



From the Director's Desk

Email is not a job!

If the past 18 months threw you off balance, and the external uncertainty left a low-grade anxiety lingering across your organization, maybe you should re-consider that your work habits.

I'm reading Cal Newport's *A World Without Email* concurrently with a virtual 8-week mindfulness course. I highly recommend both to reconnect with how managing people requires managing yourself first. The course is with John Bruna who lives in Carbondale (mindfullifeprogram.org).

Bruna speaks of "becoming aware of being unaware." In his course workbook, he cites psychologist who notes that "most people are so distracted that they do not know what they are doing about half the time they are awake." There is so much stimulus coming at us, it stirs our mind to a frenzy and blurs our attention. Mindfulness is a tool for re-setting attention.

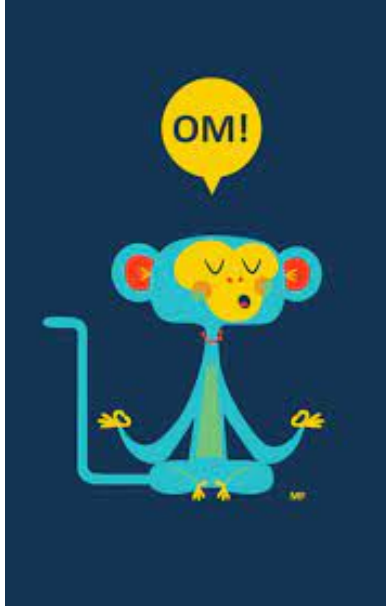
Email, it turns out, tends to scatter our attention. Both book and course take aim at counteracting a "hyperactive hive mind workflow." Newport writes, "our brains were never designed to maintain parallel tracks of attention." Strengthening the ability to single-task focus is where a mindful meditation practice comes in handy. Newport suggests work tools that don't have the equivalent of constant flashing pop-up ads and click-bait. The constant shifting of contexts is depleting our powers.

The benefit of fully focusing on completing one task and then another? Many organizations are acknowledging that it can mean less time at work. Whether the outcome is better productivity or improving mental (and physical) health, preserving "attention capital" is not just for cognitive workers. We just on-boarded an office manager recently. She was surprised when I suggested that I didn't want her glued to her email, or the phone, or even her desk; that I'd rather have her focus fully on whatever task she has begun and finish it. I said that she would not be judged for not responding immediately to an email, even if was from me, her boss. I don't think she fully believed me.

Ping-ponging back and forth from an email about one project, from one extended conversation to another and another all day may FEEL like work, but the mindfulness practice is helping me understand how often it is not. I am "becoming aware of being unaware."

The course within a course is a 28-day meditation that slowly deepens and extends the length of mediation times, but I would recommend the most basic tool of the course to anyone. Three times a day, do a 21-breath count meditation to clear and reset the mind, followed by a reflection on what has been done skillfully and





unskillfully during the intervening hours. Then set an intention for the next segment. That's it. The reset can be as powerful as a short nap. A system reboot. Shut down the monkey mind. Then focus on a task, fully. Note how if you jump to email, you are immediately scattered in a million directions.

I am no monk, but I am seeing more clearly that if the in-box jingles right then, it is a distraction that can wait. Remember the beauty of email is that you DON'T have to answer it immediately like a phone. It is a tool for "low-friction communication at scale." Our obsession with it has led to checking inboxes maniacally, on-average every four minutes, or on average 77-126 -times each day! Most of us now spend a third or more of our "work" day shuffling email, adding layers to a disjointed conversation.

Why do we check it constantly? Newport asserts, because having a question just sit there is making us anxious at some deep level that "members of the tribe are trying to get your attention and you are ignoring them." Our typical response? More emails throughout the day and well into the evening. So give your tribe permission to organize themselves differently.

If you ever think your work methods are working you, you're probably right. Answering Email all day, for one, is not a job. Now that is something to meditate on.

Jon Stavney
Executive Director
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P.S. Yes, that is really me, standing on my head. Photo credit: Bud Bartnick.

Project THOR team proud to Provide Public Safety fix in a pinch



Gov. Jared Polis on Aug. 2, 2021, said he was preparing a request for federal disaster declaration due to extreme damage to Interstate 70 through Glenwood Canyon from the mudslides. (Colorado Department of Transportation)

We may need to get used to re-routing our trips that involve the canyon because with burn scars and rainfall, we cannot rely on a single route through the mountains. The same is true of broadband. A story by Kelli Duncan in the Vail Daily, [Project THOR a hidden hero in reopening Glenwood Canyon](#), highlighted that the project is doing precisely what it was designed to do. Provide resiliency.

