Multi-tasking in the Workplace

Introduction:

Many employers like to hire employees with multi-tasking capabilities. Multi-tasking is when a person is able to perform more than one task at the same time. Employees who multi-task often demonstrate the ability to switch between different tasks or positions. Being able to hire one person to fill multiple positions may be more cost-effective than hiring several employees.

Discussion Points:

- Hiring multi-tasking employees may be more cost-effective for the company
- The consequences of multi-tasking
- Setting up a daily schedule
- Single-tasking leads to better productivity and less stress

Discussion:

To multi-task or not to multi-task? As an employee, it may appear to be impressive if you claim that you are able to multi-task. However, depending on the complexity of the task, multi-tasking may lead to accidents. For example, driving and texting at the same time can lead to an accident and result in serious injury or death. The problem is that as multi-tasking involves more than one task, it also involves distraction. The brain is not designed to perform two intensive tasks at the same time, and the amount of information your brain can process is limited. Workers who multi-task are less productive, more stressed, and are less creative than those who single-task. Studies have shown that multi-tasking causes a 40% loss in productivity. Workers who are able to focus on one task at a time have a major advantage, and will complete tasks in less time and with higher efficiency. Being able to successively accomplish a task requires concentration and focus.

The best way to reduce multi-tasking during the day is to filter out distractions by setting up a daily schedule with dedicated time for “focused work”. One of the biggest contributors to multi-tasking is receiving emails throughout the day. Workers spend more than 40% of their day multi-tasking with email and texting. Seventy percent of people will keep their email inbox open during the day. If you want to complete more tasks, with more quality, and in less time, focus on one task at a time. When you focus on one task at a time you are able to get into a “state of flow” which will lead to better productivity and less stress. To keep your energy level high, switch from one task to another and alternate between periods of focus and breaks. Taking regular breaks will help clear out “attention residue” from your previous task. A popular technique is to work for 50 to 60 minutes, then take a short break; go for a walk, turn off the phone, and avoid taking any emails or texts.

The ability to switch between tasks can stimulate creativity, keep us from boredom, and provide us with inspiration. It teaches us to manage our time productively.

How many times have you left work at the end of the day, looked back at what you accomplished during that day, and found that you were constantly jumping through hoops to get everything accomplished? So, you may ask yourself, “Does multitasking affect my productivity? Should I stop trying to multi-task?” Remember, multi-tasking increases stress and can lead to injury. Switching tasks or single-tasking may be more productive.

As always, stay safe out there!