

# RAY OF LIGHT

## DISTRACTION

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Is technology distracting you or your team members? Distraction is nothing new. Plato even spoke of it as a problem. Author Nir Eyal set out to write a book on how to use technology less. It was his belief that technology is addictive and its overuse is a problem in the workplace. In his research for the book, he found no relationship between the amount of technology or even the kind of technology (e.g. text messaging, email, social media, etc.), to the level of distraction in the workplace. What he found that had the greatest correlation to distraction was the corporate culture. (Hey, did you read last month's Ray of Light by Dave Pier?).

Distraction turns out to be a symptom of a dysfunctional company culture. Do you have high employee turnover? Are your employees sick a lot? Could a dysfunctional culture be the cause? Two factors that have been found together to lead to anxiety and depression disorders are high expectations coupled with low control.

High expectations coupled with high control results in people performing at their best. But, if we feel that we are not in control of our

circumstances it is an internal trigger to feel uncomfortable, uncertain, anxious, fearful and stressed. It leads to us feeling desperate for some control. Distractions like technology become a way to cope with these negative feelings.



Dentistry is a unique industry in that the owner is also one of the employees. Not only are they the "boss", they work in the business along with their employees. So go back to the previous paragraph and read it as it applies to you, not just your employees. What expectations do you put on yourself?

Do you find yourself calling more and more meetings? Are you sending more emails to team members than you used to? These could

be possible attempts at more control. But you say that you are not a control freak. With the recent regulations for the coronavirus changing, and the uncertainty that we've had to deal with lately, we all can experience a sense of losing control. It's important to evaluate the expectations you have for your team and yourself. Have you given your team the control they need to best accomplish these goals or are you asking the impossible? Do they have the resources and time they need? Are team members regularly staying late or taking work home?



People need to be able to openly discuss concerns and obstacles in achieving the goals that we set for them. They need to be able to do this without a fear of retribution. If they don't feel safe doing that, it gives them a sense that they can't control their own situation. Without permission to voice their concerns, employees will talk amongst themselves. This gossip becomes a sort of venom that can undermine the entire team and your goals. The resulting culture is a dysfunctional one.

I know what you're thinking. This will just open up a can of worms. A gripe session will not

solve anything. I hear you. I've been where you are. But sometimes knowing we are allowed to or even encouraged to speak our minds at the appropriate time and in an appropriate manner removes any resentment and we no longer feel the need to complain. It goes back to having some control. If people have the control to resolve obstacles, they don't need to fight the system. They know that they are responsible for their own outcomes. When we are responsible we have no one else to blame. The gripes and complaints are all the result of not being in control of our own situations.

So the next time team members seem distracted from the goal, don't be so quick to blame technology. The loss of focus may be the feeling of not having the control to meet your expectations.

Being able to focus in this technological world may be the new superpower, but being able to identify what really matters is equally as powerful. What matters is giving people the resources and freedom to reach the expectations you place on them. In order to give them what they need, you may need to ask and more importantly, listen.

Would you like a simple tool to help make difficult conversations more productive? Just ask. Send an email to [kdevine@denvantage.com](mailto:kdevine@denvantage.com) and I will be happy to share it with you.