

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI, where *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about just how obsessed we are with screens and what we can do about it. What's the source for this week's rant? My fellow peer group member, Remodelers Advantage, has a weekly blog they do, and they interview a man named Richard Krecak from a company called Humans First, and he had done four years of research into screens, basically, our obsession with our phones, our tablets, our laptops, et cetera, et cetera. He actually says our obsession with screens is the biggest threat to humanity today. Wow. I mean, that's a thing. Listen to these statistics that he has. The average person spends four hours a day on his or her smartphone, 12 hours a day spent on screen time, phones, tablets, computers, television, et cetera. Wow. 12 hours a day. That's the average person.

People check their email on average once every six minutes throughout the day. Socializing is down 18% since 2003. Stress, obviously, in the world has gone up, and social support has gone down, and Krecak makes the point all of this was before COVID. All these numbers that I'm giving you were before COVID, think how they must be now, with Zoom and Teams being the norm these days. All right, now what about this is important to you? This affects you. This affects your children, your family, your grandchildren, your employees, their children, their grandchildren. This affects all of us, and it's really an epidemic of screen time. My pet peeve these days, I have a very short commute to and from working home, but light changes, light is green, time for traffic to move on. Nothing happens. Why? I can clearly see the person in front of me head down not looking at the light, not observing traffic, not observing pedestrians, down, looking at what?

What's so important? I don't know. I can't figure it out. I'm ready to go on the horn all the time. It just drives me nuts. Okay. The problem with screen time so often is we engage in it without intent. We get hijacked on these rabbit trails of, "Oh, that's interesting. I might read that article." It feels good in the moment. Krecak said it activates your central nervous system. Almost like your fight or flight kind of system. He said it hijacks the human dopamine system. It feels good in the moment. All this social media stuff that we observe, and of course the reason that these programmers have figured out these ways to hijack our dopamine systems is they've monetized it. The longer they can keep you on the screen, the more they can make you click here to look at this product or service or software or something.

The more they can do that, the more they can monetize it. That's their business model, hijacking us. We are the product in a sense. If they can get our attention and keep it for a few minutes. My generation is a big problem in this because I guess we always thought we always had that dream, maybe watching *The Jetsons* cartoon when I was a kid, we'd all have a two-day work week and technology would always be good, it would always make things better and easier in life. So, we have this kind of naive belief, technology's always a good thing. It's not. The biggest threat to mankind, I don't know. But still, I mean, that's a huge claim and he seems to believe in it. The methods of communication are exponentially more complicated today than they were even five years ago. So you've got the old tech telephone, email, you've got texts, which is kind of old tech now.

We've got Zoom and Teams. You've got direct messaging on all of the various social media apps. You've got Slack, which a lot of organizations use. You've got WhatsApp that a lot of other organizations and fraternities and things like that use, not fraternities, but what's the right word? Social organizations. I'm not sure how you would say it. There are all these ways, and Krecak says that, "You got to forget about all that stuff." You've got to discipline yourself to three or two, two is better than three methods. So, for me it's telephone, and golly, what's wrong with the telephone? What's wrong with speaking with other human beings? Voice to voice, golly. Telephone, email, and text. I don't do any of the other things. It's like driving down this avenue and suddenly you look up and you're four blocks away on a different avenue. How did I get here?

How did I get from email to Slack? And how do I monitor all these things all the time? I just don't think it can be done. In your company, this is tip number one. In your company's established standards of communication, people on average

expect emails to be answered within four hours. Is that realistic? As busy as construction people are, is that realistic? I'm going to leave my very busy job at the end of a very busy day, and then I'm going to have a chance to look at emails and I'm going to get back to everyone within four hours. I don't know if that's realistic or not, but anyway, make standards for email responses. Maybe it's 24 hours, 48 hours, and educate everybody. Emphasize personal contact. The telephone still works, the original technology for communication, right? The telephone still works really well, and I noticed that people will go to great lengths to avoid using the telephone. Maybe it's just easier to avoid, even that simulation of human contact.

Second thing, draw a line in the sand. For me it's three methods of communication. Maybe for you it's two, but draw a line in the sand somewhere and say, "Okay, this is where I'm available." Don't waste your time on all this other stuff. I tell my wife when I'm getting ready to leave for a work trip, "Don't text me. I'm going to be driving for the next couple hours." What does she do? We won't go there.

Okay. The third thing, manage yourself. You don't need to check your email once every six minutes. Get it down to a manageable two or three times a day, maybe the beginning of the day, maybe lunchtime, maybe before you leave work in the evening. But you can manage your email, but that requires that you manage yourself.

And the fourth thing, kind of a little bit of a different topic here, manage your sleep. People didn't always think about how important sleep is to overall health. Oh sure, exercise and nutrition, but sleep is probably just as important as those, well, I guess you have to have nutrition. But anyway, sleep is just as important as exercise, when it comes to rejuvenation and refreshing and keeping your mind young and sharp. So, tips on screens for sleep. No screens within one hour of bedtime. Go back to the old thing that your mom and your grandma told you. Read, read before bedtime. It'll help settle your mind and get you going in the right direction. Set your phone to do not disturb. It's easy to do. So, from the hours of 10:00 PM until 7:30 AM, no one can contact me except people that I have allowed, and that's my wife and two kids, and that's it.

That's it. Nobody else can get in touch with me. And that's an easy setting on your phone. More important, I think, get your phone, your tablet, get all that stuff out of your bedroom. That light is extremely harmful and extremely damaging to sleep. And I mean, I'm weak. I know if it's there, it's at my bedside table, I'm going to look at it if I get up during the night, or if the screen lights up because I've gotten a text or something, I can't help but notice it. It's just easier for me as a person with a little discipline to just get it out of the bedroom altogether. That's the discipline that works for me.

So, I'd like to know what works for you. How do you manage screen time? How are you advising your children and grandchildren about these things that appear on the surface to be wonderful and advantageous, but beneath the surface can be insidious and detrimental to human development?

This is Wayne Rivers at FBI. Please share with us in the comments, and don't forget about Boot Camp, we've got Denver and Raleigh coming up in November. Thank you.