WHY AM I SO BUSY?

Ksenia Zvereva
Mollie

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11 minutes

That’s how often we interrupt our own work.

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23 minutes

That’s how long it takes to refocus.


THE LION KING
LIONKING.COM
SAMSUNG
half
all
Coca-Cola
OAKLEY
BE FEATURED ON
POPEYES

WHO AM I TO TALK ABOUT BUSYNESS?

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I AM KSENIA.

Product lead at Mollie

Professional multitasker and recovering phone-checker



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BUSYNESS PARADOX

MOTION != PROGRESS



ADDICTION TO BUSYNESS

FEELS IMPORTANT

It satisfies our ego needs — being busy makes us feel important and needed

DOPAMINE HIT

Each small task completed gives a dopamine hit, like pulling a slot machine lever

AVOIDANCE

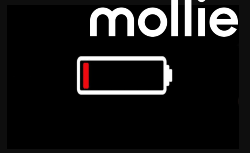
As long as we're in motion, we don't have to confront scarier questions: Am I working on the right thing?

- Workplace rewards activity
- Technology amplifies noise
- Corporate culture

SYSTEMIC FORCES



COSTS GO FAR BEYOND EXHAUSTION



- Creativity and strategy collapse
- Shallow work
- Burnout
- Missed opportunities

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THREE TYPES OF WORK



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Busy work

Good work

Impact work

URGENCY VS IMPORTANCE

Urgent & important → Do now

Urgent & not important → Delegate

Not urgent & important → Prioritise

Not urgent & not important → Eliminate

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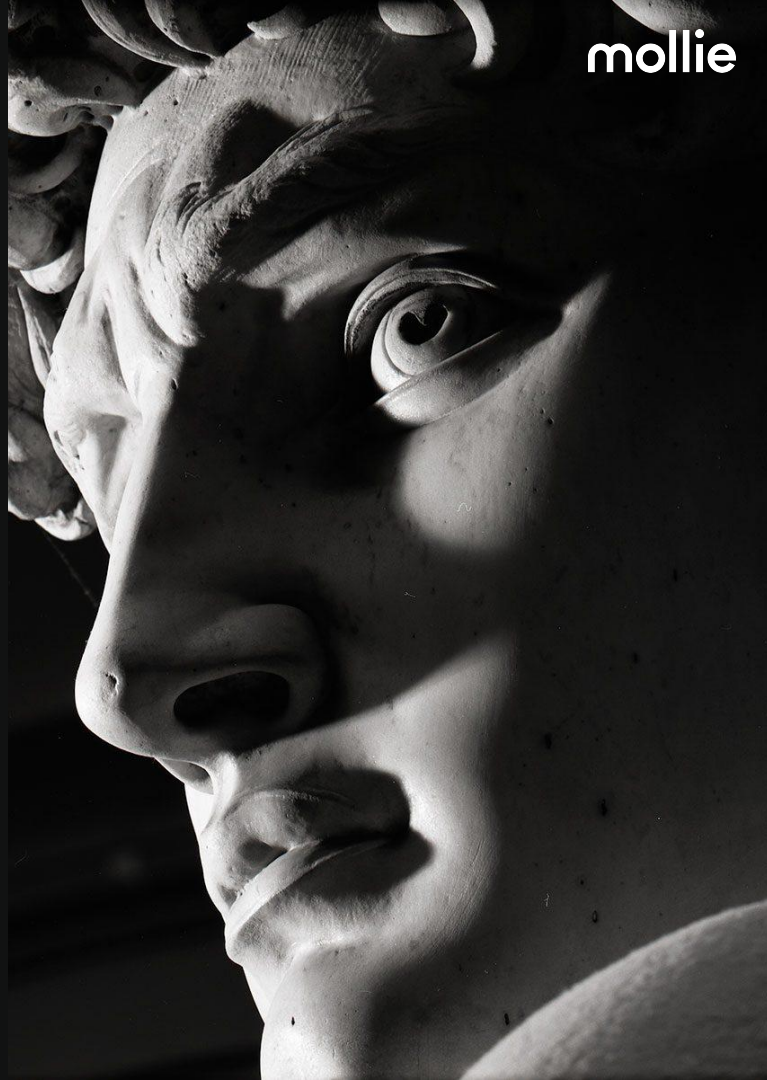
03

ATTENTION IS OUR SCARCEST RESOURCE

SUBTRACTION MINDSET

WE ARE WIRED TO ADD, NOT TO SUBTRACT.

But subtraction is where clarity lives.



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PROTECT REAL BOREDOM

PHONE-BOREDOM ISN'T BOREDOM.

Reaching for your phone suppresses the brain network that generates ideas. Unstimulated boredom activates it — direct brain stimulation studies confirm the link.



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READY-TO-RESUME NOTE

ATTENTION DOESN’T SWITCH INSTANTLY — IT LAGS.

One line on where you stopped closes the loop faster.



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IF-THEN PLANNING

"WHEN X HAPPENS, I WILL DO Y."

Pre-deciding your response to a trigger makes it near-automatic. A 642-study meta-analysis found if-then planners roughly 2x more likely to follow through.



MAKE YOUR PHONE BORING

COLOR IS BAIT. REMOVE IT.

Apps A/B-test color to trigger dopamine. Grayscale mode strips the bait — screen time drops without willpower.



ADD FRICTION BACK

WILLPOWER FADES. FRICTION DOESN'T.

Delay app-opens, charge your phone outside the bedroom. A few extra seconds beats relying on self-control.



BATCH YOUR NOTIFICATIONS

AN UNOPENED PING STILL COSTS YOU FOCUS.

Checking messages in 3 scheduled windows a day lowers stress versus reacting to every alert.



GO OFFLINE ON PURPOSE

2 WEEKS OFFLINE = 10 YEARS YOUNGER ATTENTION.

Blocking phone internet for 2 weeks beat antidepressants on mental health, in a 2025 clinical trial.



REDEFINE PRODUCTIVITY

Not hours worked

Not tasks completed

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REDEFINE PRODUCTIVITY

Outcomes achieved

Value created

04

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DO LESS. MATTER MORE.

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THANK YOU