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YOUR BRAIN AT WORK

**Strategies for Overcoming
Distraction, Regaining Focus, and
Working Smarter All Day Long**

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The Web site for this book is at www.your-brain-at-work.com

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MAIN IDEA

Despite all the advances in technology, the human brain still remains the greatest business asset anyone owns. The secret to delivering better performance in any setting is to first understand how you think and then get better at directing the way you think in the future. If you understand how your brain operates in more detail, you're then equipped to improve your performance.

The five building blocks of brain mastery are:

- 1 If you learn how to work with your brain rather than against it, you'll make better decisions and solve problems more effectively
- 2 The key to mastering your brain is to use your inbuilt "director" – your ability to notice and change your thinking processes
- 3 When you realize the brain is built to minimize danger and maximize reward, you'll know how to stay cool under pressure
- 4 When you learn to see the world from the brain's perspective, you'll be better prepared to collaborate with and influence others
- 5 You will become better at facilitating change in others when you stop focusing on problems and start being more solutions focused

"It may be that understanding the brain is one of the best ways of improving performance in any setting, especially for teams of people working together. For thousands of years philosophers have said that to 'know yourself' was the key to a healthy and successful life. Perhaps what is emerging from this new research about the brain is a new way of thinking about 'self-awareness.' Only in this case, the 'self' is the functioning of your own brain. Your capacity to change yourself, change others, and even change the world, may boil down to how well you know your brain, and your capacity to intervene in otherwise automatic processes."

– David Rock

Building Block #1 – Work with your brain instead of against it Pages 2 - 3

Today, more people than ever before are paid to think instead of performing routine physical tasks. That's fine but the human brain has biological limits on how long it can make decisions and solve new problems. Paradoxically, the key to improving performance in this area is to understand those limits and work with them rather than against them.

Building Block #2 – Learn how to drive your mind's director. Page 4

The brain has an inbuilt character – a director – who stands apart from your active thinking processes. This director can take note of what's happening and make decisions about how your brain will respond. To increase your effectiveness, activate your director. The more active your director subsequently becomes, the more control you'll have over the way you think and act.

Building Block #3 – Stay cool under pressure Pages 5 - 6

Your brain is much more than a logic-processing machine. Every moment of your life, your brain is figuring out whether the world around you is dangerous or helpful and sending you signals through your emotions. Use your director to regulate your emotions and you'll not only be able to stay cool under pressure but you'll also become far more effective in what is, after all, a chaotic world.

Building Block #4 – See the world from the brain's perspective. Pages 6 - 7

Today, very few people work in isolation. To perform well, you've got to become adept at collaborating with others. If you understand some of the basic social needs of the brain, you'll be better able to avoid some of the conflicts which frequently derail collaborative projects as a whole. The brain craves social connections and needs to feel safe among friends so if you can achieve that, you're well on your way to success in working in with others.

Building Block #5 – Stop focusing on other people's problems and come up with solutions Page 8

Making any kind of change is hard and facilitating change in others is harder still. The brain is actually quite skilled in being able to change to match evolving external factors but it can also be changed by a shift in attention as well. If you can shift the other person's attention from a threat state to focusing on a shared goal you can increase their performance. Don't give constructive feedback – focus on solutions.

