

Media Multitasking Doesn't Work Say Researchers

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Researchers who published the report in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences said the results had surprised them. They were looking for the secret to good media multitaskers but instead found broad-based incompetence.

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"Heavy multitaskers are lousy at multitasking... The more you do it, the worse you get," said Stanford communications professor Clifford Nass.

Compulsive media multitaskers are worse at focusing their attention, worse at organizing information, and worse at quickly switching between tasks, the Stanford scientists wrote.

After testing about 100 Stanford students, the scientists concluded that chronic media multitaskers have difficulty focusing and are not able to ignore irrelevant information.

Nass said that multitasking is becoming more widespread -- some jobs require workers to keep an instant message window open -- and the scientists were surprised at the results.

"We knew that multitasking was difficult from a cognitive perspective. We thought, 'What's this special ability that people have that allows them to multitask?' ... Rather than finding things that they were doing better, we found things they were doing worse," Stanford symbolic systems professor Eyal Ophir said.

A bright side to such distraction may mean that the media multitaskers will be first to notice anything new, Ophir said.

Source: bdnews24.com