



# PETRA PROCESS

FOUR SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR FOCUS



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### LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

Picture this: You're in your office reviewing your company's quarterly financials. You've got a smartphone buzzing on your desk. Your office phone is ringing, and team members keep popping their heads in to ask questions — not to mention, your stomach is growling because it's almost lunchtime. You can't finish any one thing because you're doing too many things at once.

Sound familiar?

If all of that rings true for you, it's because that's how we're expected to function every day in the office and in our personal lives: with something constantly pulling our attention away from the thing we originally set out to do. It's a wonder we get anything done.

I see leaders and teams struggle with this all the time. I'll come in for a quarterly planning session to find that a majority of team members haven't completed the priorities they committed to at the beginning of the quarter. Why? They didn't set themselves up for success by giving each priority their full attention.

Our attention spans haven't changed, but the expectation that we can do multiple things at one time has grown exponentially. As a result, we must identify strategies to help us fight through personal limitations and achieve the goals that are most important to us. Here are four ways to improve your focus every day and actually get stuff done:

#### **1. DON'T MULTITASK.**

Multitasking is a myth. It's impossible to do. Even when you think you're multitasking, all you're doing is switching between tasks quickly. This kind of split focus will make your work suffer, and you could make costly mistakes.

So don't start a texting conversation right before you go into a big meeting or have the football game on while you're reading important papers. Turn your email off (or at least don't look at it) while you're writing an important article, and most importantly, don't check your phone while someone is talking to you. It's not only rude, but you're guaranteed to miss something important, and the person talking to you is bound to feel unimportant. Make time and plan to do individual tasks on their own. You'll find you retain more and you'll work more efficiently.

## **2. REMOVE DISTRACTIONS.**

Distractions are everywhere. While some can't be controlled (like firetrucks blaring their sirens outside your window), some are self-imposed (like having your smartphone next to you at your desk at all times). Begin by removing unnecessary distractions. Set your phone to silent, and put it in your desk drawer. Close your office door, and let your team know that you need an hour to complete an important task. Even if it means setting aside time daily to remove yourself from the outside world, find ways to eliminate distractions.

## **3. MAKE FOCUSING A PRODUCTION.**

In my planning sessions, I'll often play team-building games that require an element of focus. In one exercise, I split the room into teams and ask them to watch a video, paying attention to only one thing (like counting how many people on the screen are wearing a particular color). Then I tell everyone they need to come to a group consensus on the answer at the end of the exercise. Not only that, I tell them I'm looking for the right answer and that there will be a reward for getting it right. I make the exercise a competition with a prize at the end. It's a "production," and 10 times out of 10, people take it very seriously. Individuals focus on the task at hand to the exclusion of all distractions and come together with a common vision.

When you make focus a production and raise the stakes of the game, human beings will automatically be more invested in the process and do what it takes to focus.

## **4. KNOW WHAT'S IMPORTANT.**

As one of my mentors said, "Are you focused on the urgent or the important? Don't focus on the urgent at the expense of the important." The "urgent" is the text from your significant other reminding you to pick up your shirts from the dry cleaner on the way home. The "important" is the big project due by the end of the day that has the potential to grow your business and provide long-term benefits. That's where prioritizing comes in.

Every day, start by ranking your tasks for the day from most pressing to least, based on factors like how long it might take, when it's due and what the potential impact will be on your life. The priorities at the top of your list are the ones that will most likely require the most focus, so make those your priorities for the day and hold yourself accountable for getting them done. It's much easier to keep your attention steady when you have a clear and manageable workload. Save the less critical tasks for another day.

The same steps work for longer-term goals and overall company success too, not just day-to-day tasks. Don't shoot for too many targets at once because you'll end up spending less time on each as you navigate between them. Choose three maximum to keep those targets manageable for the team and remove (or at least mitigate for) distractions. Make top priorities a big to-do and get the whole team involved in the steps to get there. And most importantly, determine what's most important and what you can control and keep only those things in the forefront of everyone's mind. Whether you're an individual trying to get a single task done or a full company with a big goal to hit, you'll need to focus in to get it done.

Now, what are you going to do first?

# THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

**The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.**

## **Looking to change your business life - forever?**

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

*Andy Bailey is lead entrepreneur coach with business coaching firm Petra and serves as the Entrepreneur Organization's global membership director. Visit his blog at [www.petracoach.com](http://www.petracoach.com) for more business and leadership insight.*

### **PETRA COACH**

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