Agile ARIZONA

The Science of Focus

Unleashing the Power of Teams

Don't forget to use Whova for session feedback

Wi-Fi NETWORK: Agile Arizona PASS: AAZ-2019

Insight Digital Innovation

About me

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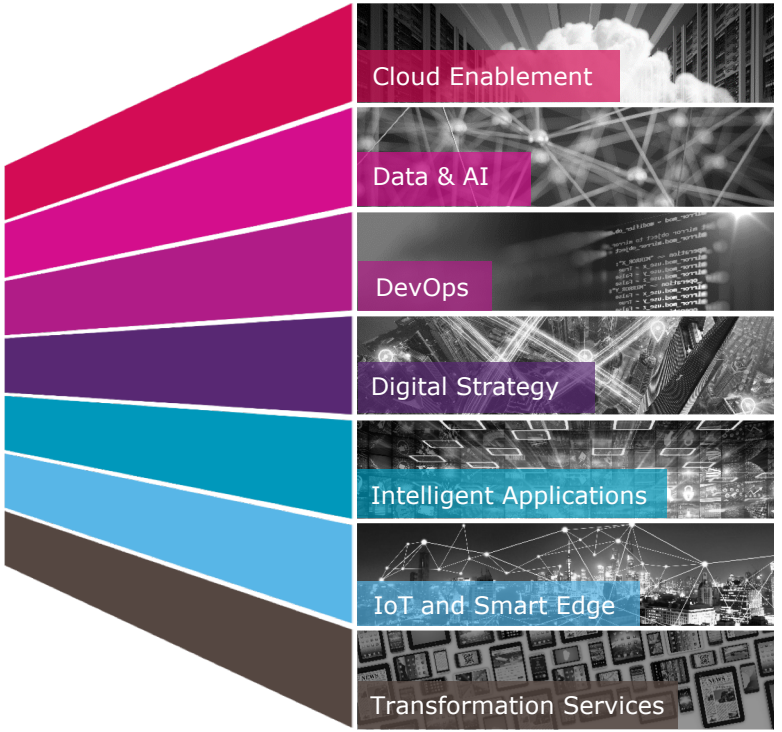
Making the impossible, possible.

Digital Experience
provides winning solutions that engage customers and employees in new, meaningful ways.

Disruptive Technology Innovations,
both proven and emerging, captivate customers, empower employees and transform business operations.

Continuous Services
sustains innovation with strategy, support, delivery, and data-driven insights.



Exercise

Speed, accuracy, sequence

- **Purpose**: Test our brain for speed, accuracy, and sequence

- **Timebox**: 30 seconds for each round

- **Activity**:
  - Get a piece of paper and a pen/pencil or a drawing application on your device
  - Write this sequence as many times as you can

  - 12345678901234567890123456789O
  - abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
  - a1b2c3d4e5f6g7h8i9j0k1l2m3n4o5p6q7r8s9t0u1v2w3x4y5z6a7b8c9d0e1f2g3h4i5j6k7l8m9n0o1p2q3r4s5t6u7v8w9x0y1z

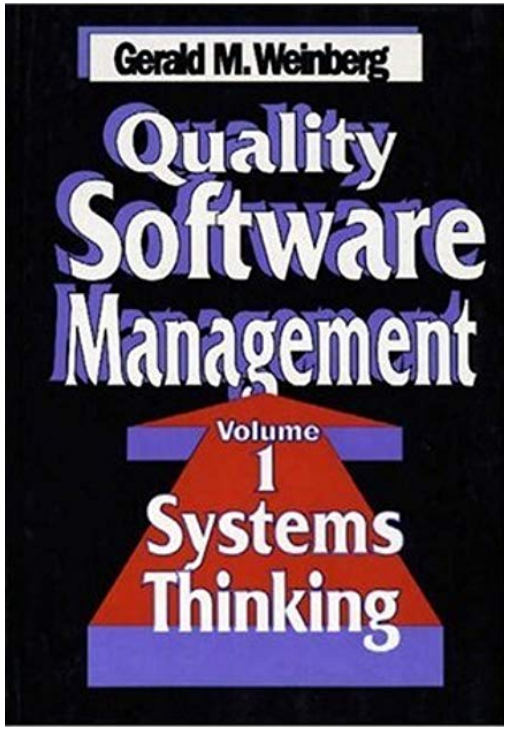
Possible Take-aways

What's in it for me?

