

# THE MULTITASKING MYTH

Why Doing **Less** Could  
Mean Achieving **More**



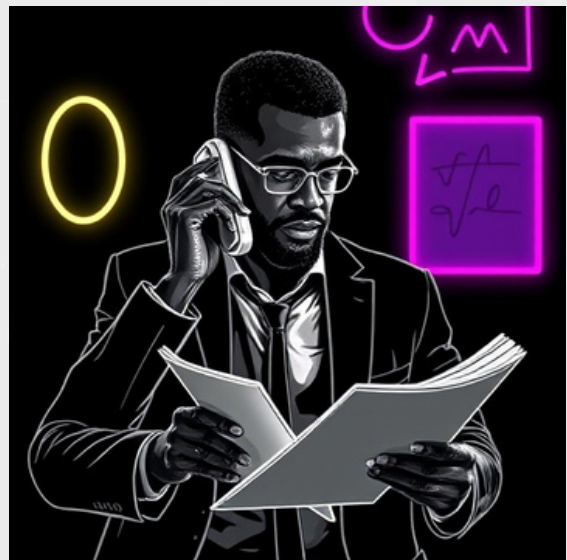
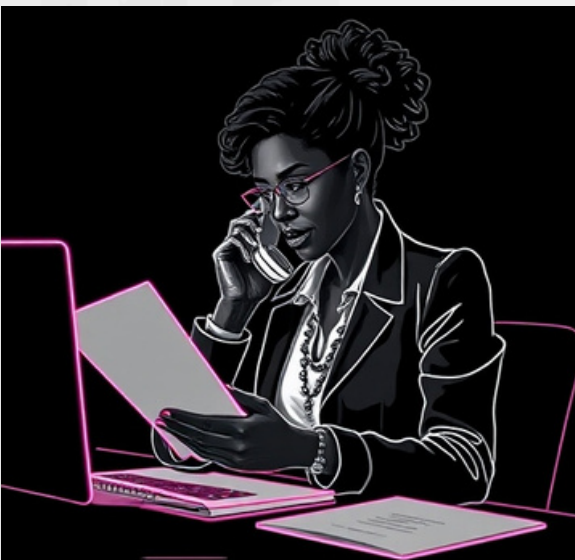
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# 1. PERCEPTION VS. REALITY

Multitasking and multi-switching are often confused concepts in productivity discussions.

When people think they're multitasking, they're often actually multi-switching.

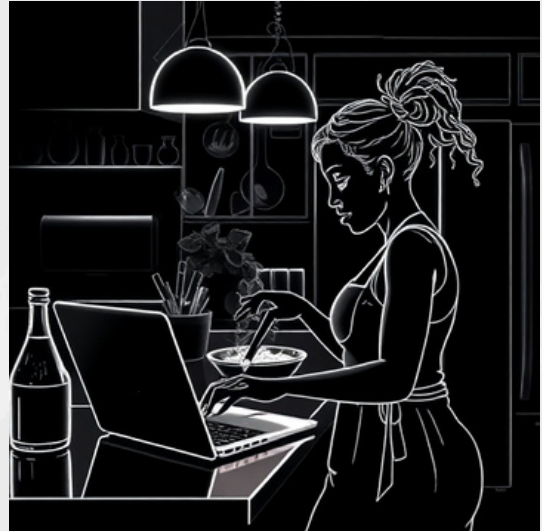
## BUT WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?



# 2. MULTITASKING

## Multitasking

refers to the attempt to perform multiple tasks simultaneously.



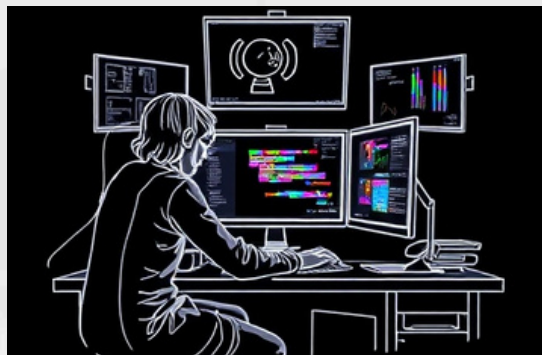
Research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience suggests that the human brain isn't truly capable of focusing on multiple complex tasks at once.

