

The Myth of Multi-tasking

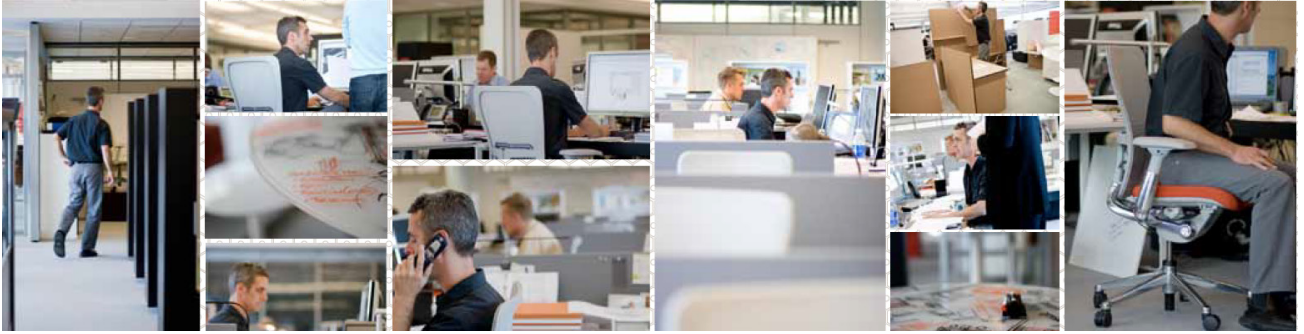
Generations Summary

HAWORTH



Task sharing or multi-tasking—switching from focused to unfocused tasks and back—takes time. According to research, it takes approximately 15-20 minutes to recover from every interruption.





Many people assume younger generations of workers process information differently than their older counterparts. Basically, for all age groups, doing two or more things at once hurts primary task performance compared to single-task conditions. Certainly, task complexity and experience level come into play, but this has been shown to be true across a variety of situations and conditions—particularly for difficult tasks.

It's easy to believe that younger workers may differ from their older counterparts in regard to frequency of multi-tasking. They certainly keep track of many gadgets and monitor information from all of them to some level of proficiency. This "continuous partial attention" may have some negative side effects, however, including lower primary task performance, techno-brain burnout, and reduced sensitivity to face-to-face social cues (Small & Vorgan, 2008). Gen Y's brains aren't different, but their behaviors are.

— Brand, J.L. (2008), *The Myth of Multi-tasking*.