



# ADMINADVANTAGE

The Exclusive Online Magazine for Administrative Professionals

January/February 2021

## How to Channel Healthy Workplace Competition

### FEATURES:

Mindfulness

5 Ways You Waste Time Every Day

10 Amazing Google Hacks to Boost Your Productivity

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# ADMINADVANTAGE

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# CONTENTS

## of January/February 2021

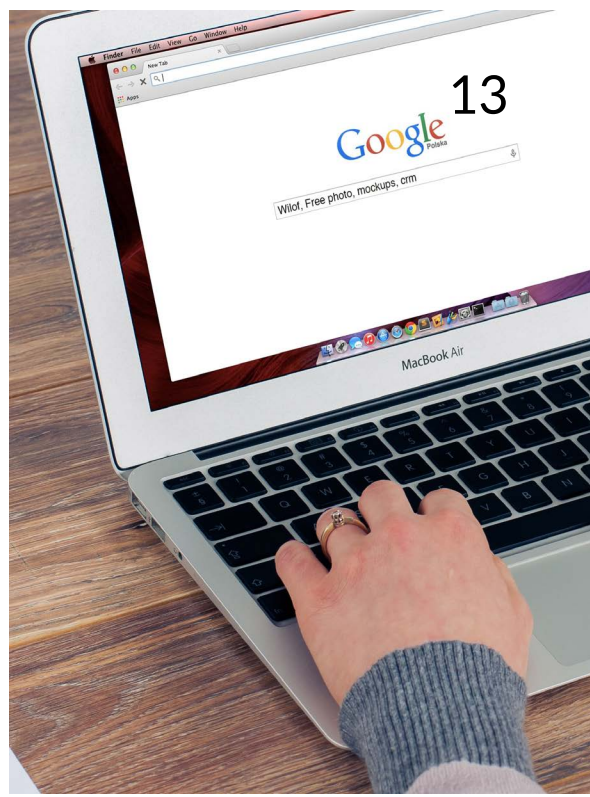
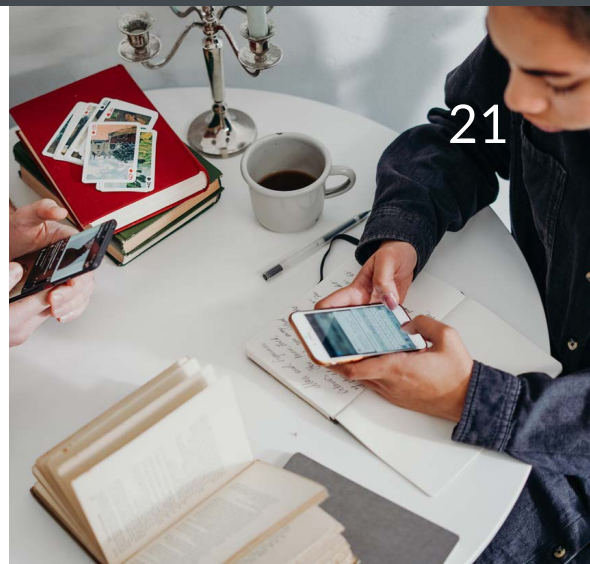
**6** Mindfulness

**10** 5 Ways You Waste Time Every Day

**13** 10 Amazing Google Hacks to Boost Your Productivity

**16** How to Channel Healthy Workplace Competition

**21** I Can't Keep Up! Six Principles For Using Your Calendar To Get More Done



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# Mindfulness

By Petris Lapis

**M**indfulness is being used by organizations all over the planet. Companies, defense forces, government bodies, universities and the person on the street are all using it daily to help them at work and in life. Mindfulness programs cover things such as leadership, communication, stress and even depression and anxiety. The key ways in which mindfulness is helpful to people in a digital workplace are first keeping focus in the midst of disruptions and second awareness of the impact electronic devices are having upon our wellbeing and productivity. ▶▶

What is mindfulness? In its simplest form, mindfulness means awareness. It is paying attention and attending to the present moment without judgement.

It is being used as a tool for focus, to improve productivity, to manage stress and mental health, to improve resilience, to improve leadership, emotional intelligence and communication skills. It is providing executives and their staff with a new way of working. With mindfulness training you are more able to successfully prioritize, be focused, be more efficient, ignore distractions, grow emotional intelligence, more easily deal with conflict and feel better.

