



# Tips for Reining in Your Focus in a Distracted World



Small business owners and solopreneurs learn quickly that they must wear many hats. While this ability to work in every area of their business may save money in the short term, it doesn't take long to understand that multitasking can be bad for business. When your focus is diluted across many channels and business goals, you may find that you do a little bit of everything but never solidly complete anything. You spend a good part of your day putting out fires and starting projects and at the end may realize you didn't finish anything to your satisfaction.

That's why keeping your focus is one of the best things you can do for your business. It also models good behavior and sets your employees up for success. Here are a few tips on how you can keep your focus in a world that rewards anything but.

## **Retaining Focus in a Busy World**

You are pulled in many directions throughout your day. There are internal and external things battling for your attention. Finding a way to silence these distractors can help you meet your business goals.

## **Silence Notifications**

This is the most obvious one but also the hardest for most people to do. We're conditioned to respond every time the ding that notifies us of an email or text goes off on our device. Even if you don't attend to it at that moment, it has likely interrupted your thought and you'll have to revisit what you were doing.

You may not have the luxury of silencing the phone at your business, but you can silence e-notifications. No, *really*. You can. You'll survive. Set your devices to go in and out of Do Not Disturb throughout the day or give yourself [designated 30-60 minute work sprints](#) followed by 10-15 minute times to answer those emails or texts.

There are very few electronic communications that can't wait one hour for a response. If you're worried you'll miss a customer communication and thus a sales opportunity, look into [AI chatbot options](#) or hire a message service. But do this only if you're in a business where waiting 60 minutes is the difference between life or death (and even so, most doctors will tell callers on their message line that they should call the ER if it's a life-threatening emergency). Most situations *can* wait.

Silencing notifications means you get your to-do list finished in a fraction of the time and with a much better, more focused quality. That focus yields better outcomes. Give yourself the gift of time by silencing those notifications.

### **Decide on Your Most Important Tasks and Keep a List**

If you're silencing notifications, you should have 30-60 minutes of limited interruptions. If you work behind a counter, in a brick-and-mortar business you will still have those interruptions but here's how you will make the most of your day. You need two lists. The first list is comprised of 2-3 things that will make the biggest impact on your business TODAY. They are your short-term wins. They'll move the needle quickly.

The second list is comprised of the things you can chip away at. They're important, but they're long-term goals or tasks that are not time sensitive. They could be quick wins or long undertakings but they're things you can work on when you have a spare "minute or two." As a business owner, you will always have unexpected time—waiting for a meeting or on a vendor, a slow moment at the store, you get the idea. Make a list of things you can do during that time that will impact your business. For example, use AI to brainstorm a new name for the newsletter. Look for a new color scheme (if you're considering a rebrand.) Watch a video on YouTube on something you want to learn more about like digital marketing.

Most of the time when we have these stolen moments, we don't maximize them. We go onto Facebook and remark about how big our friends' kids are getting. While heartwarming, this is not a great use of time. Instead, make this list and keep it handy. (Storing it on your phone means you'll likely have it wherever you are.) That way you can use your stolen moments for the greatest impact.

### **Fill Your Attentional Load**

If you are working on mundane tasks that don't require a lot of thinking, you may find you're more easily distracted. Using music or other intentional distractors that you control can actually help you stay focused because it "fills" the part of your brain that requires stimulation. This action works in much the same way that a sail may flap in the wind with small gusts but larger gusts that fill it will keep it pulled tight with less flapping around.

### **Keep a Notebook**

When something internal distracts you from your task, ask yourself if it is critical that you address that distraction now or can you table it for later. If it is not an emergency, write it down in a notebook (or digital note app) and return to it when you have finished your work. Once it's in your notebook, let it go. Don't let it continue to take up space in your mind.

Finally, retaining focus is not always about discipline. Nurture a curiosity as you go through your day. Look for connections on what you're working on, your goals, and how they tie into the community, interests, and a host of other things. You will start to uncover an interconnectedness that may help you see additional possibilities for efficiencies and partnerships in your business. Sometimes, what initially identifies as a distraction, could be your next big idea.

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