When a series of mudslides finally closed Glenwood Canyon this August for a few weeks, turns out CDOT fiber which is used to

operate variable message boards and cameras was washed out as well. Project THOR utilizes that CDOT fiber to connect Glenwood to the Internet in Denver. Because the Project THOR network is designed as a loop, when this fiber was cut by the mudslide debris flow, the connected communities were not impacted.

As CDOT crews worked to clear the highway of hundreds of tons of debris after the highway was closed to vehicular traffic on August 1st, another slide occurred that once again severed the fiber connection. It soon became clear that the damage to the fiber in Glenwood Canyon was going to be for an extended period. At that point, NWCCOG's Regional Broadband Director, Nate Walowitz was contacted by CDOT personnel requesting that the Project THOR team provide a backup connection that could be used to restore some level of resilience for CDOT information infrastructure north and west of Glenwood Canyon.

How did Walowitz and Milo and Bob Fifer at CDOT know each other? They have been working closely for the past two years as Project THOR was established on CDOT fiber, making splices to connect two locations in Clear Creek County, two in Summit as well as to Vail, Eagle and Glenwood Springs before the network took off on fiber leased from other carriers on the northern loop through Meeker, Craig, Steamboat and Grand County before connecting back to Denver.

NWCCOG would like to thank it's partners, the City or Glenwood Springs for providing a fiber connection from the CDOT yard to town hall including ports to connect to THOR, and to the Town of Eagle for allowing CDOT to access two of their 43 yet-to-be utilized ports. Just like motorists, we are working with CDOT to understand when they estimate their fiber will be restored and develop more alternate routes to ensure that Project THOR accomplishes its mission, delivering affordable, accessible, RELIABLE broadband to our communities.

The network also provides vital public safety infrastructure, not only supporting CDOT now, but also the 911 Call Center operated by the Town of Vail. As a side note, helping CDOT brought some history of the NWCCOG broadband program full circle. In the early 2010s CDOT was going to stop their fiber run at the top of Vail Pass. In order to provide public Wi-Fi for large public events, and innovative new public safety infrastructure for the 2013 Alpine World Championships, Vail sought a funding partnership with Eagle County to bring that fiber from the top of Vail Pass to town. It wasn't too long before CDOT funded fiber all the way to Glenwood (and now to Grand Junction) on which NWCCOG and Region 10 support very large regional public middle-mile networks. For that network to return the favor is a testament to the importance of this public investment, and in enduring partnerships among agencies.

NWCCOG supports CDOT returning to investing in broadband along other state highways such as Highway 9, 40 and 24 in the future to allow further resilient connections to be made, strengthening all our connections and public safety across the state. While NWCCOG is proud to own and host Project THOR, this kind of middle-mile infrastructure should be coordinated at a state level. It is too important to ignore that fact these days.

COVID Update – the Zombie Pandemic returns



NWCCOG wants to acknowledge residents across our mountain communities for doing their part in getting vaccinated. Our resort counties have some of the highest vaccination rates in the state which should bode well for herd immunity, should mean we are nearing the end of public health orders, and should mean the end of mutations of the COVID virus, including the Delta variant. Instead, the region is rolling into Fall with 2021 starting to feel much more like 2020 than it had to be. Word from a recent Summit Chamber event was that Summit County was the most visited destination in all of Colorado this summer. Seventy-two percent of Summit County

Residents are vaccinated, but residents make up less than 50% of the population during high visitation seasons. Commissioner Lawrence mentioned at a recent event that data originates from cell phone tracking data.

The [CDC tracks](#) reported cases per 100,000 cross tabbed with percentage of the population which is fully vaccinated in a map that shows NWCCOG counties as among the anomalies. [The Colorado Sun](#) covered this trend in Pitkin County where 38% of the positive cases reported in a recent 14-day period were from visitors. Health officials there are attributing the surge in "breakthrough" cases to this dynamic. That said, it is important to keep in mind that CDPHE is reporting that only 4.6% of cases are breakthrough cases. It seems the politicization of public health has persisted far beyond the intensity of the election year.

Meet our admin team

NWCCOG is excited to introduce the team responsible for keeping track of the finances of the organization and who will be the "faces" at the front door, and the voices on the phone - Jon rightly calls this team, 'the backbone of the organization'. Becky Walter was promoted to Fiscal Manager from Fiscal Assistant, Elaina West was also promoted moving from Office Manager to Fiscal Coordinator helping Becky keep track of the highly complex task of managing grants, invoices, payroll, etc., and Talai Shirey was hired to take the helm as Office Manager.