Mindfulness gives us the ability to keep our perspective and focus (no matter what is going on around us). It helps us to consider alternative courses of action calmly with the intelligent area of our brain, rather than reacting thoughtlessly with the more primitive part of our brain which usually takes over when we are feeling stressed or under pressure. Mindfulness helps us to remain calm and not get caught in the grip of emotion when things around us begin to get 'busy'.

### HOW CAN WE PRACTICE MINDFULNESS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Mindfulness training can be done any time you have a few spare moments. You close your eyes, come back into the present moment and focus

on your breath. Sure it is fabulous if you can do it for twenty minutes every day, but if you can't, take what you can get.

Start your working day with ten minutes of mindfulness while your laptop boots up. Sit quietly and bring yourself into the present moment. Focus on your breath and leave behind all the things that happened at home in the morning. Bring your attention to your breath and the moment you are in. When you have done ten minutes of training, turn your mind and your attention to what you aim to achieve during the day.

Here are seven other ways you can incorporate the power of mindful pauses into your working day:

**1. When your phone rings:** Take three deep breaths to center yourself, come into the moment and turn your focus to the phone call before picking up the phone. This enables you to turn your attention from what you were doing to the person who is on the other end of the phone.

**2. Before checking email:** We have an almost manic urge to check email as soon as an alert sounds or we want a mental break from what we are doing. Instead of giving into these impulsive urges, try waiting ten breaths before checking your email.

**3. When you're checking social media: In the**

## WORKSMART

**same way**, we yearn to check email to see if there is anything exciting happening, we also have the urge to check our social media. We wonder how many people have responded or what others are doing that you didn't know about. Notice the thoughts you have as you read each item. How does it make you feel, what do you think? How do

you feel before and after you check social media? Is there any element of unhealthy thinking or feeling associated with what you are doing?

**4. Leave your mobile phone behind or turn it off:** This is a challenge for most people. We live in a world where we feel compelled to check it





while we are driving or watching the movies. Notice any addictive habits you have and try leaving your phone behind every now and then. Turn it off at night and see if it gives you a better night's sleep. Put it in your bag or in a drawer at work, rather than leave it on your desk top. Notice how you feel when you don't have it with you. Be aware of the experience without any judgment, it is what it is.


## **5. When you're working on the computer:**

Notice what happens to your energy levels while you are working at your computer. Do they sag after a while? How long before they sag? What do you do when your energy starts to get low? How are you sitting in the chair?

**6. When you're waiting:** Our days seem to be filled with moments of waiting. We wait for the bus, we wait in the traffic, we wait for the printer, we wait for someone to answer the phone. Waiting and the patience it requires are a part of our lives. How do you feel when you have to wait? Do you become agitated? Does it help? Is there a better way to fill the time you are waiting? Would it be possible for you to take three deep breaths and allow yourself to relax without doing anything and without feeling negative while you are waiting?

**7. Meetings:** Do you take electronic devices into meetings? How focused are you on the meeting? How would it feel if you left your electronic devices behind and focused your

attention on the meeting? Could you contribute in a more meaningful way? Would the meeting finish sooner if everyone did the same thing? Some organizations now have baskets at the meeting room door for you to leave electronic devices in. If the meeting organizer sees you on an electronic device during the meeting, you will be asked to leave the room if you have something more important to attend to than the meeting? What difference would that make in your organization?

Mindfulness brings some of our digital behaviors into awareness. Awareness leads to self-empowerment. Once we are aware of our behaviors we can then release our automatic reactions and make conscious choices about how we are spending our time and energy during the working day. 

*Petris Lapis, Director, Author and Presenter of Petris Lapis Pty Ltd providing seminars and resources tackling the tough stuff and helping people succeed in careers and life. Helping people succeed one thought at a time. Visit now to find out more <http://www.PetrisLapis.com>*

WORKSMART

# 5 Ways You Waste Time Every Day

By DeskDemon

**C**heck out the most common five ways you waste time every day. Do you find yourself doing any of them? You'll also find some time management strategies. They can help you become more efficient and productive and be able to get the most out of your day. Let's get started. ▶▶

### 5 of the Biggest Timewasters of Your Day

Even if you're one of the more dedicated and organized people out there, you still waste time. Whether you work from home or in the office, we're all guilty of getting distracted and losing focus. It may not be deliberate and you probably don't even realize you're doing it until it's too late.

