

# COGNITIVE LOAD

## THOUGHTS FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS



A February, 2023 Forbes article stated "Why Cognitive Load Could Be The Most Important Employee Experience Metric In The Next 10 Years." The article presented that the 30-year old theory, known primarily in the areas of education and instructional design, has a critical new importance for today's workforce. With new emphasis on topics like "Focus," ("*Stolen Focus*" by Johann Hari), Attention Management, Burnout, and Resilience, it's significant that this topic is garnering new interest from a career/workplace perspective.

### Cognitive Load Theory Is...

**Cognitive Load** is a theory in educational psychology that explains how the amount of information that a person can process at one time is limited. It describes the relationship between the available cognitive resources of an individual and the demands of a particular task or situation. The theory is based on the idea that the human mind can only process a limited amount of information at a time and that if the demands of a task exceed these cognitive resources, learning and performance will suffer.

Cognitive Load Theory is a widely researched and applied theory that has practical applications in various educational contexts, including online learning, multimedia instruction, and traditional classroom instruction.

### And in the Workplace?

Cognitive Load Theory has several implications for the workplace, particularly in the areas of training, performance, and productivity. Here are a few examples:

- **Training design:** Training materials and programs that are designed in accordance with the principles of cognitive load theory can help employees process and retain new information more effectively. This can lead to improved performance and increased productivity in the workplace.
- **Workplace productivity:** By reducing extraneous cognitive load, employees are able to focus more effectively on tasks that require their attention. This can result in improved productivity, as they are able to complete tasks more efficiently and with greater accuracy.

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- **Performance improvement:** By providing appropriate instructional support, cognitive load theory can help employees process information and perform complex tasks more effectively. This can lead to improved performance and better outcomes for the organization.
- **Multitasking:** By recognizing the limitations of cognitive resources, organizations can help employees prioritize their work and avoid overloading their cognitive resources. This can result in better decision-making and more effective performance on a variety of tasks.

Overall, cognitive load theory can help organizations and employees understand the limitations of the human mind and how to optimize performance and productivity in the workplace.

### Strategies to Reduce Cognitive Load

Here are a few strategies that can be used to reduce cognitive load in the workplace:

- **Simplify information:** Present information in a clear, concise, and organized manner, avoiding clutter and distractions. Use visual aids and other instructional tools to help employees understand and process information more effectively.
- **Chunk information:** Break down complex information into smaller, manageable chunks to help employees process and retain it more effectively. This can include breaking down complex tasks into smaller steps, or dividing information into sections or sections.
- **Provide appropriate instructional support:** Offer employees the resources and support they need to effectively process and retain information. This can include online training programs, instructional videos, and access to subject matter experts.
- **Encourage focused attention:** Encourage employees to focus on one task at a time, rather than multitasking. This can help reduce extraneous cognitive load and improve performance on individual tasks.
- **Foster a supportive work environment:** Foster a supportive work environment that encourages employees to take breaks, get adequate rest, and engage in activities that promote mental well-being. This can help reduce stress and cognitive load, leading to improved performance and productivity.

By implementing these strategies, organizations and employees can help reduce cognitive load and improve performance in the workplace.

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### Individual Actions

Individuals can also take steps to reduce their own cognitive load in the workplace and improve their performance and well-being:

- **Prioritize tasks:** Make a list of tasks and prioritize them in order of importance. This can help you focus on the most critical tasks and avoid overloading your cognitive resources.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Engage in mindfulness practices, such as meditation or deep breathing, to reduce stress and improve focus.
- **Take breaks:** Take regular breaks throughout the day to give your brain a rest and avoid burnout.
- **Get adequate sleep:** Aim to get 7-9 hours of sleep per night to ensure that your brain is well-rested and functioning at its best.
- **Exercise regularly:** Regular physical activity can improve cognitive function, reduce stress, and boost overall well-being.
- **Stay organized:** Keep your workspace organized and free of clutter to reduce extraneous cognitive load and improve focus.

***By implementing these strategies, individuals can help reduce their cognitive load, improve their performance, and enhance their overall well-being in the workplace.***



What's your best way to learn? Reading? Structured Thinking? Listening? Reminders? Coaching? A Combination?

Here's a very cost-effective program with all these options. And the topic is a **Critical Skill** for now and the future!

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The image displays three book covers for 'Regaining Focus: A 6-Step System'. The first cover shows a hand holding a magnifying glass over a city street. The second cover is titled 'REGAINING FOCUS The Workbook' and features a person looking at a computer screen. The third cover is titled 'REGAINING FOCUS A 6-Step System' and also features a person looking at a computer screen.