### Key points:

- Often perceived as doing multiple things at the same time
- In reality, the brain rapidly switches focus between tasks
- Generally less effective for complex cognitive tasks

# 3. MULTI-SWITCHING

**Multi-switching**, also known as task switching, is the practice of rapidly alternating focus between different tasks. This is what most people are actually doing when they believe they're multitasking.



## Key points:

- Involves quickly shifting attention from one task to another
- More realistic description of what happens during attempted multitasking
- Can be more effective than trying to multitask, but still has cognitive costs

## 4. THE ILLUSION OF PRODUCTIVITY

Multi-switching can create a false sense of high productivity due to several factors:

- Dopamine release when completing small tasks
- Feeling of being busy and accomplishing multiple things
- Stimulation from variety in tasks

However, this feeling of productivity often doesn't correlate with actual efficiency or quality of work.



# 5. COGNITIVE COSTS

Every time we switch tasks, there's a cognitive cost involved:

- Time required for the brain to refocus on the new task
- Mental energy expended in changing contexts
- Potential for errors during the transition period

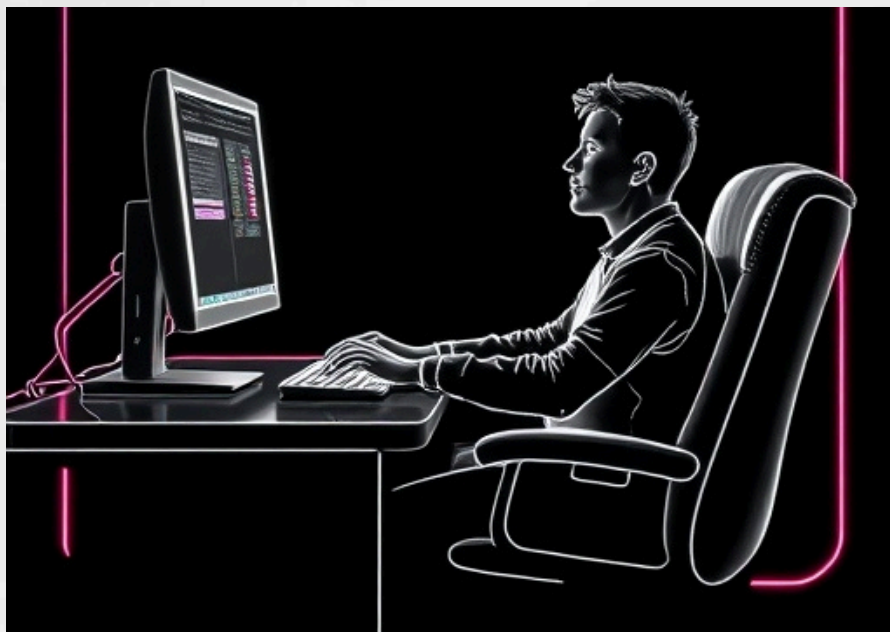
Research suggests that frequent task switching can reduce overall productivity by as much as 40%.



## 6. BENEFITS OF SINGLE-TASKING

Single-tasking, or focusing on one task at a time, often proves more effective:

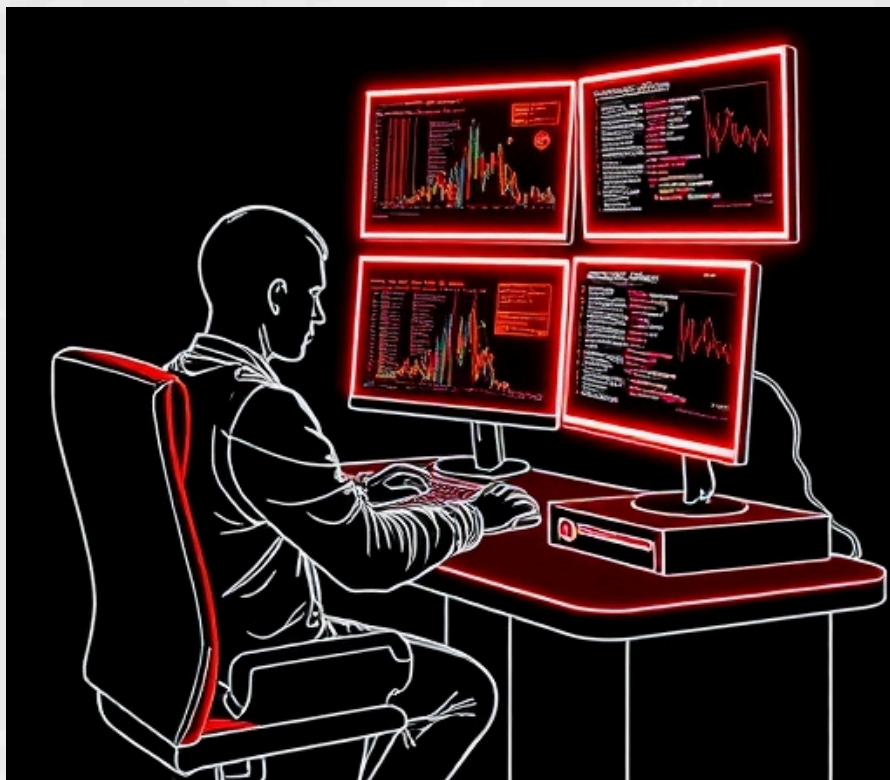
- Allows for deeper concentration and flow state
- Reduces mental fatigue from constant context switching
- Typically results in higher quality work
- Can lead to faster task completion when given undivided attention



# 7. WHEN MULTI-SWITCHING WORKS

There are some situations where a form of multi-switching can be beneficial:

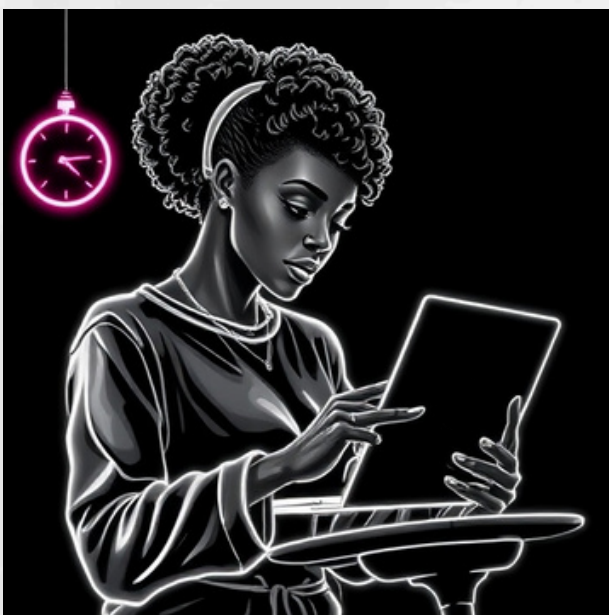
- For very simple or automatic tasks
- In roles that require monitoring multiple streams of simple information
- To prevent boredom or maintain alertness in certain situations



# 8. MAXIMIZING PRODUCTIVITY

To optimise productivity:

- Prioritize single-tasking for complex or creative tasks
- Use focused work sessions with planned breaks (e.g., Pomodoro Technique)
- Be mindful of the hidden costs of frequent task-switching
- Structure your work environment to minimize distractions
- Practice metacognition to understand your most effective work patterns



# 9. CONCLUSION

While multi-switching can feel productive due to the variety and stimulation it provides, it's often less effective than focused single-tasking for complex cognitive work.



Understanding these effects can help individuals and organizations structure work in ways that maximise actual productivity rather than just the feeling of being busy.



By being aware of the differences between multitasking, multi-switching, and single-tasking, we can make more informed decisions about how to approach our work and personal tasks for optimal results.



@sopeabgelusi