**Here are five ways you waste time every day. See if you can relate.**

#### 1. Social Media/Emails/Texts

It's become a vital part of our lives. But the world won't stop turning if you don't look at your social media for 15 minutes.

Another big distraction is hearing that too familiar 'ding' that comes with a new email or text message. It prevents you from finishing the task at hand because you keep looking at your phone every five minutes.

**Picture this scenario:** you're in the middle of work when your phone beeps. You reach for your phone to see your incoming message. So, you go from message to email to Facebook to Instagram. Then, when you're done, you notice that 20 minutes have gone by.

Research shows that each time you get distracted, even for a couple of minutes, your brain needs more than 20 minutes to refocus. Imagine how much wasted time that amounts to at the end of the day!

**The Fix:** Avoid randomly checking social media, emails, or texts. Instead, set up a certain time during your day for doing just that. In the meantime, turn off any notifications or mute your phone.

#### 2. Organizing and Preparing

You're probably wondering: how is this a time-waster? But too often we fall down the rabbit hole of 'organizing' our day. Sometimes, we take too far that we actually run out of time to do any of the things on our list.

**The Fix:** Find an online planner and to-do-list. Then, pick one day out of the week where you plan out the whole seven days in advance. Schedule in work-related projects, meetings, and deadlines. You can also include a workout schedule and get-togethers with friends.

#### 3. Multitasking

Multitasking: another thing that we do to trick ourselves into believing we're being productive. Yet, the sad truth is, multitasking wastes a ton of time.

It's counter-productive when your attention is divided among several tasks at once. In other words, it's just another form of distraction.

**The Fix:** It's simple. Just put all your attention and focus on one task at a time. When you're done, move on to the next task, and so on.

# WORKSMART

## 4. Checking the News

In this day and age, it seems something is happening in the news every five minutes.

So, it's easy to use the news as an excuse for procrastination. After all, we all want to be in the loop when it comes to politics, sports, and local news.

**The Fix:** Force yourself to stay away from checking news updates every half hour.

You can use sheer self-discipline, or you can use a site blocker.

One great example is the Stay Focused Chrome app. It helps you 'hide' certain websites for, say, 45 minutes. Then, tell the app you want to spend 20 minutes on the so-and-so website. After the 20 minutes are done, the app will block you again until your next break.

## 5. Errands and Chores

The problem isn't with the errands or chores themselves; it's when you do them. Running errands during rush hour is one of the biggest time wasters ever!

Doing chores is another. You might be sitting at your desk, working away when you notice a dusty shelf or a cluttered drawer. So, you do the responsible thing and start dusting and decluttering.


You tell yourself that it'll only take five minutes. Then, when you're done cleaning the entire

room/office, the day is over! And you still haven't finished what you're initially working on.

**The Fix:** Plan your errands ahead when you know there'll be less traffic. Also, try to do your shopping when you know the stores won't be as crowded and they're in their least peak hours. As for chores, set up one or two days during the week when you do all the dusting, cleaning, and decluttering. This way, even if you see catches your attention, you can push back in your mind and wait until 'chore day' rolls around.

## A Final Note

We all get the same amount of time each day: 86,2400 seconds, 1,440 minutes, or 24 hours. It's up to you to figure out how you're going to spend that time. Sadly, many of us spend our days doing things that don't really add any value to our lives—or anyone else's for that matter.

The good news is you can train yourself to focus more and have fewer distractions. Make a conscious effort to add purpose and value to your life and follow through. You'll soon notice you're getting more done during your day than ever before! 