- This might challenge the way you or your teams work currently
- Ammunition for convincing your leaders to regulate work intake
- Practical ideas to try with your teams to increase focus
- Anecdotes to bore friends, co-workers, and family at gatherings
- What do you want to learn about? Menti.com

Focus

What we normally hear



Focus

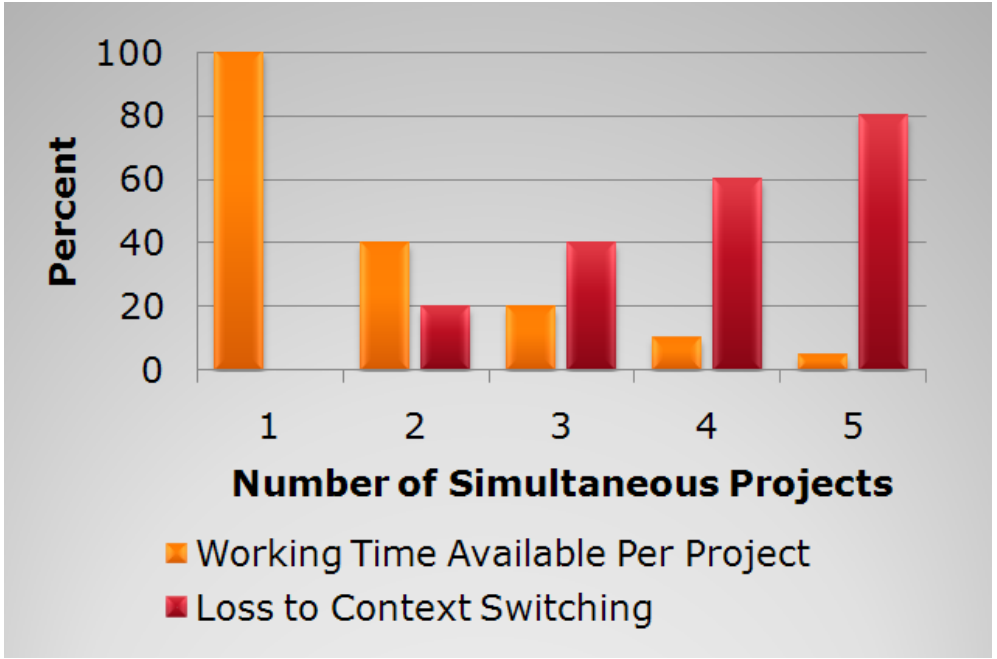
What we normally hear

Number of Simultaneious Projects	Percent of Time Available per Project	Loss to Context Switching
1	100%	0%
2	40%	20%
3	20%	40%
4	10%	60%
5	5%	75%

Focus

What we normally hear

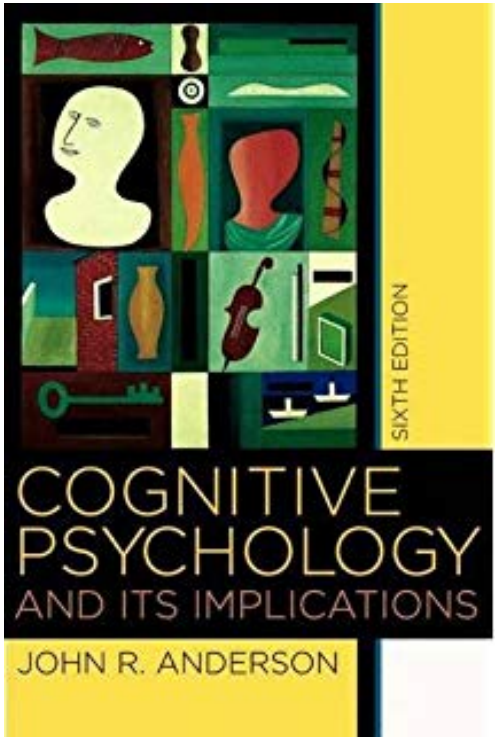
- Managers! Don’t assign people too many projects
- Managers! We didn’t complete the project on time because there were too many projects assigned



