

Busy Mentality

the state of mind equating being busy with being productive



Ask anyone how things are going and more often than not, you'll get the response, "Busy."

We certainly are a "busy" society and it has seeped into all corners of life, especially the workplace. But is continuing a culture of busy in your life really the most effective move?

Are we really as busy as we say and think we are? According to sociologist John P. Robinson from the University of Maryland, we actually have more free time than we think. What we're experiencing is fragmentation.

We're constantly responding to an onslaught of emails, text messages, phone calls and other notifications -- and we're doing it during what used to be reserved solely for leisure time. Thus it feels as if we're always working, which in turn makes us feel valuable. Don't get me wrong, there are plenty out there who are undeniably busy. But regardless of whether it's sheer overload or fragmentation we're experiencing, its effects have deeper implications.

Telling someone at length about how busy you are will not enhance your career. In reality, though, there are many tasks we've got to complete in a work day, often with bosses watching. So, it's a matter of clear communication and prioritizing.

But what language can you use to make it clear that you can't be all things to all people at once? Simms suggests, "I would say, 'Would you rather I finish this first or help you with that?'" You're forcing the question of priority on the person asking you to add to your workload. In most cases, they'll say to finish your work and then stop by to chat about a fresh task.

And next time someone asks you how things are going, pause before you fall back on the "busy" answer. Instead, use it as an opportunity to say something interesting, suggests Crabbe.

"Be creative, say something that you're engaged with or excited about; something you're working on, something that you've done at the weekend," he says. "One thing is certain; telling someone at length about how busy you are will not enhance your career, prove your "value" or create a happy moment for either of you."