*Take control of your destiny, work toward your goals and set yourself up for success in 2021. And for more workplace and hiring insights featured in the 2021 OfficeTeam Salary Guide, visit <http://officeteam.com/salary-center>.*

# 10 Amazing Google Hacks to Boost Your Productivity

By Ananya Pani

**G**oogle is a life-saver. No two ways about it. As a professional, Google has invaluable features including, but not in the least limited to, its search function, stocks, and its advertising clout. However, there is so much more it is capable of, that most of us are barely scratching the surface. ▶▶

# TRAINING

Here are some nifty little tricks we have gathered through the years:

## 1. Type using your voice (No more strained fingers)

Sure, we've all used Google search on our phones, and we know it has a fantastic voice search function. But, this feature can do so much more. Google Docs (the cloud-based version of a text editor) is becoming more powerful by the day, and as part of its features, is voice-based typing. With a few weeks of practice, the AI is capable of flawlessly understanding human speech, whatever your accent may be. As a fun tidbit, this article has been written by using voice typing!

## 2. Timer: Know when to get back after a break

Google has a calendar that is used extensively by professionals. However, in their bid to replace offline apps with cloud-based real-time systems, the software behemoth has introduced a tiny, but extremely useful widget in the form of the timer feature. Capable of counting down, it is handy to keep track of time leading up to a meeting or the re-commencement of a professional appointment after a break. Just search for "Timer" in the Google search bar to access this feature.

## 3. Calculator: Calculate on the fly

Another applet introduced by Google is the calculator feature, removing the need for an external app. Just Google the calculation you



need to be done, and the website is capable of handling arithmetic, percentages, or almost any other calculation that is performed by professionals.

## 4. Conversions:

### Convert on the fly

Dealing with international transactions is often a troublesome affair, due to the simple reason that currencies fluctuate in value with respect to each other. Google offers real-time conversion from one currency to another. Let's say you need to know the value of 16.50 pounds in American dollars. All you have to do is type "Convert 16.5 GBP to USD" in the search bar.

## 5. Draw perfect pictures:

### You don't have to be an artist

Autodraw.com is a nifty little website for when you wanted to illustrate your articles, but just couldn't find the right clip-art/stock image. By drawing a very rough version of the image in mind, you will get cute little clip arts that suit your purpose just fine.

## 6. Language translation:

### Be a pro in multiple languages

Google translate is already the most reliable option for tourists in a foreign country for translation to the native language. However, most professionals are yet to realize that this software has an extremely significant application in their respective fields. It provides a quick and efficient way of translating any blog/article that has already been written, into another prominent language, such as Spanish, for example, greatly widening the target audience.

## 7. Store documents: No fear of disk crash

We all keep important documents and drafts on our computers or hard disk drives. However, there are significant risks in doing so. Loss or damage of the storage medium will lead to a loss of the data too. Hence, a software widely recommended today is Google Drive, which is a cloud based document storage medium. You don't even need the storage medium to work with the documents, since it can be accessed by any device with an internet connection. As an added bonus, it makes the sharing of any of these documents incredibly easy, and all you need to know is the recipient's email address.

## 8. Set reminders for special days:

### Save your marriage

As part of its calendar app, you can easily set reminders for the future from the Google app (for mobile) or website. All you have to do is type (or say out loud), "Set a reminder for " and enter in the name of the reminder and at what time you want to be reminded.

## 9. Flow chart:

### No worries if you don't have MS Visio


Free software is great, right? One little problem, though. There isn't too much of it on the internet. we have often been asked by BA aspirants, as well as others, on whether they have to purchase software to make flowcharts. The good part is, Google Docs handles all that. It allows us complete freedom in designing the charts, and is a quick and efficient way of making them. Here's a link that gives detailed instructions on how to make flowcharts using Docs.

Here is a quite interesting video for the same

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=asNa86jsWmc>

## 10. Mind-maps: Impress your colleagues

The same goes with mind maps, another resource that is widely used by BAs and other professionals. Luckily, Google Docs is our savior once again. Here's the link with all the details. [https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=ILCLo2v\\_9eQ](https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=ILCLo2v_9eQ)

Oh Google, what would we do without you? 

# How to Channel Healthy Workplace Competition

By Office Team

**A** competitive nature can simultaneously be a vice and a virtue. All companies need staff who are motivated to perform at a high level, and a bit of workplace competition can push employees to greater heights. But if it leads to people derailing colleagues or creating team conflict, it's likely to do more harm than good to individual and overall morale. ▶▶



Recent research from Robert Half revealed that workplace rivalries are on the rise. More than a quarter of professionals surveyed noted a spike in competitive behavior over the last 12 months – with younger employees, men and working parents most likely to feel heightened competition.

