

## The Multitasking Myth: A Book Review

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*Technological advances and the fast pace of both work and home environments have contributed to an increase in the number of tasks that are being performed concurrently. This phenomenon has come to be known as "multitasking." In The Multitasking Myth the authors presented research gathered from the field of aviation to illustrate the reality of human performance capabilities in complex operational environments.*

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The Multitasking Myth provides answers to the critical questions facing professionals in high consequence industries like aviation in a way that is both compelling and thoughtfully documented. This text captures the reader from the introduction with its explicit examples of human error and cognitive performance constraints.

The explanations of how real world operational environments collide with seemingly straightforward procedures bring a unique perspective to the world of aviation. Pilots and air traffic controllers have long known that the accomplishment of their tasks is not as simple as it sounds on paper, but The Multitasking Myth illustrates how their job performance is complicated when faced with real world demands. As the title suggests, this text dispels some important misconceptions about human performance capabilities in a complex and dynamic environment. For example, the illusion of being able to remember to do something later is completely demolished by the examples in this text, as is the illusion that we can do two things at the same time with the same degree of accuracy as one.

The layout of the chapters is particularly helpful in building the case for fallacy of the notion that multitasking is a reliable method of operation. The authors' inclusion of numerous examples of operational procedures and their relationships with operational demands is meaningful because of its relevance to every day operations. Their illustrations of how even knowledgeable and compliant pilots can fail to follow procedures is a valuable tool for not only pilots but those that manage and design pilot operations.

By far the most valuable part of this text is the description of how the research gathered about real world operations was applied to one major air carrier and can be applied in other contexts as well. This makes this text a valuable tool for challenging the way we think about multitasking, developing new ways to train professionals that face complex operational demands, and to re-engineer the way we develop operational procedures for highly dynamic environments.

The Multitasking Myth is a valuable text for a wide range of audiences including professional pilots, air traffic controllers, medical professionals, and academic personnel that teach in those and similar professions. The highly readable glossary makes this text a valuable tool for professionals outside of aviation that share similar environmental demands including those in the medical profession. The Multitasking Myth is an integral resource for those wanting to learn more about human performance and provides a great example of how research can be used to improve real world operations.