



Timely Information for Personal Success

Keep Up at Work as You Age

By Jennifer FitzPatrick

Do you ever marvel at how fast the new college graduates in your office seem to move? Have you heard them chatting about watching late night television or having sipped martinis at the latest hip club into the wee hours of the morning? Despite this lifestyle they still seem to have unlimited energy at work the next day. Do you remember when you used to be like that? It's not your imagination; you probably are moving a bit slower. As we get older, the body has less "bounce back" than it did when we were younger.

How *do* we keep up with younger colleagues? Consider these tips for feeling younger and healthier at work:

❖ **Treat your body better every year.** Would you skip routine maintenance for your vehicle and expect it to continue running reliably? It's startling how many older workers wouldn't dream of missing an oil change for their car but don't take time to eat a healthy lunch. Eating healthy, exercising regularly, minimizing alcohol and caffeine consumption, drinking plenty of water and getting sufficient sleep is essential to keeping up energy levels. Treat your body at least as well as you treat your car.

❖ **If you are ill, take a sick day.** Even if you just have a cold, your immune system will thank you if you coddle yourself a little bit. Take a day to drink tea in bed while watching an old movie. If you truly have unavoidable deadlines, at least work from home. Taking a day or two off when you begin to feel sick often decreases the length of an illness because the rest allows your body to recover more quickly.

❖ **Set boundaries with managers and subordinates.** If you don't wish to be contacted on weekends unless it's a true emergency, make sure you let people know. Often older employees feel they need to be plugged in at all times, especially if their younger counterparts are. But everyone is entitled to set boundaries at their comfort level, especially during non-work hours. ■

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Cut to the Chase

Before today's instant transmission of words and numbers at lightning-fast speed, you had to talk to your boss in person, on the phone, or in a hard copy report. In all of those formats, it was in your best interest to get to the point quickly.

In an information age, employees have been lulled into thinking that "more info and gadgets to transmit all of this info is better" when this isn't true. Rather than thinking that you can't do anything about information overload, it's time to revisit a few cut-to-the-chase tips and take control of your day:

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Healthy Recipe: Baked Parmesan Tomatoes

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 tomatoes, halved horizontally
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh oregano
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 4 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 91
- Carbohydrates: 6 g.
- Protein: 3 g.
- Sodium: 375 mg.
- Fat: 6 g.
- Saturated fat: 2 g.
- Fiber: 2 g.

DIRECTIONS:

❶ Preheat oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit. ❷ Place tomatoes cut-side up on a baking sheet. Top with Parmesan, oregano, salt and pepper. ❸ Drizzle with oil and bake until the tomatoes are tender, about 15 minutes.

Makes 4 servings.



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Questions and Answers

Tips on Behavioral Change

Q: I've been trying to quit smoking and lose weight for years. Why is breaking old habits so hard?

A: According to one theory, change occurs in five stages. Each stage is necessary before you can successfully move to the next, and it can't be hurried or skipped. The entire process can take a long time and may involve cycling back through earlier stages before moving on. The five stages are:

❖ **Precontemplation.** At this stage, you have no conscious intention of making a behavior change, but outside influences, such as public information campaigns or a family member's concern, may spark your interest or awareness.

❖ **Contemplation.** You know that the behavior is a problem and at odds with personal goals, but you're not committed to taking any action. You may re-reweigh whether it's worth it to you to make a change.

❖ **Preparation.** You make plans to change, such as joining a health club or buying nicotine patches. You anticipate obstacles and plan ways around them. For example, if you're preparing to cut down on alcohol and you know that parties are a trigger for you, you make a list of alternative activities you can do with friends, like going to the movies.

❖ **Action.** At this stage, you've changed — stopped smoking or lost weight, for example — and are facing the challenges of life without the old behavior. You use the strategies you came up with in the preparation stage.

❖ **Maintenance.** Once you've practiced your new behavior for six months, you're in the maintenance stage. Here you work to prevent relapses, including avoiding situations or triggers associated with the old habit or behavior. ■

Source: Harvard Health Publications.

Cut to the Chase

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❖ **Overhaul voicemail and email.** If someone is consistently wordy with you, odds are that he or she is loquacious in most other situations, too. Asking this person to put the bottom line upfront is a good first step, but you need to make sure this worker is applying this lesson to other aspects of the workday. A good place to start is with voicemail and email, since these forums are used frequently throughout the day.

❖ **Be clear about what you need.** The first step in encouraging concise communication is to be straightforward about what you need. Don't expect co-workers to pick up on the hints that you're dropping. If someone is giving you way too much information, politely interrupt and tell him or her that you recognize him/her as an expert on the subject matter. As a result, you merely need sound bites. This strategy usually leads to more frequent one- or two-sentence summaries.

Summary

If you're open about the level of succinctness that you want and model those behaviors yourself, you'll find that most of your co-workers will get on board with this concept quickly. Chances are, they'll be grateful that you've cut down on the sheer volume of information on their gadgets, too. ■

Source: Michael Feuer, co-founder of Office Max.