



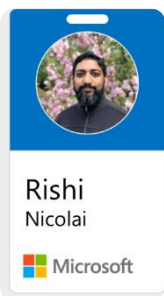
# A Leader's guide to Attention Management in Microsoft 365

The Disruptive role of AI, Microsoft Copilot and Microsoft Viva in developing the #PeopleFirst approach



<http://aka.ms/MOCA>

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# Foreword



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It is an honor to be asked to write the forward for this important paper. Not only because of the quality of the information presented, but because of the deep learning and commitment the team has to the betterment of our attention management skills. Personally, I have another goal in deepening my understanding of this topic. I am easily distracted. Having struggled with this for most of my life I deeply respect my own attention and its value. I have a clear vision of my shortcomings in this area and seek, daily, a greater understanding of my own personal challenge. What I am clear about is that my focus, both personally and professionally, is an asset. I have learned that targeting my attention appropriately increases the satisfaction and meaning I receive from relationships, activities and my profession which includes teaching strategies for technology adoption.

The work we collectively do at Microsoft on user satisfaction, attention management, the digital employee experience and people change management is centered on the idea that **it is the people that matter most in any project**. This is the heart of the *#PeopleFirst strategy*. You might assume that putting people first is a common principle but alas it is not. Often, we are distracted by the technology itself, the challenge of delivering on expectations or even our own grocery list. It's critical to understand that **mastery of your own attention is a journey, a daily practice rather than an event**. Each moment is an opportunity to return our focus to what will yield the greatest benefit – improving the experience of the people around us, deepening our relationships with them and understanding how best to serve their needs for productivity, creativity and skill building. By harnessing our own attention and focus we are best positioned to be of service to our communities, our employers and ourselves. Only by embracing this idea individually can we hope to do so at a team or organizational level.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that harnessing focus with intention also allows us to reap benefits in our personal lives. How often have we been with a friend or loved one who only truly needed our attention, our sole focus, to feel seen and heard? This need for focus and acknowledgement is one hallmark of our humanity and one that – in a busy, sometimes *fractured* world – I believe needs nurturing.

As we fully enter the age of artificial intelligence, this need for human connection, meaningful interaction and focus will only increase. Our ability to delegate tasks to our AI enabled tools is specifically designed to free us to spend our time on more creative and human-centric tasks like making meaningful connections. Artificial intelligence is coming **to** your job, not **for** your job and as such can be an enabler of our focus on higher order activities.

The journey toward attention management, both personally and professionally, will continue to provide us with learning opportunities. Learning tactics like AI enabled task delegation, structured focus time, management of distraction and understanding the best ways to recover attention has the potential to unleash our creativity and talents in new and formerly undiscovered ways. I encourage you to allow yourself the gift of focusing on this important paper and then contemplate the ways that you can leverage its knowledge for yourself and your teams.

Our commitment to improving the daily experience of work, productivity-tools and communities must continue. This team and the extended group across Microsoft are here to support you on that journey. The thoughtful, insightful and compassionate intelligence of Rishi and Emma continue to lead us to deeper and more useful understanding of these issues. My thanks go out to them, and to those of you on this journey with us. Please continue to give us your feedback and share your insights in our Driving Adoption forum (<https://aka.ms/DriveAdoption>) and across the Microsoft communities of practice. We are, after all, in this together.

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# Introduction

## Motivation

### Why has Microsoft written a paper on Attention Management?

Staying relevant in a fast-moving and competitive market means attracting and retaining great talent, being agile and getting the most from technological investments. When it comes to technology investments and return on investment, organizations often consider just that – the technology side of things. `

With the [Modern Collaboration Architecture \(MOCA\)](#), we put *people* at the heart of how organizations think about collaboration tools, and how these drive the delivery of business outcomes. This means going beyond the traditional goal of productivity to consider how technology can best be adopted to facilitate and reinforce the underlying foundations of

MOCA puts **people** at the heart of how organizations think about collaboration tools.



productivity such as inclusion, wellbeing, connection, and collaboration. The notion that an effective team is greater than the sum of the parts is best realized when collaboration tools are put to great effect.

Technology is typically introduced as a set of features, which in themselves add limited value to the individual or the organization. How people come together, to what end they use technology, and how they direct their attention is where the real value is. According to Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, *“What is scarce in all of the abundance is human attention”*, and it is critical to harness people’s attention in daily work and collaboration.

Our goal is for MOCA to provoke organizations to think differently about how and why they introduce technology, to consider the individual’s perspective and day-to-day needs, what impact they could have, and how to create optimum conditions to harness and benefit from focused attention; on the one hand to provoke organizations and on the other hand to create awareness on the role of employees themselves as they adopt Microsoft tools.

With the recent release of Microsoft Copilot set of technologies, we have a unique opportunity to accelerate *attention harnessing* behaviours within our people, within organizations, with the hope that they will rub-off on our society. With this hope, we hope this paper sparks a conversation within your organizations on how technology can be harnessed to *preserve* and *harness* employee attention. Enjoy.



“What is scarce in all of the abundance is human attention.”

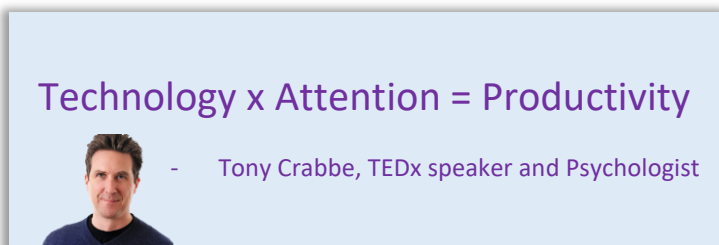
- Satya Nadella, CEO

# The Attention Challenge in Hybrid World

How often do you end work thinking “this was a great, productive and effective day?” Hopefully you have many of those, but you also recognize the feeling where you end your day thinking, “I was busy, but I didn’t do the things I wanted to do.” We feel disappointed, anxious, and yet as tomorrow comes, we remain busy<sup>1</sup>.

This social norm of busyness doesn’t necessarily equal valuable work. And while technology should facilitate our work, often it can feel like a burden, as we grapple to keep on top of our inbox, messages, and calendar. When we bounce from message to meeting and back again, zipping through those to-dos, managing mails, and switching between documents and devices, we are constantly chipping away at our attention. Keeping noise moreover can feel like an end in itself; but it’s exhausting, ineffective and unlikely to feel meaningful.

Technology does not lead to productivity. Our digital tools are amazing, but they are not enough. Unless they are harnessed to the power of human attention, digital technology can lead as much to distraction as it can enable. Or, as Tony Crabbe, business psychologist specializing in attention summarizes it:



So, what makes the difference between a great day and a distracted, draining day? What does it mean to enable attention through technology, and how can we support our people, and ourselves, to move from busyness to digital productivity? These should be central questions for all of us to grapple with if we want to truly unlock the enabling power of technology.

What are we missing in our approach to productivity and the digital workplace? We’ve certainly got the tools, but have we got the right attention and the right habits?

Great days, when we feel productive and make an impact on the problems that matter, have three consistent elements: Purpose, People and Progress (the 3Ps).

- **Purpose:** Recent research showed that employees spend only 44% of their day working on their primary job activities and 40% of their working time is responding to internal emails that they admit add no value to their business<sup>2</sup>. Yet, when we have a sense of purpose, we can see the clear value of our work; we lean in. We engage. In fact, 25% of performance can be attributed to our sense of meaning in our work.
- **People:** According to one study, there has been a 50% increase in collaboration over the last decade, with people spending 85% of their day on collaborative activities<sup>3</sup>. Consistent studies find one of the greatest impact drivers, but also motivation, is the quality of collaboration.
- **Progress:** Teresa Amabile’s research<sup>4</sup> shows that one of the greatest motivators is a sense of progress on the projects and tasks that really matter to us daily. Yet, on our busy days, how many of us leave work exhausted but underwhelmed by our progress on what matters.

Our goal is to help you build holistic strategies for your digital workplaces. Strategies that encompass the scenarios that will add value to your organization, its employees, and encourage new ways of working that facilitate the 3Ps. So how can you plan your workplace strategy and a technology adoption approach for the continuously evolving digital workplace in a way that harnesses employee attention and leverages the digital workplace as a change agent to catalyze the forming of new digital cultural norms, adapted to today’s work environment? The Modern Collaboration Architecture (MOCA) attempts to address this challenge. It offers best practices and guidance to help you develop your digital workplace strategy, understand scenarios that will add

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the blog “From Digital Distraction to Digital Enablement with the Modern Collaboration Architecture”, co-authored by Claudia van der Velden, Emma Stephen and Tony Crabbe - <https://techcommunity.microsoft.com/t5/driving-adoption-blog/from-digital-distraction-to-digital-enablement-with-the-modern/ba-p/1748129>

<sup>2</sup> Nick Atkin (2012) 40% of staff time is wasted on reading internal emails. The Guardian, Dec 17th

<sup>3</sup> Rob Cross, Reb Rebele, and Adam Grant (2016) Collaborative overload. Harvard Business Review Jan - Feb

<sup>4</sup> Teresa Amabile (2011) The power of small wins. [HBR Article](#)

value, and provide best practices to support individuals in your organization to harness their attention.

