

Mindful or Mindfull Networking?

By Beth Kanter

Becoming “content fried” is a potential hazard for content curators, and that can get in the way of being efficient. In addition to the technical skills and tools described above, it is also important for staff to incorporate techniques into their daily work life that reduce distraction and stress.

The seeking part of the work is a fast-forward, swimming-in-the-stream experience. I can’t possibly read everything, but my content curation skills help me pick out the best stuff to give more attention to. I find I can only do that work at certain times of the day or only for so long. The biggest difficulty I experience is the shifting from this forward-flowing process of consuming, curating, and sense-making of content to *learn* versus to *get something done*. The latter requires a different type of attention, so it is good to schedule accordingly.

As you encourage content curation activities for your staff, you may also want to remind them of techniques for being efficient and staying focused:

- 1.) **Manage Your Attention, Not Just Your Time:** Don’t just create a to-do list, lay it out on daily and weekly schedules, breaking down key tasks of the project into chunks. Consider the level of concentration and focus that each type of task or chunk requires – and schedule accordingly. For example, if I have to do some writing that requires a higher level of attention for me than does scanning Twitter or reading and responding to email, I schedule my writing time during peak concentration hours in the day. (I’ve charted those – so I know when they occur). I also use a timer when I’m scanning my networks and limit those activities to 15-20 minute bursts.
- 2.) **Visualize On Paper:** Over the past 10 months, I’ve made a return to paper and markers and using mind maps or visualization techniques to reflect, and plan my week or day. I use this as a pre-writing exercise as well as a reflection exercise. It’s why I felt the need to dive into visual facilitation and thinking techniques as a way to cope with getting “content fried.”
- 3.) **Establish Rituals:** Rituals in your work life are valuable. The mind map offers a lot of good suggestions for rituals – from decluttering your workspace to [healthy habits](#) like sleep and exercise.
- 4.) **Reflection:** Reflection doesn’t have to be a huge amount of time to be effective. I’m taking ten minutes every morning to practice some visual recording skills like drawing to create my “3 Most Important Things for Today List.” At the end of the day, I look at it, reflect on what I did – and plan for tomorrow. The advice is not to go online or check email until you get your three things done, but that is very hard for me – given so much of my work is online. What I do is try to avoid email first thing in the morning.
- 5.) **Managing Email and Other Distractions:** I’ve turned off notifications that pop up on my computer screen or send me a text message to my mobile phone.
- 6.) **Managing Physical Space:** When I see clutter in my physical work spaces, I try to take that as a sign that I need to hit a pause button. Usually it is because I’m doing too much.
- 7.) **Just Say No:** Maybe you are going to say no to social media for a day and go to meet with people, take a class, read a book, or take a walk. When I’m feeling most overwhelmed, I take a break. Even if it is just to get up and walk around my desk.

Source: The Unanticipated Benefits of Content Curation: Reducing Information Overload by Beth Kanter
<http://www.bethkanter.org/nten-curation/>