Focus

Attention research – John R. Anderson

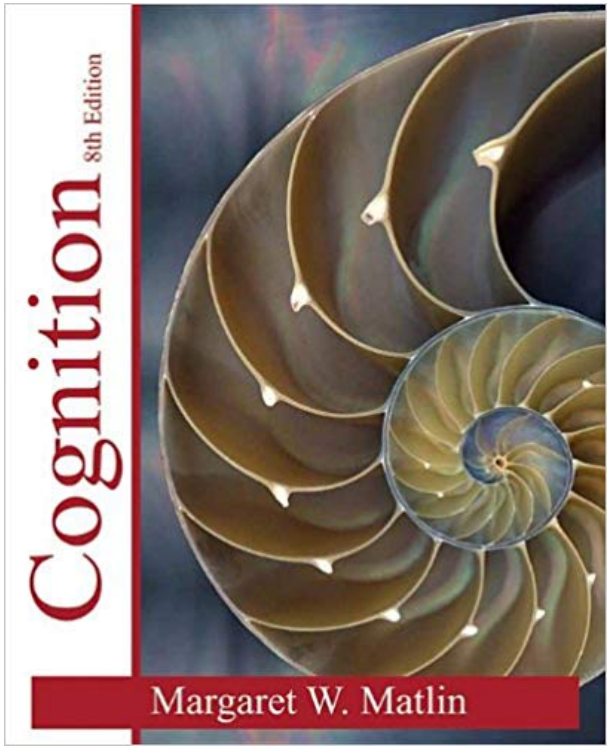
- **Attention is "the allocation of limited cognitive process resources"**
- Limits of short-term memory
  - About 7 items
  - 15-30 seconds unless replaced
- Frontal Cortex limited to one cognitive task at a time
- Studies indicate we can do two non-cognitive tasks at a time, but maybe not three



Focus

Attention research – Margaret W. Matlin

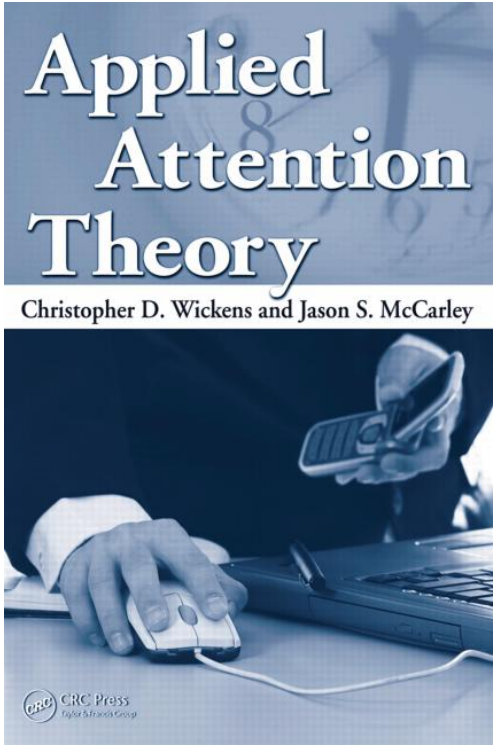
- **"When multitasking, people make more mistakes or perform their tasks more slowly"**
- In Prefrontal Cortex you can task switch, but focusing on one decreases focus on the other
- In task switching there are two distinct "phases"
  - Goal shifting
  - Rule activation/deactivation



Focus

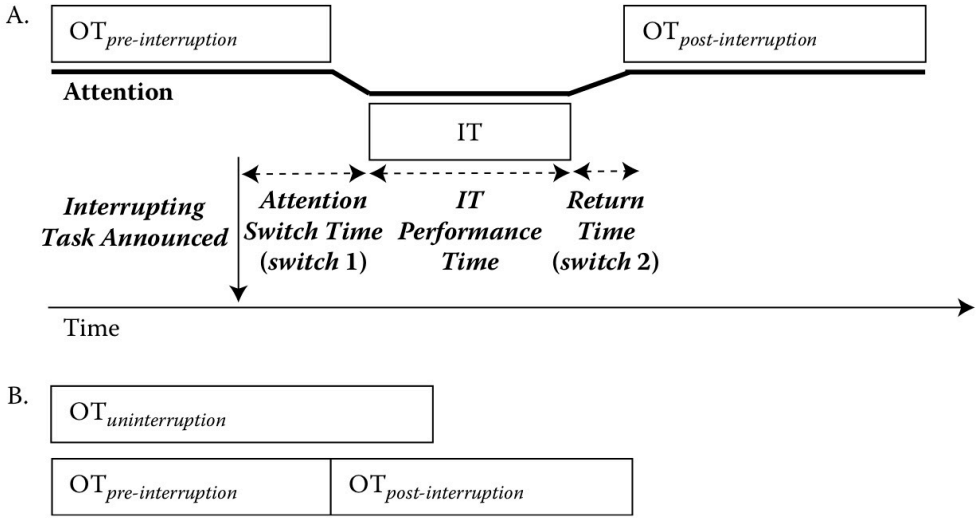
Attention research – Wickens and McCarley

