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Since January 1996

Over the past several months I have read more discussions in the news with regards to distracted driving. Studies have suggested that distracted driving – mostly due to texting and talking via cellular telephones – is comparable to driving while under the influence of alcohol. The United States Department of Transportation has a web site dedicated to distracted driving awareness – [www.distracton.gov](http://www.distracton.gov) – that includes statistics on fatalities due to distracted driving.

Without downplaying the seriousness of the injuries, damages, and deaths caused by distracted drivers, there is something else going on here too: quite simply distracted drivers are taking longer to get to their destinations because they are not focusing on their driving. And from my unscientific though I believe pretty accurate observations it only takes between four and eight distracted drivers strategically spaced apart to slow down hundreds if not thousands of vehicles on multi-lane highways. As such distracted drivers are imposing their inefficiencies on countless others.

There is a cause-and-effect here: the more distracted the less effective in the ability to perform individual tasks. (I've noticed this with my university students.) With more attention focused on the non-productive task there is an increased obliviousness to the important aspects of the productive task, e.g. being aware of vehicles in blind spots before changing lanes.

Organizations that are constantly distracted by exceptions to normal routines or processes can become absorbed in those exceptions: important resources are diverted and this can result in lost opportunities. Important aspects of the business will not get the attention they deserve or require. The organization wants to move forward quickly but simply cannot because they are a distracted driver. It might take only a few distractions to grind the entire organization's progress to a near halt.

So what is the solution? My message to distracted drivers is to put down those cellular telephones and concentrate on driving: let's all get to our destinations safely and timely. I know this will take some willpower but consider the catastrophic consequences of failing to do the right and prudent thing. In addition by getting to our destinations more quickly there will be extra time to make those phone calls and check those e-mails safely.

Organizational distractions can be caused by internal operations discord, supply chain interruptions, and software applications that are not able to produce the necessary analytics from which qualified business decisions can be made.

If you know of an organization – maybe your own – that needs aid in "hanging up" on the distractions then please give me a call and let's chat about how I can help. Just don't call me while you're driving.

Thanks.

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