Starting with the purpose we looked at what the specific needs of individuals in the workplace are. What are the common things employees are trying to achieve with technology and what kind of work is the technology designed to facilitate?

When it comes to the people aspect, we consider the different contexts of productivity and attention. We looked at both individual work and more collaborative and community-based work. In the MOCA model, the organization plays a facilitation role to enable all individuals, teams, and communities.

Progress is incorporated when we think about the digital cultural norms that we can encourage to facilitate getting work done and the conditions to harness attention. How can we leverage technology and science to learn to facilitate Flow for example, a key factor in employee engagement<sup>5</sup> and general well-being<sup>6</sup> because it builds this feeling of progress?

Talking about progress, our most collaborative employees are often also the most disengaged<sup>3</sup>. As teams we rarely discuss our “rules of engagement” that will make the most of people’s time, talents, passions, and attention as we embark on a task. It is time to start.

The intent of the MOCA framework is not to predict ‘THE BEST way to organize your work, but to act as a guide. As you look at MOCA, think about the different needs, scenarios, and contexts your employees work in. Does it fit or do you need to adapt based on your organization’s goals? What other tools are end-users using that need to fit in?

Leverage the “[MOCA on a page](#)” as a starting point to spark discussions as you consider priority needs and scenarios that will add value to your organization and employees. How will you enable those scenarios based on the evolving technology landscape? And what digital culture norms do you want to encourage as you continue the digital workplace journey? If you are that individual who is overloaded or needs to re-take control of your time, do it and think about how you can leverage technology to facilitate that.

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<sup>5</sup> Microsoft and London Business School (2019), [Work Reworked](#)

<sup>6</sup> M. Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: Harper Perennials, 1997

# Digital Employee Experience - our next biggest challenge

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## Digital Employee Experience Fundamentals

The growing focus on Digital Employee Experience (DEX), Employee Experience Platforms (EXP), or similar organization wide initiatives, is confirmation that helping people be more productive is achieved by a more **people centric approach** to their working experience.

However, it can be easy to get distracted by the obvious ideas of consistent user interfaces, reskinning applications, intranets, and portals. The real outcome being pursued for productivity is **attention management** and balancing the individual's **attention objectives** (to complete a task) with broader organizational imperatives.

In some cases, these are perfectly aligned, e.g. The individual needs to understand the definition of a metric to continue with a task, and the definition is surfaced within the flow of work from an Organizational

Knowledge Repository. In other cases, the organizational imperatives may be seen by the individual as helpful (e.g., Security incident alert, Compliance breach notification, Corporate Communications building culture). The latter can require grabbing the attention of a user (distracting them), but in both cases the ideal approach achieves this with small nudges<sup>7</sup> within their *flow<sup>8</sup> of work* rather than expecting people to hunt information pertinent to the task at hand.

As people complete their role using many technological solutions, an important DEX outcome is to surface nudges and information across that multitude of solutions and support in situ completion, were optimal. Microsoft Copilot family of technologies is likely to be a game changer here as they have the potential to increase progress, creating motivation and addressing inertia.

## Understanding 'Attention Management'

Managing our attention, to 'get work done' has been a significant challenge, especially as people have started to work from locations other than the 'office', where the needs of family, home schooling and other social needs collide. It is this collision that can create a conflict in our attention, which can have a significant negative impact on work, as well as personal lives of people. Research shows that the mere presence of a mobile phone is distracting<sup>9</sup> and can result in a loss of attention towards work activities, and towards friends and families towards personal time.

Over the last two decades, the amount of content an individual office worker generates has increased by a factor of 200<sup>10</sup>. Over the same period, there has also been a 50% increase in work requiring collaboration<sup>11</sup> as people work longer hours and have more meetings than we have ever before<sup>12</sup>. Given that our attention is limited in time<sup>13</sup> people often end up spending their attention without getting the desired outcome. And once the attention is spent, there is no way for it to be reversed (time travel hasn't yet been discovered). To

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<sup>7</sup> Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2021). *Nudge: The final edition*. Yale University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience* (Vol. 1990). Harper & Row New York.

<sup>9</sup> Thornton, B., Faires, A., Robbins, M., & Rollins, E. (2014). The mere presence of a cell phone may be distracting. *Social Psychology*.

<sup>10</sup> Cross, R., Rebele, R., & Grant, A. (2016). Collaborative Overload (Harvard Business Review). <https://hbr.org/2016/01/collaborative-overload>

<sup>11</sup> Cross, R., Rebele, R., & Grant, A. (2016). Collaborative Overload (Harvard Business Review). <https://hbr.org/2016/01/collaborative-overload>

<sup>12</sup> Kost, D. (2020). You're Right! You Are Working Longer and Attending More Meetings. *Working Knowledge: Business Research for Business Leaders*. <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/you-re-right-you-are-working-longer-and-attending-more-meetings>

<sup>13</sup> Nobre, K. (2010). *Attention and time*. Oxford University Press, USA.



understand the value of planning 'attention harnessing' activities, the impact of distraction must be understood.

To cover some psychology basics, business psychologist [Tony Crabbe](#), discussed in a blog written for the 'Driving Adoption' blog, about the attention '3 Ds'<sup>14</sup> of our attention:

## Direction

Compared to a flashlight, Crabbe talks about our attention having a direction, which can be pointed to different topics and tasks at various times. The direction of our attention is not managed by us consciously.

**However, paired with motivation, it is one of the biggest predictors of the individual's impact<sup>15</sup>.**

Realigning the direction of our attention to what we need at the 'present moment' is critical, it is to our projects, decision making, being present for the kids as they do their homework or paying attention to your friends as they talk about their day. This attention can narrow (for more challenging tasks) or broaden its spotlight (for tasks that have been repeated previously), like the *system 1* and *system 2* concept talked about by Dr. Daniel Kahneman<sup>16</sup>.

## Depth

Attention, in addition to direction, also has an intensity (or how bright your flashlight is). This directs the degree to which a person is fully present in a conversation, or in a task. Having a low *depth* of attention can cause it to be

re-directed easily. The more *depth* we establish, the more ability we must stay on-task when faced with distractions. A *deep state of attention* is often called the *flow state*<sup>17</sup>. Research done by Kabir Sattarshetty<sup>18</sup> identified **Mental Stillness** as one of the primary techniques that can be used to strengthen the *flow* state, and thus improve the *depth* of attention.

**Improving the depth of our attention improves our performance while reducing fatigue.** The acknowledgement that the intensity of our attention cannot be consistently maintained, and that it fluctuates based on the person's interest in the activity is important in designing behaviours that prevent attention fragmentation<sup>19</sup>. In short, give people work that they consider interesting and fulfilling if they are to create better focus.

## Duration

Our attention is present in time, it loiters on a thought for a specific period. Difficulty in managing the duration of attention could cause people to switch attention more frequently than is required. **Distraction can be defined as "our attention switching away from our focus area before intended"**.<sup>20</sup> Research from the University of California has demonstrated that **on average, office workers face attention interruption every 3 minutes in an average day<sup>21</sup>**, compensated by working faster, often to the detriment of quality, which results in increased stress.

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<sup>14</sup> Crabbe, T. (2020). Managing Attention for Employee Wellness & Productivity. *Driving Adoption Blog*. <https://techcommunity.microsoft.com/t5/driving-adoption-blog/managing-attention-for-employee-wellness-amp-productivity/ba-p/1799733>

<sup>15</sup> Amabile, T., & Kramer, S. (2011). The progress principle: Using small wins to ignite joy, engagement, and creativity at work. Harvard Business Press.

<sup>16</sup> Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, fast and slow. Macmillan.

<sup>17</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow: The psychology of optimal experience (Vol. 1990). Harper & Row New York.

<sup>18</sup> Sattarshetty, K. (2016). The Effect of a 'Mental Stillness' Meditation Intervention on the Mental Health Risk of Primary School Aged Children [University of Sydney].

<sup>19</sup> Oulasvirta, A. (2005). The fragmentation of attention in mobile interaction, and what to do with it. *interactions*, 12(6), 16-18.