As firms strive to deal with the fallout of the COVID-19 crisis, stress levels are running at an all-time high. And with many offices still operating remotely, team cohesion is more challenging – and more important – than ever. Here's how administrative professionals can help bring out the best in their competitive coworkers and create a culture of collaboration.

## HOW MUCH COMPETITION IS HEALTHY?

Many of us know people who can't help competing, whether in work, sports or status. On a professional level, competitive colleagues can be incredibly useful, as they are typically proactive, productive and apt to inject energy into conversations and meetings. Often, this can inspire others to work harder and improve their own performance.

But it can also have the opposite effect. A team member who is laser-focused on achievement can come across as aggressive and intimidating. Their ingrained desire to nail that new project or land a promotion can alienate them from their colleagues.

Fostering the former type of competitive environment while not letting it devolve into the latter can be a delicate balancing act.

## COPING WITH AN OVERLY COMPETITIVE COWORKER

Whether it's subtle or upfront, competition at work requires careful handling. The last thing you want is to overreact and damage your own credibility. While colleagues who let competition consume them can be infuriating, there are ways you can help neutralize their behavior.

- **Keep your cool.** If a colleague is competing with you, they might be trying to provoke a reaction. Focus on being polite and civil and resist their bait. Competition is far less rewarding when there's no one to vie with.
- **Understand their intentions.** Put yourself in your coworker's shoes and consider why they feel the need to compete. Maybe they're insecure about their performance, anxious about redundancies or envious of your success. Understanding their needs and goals can help you move forward in a productive way.
- **Bring them into the fold.** Competitive people may have a "me" versus "we" mentality. Whether your colleague is covering up a lack of confidence or just gets a kick out of winning, praising their accomplishments, asking their advice and being friendly may help them see you as an ally rather than a threat.

## CAREER



- **Have a heart-to-heart.** Confrontations can be difficult, but having an open and honest conversation can clear the air. Explain to your colleague how they make you feel and give them a chance to change. People may be unaware of how their behavior negatively impacts others.
- **Take it to the top.** If you've tried all reasonable avenues and your coworker still tries to undermine you or take credit for your work, don't be afraid to report the situation to your supervisor. Keep a list of examples and approach the meeting as a means for guidance rather than a chance to vent.
- **Stay focused on your work.** Office politics can be very consuming and distract you from your own goals and standards. Try to ignore what other people are doing or saying and focus on your own role within the company.

and how you can develop your strengths to reach your highest potential.

## WAYS TO HELP CREATE A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

Setting the tone for workplace collaboration needs to come from the top, but administrative professionals have a vital role to play.

Support staff are the backbone of any office and are often responsible for organizing social events and helping create a positive working environment. Away days and team-building events might be on hold right now, but there are still plenty of ways to encourage healthy competition.

**1. Keep it lighthearted.** The stresses and strains of everyday life (let alone during a pandemic) mean we all need a bit more fun. Competition that's exciting and engaging — with no serious consequences — can create a sense of camaraderie. Whether it's a virtual quiz or scavenger hunt, keep the prize small to avoid any resentment.


**2. Encourage wellness challenges.** With workers largely confined to home offices, a competition that gets people moving can boost mental and physical well-being. From walking challenges to stair-climbing contests, getting employees away from their screens will help make everyone feel better.

**3. Get in groups.** Encouraging colleagues to

work together toward a common goal can be a bonding experience. From online escape rooms to fundraising initiatives, team competitions can improve trust, communication and cohesion.

### 4. Offer other ways to succeed.

Some personalities just aren't competitive and will disengage from situations where they have to win or lose. These individuals need to be given clear personal goals that stretch their abilities without measuring their success against others.

When competition is channeled skillfully, it can drive excellence at work. On the other hand, if everyone is rewarded equally — regardless of performance — it can result in a culture of mediocrity. Individuals need to be allowed to shine in a fair and structured way. Recognizing effort and achievement in line with company core values helps all staff members stay focused on goals and working together to achieve them. 

