

Protect your focus: Take control of email and interruptions

Adaptive module

~20 min

More than 120 emails a day, and over a minute to get back into a task after reading each one: nearly an hour and a half is lost this way every day. The shift in this module: team members stop putting up with requests and decide in advance when and by what they can be interrupted, with fixed times to check email, filtered notifications, AI that sorts and summarizes, and a protocol for handling “Got 5 minutes?” without losing track of their work.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 01 Take back control of your inbox: send less, write clearly, and check it at fixed times.
- 02 Delegate sorting, summarizing, and drafting emails to AI, but decide and send them yourself.
- 03 Diagnose your interruptions over one week, then filter notifications and requests by choosing who can interrupt you.
- 04 Handle an interruption with the three-option protocol: answer, arrange a time to talk, or decline without explanation.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone who wants to get real focus time back and choose what they give their time to.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

- 1 **Self-assessment:** on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
- 2 **Expert video:** 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
- 3 **Practice scenarios:** the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
- 4 **Dated commitment:** one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
- 5 **Memo to download:** key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

A SAMPLE PRACTICE SCENARIO

Aiko, a payroll specialist, closes her email from 9 a.m. to noon to finish the payroll. This morning, Gabriel wrote to Aiko, followed up twenty minutes later on the team channel, then came to Aiko's desk. Gabriel's question could have waited until noon. What does Aiko do?

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Protocol for handling an interruption (stand up, clarify the request, 3 cases) – Afthonios method
- 3 email habits (send less, make it easy to read, choose your recipients) – Afthonios method
- 2–3 fixed times to check your email – drawn from Afthonios coaching and training practice

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Gloria Mark (University of California, Irvine) – sustained attention at work has fallen to under a minute (about 47 seconds)
- Radicati Group – more than 120 work emails received per employee per day
- About a minute to refocus after a simple interruption, such as reading an email – Jackson, Dawson & Wilson (2003)
- Kushlev & Dunn (2015) – how often people check email and daily stress