<sup>20</sup> Crabbe, T. (2020). Managing Attention for Employee Wellness & Productivity. *Driving Adoption Blog*. <https://techcommunity.microsoft.com/t5/driving-adoption-blog/managing-attention-for-employee-wellness-amp-productivity/ba-p/1799733>

<sup>21</sup> Mark, G., Gudith, D., & Klocke, U. (2008). The cost of interrupted work: more speed and stress. Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems

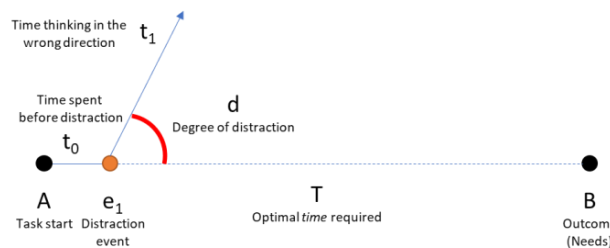
## Understanding the nature of distraction

Understanding how attention is distracted will enable organizational leaders to devise prevention strategies. In this section, we explore how distraction impacts the direction, depth, and duration of our attention while we are trying to complete a task. To illustrate, we are going to be using geometric figures and some basic mathematical rules to demonstrate concepts.

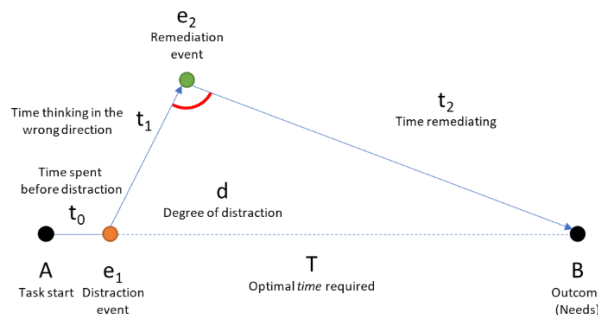
Let us say that we are currently at a point in time, say point **A**, where we are going to be starting a task. Our task completion happens at point **B**. The straight-line **T** represents the shortest distance between the two points, or the *optimal* time taken to complete the task.



Now let's introduce a distraction event into the mix, event **e<sub>1</sub>**. The distraction often causes a person's attention to move in a different direction, influenced by *d*, the degree of distraction which influences the direction of the attention, and **t<sub>1</sub>**, time spent in the distraction, represented below:



As is the nature of our thoughts, we keep on jumping from one thought to another, and thus time distracted (represented as **t<sub>1</sub>**) can be anything from seconds, minutes, to even hours and days<sup>22</sup>. To bring our attention back to the completion of our task, there needs to be a re-directing remediation event, **e<sub>2</sub>**, which brings our focus back towards spending time required to arrive at our desired outcome, represented at **t<sub>2</sub>** in the diagram below:



If we call **t<sub>0</sub>** the time we spent on the task before the distraction event **e<sub>1</sub>**, the total time spent on the task can be calculated as the formula below, instead of the *optimal* time, **T**.

$$\text{Total time spent} = t_0 + t_1 + t_2$$

<sup>22</sup> Manocha, R. (2013). Silence your mind. Hachette UK.

$T$  in this case is likely to be a negative value, demonstrating that time has been lost, resulting in lost productivity.

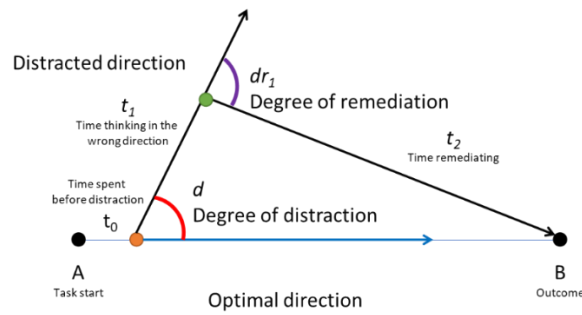
$$\text{Time impact} = T - (t_0 + t_1 + t_2)$$

Time, however, is not the only thing that has been lost here: initial distraction and the remediation event have also had a compounding factor in lost value, and can be written (using a basic geometrical formula measuring the area of the triangle) as:

$$\text{Lost value} = \frac{1}{2} (T - t_0) \sin d$$

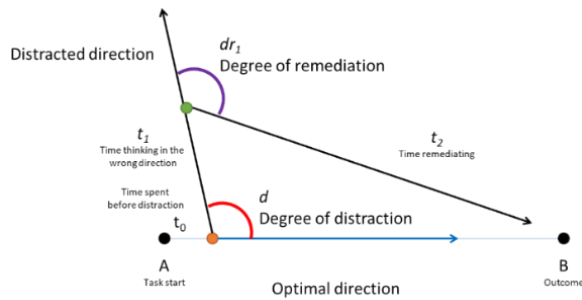
When looking at the cost of productivity for that activity, time is only one-dimensional. Lost value signifies a more accurate opportunity cost. Even though this model is purely theoretical, it is intended to logically explore the measurability of 'lost value' that can be caused by even a single distraction.

## Refocusing attention

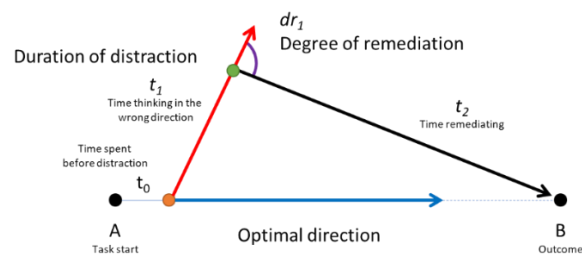


The diagram above shows components that impact on the direction of our attention, or the degree of distraction,  $d$ . Distraction, more generally inattention, involves an explicit activity different than the one that is intended to be performed, and that competes for attention. This *inattention* often leads to diminished capacity to achieve the task outcome.

A. Smiley<sup>23</sup> defined distraction as “**misallocated attention**” – we’re still paying attention, but not to the thing that we had originally intended. The degree of realignment of attention,  $d_1$ , is critical for the corrective reallocation of attention.



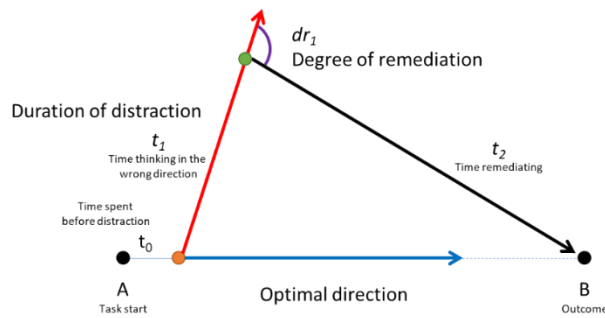
The larger the degree of distraction the larger the degree of remediation required, and longer the time required to remediate the attention.



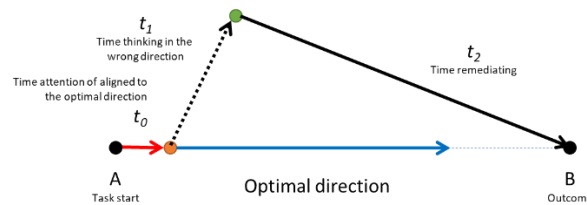
The duration of the distraction,  $t_1$ , is also positively correlated with the time required to remediate  $t_2$ , and the degree of remediation  $d_1$  required.

<sup>23</sup> Smiley, A. (2005). What is distraction? International Conference on Distracted Driving, 2005, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

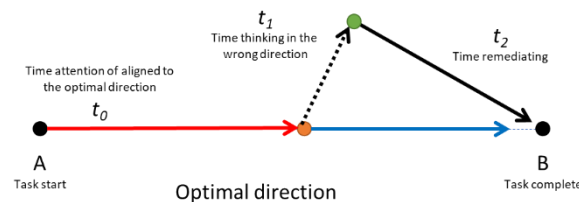
As seen in the diagram below, the longer the duration before the remediation event is applied, the larger degree of remediation is required, and the longer the time required to remediate:



The final attribute of attention is the depth, or intensity of attention. The depth of our attention relates to how present a person is in their focus towards a task, and the outcome. Attention with a lot of depth can create a state of *flow*, which creates strength in the *direction* of attention, just a narrow, strong flashlight.



The greater the depth of attention, the longer the time aligned to the optimal direction before it can be distracted. In other words, the depth positively correlates with  $t_0$ , time spent before distraction.



The more depth we can build to our attention, the longer we can go without being distracted, reducing the negative impact of a potential distraction.

## The nature of thoughts and its role in distraction

### A brand-new Persian Rug

Imagine, you have just spent a significant amount of money buying a brand-new Persian rug, you saw in a Turkish rug show over the weekend. It was “love at first sight” and you just really had to have that rug. As someone with a good eye for aesthetics, you place it in your living room, where everyone can see it (and enjoy it) and place a complementing coffee table over it.

