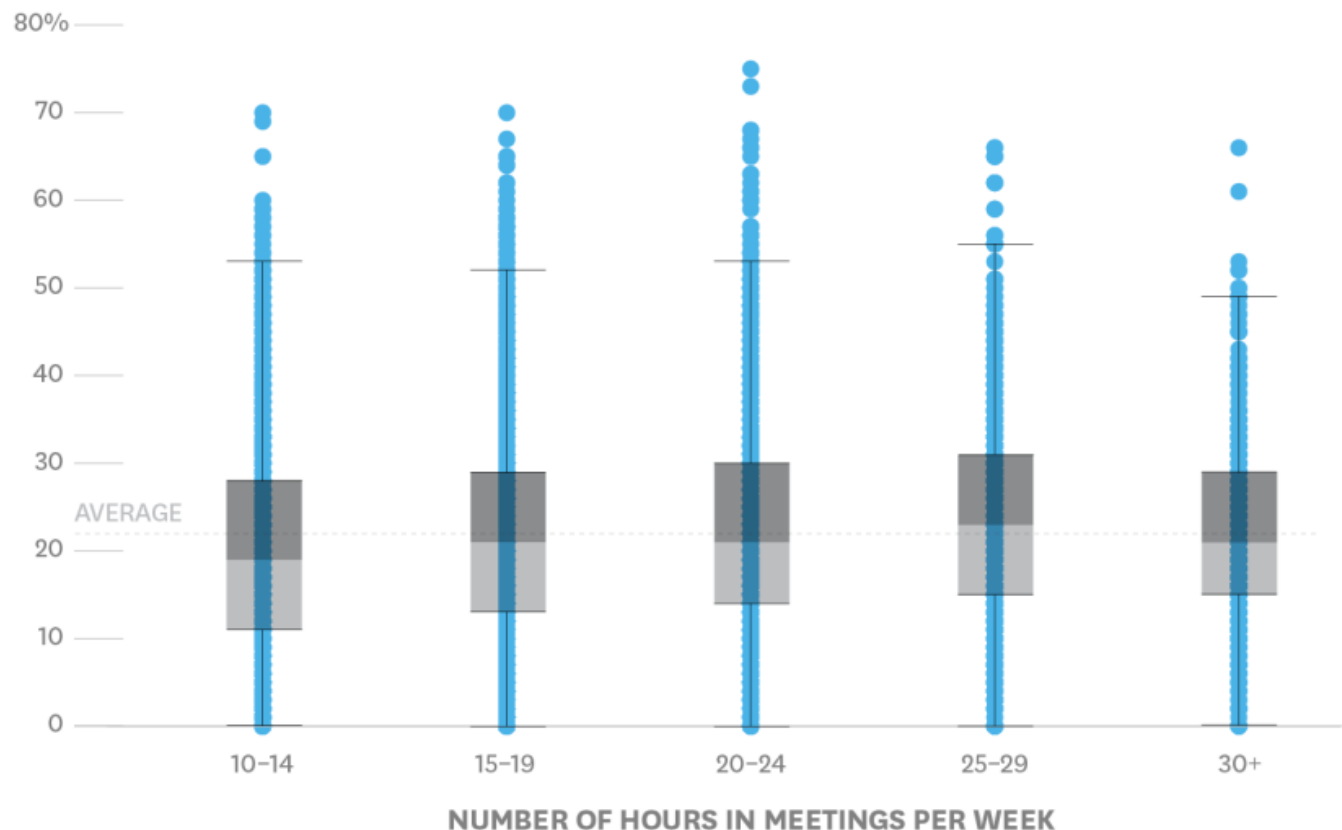
In the chart, each dot represents a manager. The X axis in the number of hours they spend in meetings each week and the Y axis is the percentage of time they multitask.

This analysis shows a wide variance in the multi-tasking rates from 0% to over 70% that appear unrelated to the number of hours in meetings. Managers with 10-15 hours of meetings are just about as likely to multitask as those with over 30 hours of meetings.

## Managers Multitask in Meetings Regardless of How Much Time They Spend in Meetings

The “I’m too busy with back-to-back meetings” excuse doesn’t hold.

PERCENTAGE OF TIME SPENT MULTITASKING





# Why you also shouldn't?

snail

## Giving bad example



When you as a manager multitasking in meetings, you send the signal, "It's OK to not pay attention."

## Disturbing



While multitasking can, at times, seem to you an efficient way to work for you, it's also distracting for other participants.

## Disregarding



Your multitasking can signal to others that you don't value their time or their contributions.



# Manager's responsibility



When you shoot off a quick email during a meeting, you miss that part of the conversation. You – and others – may not even notice, but it means you have gaps in understanding of what took place.

