Manage the Technology, Manage the Distractions

Like every expensive or important aspect of life, technology must be managed—and you're the manager in charge.

Follow these 5 steps for managing technology and reducing distractions:

1. Take responsibility to learn how to care for equipment and make minor repairs (e.g., getting back online after a power outage), have on-call technical support numbers posted for software difficulties, and find a reliable technical support person or service that comes on-site. Allot time each week or month to update software programs.

2. Learn a little every week. Most of the problems users have with email or software programs stem from misuse and misunderstanding. Trial and error is often the least effective and most time-consuming way to fix problems. Instead of spinning your wheels, take a course, get an easy-to-read manual, call a friend, or use technical support services to continually upgrade your skills.

3. Set up a schedule to accommodate different users if computers are shared.

4. Keep a log of common problems and solutions.

5. Assess your skills and bad habits, and make a commitment to improve.

Technology should help rather than hinder you. When you do not adequately manage your equipment, software, or gadgets, you create unnecessary and unnerving distractions and lose time and energy.