A few days later, you had some friends come to visit after an extended period. It was great to see them again, and meet their kids for the first time, who were enjoying exploring the space around the room. As you were busy getting the latest update of their recent adventures, you noticed that their 2-year-old runs past the coffee table, brushing past the freshly poured coffee cup. As the cup rocks, balancing the liquid within, you can't help but think about how this could have gone all so wrong had the coffee spilt over your brand-new Persian rug.

Breathing a sigh of relief, you wonder what would have happened if some coffee did spill on the run, where would you have taken it for dry-cleaning? How much

### Work story

When we're at work, the situation might be different but this pattern of hopping from connection to connection and thought to thought in our minds is the same. Imagine you're working towards a deadline for a project. You're right in the flow and ping, you get a chat from your colleague asking when you'll have your part ready. Suddenly, the spell is broken and your focus shifts to asking yourself when is the deadline? Will you make it? Do you even have all the right content? Ahh yes, there's also that meeting that's happening the day after the deadline that you still need to prepare for. And you still need to send the agenda to the customer and book your

would it cost: \$250, \$500, or \$1000? Wow, that is a lot of money! When you go to the dry cleaner's, the next couple of weeks in the calendar are extremely busy and you must get a lot of important work done. Suddenly you remember you must send an email to your manager and the other team manager with specific details of an outstanding issue by tomorrow, which you completely forgot about. Your attention now moves away from *catastrophizing*<sup>24</sup> about the beautiful Persian rug, to thinking about what would happen now that you have missed the deadline for sending that information out to the senior leaders, and how that will reflect on your credibility within the organization.

All this time, your Persian rug is fine, nothing bad has happened to it, but your reputation at work has been negatively impacted: this is just a trap your mind has created for you. What you are missing out on in the process is the story of the adventure that your friends have been on, something that is special and meaningful to them, that they wanted to share with you.

train ticket. You'll never get it all done, and that will impact your and your colleagues' reputations.

In less than a few seconds, your mind has made a series of connections which have very little to do with the present moment and the work that you are trying to complete. Finding your way back to your thoughts on the project and completing what you had set out to do is now harder as your attention has taken multiple steps away from it.

Distractions will always be there whether in our environment or in our minds. The question is, how can we harness our attention and that of others?

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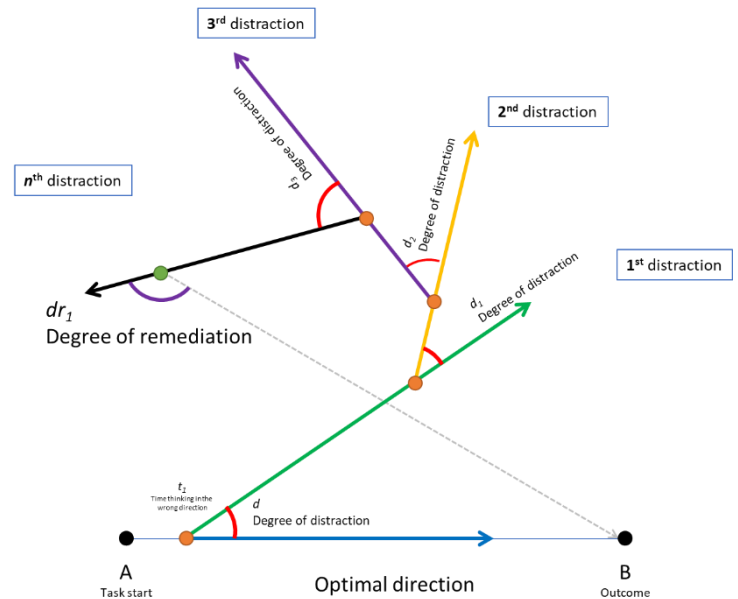
<sup>24</sup> Vasey, M.W. and Borkovec, T.D., 1992. A catastrophizing assessment of worrisome thoughts. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 16(5), pp.505-520.

## The reality of 'distraction'

According to the research done by Dr. Manocha, the bouncing of our attention from thought to thought<sup>25</sup>, a constant mental chatter, contributes to the bouncing of our mind from one distraction to another. With each distraction, there is additional *attention debt* accumulated, and the magnitude of the *remediation event* grows more uncertain.

The number of distractions when compounded makes it more difficult for the original task to be completed and precious resources like time, effort and commitment are wasted.

While developing a Modern Work adoption program, it is critical to intentionally focus on attention harnessing behaviors and to warn people against adoption behaviors that facilitate *technology enabled* distractions.



## Harnessing vs Preserving Attention

Organizations must balance competing priorities for individual's attention. Individual productivity and wellbeing are clearly served by allowing people to plan and execute their tasks with personal attention preservation, however organizational functions may need to disrupt this, e.g.:

- Corporate Security alerting people to danger or immediate action required.
- Corporate Affairs with anything from time sensitive COVID communications, through to longer term culture and engagement messaging
- IT Security uses Artificial Intelligence to interrupt individuals if they are mistakenly breaching security, compliance, or Human Resources policies.
- Microsoft Copilot to alert an individual towards organizational knowledge that may assist them with the current task they are completing.
- Learning & Development teams use Artificial Intelligence to make an individual aware of pertinent training for a subject or topic they are working on.

To manage this balance, it becomes essential to understand how the variety of individual roles and personas combine with the multitude of different User Experiences (or "surfaces") the individual is faced with. MOCA helps identify the "surfaces", and components like Microsoft Viva bring attention management to the forefront by orienting the solution behaviours around the Employee Experience.

<sup>25</sup> Manocha, R., 2013. *Silence your mind*. Hachette UK.

# Preventing Distractions in Hybrid Work

In an ideal work setting, the outcome we are looking for is to have actual time spent aligned to the optimal direction  $t_0$ , be as close to the optimal time,  $T$ , as possible. If the value of  $t_0$  is the same as  $T$ , then one has successfully prevented being distracted during that task. There are several strategies that can be applied to prevent distractions while working in a hybrid workplace<sup>26</sup> environment:

## People + Culture strategies

Understanding human psychophysiology and how their personality develops can help organizations craft approaches that enable people develop their effectiveness in both their personal and professional lives. This *#HumanFirst* mindset is going to be the differentiating factor as people look to choose the employers that have values that align with their own including the ability to create the right flow of work; flexible, safe workspaces for a hybrid workforce; and the ability to choose how they want to work<sup>27</sup>.

Hybrid work is inevitable, and organizations must think of empowering employees with behaviours that help them navigate the complexities of the bi-modal nature of work, according to Microsoft's Hybrid Work guide for Business Leaders<sup>26</sup>. Helping employees create behaviours that help them build a listening system, maximize their flow of work (and flow outside of work) and the ability to embrace flexibility, enabled by technology such as Microsoft Copilot, Teams, and Viva. Having the right technologies and using the technologies to their full potential is a dimension of the people focused distraction prevention strategies.

### Key takeaways for preventing distractions:

- Set a clear flexible work policy that enables people to choose where they get specific type of work done and empower managers and leaders to guide their directs on how to make good 'outcome-based decision' when choosing a location to work from.

- Lead with empathy and expect everyone else to do so as well. This will facilitate better inclusion of people who are joining remotely and in person. Consider giving space at either end of a meeting for informal banter, crucial to rebuilding connections, social capital and establishing new relationships<sup>28</sup>.
- Create shared work rituals within your team, around collaboration, work processes, and how you run your meetings in a hybrid setting and when working a-synchronous within the team.
- Create shared norms for digital boundaries mean, such as "Do not disturb" as part of the organization's adoption program. Create a culture of compliance to 'attention harnessing' behaviors by clearly explaining the 'why' behind them, and the impact of not 'respecting' them.
- Help employees learn the benefit of changing the default – shifting their apps and customizing notifications to support their needs of the moment.
- Support employees with boundary setting techniques, such as changing place, using music as a trigger, and the Pomodoro technique – "25 minutes of focused, uninterrupted work on one task, then 5 minutes of rest"<sup>29</sup> for example.
- Make *Employee Experience* an organizational capability.
- Focus on attracting and retaining talent.
- Prioritize addressing digital exhaustion from the top.

**Pomodoro (n.)** – a short, timed interval during which you work on what you intended to work on, and only what you intended to work on – until the timer goes off, at which point you take a break.

