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There is a great article in the December 17, 2012 edition of *Information Week* magazine by their resident Secret CIO, John McGreavy, about the personal and professional trials and tribulations of being always connected and therefore always distracted.

Mr. McGreavy attributes the need for 24/7 connectivity to e-mail to his management role in the information technology profession. However from my own personal experience of having walked around Hong Kong where everyone is heads-down on their smartphones and not heads-up and aware of who they are about to walk in to, and as a university instructor who has a "professor's perspective" as he watches his students text and tap through his lectures (and exams!) in a computer lab (with open Internet access), I can tell you that the distractions Mr. McGreavy discusses in his article go far beyond the imbalance technology has forced upon IT professionals' personal lives. There is a real addiction to instantaneous information – regardless of the quality – and an unrealistic response-time demand that has somehow been imposed.

I can recall when I first started consulting back in 1996 – before cell phones – when we had pagers. I noticed that my consultant friends would get "beaten up" by their clients who paged them constantly and repeatedly every few minutes when they didn't call them back right away. From the outset I set my parameters with my clients and told them that I would call back as soon as possible but not to page me repeatedly. (I might be in a sales meeting, with another client, or driving and unable to respond at that time.) This rule translated to cell phone voice messages and e-mails as the technology progressed.

My university students know they have an addiction to unimportant instant information and they know this will be a problem once they reach the workforce, but for the most part none of them are trying to wean themselves from the problem as of yet. Some of my students actually think that their future employers will let them burn up bandwidth and time on social media as long as they get their work done...as if they will likely have time during the day to complete all of their workload!

The bottom line from my viewpoint – and this is echoed by Mr. McGreavy – is that there has to be a balance, a line drawn, a determination as to what is important and when. Yes, there are critical demands of business that must be attended to at certain times, but other things simply can – or must – wait. From the classroom to the conference room I have witnessed students and professionals alike distracted from the task at hand, sidetracked by the less important, and slowing the progress of the group by forcing questions and statements to be repeated. Instead of multi-tasking and doing several things with mediocrity, focus on what is in front of you and make that the priority: you will accomplish more in less time at a higher level of quality than you could have otherwise.

Thank you.

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