

## Quick Guide: People Interruptions

We all need people around us, especially at work, but there are many times when we would like to tell some people to get lost! If we can successfully manage the situation so we have fewer people interruptions, we can focus, and so do justice to the task at hand. Here are the top ten tips to help you deal with people interruptions:

- 1. Change your default setting.** If you always say 'yes' immediately, leave a pause before you agree. Use those moments to ask yourself if it is in your own best interests to agree to the request right now.
- 2. Ask what they want** or "How may I help you?" How we treat the interruption not only affects how our time is spent now but the likelihood that we will be interrupted later.
- 3. Remove your stationery from view,** or leave a set away from your desk for others to use, eg stapler, staple remover, pens, post it notes.
- 4. Stop interrupting yourself.** Get into the habit of wearing invisible blinkers; using electronic post it notes; and being more organised so you can get on with the task at hand.
- 5. Coach people.** When they ask for help, coach them to solve the problem themselves rather than you taking on the tasks. It will save time later.
- 6. Schedule a discussion.** For those who persist, explain the impact on your time, then fix a specific time in the week or day or discuss matters.
- 7. Stick to the process.** When you delegate, put a clear reporting and checking process in place and keep to it. Otherwise you may end up fielding endless requests for guidance and reassurance.
- 8. Keep it brief.** Once the immediate problem is solved, close the discussion quickly.
- 9. Be a role model.** Think carefully about how and when you interrupt others. If you aren't being a great role model then don't be surprised if others follow your poor example.
- 10. Say no.** Or at least 'not now' every once in a while. The interrupters may then seek out someone else who is a softer touch.

**Compiled by Des Whitehorn**