Becky Walter - Fiscal Manager

Becky joined NWCCOG as the Fiscal Assistant in July of 2019 after working for Faction Skis as the North American Accounts Manager. Faction is a ski company based in Verbier, Switzerland. Their North American headquarters were located in Breckenridge for many years, before recently moving to Denver. As typical of any startup, Becky wore a variety of hats in her role there.

At NWCCOG, she has looked at all aspects of the fiscal office seeking opportunities to innovate, find efficiencies, and modernize. Through that effort, she has spearheaded improvements to many systems, such as



migrating away from paper to electronic based solutions, including with credit card management, grant reimbursements and administration, and record keeping.

Growing up in the Chicago suburbs, Becky moved to Colorado after high school to attend Colorado State University, where she graduated with a Biomedical Science degree. Upon graduation, she took “a year off” and moved to Breckenridge, where she has remained for the past decade. She spends her free time skiing, mountain biking, volunteering for the 501(c)(3) High Country Veterans Adventures as a guide and board member and playing violin in the Summit County Community Orchestra.



Elaina West - Fiscal Coordinator

Elaina joined the organization in April of 2016 as Office Manager. She has lived in Colorado for a decade. Prior to NWCCOG, she worked as Volunteer Coordinator at the National Sports Center for the Disabled where she recruited and managed over 1,000 volunteers to engage in all season's therapeutic recreation, joining participants on the slopes, rock climbing, and riding horses.

As our previous Office Manager, West was integral to modernizing and improving many of NWCCOG's

systems and practices, including all aspects of office management, transitioning the organization to an on-line HR platform (NeoGov) while becoming the point person for benefits and personnel policy and administration, taking the Safety and Wellness programs to new heights, achieving higher scores with CIRSA each year. Elaina seeks every opportunity to train herself, learn new skills and improve the organization. Along the way she has earned Healthy Business Leader and Resource Wise Sustainability Certificates.

Elaina was born and raised in Michigan, the Great Lakes state where she did a variety of styles of dance, played sports and piano, while also enjoying outdoors activities such as skiing, backpacking, and traveling. After graduating with her Bachelor of Arts and completing her role as caregiver to her father who had ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease), Elaina traversed her way west to Colorado. There she immersed herself in all the outdoor activities from rock climbing to cross country skiing and yoga.

Talai Shirey - Office Manager

Talai joined NWCCOG in July of 2021 as Office Manager bringing two decades of administrative experience with her. A native to Colorado, Talai was raised skiing the local Summit County resorts. Prior to joining NWCCOG, she earned a Bachelor of Arts from Metro State University Denver. She started her career as an Executive Assistant with Clear Channel Airports providing support for the advertising program at Denver International Airport where she earned recognition for her ability to anticipate client needs and prioritize projects. More recently, Talai worked as an Executive Assistant for a local software company where she assisted in several different roles including administrative support, human resources, and legal research.



Talai has lived in Summit County with her husband Scott since 2011 where they are raising their daughter; a family of outdoor enthusiast who enjoy time together often spent on the slopes or hiking trails. Her biggest accomplishment lately has been to keep her family happy, healthy and safe.

Age-Friendly workplaces - advantages in recruiting older workers

Tapping hidden talent pools
AGE-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES
SEE ADVANTAGES IN RECRUITING

- Learn how recruiting older workers can benefit your business
- Become an age-friendly certified workplace
- Understand how to find, recruit and retain older workers

10 – 11:30 a.m.

Aug. 24

Virtual

Register at www.nwcoworkforce.cdle.co
Click the "Employer Services" tab



For more information email mark.hoblitzell@state.co.us or call 970.880.4092

SAVE THE DATE -- 13th Annual Care Givers
Conference

13th annual Caregiver Conference



Best Practices in Dementia Care:

*Building Hands-On Skills
for Communication
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Teepa Snow, with *A Positive Approach to Care*, is a worldwide leading advocate and educator of dementia and other brain change. Join us for an interactive lecture and discussion for caregivers and professionals.

Sept 17, 2021
9am-4pm

For more info including location & how to register:
www.tinyurl.com/COCaregiver

Or call: 970-665-0041

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Next Council Meeting - Thursday, August 26, 2021

Full Council and EDD Board Annual Planning Meeting

Location: Zoom Conference Call, On-Site Location TBD

Time: Council 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Time: EDD Board 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Primary Agenda Items: Strategic Planning for 2022