

Control distractions to turn them into opportunities

A convenience-store clerk was once heard to remark, "This job would be great if it weren't for the customers."



MANAGING PERFORMANCE

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Many times, in sales, we feel the same way: The job would be wonderful if it weren't for other people.

Imagine being able to get through your whole day without any interruptions, without any clients or colleagues rescheduling or canceling appointments, without anybody stopping in to see you right as you're getting into a groove.

Imagine a day in which no pitches or meetings ran long, where every client showed up to a meeting on time, where not a single highway bottleneck kept you from getting to a meeting or back to the office on time.

Now come out of your reverie. The fact of the matter is sales is about other people. Sales is about those distractions. It's about turning interruptions into opportunities and then capitalizing on them.

Distractions are inevitable. The human animal is one that notices detail and focuses in on it, but sometimes those details are not the important ones.

Avoiding static distractions -- those interruptions that have little to no potential for moving you toward your goal -- can be impossible without support.

Scheduling tasks for certain times during the day does not guarantee the phone will not ring. But having an assistant or colleague answer nonpriority calls can work wonders in terms of

saving you time. The same applies for blocking unexpected visitors who drop by unannounced.

Some interruptions have great potential. Chance meetings and glimpsed opportunities are things that should distract you. But their potential does not mean you can abandon your regularly scheduled activities. Phone calls still need to be answered, meetings still need to be scheduled and market research still needs to be done.

Glimpsed opportunities are things that should distract you. But their potential does not mean you can abandon your regularly scheduled activities.

In such instances, delegation can be key. Ask yourself: Are there jobs others in your organization can take care of? What needs to be done as it relates to your goals and priorities? Who is the best person for the job, based on skill, talent, ability and availability? How does the job need to be accomplished?

Insist on results, not perfection.

By using that approach, you'll find your one-time nemesis -- other people -- can be your greatest asset.

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