- Time to finish a task with an interruption is greater than time without interruption
- More complex the task, the longer the delay
- The more time between stopping one task and starting the next, the shorter the delay



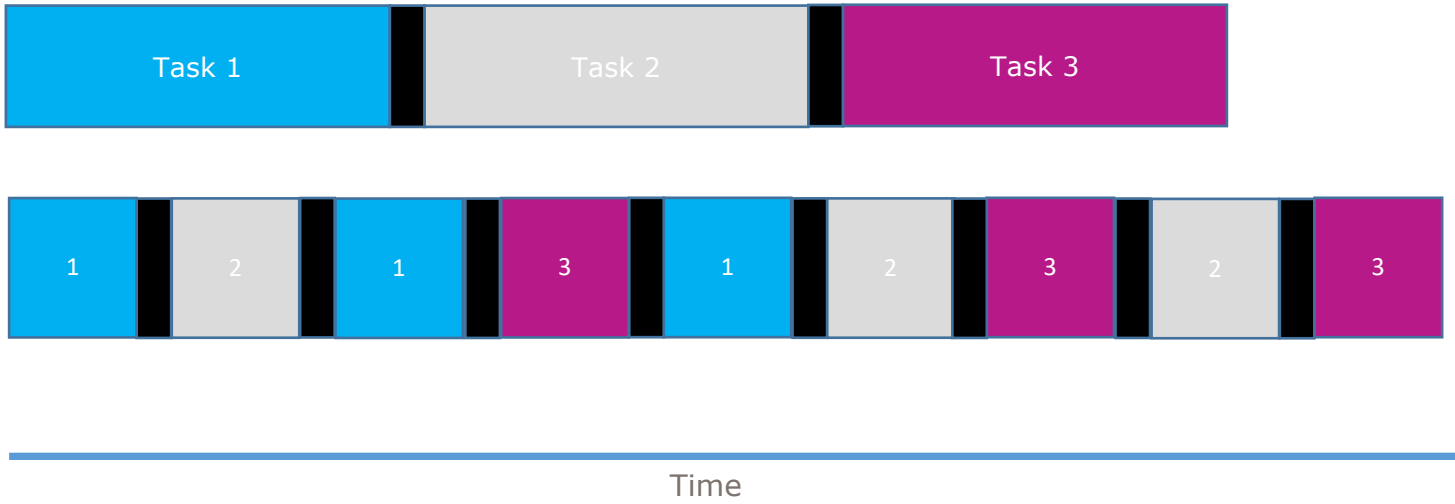
Focus

Attention research – Wickens and McCarley



Focus

Effects of task interruption - visualized



Focus

Brainstorm practical ideas for focus

- **Purpose**: Share ideas for helping foster focus on our teams

- **Timebox**: 15 minutes

- **Activity**:
  - Break into groups of 4-6
  - Discuss and exchange ideas about:
    - What practices have you successfully used to benefit team focus?
    - What practices have you unsuccessfully used to benefit team focus?
    - What practices would you like to try to benefit team focus?
  - We will come together and give each table a chance to share ideas

My ideas

My suggestions

- Stop starting and start finishing
- Create and honor “quiet requests” or office hours
- Take breaks after task completion
- Schedule interruptions
- Scrum framework has a lot of focus support events and artifacts
- Work broken into small pieces
- Turn off IM, emails, slack, etc. for periods of time
- Set clear goals
- Structure work to get quick feedback
- Remove interesting distractions (phones, websites, games, etc.)
- Recognize the mind naturally wanders, so draw it back
- Actively choose what you focus on
- Take planned regular breaks

Questions?

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