
MANAGING THE FLOW OF INFORMATION

by [Steve Brown](#)

A recent study by comScore found some interesting things about why people get an iPad and what they do with it. In order, people will use the iPad to browse the internet (50%); email (48%); listen to music (38%); read books or maintain an address book/contact list (37%); watch videos or movies (36%); store or view photos (35%); read newspapers or magazines (34%); use a calendar (33%) and play games (30%). This is a great way to view information, but does it compound our problem of receiving too much and ending up with information overload? Today we examine ways you can better manage the flow to help make your job easier in this area.

The first thing to wrap your mind around is that information pipes are all around your office and the flows are always on. Email, snail mail, social networking, internet, web sites, Google alerts, newspapers, magazines and yes, even the Banc Investment Daily, are all part of the flow of information you receive as you try to keep up and stay on top of things. This flow of information and interruptions during the day mess with the human brain and often just lead to more work just piling up. This may lead to stress, reduced productivity and information overload paralysis in extreme cases. To avoid this, here are some tips you can use from our research on the subject.

To keep up, you have to reduce sorting and reading time, simply given the high volume of information flow. You have to decide what is valuable and what is not and deal with it. One way to do this is to touch everything only once. Whether the information comes in email, paper or magazine form - if you pick it up, you own it. As soon as you touch something, take immediate action on it, request more information so you can deal with it once that information comes in, keep it for reference or chuck it in the trash can right now. If you do nothing else, this one tip has worked wonders for us over the years. While it takes some getting used to, once you drive this into your brain it is an amazing tool to use. Every single time you touch something (with your eyes if email), ruthlessly force yourself to deal with it. In a very short time the piles will drop to more manageable levels.

Understand that studies find the average executive only gets to deal with about 50% of what they set out to do each day. Constant interruptions derail things frequently and depending on the interruption, it can take up to 25 minutes to get the brain back on track. As soon as the interruption ends, take a deep breath, clear your head and ask yourself what is the most important thing you can be doing and then do it. Workplace interruptions are a fact of life, but reducing bounce-back time can help.

Use a to-do list the right way. Dump in all the things you have to do and then prioritize them. Isolate the most important things from the rest and then concentrate on doing them right. This process increases productivity, effectiveness and efficiency. Be sure to set aside time to focus on your most important priorities first and don't forget to celebrate even small successes.

Finally, sprinkle in as needed this last group of tips: proactively delegate things on your to-do list; break larger projects into smaller ones so you can make progress; block out the calendar and close the door when you need to complete big projects to limit distractions; and stay focused on the task at hand until it is done. In the alternative, people seem to blow apart when they try to do too much, manage by crisis and try to be perfect - so just stop doing those and your stress will quickly dissipate.

Just knowing that the average person visits 40 websites a day and that 85% of emails are opened within 2 minutes is enough to increase stress as you think about keeping up. Fight the urge, stay focused and know that managing the endless flood of information isn't easy - even when you have a cool iPad.

BANK NEWS

Bair on Banking

FDIC Chair Bair said she would be surprised if there were any major changes to Dodd-Frank due to Congressional changes. She also talked about the back-up of banking changes due by the regulators in the next few months (including the Volker Rule, SIFI, incentive compensation, etc.). Also, of interest she talked about the Small Business Hotline (1-855-FDIC-BIZ) that businesses can call to find out more on lending or complain about their bank.

Scam

The FDIC issued an alert of an email scam that warns: "in cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security, federal, state and local governments, the FDIC has withdrawn deposit insurance coverage" from their account "due to account activity that violates the Patriot Act." It then says insurance is suspended until the recipient gives account info.

Pre-paid Tax Refund

The Treasury announced that it will pilot a prepaid debt card this year for the unbanked to receive their tax refund.

Top Billionaires

The 5 richest people in the world, according to Forbes, in order are Carlos Slim Helu (\$53.5B, Mexico); Bill Gates (\$53B, US); Warren Buffett (\$47B, US); Mukesh Ambani (\$29B, India); and Lakshmi Mittal (\$28.7B, India).

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