

10 Tips for Staying Focused at Work During the Holidays



We're quickly approaching the holiday season, and as you try to juggle parties, shopping, hosting, planning, traveling, and work, there's a good chance you will lose focus and momentum in the office.

There are so many competing demands and expectations during the holidays that it is very easy to get overwhelmed. Many people lose focus during the holiday season because their to-do list swells while their time shrinks. Travel planning, guest preparations, gift shopping, children's events, parties and so on, must be crammed into already-full schedules, which causes stress. Personal stress often affects work performance and can diminish productivity.

Another reason employees see a dip in productivity at work during the holidays: colleagues and managers may be on vacation. It can be extremely difficult to get things done and maintain a high level of productivity when people are out of the office, and the workflow subsequently slows down.

In addition, if you have kids home from school on winter break, balancing work and family becomes even more challenging!

However, if you do manage to maintain focus through the chaos, it gives you a chance to stand out. With lower and fewer expectations from your otherwise distracted coworkers, you can also use this time to get caught up on your important, but not urgent, tasks.

Here are 10 ways to stay focused and maintain high productivity during the chaotic holiday season:

1. Take a few days off. If you have a few vacation days available, take the time to do a little shopping or enjoy a day with your loved ones. This will give you a chance to refresh and recharge during the busy holiday season.
2. Clear your mind. Get your tasks and projects, both personal and professional, onto paper and out of your head. Once you see all your commitments and want-to-do's, decide which to drop and which could wait until the new year.
3. Avoid multitasking. Try to avoid working on personal and work-related tasks at the same time. Shopping online while listening in on a conference call could be disastrous.



4. Start working on year-end projects and personal tasks early. The holidays don't creep up on us! Start your holiday shopping earlier than you have in the past, and get a head start on any upcoming projects at work. This way, when you're busy with office parties and planning family gatherings later this month, you'll have fewer to-do items on your plate.
5. Don't take your work home. We all have family obligations during the holiday season. When at the office try to set clear and reasonable goals for what you want to accomplish and commit to a hard stop time. Use your motivation for getting out the door on time as a way to fight off those tempting distractions.
6. Watch out for distractions. While at the office, don't try to cram in shopping at lunch or buy gifts online. At work, focus on work. You can take on the holiday chores during your personal time. It will also free you up from trying to do too many things at once.
7. Take care of yourself physically. Exercise more, not less, even if it's just a walk around the block. Sleep more, not less, just thirty minutes more a night can make a big difference. And watch what you eat and drink - the increase in sugary foods and alcoholic beverages will impact you the next day at work, both mentally and physically!
8. Don't over-commit. With all the office parties, client events, and secret Santa exchanges it can be tough to stay focused on work. Be sure to prioritize and balance your holiday activities with your work obligations. Don't feel like you have to go to every department lunch gathering or office party you get invited to. Keeping focused and maintaining a good work-life balance sometimes means saying no.
9. Remind yourself to stay focused at work. The trick is to forget about "seasons" and focus on "today." Is today a holiday? If not, behave as you would in September. Follow that procedure every day you work. On actual holidays or vacation days, forget about work and have fun. It's that simple.
10. Remember what the holidays are all about. Keep in mind the holiday season is for celebration. This should be a joyful time of the year. A chaotic holiday season is a choice, not a given.

We hope these tips will help make your holiday season less stressful and more enjoyable. To get started planning your holiday activities, [download our printable 2013 Holiday Events Calendar](#). Happy Holidays from Smead!

Sources: Forbes.com, ResourceNation.com, Beyond.com, BusinessKnowHow.com