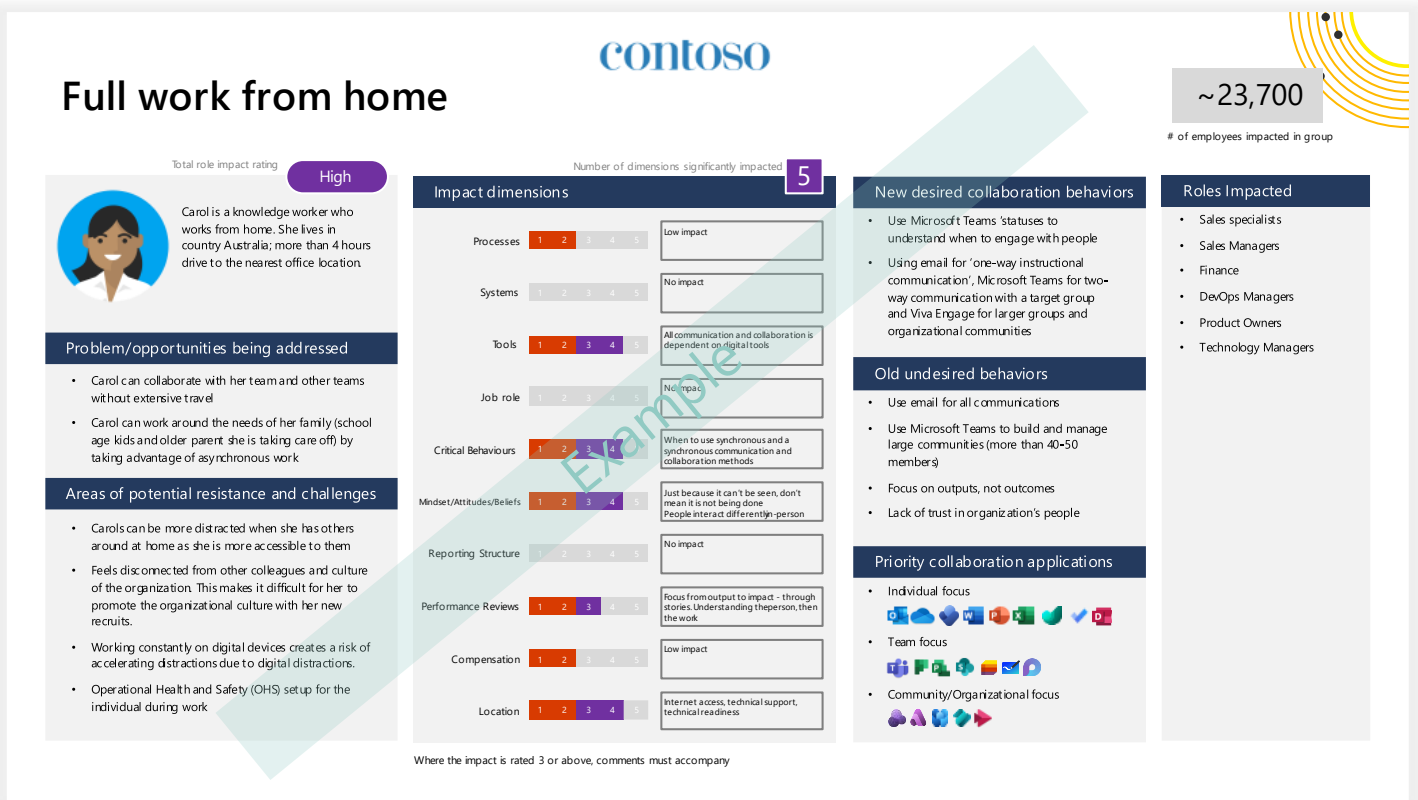
<sup>26</sup> Microsoft. (2021). Hybrid Work: A Guide for Business Leaders. <https://clouddamcdnprodep.azureedge.net/gdc/gdcSwn4Qe/original>

<sup>27</sup> Spataro, J. (2021). Microsoft and LinkedIn share latest data and innovation for hybrid work. Official Microsoft Blog. <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/what-microsofts-satya-nadella-thinks-about-work-future>

<sup>28</sup> A Guide to effective hybrid and remote meetings <https://clouddamcdnprodep.azureedge.net/gdc/gdchHPKb2/original>

<sup>29</sup> Wang, X., Gobbo, F., Lane, M. (2010). Turning Time from Enemy into an Ally Using the Pomodoro Technique. In: Šmite, D., Moe, N., Ågerfalk, P. (eds) *Agility Across Time and Space*. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-12442-6\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-12442-6_10)





## Space strategies

Workplaces have traditionally invested significant resources to design worksites to minimize impact on people's health<sup>30</sup>. As people, especially knowledge workers, increasingly work from locations other than their offices, these new environments haven't been physically optimized to minimize distraction. Critical elements such as ergonomic furniture, opportunity for movement, different spaces to match the task being completed, aesthetics, and physical interaction (including water-cooler location for casual conversations) with colleagues, are design aspects that may not be available to all people. Workplace health and safety (WHS) needs to be top of mind when preparing for the right work environment. Organizations need to support people to create a safe environment, which is compliant to the security requirements for information.

Some key aspects of a remote work setup include<sup>28</sup> furniture, lighting, screens, audio setup, video setup, cabling, and mobility (when to go for a walk, take a hydration or bio break).

*Personas* are an effective way to categorize how people's behaviours are likely to manifest in the new

COVID normal. *Personas* are not job descriptions, nor are they hierarchical; they help to capture *how* people go about doing their jobs (instead of what they do). The primary personas that represent the new hybrid work can be summarized as:

- Full work from home
- Full work from worksite
- Work-home combination
- Work from anywhere else.

For each of the highlighted personas, information such as problem/opportunities being addressed, areas of potential resistance and challenges, impact dimensions, new desired collaboration behaviors, old undesired behaviors, priority collaboration applications and roles impacted, is then used to develop communications, training, sponsor orchestration and people manager plans, to scale the adoption effort.

<sup>30</sup> Walton, J. (2019). Good Office Design Reduces the Hidden Costs of Healthcare. The source for next work environments.

<https://www.workdesign.com/2019/01/good-office-design-reduces-the-hidden-costs-of-healthcare/>

### Key takeaways for preventing distractions:

- Find the right space to perform the right type of work. When you need to work with other people, prioritize in-person collaboration. When working with people from different time zones, or with people requiring flexible working times, opt for asynchronous work, over calls, which are time dependent. In the event of work that is urgent and important, consider using Microsoft Teams for a voice call or a meeting, from anywhere. When focused work is required, consider the right environment whether you are working from home, or from the office. And when working on confidential content, avoid cafes and other public areas that can otherwise be stimulating when you are seeking inspiration.
- When working from home, inform other residents to consider you 'away' from home, unless you have left your designated workspace. Creating a habit of working in the same place every day will assist with that.
- When in a common worksite, consider how you use your headphones to indicate if you are approachable (interruptible?), or not. The same applies to office doors for those who have a designated office.
- Ask people to trust your 'status' within Microsoft teams. Having a clean calendar will go a long way in assisting effective 'status' practices.
- Set up a [focus plan](#) in Microsoft Viva. This will ensure that you are not disturbed during times when you need to get allocated tasks completed. Using [Focus assist](#) in Windows can also be very effective.

### Technology strategies

Organization would benefit from two parallel technology strategies:

- Addressing technical debt, and
- Digitizing business processes.

#### Addressing technical debt

Enabling hybrid workplace through technology requires some fundamental capability to be established within organizations. Below are the 5 areas for organizations to lead with when creating a plan to address technical debt and move to cloud services:

1. **Move *identity* to the cloud** (Azure Active Directory implementation, either in cloud only, or hybrid mode)
2. **Move *email* to the cloud** (Exchange Online implementation)

3. **Move documents to the cloud** (SharePoint Online implementation), prioritizing OneDrive for Business
4. **Prioritize Security and Compliance** capabilities within the cloud (Microsoft 365 E5 security and Microsoft Purview implementation)
5. **Establish Microsoft Teams as the hub for collaboration and team document management.**

Leading within these 5 strategies will help with releasing on-premises resources, consolidate duplicating software, removing technical debt by establishing cloud technology foundations, resulting in financial savings and technical modernization. To calculate the saving for your organization, use the [Microsoft 365 ROI calculator](#).

