

**Impact Lab Learning Network
August 2018 | Find Your Focus**

## Managing Distractions

## Match your distraction management strategy to the source of those distractions

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| **Others** | **Self** | **Environment** |
| Schedule check ins (and divert mid-term interruptions to those events) | Clear the deck (put everything you’re not working outside your field of vision) | Self-advocate (remote working policies, flex time, etc.) |
| Office hours (e.g., schedule when people can interrupt you) | I’m not doing that right now (write it on a sticky note; use it as a mantra) | Ask for help (turn your sources of distraction into fellow problem solvers) |
| Manage up (see below) | Manage energy (as/more important than managing time) | Quiet areas/ times (or some good noise-cancelling headphones) |

**Manage Up and Down**

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| **Strategies** | **Examples** |
| Get approval | * Take the initiative
* Share your imperatives with your supervisor
* Incorporate their input and finalize
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| Imperatives as structure | * Use your imperatives as the structure for supervisor and team check-ins and reports
* Reference your imperatives during staff meetings and connect the dots
* Every time you do this, you are reaffirming your focus and modeling a more focused approach to the work
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| Educate up and down | * Don’t assume that others understand the implications of what they ask of you
* Find appropriate ways to let others see behind the scenes
* Keep your imperatives handy and pull them out when needed (“Here are my imperatives for this quarter. Can you help me understand how this new task fits in?”)
* Ask specifically for what you need to do the job
* Present the problem along with a possible solution
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| Know your audience | * Communicate up the chain using the method and frequency your audience prefers
* Talk about your imperatives in the context of their needs and interests (i.e., how focusing on your imperatives benefits what they care about)
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| Feed the beast | * People are people – get to know their unique preferences and quirks
* Pay special attention to what makes your supervisor nervous or stressed out and get ahead of it
* **If the relationship is right, just ask: how do I best manage up with you?**
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