

BUSINESSEYE

Consider a 'to don't' list

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Welcome to the second version of this week's undeniable wisdom, the first having failed to save properly on my laptop, disappearing to that great cyber graveyard in the ether.

What a truly fabulous holiday weekend we just enjoyed.

I hope you had fun.

The weather makes such a difference to the economy, something which became the subject of a more detailed conversation at the first of my four tennis outings over the long

sunny bank holiday (I'm trying to lose weight and get fitter).

Apparently, it's big news at the Royal Horticultural Society.

Not my fitness regime, you understand, but that flowers tend to bloom weeks earlier in the south than the north, something which you wouldn't spot if you lived in any one place, but which fundamentally alters the business cycles for plant nurseries and the purchasing of garden furniture and tools.

I mention this because it is an interesting subject, though not central to my own business and life, so it could so easily become a cause for distraction.

It is such apparently harmless distractions that are the route of one of the more significant causes for businesses to fail to reach their full potential... a lack of focus.

I know, because I can be as distracted as the next guy.

Hey, writing a column in the local newspaper is proof of this point!

The weekend also saw the

Ukrainians vote in a comedian as president; trouble starting to brew again in Northern Ireland; and terrorists who blew up innocent young children and families in Sri Lanka.

When I was a lad – something which to me seems like only yesterday, but to others might be four decades ago – the world was a different place.

If I'm honest, life as a kid living in Quainton was boring.

We had to make our own fun. We didn't get to know much.

We had a phone. It lived in the dining room on a long flexible extension cable (which made us trendy in the day) and if we were very lucky, it would ring once or twice a week.

We enjoyed three television stations. There was no internet, there were no smart phones, no Sky TV, no broadband, no digital newsfeeds, no texting, no Instagram, no twitter, no Facebook, no WhatsApp; nothing of the sort.

The risk to my mental health

as a child was boredom not depression.

These days, the opposite is true. It is almost impossible not to spot a shiny new distraction every minute of every day because we are soaked in them, whether that be worrying about a cowardly bombing in Sri Lanka or still considering it as a wonderful place to visit on holiday.

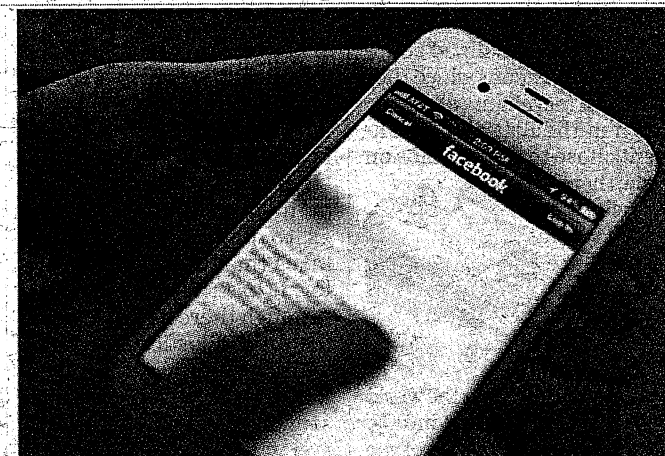
Maintaining focus, avoiding distractions and preventing mission creep are essential behaviour-sets today for those who wish to do more than simply survive in business.

Focus is everything.

To maintain your focus in a flood of opportunities is like living in Charlie's Chocolate Factory as a child yet staying true to your carrots and hummus.

What we all need is a 'To Don't List'.

The problem with the alternative 'To Do List' is that there is so much to do, that they are never completed, you only manage to do a couple of the tasks each



Modern life can have too many unnecessary distractions...

day and are forever carrying the lengthening list of self-promises forward.

What is on your To Don't List today?

Don't turn on the news in the morning, because it is always bad? Don't say how much everything hurts, because nobody else wants to know?

Don't help everyone who asks, because you must learn

to say 'No'? Don't stay up late, because sleep deprivation impacts your performance? Don't have the BBC website open on your computer, because you should be focused on your work?

Don't save your column in Outlook without first saving it to your desktop... because you might be forced to write another one?