#### Digitizing business processes

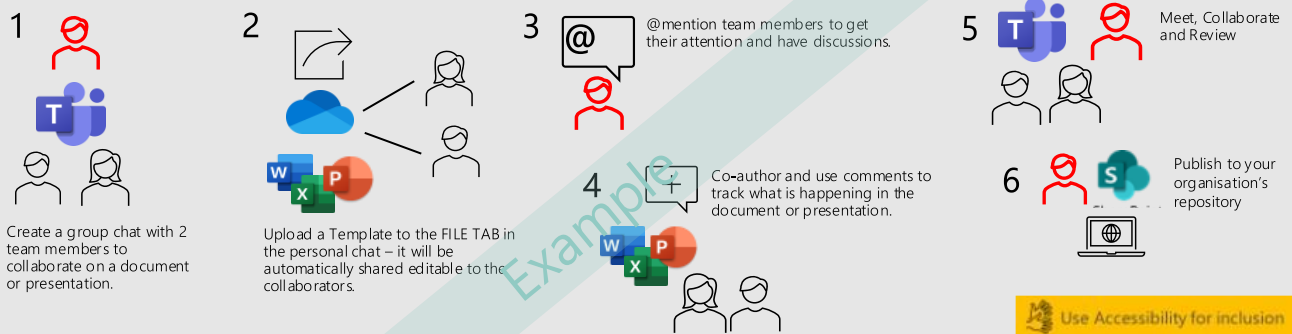
Enabling the business to work differently, supported by the *new ways of working* that Microsoft Cloud facilitates, bring about new ways of doing business. It is the combination of new technologies, *cloud-enabled* business processes and the *new mindsets* adopted by the people that deliver true Digital Transformation. The outcome – the “job to be done”, how it is done, and how it can be done differently are captured thought outlining a **scenario**.

Adoption teams often start off with generic organization wide scenarios when implementing Microsoft 365. Some of the most common generic scenarios include:

- Storing my files
- Team content collaboration
- Effective team meetings
- Daily/Weekly team Stand-ups
- Building Community of Practice.

## Content Collaboration (Peer to Peer)

Report creation and publication



### Behavioral Changes

Collaborate in a personal chat and coauthor on one source of truth. Work and meet together via chat and virtual meeting capabilities to allow flexible and timely outcomes.

Start	Stop	Continue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Sharing and keeping one version of documents</li> <li>✓ Storing documents in the cloud ( i.e. OneDrive)</li> <li>✓ Chatting and engaging in Teams</li> <li>✓ Updating documents in real-time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Working on documents in isolation</li> <li>X Emailing physical attachments</li> <li>X Using multiple copies to create a document</li> <li>X Printing documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborating with others</li> <li>• Meeting</li> <li>• Creating quality documents, presentations and/or reports</li> <li>• Following the formal approval process when required</li> </ul>

There are other quick wins that can be derived by prioritizing specific business processes, where working differently can bring significant benefits to the legal, financial, HR or other operational processes. These opportunities can be identified by conducting Scenario Discover Workshops. These scenarios can present strategic opportunities of utilizing the wider Microsoft 365 suite can help drive exponential business value to the organization.

Some of the key Microsoft 365 workloads that focus on business value include:

- Employee engagement and connection (Viva Connections, Viva Insights, Viva Pulse)
- Cloud Personal Computer (Cloud PC) enabled by Windows 365
- Records Management capability (enabled by SharePoint Online and Microsoft Purview)
- Establishing Communities of Practices (Viva Engage)
- Advanced Communication practices (Viva Amplify, Viva Engage, Viva Pulse)
- Citizen Development Center of Excellence (enabled by the PowerPlatform suite of applications)

The priority is to uncover scenarios that will provide business with specific business value, aligned with the strategic priorities of the organization. Enabling these priority scenarios will assist in realizing the value of how the Microsoft Cloud technology facilitates a business lead change initiative, where the technology deployment teams are just the enablers.

### Key takeaways for preventing distractions:

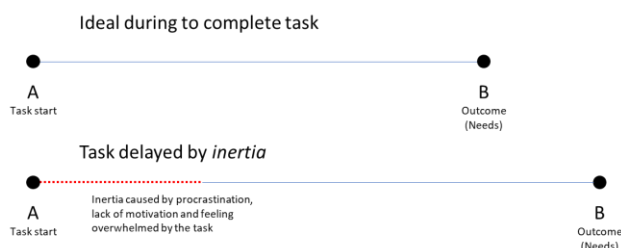
- Notification Management is going to be a key area where people across the organization would need guidance to prevent notification overload. Consider developing the right notification management practices for your organization.
- Moving people who work together, to the cloud together.
- Using change management practices to lead change. Microsoft has found success in the use of Prosci's® [ADKAR model](#). This will keep the focus on the journey of adoption and will remove the expectation that people will just adopt technology by using it. Training is not the entry point to technology value realization and organizations must start by presenting the business case to their employees.

# AI, Microsoft Copilot & Viva – enablers of *Attention Harnessing* behaviors

## Opportunity #1 – Addressing Inertia

**Inertia is the tendency to do nothing or to remain unchanged<sup>31</sup>.**

Inertia, in the context of starting work, refers to the difficulty that individuals may face when trying to begin a task or project. This can be due to a variety of reasons, including procrastination (the tendency of spending a lot of time to get started<sup>32</sup>), lack of motivation, or feeling overwhelmed by the task at hand. Inertia can be a significant problem as it can lead to decreased productivity and missed deadlines. It can also cause stress and anxiety, as individuals may feel guilty or frustrated about their inability to start working.

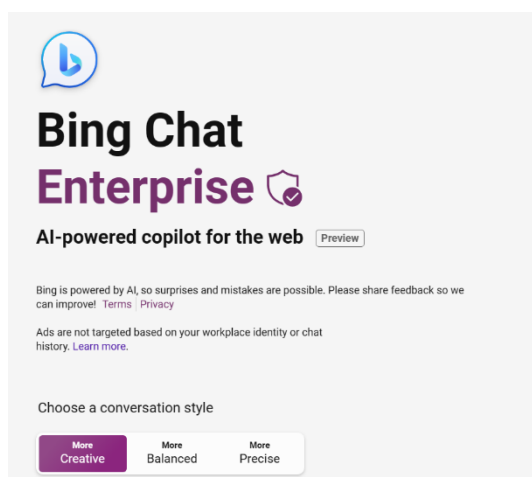


To overcome inertia, individuals can try breaking down large tasks into smaller, more manageable ones, setting specific goals and deadlines, and creating a conducive work environment. Additionally, finding ways to increase motivation, such as rewarding oneself for completing tasks or finding meaning in the work being done, can also help to overcome inertia and increase productivity.

Microsoft Copilot<sup>33</sup> is a once-in-a-generation technology opportunity which is going to have a significant impact addressing inertia by providing a natural language interface to ask Artificial Intelligence (AI) to do the required research, draft an opening paragraph, or even create a 14-slide PowerPoint presentation with all the graphics and transitions<sup>34</sup>, as examples.

Here are some ways technology can address *inertia*:

- **Procrastination:** One of the biggest reasons people procrastinate is because they catastrophize or make a huge deal out of something<sup>35</sup>. This could be related to how tough, how repetitive, or how complicated it would be to complete the task. Microsoft Copilot can get you access to the right information in 'smaller chunks' by asking simple questions about the topic, and by getting access to information quickly, even in the form of analyzed insight, or even a draft of a paragraph or a complete document. Viva Insights<sup>36</sup>, a Microsoft Viva module, can schedule focus time directly in the calendar<sup>37</sup> and reduce notifications (an attention-distracting behavior) for the duration. Reserving time for a particular task can help reduce procrastination.
- **Lack of motivation:** The following text was generated by Bing Enterprise Chat: "Creative mode is good to use when you want to generate content that is original, imaginative, and engaging. For example, you can use creative mode to create poems, stories, code,



<sup>31</sup> [inertia definition - Search \(bing.com\)](#)

<sup>32</sup> [PROCRASTINATION | English meaning - Cambridge Dictionary](#)

<sup>33</sup> [Artificial Intelligence Solutions | Microsoft AI](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Microsoft Copilot – Microsoft Adoption](#)

<sup>35</sup> [11 Ways to Overcome Procrastination | Psychology Today](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Improve productivity with Microsoft Viva Insights](#)

<sup>37</sup> [Focus with Viva Insights - Microsoft Support](#)

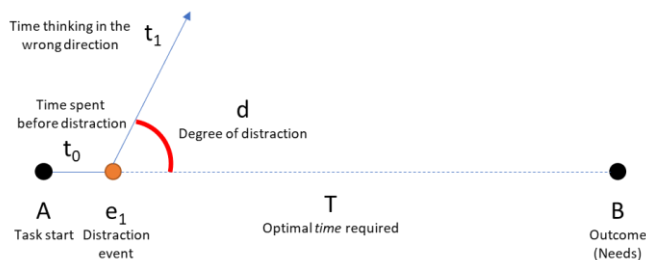
essays, songs, celebrity parodies, and more using your own words and knowledge. Creative mode can also help you express yourself with more freedom and personality, using emojis, GIFs and humor when appropriate. Creative mode is ideal for tasks that require creativity, innovation, or entertainment<sup>38</sup>. Starting your task with creative content can create interest, improving motivation. Research suggests that people who find activities meaningful or interesting are more likely to persist at a task or have better performance<sup>39</sup>. Interest and enjoyment in an activity can boost intrinsic motivation by engendering 'flow'<sup>40</sup>. Interest and motivation have a powerful effect on cognitive

functioning by enhancing employee engagement and promoting positive emotions<sup>41</sup>.