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# I Can't Keep Up! Six Principles For Using Your Calendar To Get More Done

By Lonnie Pacelli

**T**hrough my years I've seen many leaders at all levels struggle with getting things done either by having to work late in the evenings and on weekends or by completely missing due dates. As I've talked with these leaders, they just consider it part of the job, unable or unwilling to do anything about it. I found myself early in my career doing the exact same thing; setting unrealistic expectations and killing myself to try to meet them, only to have a limited success rate of delivering on time. I hated that hamster wheel. ▶▶

# LIFESTYLE

The good news is you don't have to accept this as the status quo. Here are six simple principles to get better control of your work and be more deliberate about what you get done:

**1. Make your to-do list a "done" list** - It's commonplace to keep a to-do list. My approach is to apply four changes to the prototypical to-do list:

Express what needs to get done in terms of the final deliverable, not the action to produce it - For example, instead of saying, "Research hotels in Venice," say, "Decide and book hotel in Venice." The wording focuses on a definitive end to the activity, versus something which has no defined end.

Add a date the to-do needs to be done - By adding the due date, you by default prioritize when something needs to be done, which is the same as prioritizing the list.

Add an urgent/not-urgent indicator - By adding the urgent/not-urgent indicator, you are forced to think about not only those things which need to be addressed right away, but also those which are important but not required immediately. Subdivide dones into deliverables that can be completed within a normal work week - For bigger deliverables that may take longer than a week to produce, break the deliverable down into smaller deliverables that can reasonably be completed in a week. For example, if you have a done called "produce competitor report," break the deliverable

into smaller deliverables that align with the report's table of contents, i.e. "Create strengths and weaknesses analysis for each competitor."

**2. Ensure your calendar includes everything that consumes time in your day, not just meetings** - I've seen countless examples of people only putting meetings with others in their calendars, making their days crammed with meetings, then burning the midnight oil to get non-meeting work done. Any activity that consumes time in your day--meetings, work time, personal time, professional development, or other activities--deserve time scheduled in your calendar.

**3. Schedule a recurring Friday afternoon progress and planning meeting with yourself** - Near the end of your day on Friday, block out 30 minutes on your calendar to do three things:

Review what you committed to get done - For those items you committed to do in the prior week, look at what you actually got done. For those items you either didn't get done or spent more than your allocated time completing, ask yourself why. Were you too optimistic? Did you let yourself get distracted? Was there legitimate activity that was higher priority? Doing a retrospective analysis on your planned vs. actual done activity will help you be more realistic in future planning.

Plan out your calendar for the upcoming week


- This is the time to review your “done” list for urgent and non-urgent deliverables needing to be completed and slotting the work time to produce the deliverables into your calendar. It’s important to be realistic with yourself on how much time is needed to complete the deliverables and not set yourself up for failure. Remember to ensure your calendar includes all activity that consumes time in your day.

Document what you plan to get done for the following week - For items you are committing to getting done, update your Friday planning meeting for the next week to include the dones, which you’ll review in a week’s time.

**4. Make difficult calendar choices** - If there just aren’t enough hours in the week to get things done, look to see what needs to change. Perhaps it’s a change in due date or altering or deferring other items in your calendar that are taking up time. Whatever the case, be willing to make some decisions about what you do and who you meet with.

**5. Find hidden time in your calendar** - Are there meetings you just don’t need to be at? Are there one-hour meetings that can be done in 30 minutes? Can the frequency of recurring meetings be reduced? Can some things be done through offline communication, i.e. email? Ask yourself where time spent in meetings can be reduced or eliminated without materially adverse business impact.

**6. Remember that you own your calendar, it doesn’t own you** - Certainly things may happen during the week which could alter what you get done (or when you do it). Don’t beat yourself up if it does happen, just look at the frequency and reasons behind the changes. If they’re happening on an exceptional basis because of unforeseen work hitting your plate, then accept it as part of the job. If they’re happening frequently, then it could be you’re either not realistic in your planning or you’re allowing yourself to be distracted. It’s up to you to decide, just be honest with yourself.

A common thread through these principles is discipline. You can put the best-intentioned techniques in place but if you don’t follow them, you’re dooming yourself to emails at midnight. Seriously consider the principles, put your spin on them, and put them into action. 

*Lonnie Pacelli is an accomplished author and autism advocate with over 30 years experience in leadership and project management at Accenture, Microsoft, and Consetta Group. See books, articles, keynotes, and self-study seminars at <http://www.lonnipacelli.com>*