

## The Myth Of Multitasking

Do you talk on the phone while answering emails? Read while watching TV? Use your Blackberry at meetings? New research into multitasking shows that you might be wasting your time trying to do two things at once.

### **Switching Between Tasks Takes Time**

Participants in a study at the University of Michigan were given 10 multiplication problems that took them about a minute to complete. When they were given the same number of tasks consisting of two *different* types of tasks (multiplication and division) they took longer - a minute and a half.

When the brain has to switch between tasks, it takes a little longer to re-orient. The more complex the task, the longer the warm-up time. That is why it takes so long to complete something when we are interrupted.

### **Doing Two Things Simultaneously Means You Do Each Less Well**

The brain, it seems, has to split resources when we are performing two different tasks. Marcel Just, PhD, a cognitive scientist at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, recorded brain images as subjects tried to perform two tasks simultaneously: listening while visualising certain objects. The brain power used for the simultaneous activities was less than when the whole brain is used to tackle each task separately.

What does it mean for you? You'll probably make fewer errors and actually save time if you concentrate on one thing at a time.

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