- **Feeling overwhelmed by the task:** Perhaps breaking a larger problem in smaller components by asking more targeted questions is a great way to get started when one is feeling overwhelmed by a task. Microsoft Copilot can be asked questions on smaller aspects of the challenge, which will enable the *eating of the elephant a bite at a time*; with specific guidance on how to create effective prompts available on the Microsoft Adoption website<sup>42</sup>.

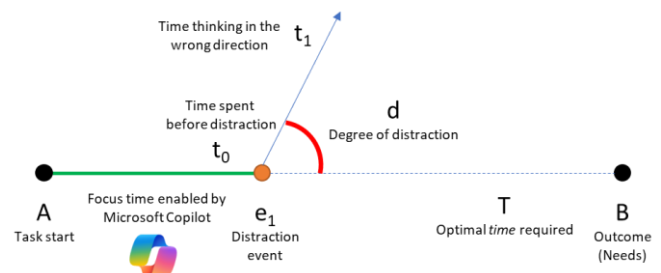
## Opportunity #2 – Preventing Distractions

Time,  $t_0$ , is the time spent on an activity before the distraction event  $e_1$ . Extending the duration of  $t_0$  also increases the engagement and sustainment of the *flow* state, enabling people to get work done faster.



Microsoft Copilot can create focus by addressing inertia, as well as getting the work started by getting the AI to do a lot of the work. Obviously, this would be based on how much information is available on the topic and how well the Large Language Model (LLM) is able to synthesize the requirements in its specified context. Microsoft 365 Copilot can help you stay focused and

prevent distractions by providing quick and accurate answers to your questions, allowing you to stay on task and avoid getting sidetracked. Copilot can also help you manage your time and prioritize your tasks by providing reminders, scheduling assistance, and other productivity tools. Additionally, Copilot can help you stay organized by summarizing important information and keeping track of your to-do list. By using Copilot to manage your workload and stay focused, you can minimize distractions and increase your productivity.



<sup>38</sup> [Bing Chat Enterprise](#)

<sup>39</sup> [Frontiers | How Students' Motivation and Learning Experience Affect Their Service-Learning Outcomes: A Structural Equation Modeling Analysis \(frontiersin.org\)](#)

<sup>40</sup> [On what motivates us: a detailed review of intrinsic v. extrinsic motivation | Psychological Medicine | Cambridge Core](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Why Work Should Be Fun \(hbr.org\)](#)

<sup>42</sup> [Prompt-ingredients-one-pager.pdf \(microsoft.com\)](#)

# Identifying 'harnessing' behaviours

Behavioral nudges have proven to be a valuable public policy-making tool<sup>43</sup>, but the one-size fits all fit all approach. When designing adoption programs to help guide behavior that will enable people to 'harness attention' and improve their effectiveness while contributing towards organizational productivity, organizations need to consider elements unique to their strategic priorities and the culture they want to drive.

Element	Description
Basic information	
<b>Focus area</b>	The behavior impacting a person using their 'general focus'? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual</li> <li>• Team</li> <li>• Community/Organization.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome (need)</b>	The outcome that the person is looking to achieve. These 'needs' that apply to the particular focus area are what the technology is there to enable.
<b>M365 Application</b>	The application(s) from the Microsoft 365 suite that are suggested as the primary applications to help deliver the desired outcome (need). The relationship between the application, the outcome (need) and the focus area create the 'Which tool when' guidance for organizations to follow.
<b>Knowledge required to deliver the outcome (need)</b>	This is the guidance for people on how they can use the technology using 'attention harnessing' behaviors to deliver the outcomes (needs) that people desire for a particular focus area. When organizations are developing the required 'training',
Distraction event	
<b>Distraction event</b>	These are the events that are likely to take your attention away from the task at hand. Proactively identifying these potential events will help bring them to the attention of people and their managers, who can work together to embed the 'attention harnessing' behavior and prevent 'attention distracting' behaviours.
<b>Distraction source</b>	Based on the primary markers of the hybrid world, the source is identified as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People</li> <li>• Places</li> <li>• Process</li> </ul>
<b>Treatment for IT Administrator</b>	Guidance for the Microsoft 365 administrators on the Microsoft 365 applications that need to be enabled, governance and policies that prioritize specific people behaviours.
<b>Treatment by user</b>	Actions (both proactive and reactive) that people need to be taught so they can mitigate the distraction caused by the <i>distraction event</i> . The treatment could include guidance such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The right tool for the right job, and</li> <li>• The right behaviours while using the tools.</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge required to apply treatment</b>	When providing the right training to people within the organization, the guidance needs to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which scenarios assist in solving which specific problems that people struggle with</li> </ul>

Let's explore a few examples:

<sup>43</sup> Halpern, D. (2015). Inside the Nudge Unit: How Small Changes Can Make a Big Difference-David Halpern. Google Books.

## Example #1 – Developing new documents

Element	Description
Basic information	
<b>Focus area</b>	Individual
<b>Outcome (need)</b>	Develop content
<b>M365 Application</b>	Excel, OneNote, Word, PowerPoint, Sway, Publisher, Visio
<b>Knowledge required to deliver the outcome (need)</b>	<p>The right tool for the right task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Excel</b> – spreadsheets, data computation (using formulas and basic calculations) and simple visualizations.</li> <li>• <b>OneNote</b> – Note taking and capturing ideas, synchronized on any device.</li> <li>• <b>Word</b> – word processing, creating, formatting, illustrating, and editing text-based documents for various purposes.</li> <li>• <b>PowerPoint</b> – Presentation aid. The slides are designed to support the story that the storytelling is telling by using pictures, text, videos and other rich media like forms and polls.</li> <li>• <b>Sway</b> – Idea for creating rich micro-sites with embedded images, audio and video files can help convey a message. Can be used to construct newsletters, standard operating procedures, knowledge articles and similar artifacts.</li> <li>• <b>Publisher</b> – Desktop publishing program ideal for design work like brochures, whitepapers, and calendars.</li> <li>• <b>Visio</b> – Tool idea for creating flow charts, vector graphics, diagram networks, organizational charts, which can be scripted for task automation.</li> </ul> <p>Basic training on how to use the various Microsoft office applications are available here - <a href="#">Microsoft 365 Training</a>.</p>
Distraction event	
<b>Distraction event</b>	A notification from Microsoft Teams or Outlook pops up, engaging the attention of the person focusing on developing a document.
<b>Distraction source</b>	People
<b>Treatment for IT Administrator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade to Windows 11 or Windows 365 to enable users to manage their own notification settings.</li> <li>• Deploy Microsoft Viva’s Insights module.<sup>44</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Treatment by user and knowledge required to apply treatment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn on Focus Assist in Windows - <a href="#">Turn Focus assist on or off in Windows (microsoft.com)</a>.</li> <li>• Use Viva Insights to assign ‘focus time’ in your calendar, which reduces unnecessary notifications - <a href="#">Protect time with Viva Insights   Microsoft Docs</a>.</li> <li>• Turning on <i>Focus</i> in Windows 11 is even easier - <a href="#">How to use focus in Windows 11 - Microsoft Support</a></li> </ul>

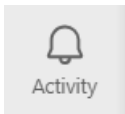
<sup>44</sup> Cavanell, Z. C., Jeremy. (2021). Microsoft Viva, The Essentials video series. Microsoft Tech Community. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-viva/insights>

