

### Do a Self-Assessment

Start by calculating your total interruptions during the day. Tally up every time you are distracted—with emails, instant messages, phone calls, internet breaks—and divide that number by 480, the minutes you work over an eight-hour day. Studies show that the average professional is interrupted every two or three minutes during the workday, and it can take up to 20 minutes to return to the original task, according to Unger.

### The Cost of Multitasking

Human brains are not well equipped to multitask, Unger said. Doing so takes more time, leads to mistakes and causes more stress, especially for workers who use two computer screens.

“No one would expect you to write an appellate brief on screen one, and then on screen two you’re drafting a contract,” Unger said. “That’s completely unreasonable.”

Instead, give yourself and your coworkers a block of time to focus on one task, distraction-free, Unger said.

New research has claimed that workers who constantly juggle tasks, and are oft-distracted by email and phone calls, suffer a fall in IQ more than twice than found in marijuana smokers, according to Unger.

“We can’t eliminate our workload, but we can dial down the noise and we can take down the task switching,” he said.

### Digital Detox

The advent of technology in the workplace has hurt productivity almost as much as it has helped, according to Unger. Social media has addictive properties, which can lead to mental health issues and harm your ability to focus. Unger recommended that workers practice “digital minimalism.” Start with a 30-day social media fast, or limit your social media time to 15 minutes a day, refrain from social sites between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., and turn off your device after 9 p.m.

“You might realize ‘I don’t need Facebook or Instagram, but I need LinkedIn for business networking,’” Unger said. “It’s a very effective way to put limits on the amount of time you’re on social media.”

### The Email Black Hole

About 85% of workers start the morning by logging into email and letting the barrage of incoming messages dictate the day, according to Unger.

“Don’t fall into the email black hole,” he said. “Email is not your daily plan.”

It’s more constructive to develop your own written planner to serve as a daily roadmap, Unger said. Write down your priorities

for the day, grateful thoughts and a couple reminder notes.

Try not to leave email open on your computer screen all day, Unger said. You don’t have to shut it down, but minimize it and turn off notifications so you can devote most of the day to tasks on the planner.

Don’t get discouraged if you fail to accomplish everything on the daily plan, Unger said. Most professionals rarely do.

“Plans never go as planned in the legal world. However, if you get 50% to 80% of your plan done for that day, that is a total win,” he said.

### Do a Weekly Deep Dive

Attorney calendars are loaded with appointments and deadlines. To help get ahead of schedule, Unger recommended that attorneys look two weeks ahead in their calendars, read every item and ask, “what do I need to do to prepare for this?” Then go two weeks back and see if you missed anything.

“You’re looking for things that you promised people that you didn’t do,” Unger said. “Oftentimes that happens because you go from one meeting to the next with no buffer time.”



## WORKING WELL

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### Are You a Mindful Attorney?

By Lori Ann Buza

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Mindfulness is directing attention to the present without judgment or preconception, not focusing on what has happened in the past nor worrying about what will happen in the future but

feeling appreciation and gratitude for the present. Mindfulness helps one with self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-appreciation, as it fosters a richer understanding and insight into oneself and others. Moreover, it teaches the tools to balance work with personal life and find peace, joy, and success in both. Regularly practicing meditation and real time self-reflection are tools to help one master mindfulness.

Why? Integrating mindfulness practice into an attorney's life enhances their abilities to act ethically and professionally while providing the attorney with broader insight into their clients' needs and the best methods to represent them. Mindful attorneys have greater capacity to see what is beneath the surface of their clients' factual and legal issues. They are less inclined to have bias based upon preconceived notions and more inclined to have openness and acceptance of differences in others. Thus, it helps attorneys to cross class, education, gender, and cultural barriers with their clients as well as face the challenges of their communities at large.

Using mindfulness principles, attorneys can learn to master and control their own thoughts, which in turn helps them control their behavior. It teaches one to take time to reflect, be silent, pause before responding, and control the situation or case presented. Instead of mindlessly reacting, mindfulness gives one the opportunity to offer their best response to a situation, including both the best choice of words and actions. Attorneys may learn to listen better and feel empathy for their clients, have humility, and better counsel their clients. In return, clients may develop a deeper trust and higher satisfaction rating for their attorney.

Mindfulness may cultivate an attorney's growth in many areas, such as concentration, focus, accountability, decision-making, mental clarity, effectiveness, and problem-solving abilities. As a result, mindfulness may help lawyers to have stronger/repeat relationships with clients, more productive relationships with adversaries, judges, and support staff, and overall to more effectively "lawyer." ■

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