That can lead to:



different interpretations of a decision



missed opportunities to provide critical guidance



inconsistent follow-through on action agreements



# What you can do as a leader?



01

For a week or two, take note of when you multitask and why. If it is because you're not essential to the purpose of the meeting, ask the meeting owner to remove you.

02

Convert 60-minute meetings to 45 minutes. You get the dual benefit of a more focused discussion and an extra 15 minutes each hour to catch up on emails.

03

Cluster your meetings during portions of the day or days of the week. That leaves chunks of time open for getting focused work done or being available to your team for a quick five-minute conversation instead a complicated email thread or 30-minute meeting.

04

Take 10 minutes in your next staff meeting to discuss this with your direct reports. Make a shared commitment to show up more fully present to meetings for that week and debrief the experience in a subsequent staff meeting.

snail



# How to protect team?

## PRIORITIZE

Your team must understand what is the priority and why. Your job is to make sure that the priority they afford to the task aligns with your overall goals and the business needs. Check-in with the team and make sure that they know what should be top of the to-do list.

## CHECK WORKLOAD

People are more inclined to multitask when they have too much to do. Make sure that your team members are not overloaded by assessing their overall workload. They should be allocated between 80-100% of their time.



## REVIEW TASKS

Try to have team members' tasks link logically. Then, even if they do have to switch between activities the burden on their brain is lower as there is a thematic link between what they need to do. In fact, they may even be able to find synergies to the point where the workflows naturally and don't feel too disconnected.

## STAY OUT OF THE WAY

You and the team need to be flexible but also respectful of their time. If you do have to change their workload and ask them to switch to another task, let them know what you expect them to do with their current priorities.



# How to support your team?



In your role as a team manager, you can't afford productivity to drop by much. Probably your work sometimes is complex, often involving multiple strands and peaks and troughs of work. And most of the time your team is working on more than one project.

If you pull your team into new urgent tasks, they won't be able to hit their deadlines for tasks at the same time, so you'll need to:

- push out other deadlines until the work is finished,
- or give the tasks to someone else to finish,
- or delay the new tasks if your team's current work is more important.

Expecting them to multitask and take more on is just going to leave you with poor quality work on both counts.



# Summary

True multitasking in your team is counterproductive so do what you can to:

- prioritize,
- set clear task assignments,
- ensure you are not overloading your team,
- steer clear of making the problem worse,
- make your team aware,
- give a good example and promote good practices,
- do not contribute to creating a multitasking culture.

Then your team will be able to get their heads down and crack on with their projects, knowing you are there to back them up if they need it.





# Sources of reference



[https://medium.com/@Adrien\\_Liard/why-you-should-limit-work-in-progress-and-stop-multitasking-ba7ecd4670f](https://medium.com/@Adrien_Liard/why-you-should-limit-work-in-progress-and-stop-multitasking-ba7ecd4670f)



<https://xenlife.com.au/multitasking-affecting-efficiency>



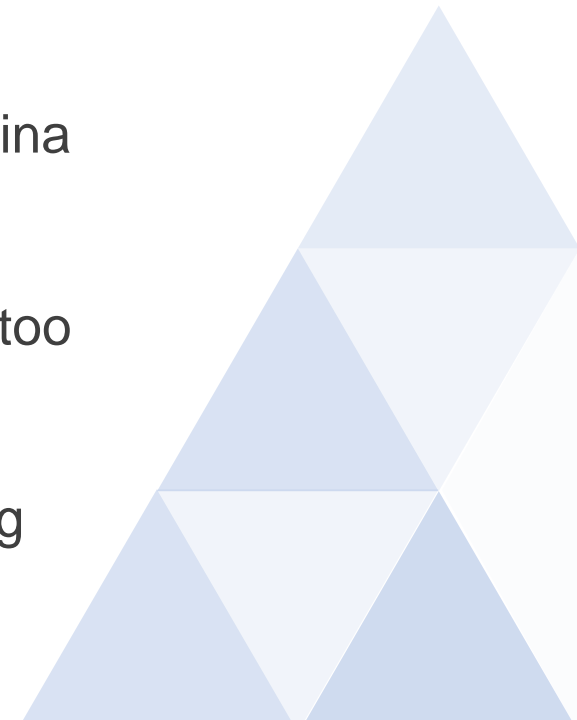
<https://mindfulnessinside.pl/czy-jestes-uzalezniiony-od-dzialania-dopamina>



<https://hbr.org/2018/01/if-you-multitask-during-meetings-your-team-will-too>



<https://www.projectmanager.com/blog/keep-your-team-from-multitasking>



Don't multitask. Stop starting, start finishing !

THANK YOU



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



[www.slow-work.eu](http://www.slow-work.eu)



**I&F**  
Instruction & Formation  
LEARNING FOR LIVING



**INDEPCIE**



**ORANGE HILL**



**GrowthCoop**  
developing people



**LIJUDSKA UNIVERZA VELENJE**