

WHAT IS ATTENTION MANAGEMENT?



Manage Your Attention,
Not Your Time

Simply put, attention management refers to the process of deciding what is allowed to take up your focus throughout the day. Maura Thomas, the author of *Attention Management*, says that "it's about regaining control over your attention and thereby taking control of your life."

While time management is often discussed concerning productivity, it does not always work in the grand scheme of things. Time is constant. It does not change.

Our attention, however, does change, and sometimes quite often.

The brain goes through various cycles throughout the day, depending on what a person is doing at the moment. According to Maura Thomas, four quadrants make up attention management and "are based on the amount of control you exert over your attention."

Reactive and Distracted

In this quadrant, your attention is out of the reach of your control. You are typically reacting to things happening around you or within your head, which often leaves you flustered. You may be attempting to get your work done, but the smallest distraction leads to not getting things accomplished.

Daydreaming

These moments are few and far between in this age of technology. However, in this quadrant, you are typically not distracted by outside factors but instead have a "quiet moment" to just think about things. You are not quite focused on work or other things, but you are not distracted either.

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Focused and Mindful

This quadrant is about maintaining your focus and being aware of what you need to do to achieve your goals. Often, when your brain is in this mode, you take active measures to ensure that you stay focused. This may mean that you close yourself off from others or use earplugs or headphones to reduce any distractions.

Flow

You have probably heard people say things about being in the zone or the flow. This means that you get into a state where the work is just moving right along, sometimes to the point that you lose track of time. This is the zone that many people often strive for.

To successfully utilize and embrace the concept of attention management, you have to understand the various states of attention and be able to identify which level you are at and where you want to be.

If you find yourself being distracted often, you may want to consider taking steps to control the things around you, such as technology or even your environment. Making even small changes to either of these can put you on the right track and help you focus your attention on the right things.

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