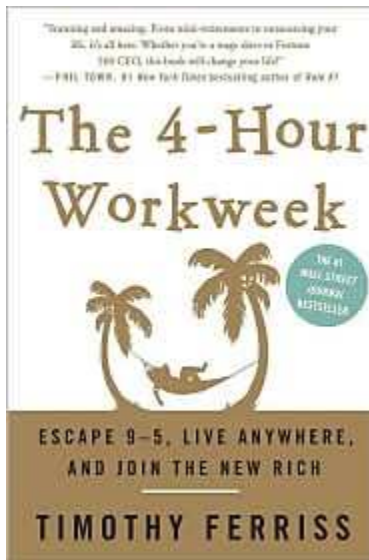


Turn off the alerts! & The 4-Hour Work Week

s what I am doing now income producing or capacity building activity? -Paul Brown, CEO of Leadership Dynamics

We have created a world of constant distractions. There are two types of distractions (1) distractions that make us money, and (2) distractions that cost us money. The problem is, we waste so much time checking the #(2) type of distraction that it sucks away our time to engage in activities that actually make us money. I've created a few easy steps that help those of us that use social media to cut down on the distractions. My inspiration? [The 4-Hour Work Week](#) by Tim Ferriss.



I don't believe in the four hour work week. While the book [The 4-Hour Work Week](#) is entertaining, the idea that you could make a difference in the world and live a fulfilling life working four hours per week is absurd. Having said that, there are some time management tips in [The 4-Hour Work Week](#) that rocked my world (and ironically, may make a difference in my world). I will explain the principle, and then show how you can apply it to your social media routine.

Batching:

Tim Ferriss recommends to get started we only answer emails twice per day. It is much more efficient to handle something like email in batches. Just like its is easier to do your laundry once per week, rather than a shirt and pair of pants each day. This makes sense, right? If this would cause a major problem in your business, set up an auto-response email that requests people to call you if the mater is urgent.

The unintended consequence for Tim is that people stopped sending him pointless emails- because they knew he wouldn't respond. Tim has calculated that this practice alone saves him at least **10 hours per week**, sometimes even more. He has taken this to the extreme however, now he only answers emails once per week.

I recently spoke to a senior partner at a very large law firm. He was complaining to me about how little paying work he had. We went through some basic principles of social media, and I think he really got the message, he could start developing valuable relationships and eventually new clients with social media and these new tools. Then the doubt surfaced like it does with all attorneys: "How am I going to find time to do this? I already spend three hours per day answering emails."

I wanted to say to him right then and there, "How is that working out for you?" (He obviously needed more work). You see when we spend time all throughout the day responding to emails, it eats away small bits of time that become huge chunks of time. This distracts us from the activities that we can bill for, or activities that can help us develop business. This attorney needed to figure out a better SYSTEM for handling his emails. Those of us who use social media need to put together a system as well.

Batching and Social Media

Turn off the alerts. Ok, so @guykawasaki just followed you on Twitter, did you really need to interrupt your work to find that out? Your neighborhood garden club is having a yard sale- better put everything on hold to read the Facebook announcement. Even if you don't read it, it just popped up on the bottom right corner of your screen- distracting your from real work. Social media like Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook create constant alerts that are in most cases useless and distracting. So turn them off, or turn them down. Here are a few "systems changes" I have implemented in the last week that are already yielding huge rewards in terms of freeing up time and keeping me more focused.

1. Opt-out of automated direct messages

This takes two seconds, [just follow this link](#)- follow the instructions, and you will stop receiving Twitter automated direct messages (at least from the major sender on Twitter). **This single change has saved me 15 minutes per day.**

2. Change your Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn settings

Turn all real-time alerts off. When someone sends you a message on any social media platform, it is sitting in your inbox on those platforms. Show the discipline to check these before lunchtime or at the end of your work day. You can't afford to be distracted all day by these. Every once in a while, somebody important or valuable will want to connect with you. Think about it, if they are that important and busy, they won't mind if you wait until the end of the day to respond to them. (Believe me, 99% of your new connections will NOT be that important.) **20 minutes per day saved.**

3. Turn off real-time Email Notifications

I know this is difficult for those of you with Crackberry addictions, but turn off the buzzing of your phone for every email that arrives. If I were to think of THE MOST distracting thing I could possibly invent- it would be a buzzer in your pocket that will just go off at random times. I understand for some attorneys they need to have a line for urgent matters, so separate those out, and use a different email address than the one used to announce left-over donuts in the break room. This has saved me at least **30 minutes per day** since I instituted it last week.

As an added bonus, now my battery life on my Palm Pre lasts well into the next day. This way I guarantee I have battery power left when the important calls come in.

What is the real analytic we are most interested in? Traffic to our website? Number of followers or connections? Comments on our blog posts? Give me a break! If you want to survive in this world of social media you need to MAKE MONEY. Even if you are a non-profit, you need to bring in money. So instead of tracking your emails, Facebook friends, and Tweets all day, start focusing on something that really matters, the bottom line.

Just ask the question Paul Brown has staring at him on his office wall: Is what I am doing now income producing or capacity building activity?