

Quick Reference Card (QRC)

Best Practices for Preventing and Minimizing Disruptions

Play Offense, Not Defense

- Achieve your agenda daily by not being a slave to computer pop-up boxes/alerts of any type (e.g. email, news alerts, instant messaging, etc.). **Turn them all off**. If having these alerts is a required part of your job, your role is more trader than analyst
- Don't make the false conclusion "multi-tasking" (doing more than one complex task at a time) is productive because countless studies show it is not
- Be deliberate about removing yourself from all unwanted email and voicemail lists
- Pre-screen all in-bound phone calls

Treat Your Research Time Preciously

When conducting research:

- Isolate yourself—close the door, put up a sign, wear ear buds/headset, or work in a conference room or at home
- Send all calls to voicemail (or screen calls if awaiting an inbound call)
- Close email program
- If interrupted, bookmark your place so it will be easier to return to the task (use the "comment" feature when in Word and PowerPoint, a sticky note, etc.)

Covet Your Space

- If your desk faces office traffic, change its location
- Move materials or files used by others away from your work area
- When others enter your workspace, stand up; it prevents them from getting comfortable
- Place items on visitors' chairs in your workspace or remove the chairs altogether

Manage Internal Colleagues

- If being asked to help others, determine if it helps to meet your professional goals as set explicitly by your manager:
 - If not, politely tell the person you don't have the time due to other higher-priority tasks set by your manager
 - If the task is critical in the way your manager evaluates your performance:
 - Speed things up by asking the person for the solution they propose
 - If follow-up is required, suggest a specific time later in the day or week to speak rather than interrupt your current workflow
 - If they suggest it's urgent (to them), ask how many minutes they need and stick to it
- If a colleague is telling a story, ask for a summary and what they need from you
- If you speak with others frequently (including an associate or assistant), you should both create "agenda" lists (in Outlook, Word, etc.) for topics to be discussed so as to avoid having multiple conversations on topics throughout the day that can be covered in one conversation
- If you have an associate or assistant:
 - Set a regularly-scheduled meeting (daily or weekly) if interruptions (face-to-face or via email) are more than 2-3 times a day
 - Establish guidelines of when interruptions are acceptable

Elements adopted from Lisa J. Downs, [Interruptions and Distractions](#), American Society for Training and Development (ASTD).

Master this concept in our workshop: [Maximize Your Time for Alpha Generation](#)