



## The Four F's of Focus

From Jones Loflin-The Speaker With TWO Last Names



*When is the last time you REALLY focused on something of significance at work?*

After simply reading the subject line of an email, it can take up to 75 seconds to return to your previous level of focus.  
-From *Why We Make Mistakes*

When is the last time you were REALLY focused on something of significance at work? I don't mean focusing on how to sift through 200 emails or rework your task list for the 5th time in one day. I mean focusing on a task or group of tasks that had a significant, measurable impact on the success of your job, department or organization.

It's harder than ever to find those moments in today's distracted and disjointed workplace-but not impossible. If you are finding yourself very busy, but with little concrete results to show for your time, try some of these techniques to accomplish something of real value:

**Find** the right moment to work on your most critical items. Envision the ideal environment that would allow you to get this work done. Determine the day, time and location where you need to be to complete the task. Schedule it on your calendar in the same way you would schedule a meeting. If the task requires a high degree of mental focus, when does that most naturally occur for you? If you will need the collaboration of other team members, when would they be most available?

**Filter** out unnecessary distractions. There are two types of distractions; physical and mental. Both draw our attention away from the task at hand, especially when we are attempting to get into a deeper level of thought. Physical distractions could include anything from your email notification to unfinished documents, bills or other information that is screaming, "pay attention to me." If you regularly keep your phone on your work area, put it out of sight-there's always someone you could text or call, and when your eyes see your phone, your brain starts building a list of possibilities. The mental ones are a bit more complex to handle. If you can't resolve the issue occupying your mind, at least think of one step you could take AFTER you finish the task in front of you now. Your mind will say, "Okay, there is a plan in place," and will stop yelling at you to do something about it.

*(continued)*



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Ask yourself:  
Why are  
people  
interrupting  
me?

**Fix** what's not working. In training programs participants frequently talk about having too many interruptions, but aren't willing to take the steps to minimize those interruptions or identify what is causing them. Try asking these questions (and answering them) to determine how to best handle what's draining your level of focus:

- ◆ Who/What is interrupting me most often? (Note: Keep a log of interrupters for a day)
- ◆ Why are they interrupting me?
- ◆ What changes can I make to minimize these interruptions?
- ◆ How will making these changes be of benefit? (There must be an incentive for you to make these changes or you just wasted your time working on the first three questions)

Be **Flexible**. We are rarely able to execute our schedules as planned. If something disrupts your focus, immediately look at your next opportunity to focus on it again. Don't try to force the task requiring deep focus into a time of your day when you aren't ready. The task will take more time than needed, and probably yield less than stellar results. If a phone call that I need to take interrupts my focus time, I use the remaining time I would have focused on the task for other items requiring less mental energy-especially if doing so opens up a new focus opportunity later in the day.

Above all else, remember, *focus is like a muscle; the more you exercise it the stronger it gets.*

Get more resources at [www.jonesloflin.com](http://www.jonesloflin.com)

Jones Loflin is an internationally-recognized speaker and trainer. His messages focus on change, motivation, time management and work/life blend. He is the author of two books: *Juggling Elephants* and *Getting the Blue Ribbon*. His humor, energy and audience engagement make an **impact** on every member of your group, not just an impression.

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