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eTopic THE TOP DESIGN MONTHLY NEWSLETTER top

It's a Crazy Busy World!



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I often write in eTopic about a book or article I've read that really resonates with me, and the latest best-seller that I picked up recently has had a real impact. In his book, "Crazy Busy," Dr. Edward Hallowell deals with the elephant in the room: the fact that we're all way, way too busy for our own good. But he doesn't just kvetch about being overworked—he digs into the problem to help us understand how the very nature of communication has changed drastically (thanks to the immediacy of the computer, the BlackBerry and the cellphone) and how technology is making us less efficient and more stressed.

We've become slaves to the technologies that are supposed to "free" us. We obsessively check emails, we answer intrusive phone calls and we never have down time. Tools like the BlackBerry don't just connect us to work—they literally chain us.

Reading "Crazy Busy" had an immediate effect: It made me very conscious about the fact that I need to regain control over technology and not let it control me. So I decided to designate one day per week as a "technology-free" day. To test the theory, I spent last Sunday completely "unplugged." I ignored email, I didn't use my cell phone and I spent the day reading and puttering around the house. I gave my mind a rest, but by the end of the night, I felt totally energized. I accomplished so much that day because I wasn't interrupted.

I'm going to carry some of these strategies over into my workweek, too. I plan to limit the time that I spend online and pay attention to when I get sucked into surfing the net and checking email. I plan to designate certain times during my day to read and respond to emails. And I'll share some ideas with my clients and friends about how we can better communicate (for example, picking up the phone to discuss an urgent issue, rather than sending an email).

The reality is, this isn't going to stop; the amount of communication that gets thrown at us during the day isn't going to decrease. So our best defense is to be mindful about how we use these tools. We can't let them use us.

Do you have any effective strategies for managing the communication clutter in your life? I'd love to hear about them. Go ahead: send me an email about it.

Keep in touch...

Peleg Top
Principal & Foudner, Top Design

PS- For those of you who wonder what I sound like in real life, I invite you to listen to the audio podcast of this newsletter (it's only 6 minutes long and my first one ever...). **Click here to listen!**

Book of the Month...



GET IT NOW AT amazon.com

If you consider yourself "crazy busy," then you absolutely need to make the time to read the book, "Crazy Busy" by Dr. Edward Hallowell. Not surprisingly, it's a quick read—a book you can pick up and put down and finish in just a day or two. But it's packed with great information and advice (the subtitle is, "Overstretched, Overbooked, And About to Snap! Strategies for Coping in a World Gone ADD"). The author is an expert in Attention Deficit Disorder, and he describes how even those of us who don't suffer from ADD nonetheless experience its effects, like the tendency to feel rushed, to undertake too many tasks at once, to lose focus. The book offers great strategies—it's not just a matter of slowing down, but of becoming self-aware and focusing on tasks that are really important. Make time to read "Crazy Busy" and it'll help you make better use of your time.

Tips of the Month: **Focus, Act, Be Aware**

Stop multitasking. After years of crowing about the benefits of multitasking, the so-called "experts" have finally admitted it: Doing many things at once means you're doing many things poorly. I've learned that multitasking is like playing tennis with two balls. You may be able to play a game, but you won't be able to play well. And it's not just having too many projects on your plate at one time; it's also doing more than one thing at once. The worst is checking emails while you're talking on the phone: I can always tell when the person I'm talking to isn't focused on our conversation, because their voice changes. It's not only rude, it's inefficient. Focus on one task or project at a time, finish it (or a key portion of it) and move on.

Ignore distractions. Does your email program give you an alert every time a new message arrives in your inbox? Turn off the little animated icon, the pop-up window or the sound that indicates a new

email (use your email program's preferences menu). Mute the ringtone you hear when your cellphone picks up a new voicemail message. Quiet all the devices in your life, so you can concentrate.

Deal with it. Hallowell embraces the OHIO philosophy: Only handle it once. Whether it's your snail mail or your email, you must do one of three things: respond, file or toss. Don't let messages pile up in your inbox; create folders for saving important communications and respond to and delete the rest. Don't accumulate magazines in a pile by your desk; browse through them and tear out pages of interest for filing. Act on everything that comes in.

Turn off and tune out. Designate one full day each week—or a window of time each day—to be technology-free. Don't answer the phone, watch TV or surf the web. Instead, read a book. Have a conversation. Enjoy a quiet dinner. Play a game. I especially like two thought- and dialog-provoking games: Table Topics (a box of question cards that's perfect for starting great conversations at the dinner table) and The UnGame (a very unconventional board game that reveals fascinating things about the players).

New Top Design website launched!

Curious to what we have been up to lately? Wanna see our latest work? I invite you to click and check out the new and imporoved Top Design website. Our new site also has some great resources and a FREE download of my new e-Report on Buzz Marketing.

Visit www.topdesign.com and tell us what you think! I'd love to hear from you... (email me!)

Top Speaking Engagements

If you're in the New York area and you're a designer who is looking to improve their marketing and pricing skills, come and join me at the Pricing and Marketing 3 hour workshop I will be teaching on Saturday, June 17. For more info please visit the workshop website.

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