

# ***STRATEGIC ACCELERATION MEDIA***

## **Incentive Magazine Article**

### **Distractions: The Enemy of Superior Results**

By Tony Jeary, Author, Strategic Acceleration – Succeed at the Speed of Life

Getting superior results hinges on your ability to cut through the clutter, drown out the noise, and focus on high-leverage activities that have the ability to make great things happen. Without focus we always find ourselves swimming in an endless stream of distractions.

Have you ever attended an NBA basketball game? In the final minutes of close games, the team that is behind usually resorts to a strategy of committing intentional fouls on the other team. When a player is fouled, the game clock is stopped to allow the fouled player to attempt one or more free throws. What the free throw shooter sees is the basket against a backdrop of several thousand frenzied lunatic fans waving towels, tassels, pom-poms, or anything else they have been able to bring into the arena to distract the shooter from making the free throw. The fans scream, yell, blast air-horns, and do anything they can do to break the concentration of the shooter. To be successful, the shooter has to block all of this mayhem from his mind and focus on the basket.

The most focused players in the NBA are able to make 90% of their free throws. The least focused players make less than 50% of their attempts. The point of this illustration is that you have to keep your eye on the goal to be successful, and that requires a way to maintain your focus in the midst of distractions!

Focus is not something that comes naturally for most people, and that is why it is a skill that must be learned, polished, and practiced. Specifically, focus is a thinking skill that is

acquired as a result of mental discipline. To develop mental discipline concerning focus, you have to treat it the same way you would acquire any skill.

- First, you have to *become aware of the need* to improve your focusing skills.
- Then, you have to *clarify the need*, and make a conscious decision to *invest the time and energy* needed to improve your skills.
- Then, you have to *focus on the need*, and practice and train your mind to focus.
- Finally, you have to *execute the need* by implementing your new skills and making them a routine that is second-nature.

### **Distractions are Constant**

One of the challenges of living in the information age is the extraordinary number of opportunities you have to become distracted. The very things that are meant to be powerful tools to help you be more effective are potential sources of distraction. The Internet, e-mail, Twitter and even cell phones can introduce unexpected intrusions into your mind. Every intrusion creates the possibility of disrupting your ability to focus on what you should be really be doing at the moment. Focus is about establishing priorities and keeping the main things in front of you. To do that effectively, you have to be able to control the distractive influences that bombard your mind.

How well do you focus? There is only one objective standard to measure your ability to focus, and that standard involves *the ability to consistently complete pre-determined objectives on time!* People who are consistently late for meetings, late for telephone appointments, and late finishing projects and tasks have a focus deficiency. Focus is also a problem for those who are consistently behind in their work and constantly scrambling to meet deadlines. I'm not saying that you will never experience times when you have more on your plate than you can handle. I'm talking about when those conditions are a way of life! Some people are always harried and behind the power curve of getting things done. That condition is a hallmark of a focus deficiency.

There is no single skill or habit that has a more powerful impact on results than the ability to eliminate distractions and focus on the high-leverage activities that have the

greatest potential to advance your strategic goals and objectives. When your ability to do that becomes a habit, your entire life will change, and the results you achieve will be *Strategically Accelerated*.

Most people don't think of focus as a strategic skill, and most people haven't really spent much time factually examining how well they focus. Focus is a subject that gets a lot of lip service, but it usually doesn't get the respect it deserves. When you don't treat focus as a strategic issue, minimizing its importance is easy, and soon you're ignoring it altogether. Most people approach focus as a time management issue or as an organizational challenge. Typical solutions to improve focus may include obtaining a better time management system, or doing something to better organize the work environment. These are valid considerations, but those kinds of solutions don't address the heart of the focus issue, which is distraction! Distraction is a natural occurrence in the life of every person. You can be the most organized person on earth with a great time management system, and still become routinely distracted.

To help you determine how well you focus, I challenge you to keep a "Focus Journal" for two weeks. It is easy to do, but you will have to focus on your real activities and exercise some discipline to get it done. All you need to do is keep a daily log of your activities. Just write down your priorities for each day and the specific things you intend to *finish* each day. Then, keep an activity log of all that happens to you during the day. Be particularly mindful to log each distraction you experience and the amount of time you invested the distraction. If you keep this log faithfully for two weeks, you will have a clear picture of what is going on in your life each day concerning focus. When you can see that, you will have an understanding of your need to improve.

When you are able to significantly reduce the distractions in your life, you will discover that your productivity and your results will have increased significantly.

---

*Find out more about creating superior results faster at [www.strategicacceleration.com](http://www.strategicacceleration.com)*