



## What's the Rush?

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Ever feel like you're living life at warp speed? If you do, you're not alone. There are many of us who feel like we're doing more than ever before but failing to enjoy the fruits of our labor.

We're depriving ourselves of sleep to buy a few extra minutes, communicating in sound bites and bullet points, while riffling through volumes of information like never before.

(Take a breath.)

We exploit every millisecond in order to fit an additional activity into our day and then manage it all by multitasking like world-class jugglers. In the process, we have become a society with the attention span of a gnat.

Please remind me again...why are we doing this?

Oh yes, we want to be more [productive](#), to get ahead, to stay connected. Or is it simply out of fear that the other guy will pass us by? Regardless of the motivation, the risk is that what we gain in speed and quantity, we lose with shallow thinking, superficial relationships, and living *only* "for the moment."

So what are we missing? — Let's start with meaningful relationships.

### There's No Short Answer to the Eternal Question about the True Meaning of Life

#### Meaningful Conversations

Today, we define a "meaningful" conversation as texting a business associate at a traffic light, IMing a colleague while we're waiting for someone to pick up the phone, and tweeting another while we're in line to place our food order. We call it multitasking. These rapid-fire "conversations" are limited to 420-character Facebook status updates and 140-character tweets. This gives new meaning to the term "short and

sweet," never mind our new definition of friends — clicks on Facebook.

How do these "[conversations](#)" impact our ability to form meaningful relationships? Resolve conflicts? Shape our children's values? Answer: Not very well.

#### Quality Time

In the world in which we live, everything has to be done right away. Today, a take-out dinner or a quick stop at the

drive-through window has replaced the home-cooked meal that we once enjoyed. Family meals around the kitchen table have been reduced to grabbing a bite with anyone who happens to be around. That's the new definition of quality time.

Do you consider quality time with your family a priority? Are you achieving the life balance that you desire? Do you consciously determine how to invest your personal time? Do you make time to determine your personal priorities? Do you prioritize your to-do list or merely check off items? Do you feel you're so busy

running around that you're losing perspective? You'd think we'd learn something from watching a hamster run around on its wheel.

What happened to the "quality" in quality time? Answer: It's been relegated to the free time available before the microwave beeps.

#### Staying Informed

Information shapes our values, molds our relationships and guides our decision making. Yet, even though information touches every area of our lives, we opt for speed and simplicity over depth and understanding.

Unfortunately, because of our capitulation to time pressures, we place a premium on shortcuts, such as sensational headlines, captivating subheads, brief body copy, and executive

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summaries that spoon-feed us the bottom line. The principal medium of exchange in business has become the Power-Point slide deck made up of a series of bullet points that masquerade for substance.

Rather than taking the time to think through issues in a discerning fashion, we often rush to judgment, make decisions emotionally, and view issues in polar extremes.

Where did we lose our way? Answer: When we traded in critical thinking for “winging it.”

### **Sound Decisions**

Being under the gun of so many time pressures affects the entire decision-making process. It impacts our ability to identify quality sources, test assumptions, create a compelling line of reasoning, and generate practical solutions. Today’s rapid-response culture pushes us to favor simplistic answers to problems, rather than opting for holistic thinking and deep analysis.

Although every answer need not be overly complex, we lose something very precious when we train our brains to search for quick answers rather than the “best” solution. We forget how important it is to view a situation “in context,” considering how each component relates to the total. When we fail to do this, we risk optimizing one area at the expense of the whole.

What’s wrong with the quick way around? Answer: Nothing, as long as you’re willing to go around a few more times.

### **Thinking Beyond Today**

Living by the stopwatch encourages short-term thinking; we don’t have the time or the energy to think about today, much less plan for tomorrow. This too has implications.

In business, people maximize individual sales transactions rather than taking time to build long-term customer relationships; people charge ahead with day-to-day activities rather than developing contingency plans as backup strategies; and employees are incentivized to hit quarterly performance targets to the exclusion of a strategy that supports long-term growth.

How can this be bad? Answer: When is the last time you checked the value of your stock portfolio or your 401k? Maybe it’s time to press “Pause” and just stop...and think.

## **It’s Time to Wake Up and Smell the Coffee**

We lose something very special in our mad dash through life. Although we logically understand that living via a stopwatch doesn’t make sense, we fail to take the time to ask ourselves why we live this way.

Are we passing our values on to our children or letting someone else fill the void? Are we creating meaningful relationships or settling for lots of acquaintances? Are we tackling key priorities or checking off to-do items? Are we solving root causes of problems or employing band-aid solutions? Are we achieving our goals in life or running on a treadmill to nowhere?

The first thing we have to do is establish **priorities**. When everything is a priority, nothing is a priority. When we try to take on too much, we end up doing everything equally poorly. Do you really think that everything on your plate requires equal emphasis? Do what matters most.

Downtime is also critical. Learn how to take a planned vacation every day. Try starting at 10 minutes and raising it to 30 by increasing your vacation time a minute each day. In the space of a month, you’ll emerge with a fresh new perspective. It’ll give you renewed confidence in your ability to succeed even though you’re not on call all of the time. It’ll help you reflect on your priorities, learn from past actions, connect some random dots, break out of a rut, ask “what if,” try something new, question the obvious, see the big picture, make a difference in someone’s life, or just RELAX. :-)

Life is short enough to begin with. You’re limited in what you can do to lengthen your life, but there are no limits to what you can do to deepen it. What’s the rush? ●

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Frank Sonnenberg, a marketing strategist, has written three books and published over 300 articles. • *Industry Week* named his book, *Managing With a Conscience* one of the Top Ten Business Books of the Year • Salon.com named Sonnenberg’s blog among the top 100 in 2009 • *Trust Across America* named Sonnenberg one of the Top 100 Thought Leaders of 2010 • In 2011, *Social Media Marketing Magazine* (SMM) selected Sonnenberg as one of the top 77 marketing authors in the world on Twitter. [www.franksonnenbergonline.com](http://www.franksonnenbergonline.com) © 2011 Frank K. Sonnenberg. All rights reserved.