## Example #2 – Document search example

Element	Description
Basic information	
Focus area	Individual
Outcome (need)	Find documents & people
M365 Application	Microsoft Search in OneDrive for Business (Supported by Microsoft 365 Copilot)
Knowledge required to deliver the outcome (need)	Microsoft Search in OneDrive for Business (ODfB) is a great place to start searching for documents that an individual is looking for - <a href="#">Find what you need with Microsoft Search - Microsoft Support</a>
Distraction event	
Distraction event	People looking for documents end up browsing their OneDrive/SharePoint/File-Share folders, which takes a ‘significant’ amount of time. Sometimes during browsing, they may come across other ‘interesting’ files, which they then open and get distracted from the original task.
Distraction source	Process
Treatment for IT Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optimize Microsoft Search - <a href="#">Set up Microsoft Search   Microsoft Learn</a></li> <li>Set up Information Labels to restrict access to certain information types - <a href="#">What is Microsoft Purview?   Microsoft Learn</a></li> <li>Enable Microsoft 365 Copilot will enable staff to converse with Copilot to synthesize data, speeding up the time required to make decisions - <a href="#">Get started with Microsoft 365 Copilot   Microsoft Learn</a></li> </ul>
Treatment by user and knowledge required to apply treatment	<p>People need to adhere to good document management practices. Here are the three primary rules for good document management:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. There shall only be 1 copy of a document</b> – Attaching documents to emails, saving files offline, or creating additional copies of documents create unmanaged copies of documents, causing information proliferation. This risks people using outdated documents to make critical decisions. Imagine the consequences of making workplace health and safety decisions using an old policy document? Attention harnessing behaviours require organizations encourage a single copy of a document, and thus staff need to learn effective document sharing practices - <a href="#">Share your documents (microsoft.com)</a>, <a href="#">Sharing &amp; permissions in the SharePoint modern experience - SharePoint in Microsoft 365   Microsoft Docs</a>.</li> <li><b>2. Document ownership</b> – A document in Microsoft 365 is owned by the individual if it is shored within OneDrive for Business, the Team owners if the document is stored within the Microsoft Teams environment and owned by the site owners if stored in stand-alone SharePoint site. The owner of the document is accountable for the quality and currency of the document. The document owner is also responsible for ensuring that only the right people have permission to access documents and that the access list is being maintained.</li> <li><b>3. Document search</b> - Irrespective of where the document is stored, Microsoft Search is the single place where people can go to find documents, they have access to. For individuals, starting with <b>OneDrive for Business</b> is ideal. This will prevent the need for people to search separately in Teams, OneDrive, SharePoint and locally on their computer and instead spend the time applying the information instead. Irrespective of where the document is stored, Microsoft Search will find the document if the staff member has access to the document. Microsoft 365 uses the Microsoft graph <a href="#">Microsoft 365 Copilot overview   Microsoft Learn</a>.</li> </ol>



## Example #3 – Communities in Microsoft Teams

Element	Description
Basic information	
Focus area	Team
Outcome (need)	Team instructions, manage team tasks, chat with team members
M365 Application	Microsoft Teams
Knowledge required to deliver the outcome (need)	Collaborating in Team and channels - <a href="#">Microsoft Teams video training</a>
Distraction event	
Distraction event	<p>When looking at the Activities tab, there are a significant number of notifications created by interactions communities, set up in Microsoft teams. community notifications are typically for “nice to information, they mask time critical, or “must know” notifications relating to team outcomes – essential for delivering organization’s strategic priorities. This imitates “too many notification” problem, originally faced within email, now transferred to Microsoft Teams.</p>  <p>While know”</p>
Distraction source	People
Treatment for IT Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable <b>Viva Engage</b> for community management - <a href="#">Set up Viva Engage   Microsoft Learn</a></li> <li>• Enable Microsoft 365 Copilot will enable staff to converse with Copilot to synthesize data, speeding up the time required to make decisions - <a href="#">Get started with Microsoft 365 Copilot   Microsoft Learn</a></li> </ul>
Treatment by user and knowledge required to apply treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid creating communities in Microsoft Teams, use Microsoft Viva Engage as a central place for knowledge to be harnessed - <a href="#">Join and create a community in Viva Engage (microsoft.com)</a></li> <li>• Turn off notifications for all Teams that are non-essential <a href="#">Manage notifications in Teams (microsoft.com)</a></li> </ul>

# Call to action!

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## Be an 'Attention Advocate'<sup>45</sup>

**The hybrid workplace** - approximately 1.4 billion people worldwide have made the shift as offices worldwide remain closed in some countries and open in others. Whilst we like working in more casual clothes, having more time for hobbies, and having our pets around, we also have more meetings and interruptions (individual attention), feel less connected to our teams (team attention) and more siloed (community attention). Whilst many don't want to go back to the office fulltime, we're still working to find our home office rhythm and create new working habits for the home office (whilst trying to stay away from the snack cupboard which is now much closer).

**That's no surprise** – it's a big shift and many of us were unprepared with recent research finding that 61% of

managers felt unprepared to lead remote teams. Organizations are doing the best they can to equip their people whilst considering what changes this means for office real-estate longer term with a focus on cost-saving and convenience. But this change involves more than a lift-and-shift of our office behaviours and that is where the opportunity is. This is the opportunity for us to examine our working culture, and how we harness our attention and that of others.

Our previous blogs have explained what attention is, why it's important, and given hints and tips for individuals and teams. This blog is a toolkit for those who want to catalyze the conversation around attention in their organizations – to become an attention advocate – at the individual, team, and community level.

## Individual attention – advocate for flow

Flow, losing ourselves in a task or activity where we are so engaged that we lose a sense of time and other senses. Employees who have more opportunity to find flow are also more engaged<sup>2</sup>. Innovative companies where “employees can tackle problems from new angles and in new ways, employees are supported in developing new ideas, and the organizations are flexible in adapting to changes in their operations” also have a higher percentage of employees who can achieve flow during their work<sup>3</sup>.

Put simply, they have more chunks of uninterrupted time available to them, engage in less task switching, and can make real progress against their goals. To advocate in practice, try the following to lead by example:

- **Schedule focus time** – whether you use a tool like MyAnalytics to find and block time, or you do this manually, block 90–120-minute slots in

your calendar for undisturbed work. Respect and protect this time – decline meetings, enable do not disturb (each interruption will cost you 23 minutes of re-engagement time), and set yourself a little challenge around what you're doing<sup>4</sup>.

- **Timing is everything** – the research found that the prime time when many people achieve flow is between 08.00 and 10.00. Consider this when you are setting your meetings.
- **Take regular breaks** – our minds need to re-charge so when you've snapped out of flow or have simply been back-to-back, refresh with a break. Research has shown that just a few minutes physical activity – simply a short walk – outside renews our attention<sup>5</sup>.
- **Create clarity** – plan the topics you would like to work on during focus time, so you set clear goals.

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<sup>45</sup> This section was written for [Driving Attention Blog](#) by Emma Stephen, Claudia van der Velden and Tony Crabbe.

## Team attention – advocate for connection

Team spirit, feeling that you are part of a group gives a sense of belonging. We often miss this sense of belonging while working alone in our home office. According to the research, after company culture, maintaining team cohesion is the biggest challenge we face. In blog 4 we spoke about engagement as the hook for attention at the team level. So how can you lead by team, in your team, staying engaged and connected to harness the collective attention? To advocate in practice, be more intentional about:

- **Be clear on purpose** - Creating a clear purpose for your team gives direction and a shared common goal which gives more purpose to work, helps people prioritize, and empowers them to make decisions. Whether you are creating or taking on a task, get clarity on how it contributes to team goals and try teaming up with a colleague. Working together on a task

builds a space for learning and connection, which fosters attention.

- **Re-think your rituals** – If we want to stay innovative and doing our best work as a team, we need to stay connected. In innovative companies 70% of employees report feeling a sense of belonging vs. 43% in less innovative cultures. Build in time to chat at the beginning of meeting agendas, check-in on a colleague, and think about how you can connect asynchronously for example a weekly Friday highlight of the week share.
- **Don't be a phubber** – Phubbing is snubbing someone with your phone or multitasking in a meeting. Leverage video in meetings encourage self-discipline when it comes to paying attention. Advocate for “vote with your feet rules” meaning if you are in a meeting that is poorly prepared or you do not need to be there, then leave.

## Community attention – advocate for sharing

Networks formed of communities that run across organizational structures and silos are key for learning and innovation. Most ideas are only half ideas until they “meet” the other half and become a fully-fledged great idea<sup>6</sup>. Well managed, engaging communities are great places for ideas to meet and to gain insights from people outside our regular echo-chambers. To advocate in practice and strengthen the foundations for community attention, try:

- **Strengthening your growth mindset** – We tend to seek feedback from our closest peers and the team around us, but our organizations are full of people with different expertise and experience. Try reaching out to a broader community for feedback and see what new ideas and perspectives you learn.
- **Re-connecting** – Many of us have networks we've built up throughout our time with an

organization, but we don't often connect. Research has shown that these weak links are some of the most powerful when it comes to helping us out and bringing new perspectives. In our new hybrid world, it's also a chance to break through the geographic boundaries that naturally occur in the office so reach out to someone you haven't spoken to in a while and get their perspective.

- **Share** – Companies that have cultures where people are generous with sharing their knowledge across networks and supporting each other experience better business outcomes. We're not saying engage in sharing all the time – it can be draining – but next time you go to share something with a few people, ask yourself who else this might be relevant to and share more broadly.



<http://aka.ms/MOCA>