

## views you can use



By Linda Tennant

### Leadership, Motivation & Productivity

# Is Your Day Just One Big Interruption?

**M**any of us feel overwhelmed with constant interruptions. A recent study concluded that the average employee has a little over three minutes between interruptions! That translates to over 150 interruptions a day. These come from e-mails, phone calls, voice mails, people stopping by, and other sources.

#### Cost of Interruptions

When an interruption occurs, it's not just the time we spend on the interruption that costs us, it's the time we need to refocus after the interruption. Constant interruptions drain creativity, disrupt good ideas, and cause us to lose focus. So what are some solutions?

#### Analyze Current Interruptions

Who is causing the interruptions, when do they occur and why (what is the subject or cause)?

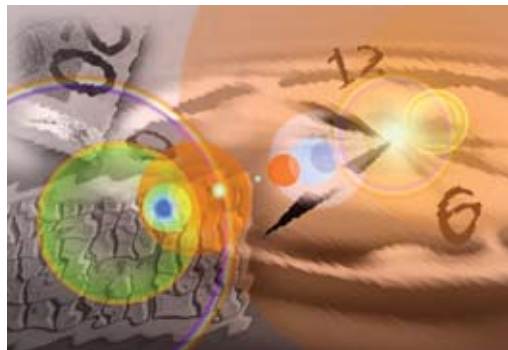
**SELF-INTERRUPTIONS:** When working on an important project, do you get distracted with an incoming e-mail and hours later haven't returned to that important project? Do you jump up to find the answer to some non-urgent question? When working on a task, does something else on your desk catch your eye and you feel the urge to do something with it? These self-interruptions hinder productivity.

**INTERRUPTIONS FROM OTHERS:** Do you need to answer the same questions from several people? Do you get interrupted to put out fires? Are you making decisions that others could and should make? Do others stop by to socialize for long periods of time?

#### Develop Plan to Eliminate, Delegate or Consolidate Interruptions

- *Develop written procedures and answers* to frequently asked questions.

- *Put out fires permanently* by addressing the cause rather than the symptom.
- *Start a list for each team member for non-urgent items.* Schedule one discussion time rather than several interruptions. Remember, it's not just your time you'll save; it's the other person's time, too. If everyone in the organization practices this one idea, the cumulative savings in time (and money) will be huge!
- *Reposition yourself* to decrease eye contact with others passing by.



- *Establish a calm space to work on projects.* If you have an office door, close it all or part way. Send your phone to voice mail. Advise others ahead of time so they can plan accordingly.
- *Set your priorities for the day first* – before looking at e-mail.
- *Turn off the new e-mail indicator;* schedule specific times to handle e-mail with the goal of doing, delegating, dumping or filing it the first time its read.

- *Keep commitments and be proactive with communication* so you won't have to be reactive.

We have more control over our time than we think. If we think we have no or little control over interruptions, we'll feel powerless to change it. Set boundaries; let people who interact with you know why these are important. By implementing these ideas, most people can free up at least half an hour a day, which translates to a whole month! What will you do with that extra time!? ■

Linda Tennant is President of Attainment Inc., a 20-year franchise of LMI. Using a proven Behavior Change Process with verifiable ROI, Attainment facilitates leaders in improving leadership, productivity, communication, team building, coaching and sales. Listen weekly to "Attainment with Attitude" on the John Adam Show, KXAM 1310, Sunday at 1:45 p.m. Visit the new website at [www.AttainmentInc.com](http://www.AttainmentInc.com).