

How to Stay Laser-Focused During the Dog Days of Summer

Lisa Quast, CONTRIBUTOR

I write about career topics, helping people maximize their potential.



(Photo: Shutterstock)

If you're like me, you love soaking up every ounce of sunshine you can get (I live in Seattle). Have you ever found yourself daydreaming about an August afternoon at the beach when you're stuck behind a desk?

While the warm weather is great, the laid-back attitude that often comes with it can mean declining efficiency in the office. Consider these tips to stay focused, leaving you more time for after-work fun:

Tackle your most important tasks first. Many people come into the office and take a solid hour (or more) to get settled – checking emails, having coffee or connecting with colleagues. Instead, use this time to tackle your most important task. Not only does this allow you to cross off the top item on your list, it also sets a positive tone for the entire day, which can often inspire you to get more done.

Schedule out your to-do list. It's easy for to-do lists to get out of control. If your list has more than 20 items on it, you'll feel stressed that you can't complete everything. Be realistic with the time you *actually* have, focusing on a few items you can successfully complete. I recommend assigning a schedule or timeframe to each task and doing your best to stick to it.

Limit your time spent checking emails. Studies suggest that [employees spend 25 percent of their day reading and answering emails!](#) I have two tips for using email more efficiently.

- As you're scheduling out the to-do list mentioned above, include time throughout the day to check and reply to emails. Focusing your time (instead of answering emails as they come in) is a big timesaver.
- Ask yourself if email is the best communication method for a given task or project. Sometimes picking up the phone for a 10-minute call or walking over to the person's office can save you hours of back-and-forth messages.

Stay on track during meetings. Large group meetings are notorious time sinks. Even if you aren't the one hosting the meeting, always suggest and request an agenda to help you stay on track. If you are the meeting host, a detailed agenda should include what you plan to cover and the desired outcome(s) of your meeting.

Get adequate sleep. The long summer days make it easy to stay up late during the week to enjoy the sun and fun. Commit to getting the sleep you need Sunday – Thursday. It's tough to be focused and efficient with tired eyes and a groggy mind.