

Living in a Digital World

"I'm an analog man, living in digital world."

I don't have much in common with Joe Walsh (Eagles, guitarist-singer-songwriter) but I can identify with his lamentation. I can sing his song, and loudly.

As I opened my email early this morning, I was instantly reminded of why I needed a vacation from it. I clearly remember the analog inbox which sat politely on my desk until I was almost 40. Email has been with us for 25 years, and during the holiday break, I was reminded of the powerful impact digital mail has upon my life.

I believe email usage is a good measure for our commitment to meaningful, deep work (work that produces measurable value). Every time I "check" my email, I demonstrate the water level at the current moment. Email has a lever I can pull to detract me from meaningful work.

Social media has added to my corrosive anxiety about what and when to engage with broad audiences. Just over 10 years ago, we spent zero time on social media because it was not the centric force in life as we know it today. Research indicates we spend almost two hours a day on some form of social media. We spend over six hours per day online. (These are national averages.)

Is it any wonder why we struggle to add value to a project?

Are we surprised that five to 10 minutes of focus provides such little impact?

We all suffer from information overload. Incoming messages far exceed our ability to send outgoing messages.

In my analog life, I worked with a scarcity of tech. Today, I suffer from attention scarcity. My neck swivels constantly in

response to the urgent beep, buzz or digital bellow. I recall the old quote, "Tools make excellent servants but very poor masters."

Our personal response to this era must come in a form of rebellion against distractions. We must push back in order to push forward. Meaningful work emerges from dedicated blocks of singular focus.

No one can manage your time for you. An accountability moment will knock at the door and we cannot respond with a cry about our heavy load of email and media engagement. It won't ever fly. Meaningful work is rewarded.

It's nice to vacation in an analog world, but I don't really want to live there. I simply need to understand my life's priorities are not embraced by email and social media.

We live in a time of declining water levels. It's hard to find the deep end of the pool.

But alas, meaning lurks in the deep.

"Deep calls to deep at the noise of your waterfalls" (Ps. 42:7).