

## Divide-and-conquer is best for brains

ANYONE who has had a stressful day at work knows what it feels like to multi-task – but what is actually happening in the brain is less obvious.

Research from The University of Queensland has found multi-tasking brains use a divide-and-conquer strategy.

“Life increasingly asks us to negotiate information-rich environments where our senses are bombarded with multiple tasks,” Associate Professor Dr Paul E. Dux says.

“Previous work has demonstrated that our ability to multi-task can be improved over time with training, but the neural mechanisms that drive this adaptation have not been understood.”

The research required 100 participants to complete tasks at the beginning and end of a

week while being scanned with functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

In between scans, participants completed 3024 training trials and were assigned either a combination of single and multi-tasks, or a comparably difficult single task.

The latter was the control group, who did not require multi-tasking.

“We found that training increases the distinctiveness of neural representations of component tasks,” Dr Kelly Garner from UQ’s School of Psychology says.

“This suggests the brain employs a divide-and-conquer strategy to overcome multi-tasking. By separating out the neural response to both tasks, competition for neural resources is reduced.”



Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

### Director, Child Safety, Rockhampton Child Safety Service Centre

Rockhampton Child Safety Service Centre

**Specified position:** Applicants for a Specified position must nominate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who is recognised and accepted in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community as a referee to support their ability to meet the relevant criteria.

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Salary: \$120 000 - \$131 651 p.a.

Location: Rockhampton

REF: QLD/200553/15

#### Key Duties:

Contribute to the leadership and management of the region’s service delivery through supporting the Regional Director by:

- Providing high level leadership and management of the Rockhampton Service Centre in the delivery of quality child protection services through the implementation of quality case management systems/practices/standards and a framework for practice.
- Lead the establishment and maintenance of enduring productive partnerships with carers, the community, the public and non-government sectors.
- Providing leadership and strategic advice on effective and efficient service delivery and workforce management strategies; and the ongoing professional development and management of staff.
- Managing the human, financial and physical resources to ensure that effective and efficient practices and systems are developed to support the delivery of client services.

#### Skills/Abilities:

- Knowledge of the organisation’s objectives, the links between your business unit, the organisation and the whole-of-government agenda, and how your business area fits into this agenda.
- Ability to contribute your own expertise to achieve outcomes for the benefit of the business unit and to respond flexibly to changing demands whilst maintaining sight of the end goals.
- Ability to build and sustain relationships with a network of key people by liaising with a range of stakeholders including other teams, peers and colleagues across the organisation, and in other organisations.
- Ability to commit energy and drive to see that goals and objectives are achieved and to demonstrate persistence and adapt approach when required.

Enquiries: Bernadette Harvey (07) 4938 4702

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Closing Date: Monday, 4 January 2016



## 3 steps to beat the Christmas rush

How to push aside the busy season and finish the year well

IN today’s crazy busy, crazy fast world – especially in the run to the end of year – getting brain-fit for work has to be approached as if training for a marathon.

But it does not take as much time as that to get there.

Brain fitness doctor Dr Jenny Brockis, author of *Future Brain: The 12 Keys to Create Your High-Performance Brain*, outlines how it can be done.

### 1 GET THE ENERGY

Top performance brains need top quality fuel. “There is no single best food or best diet; it’s about eating a variety of foods as shown by the research to be great for enhancing memory and cognition,” Brockis says.

“Regular pit stops are highly recommended, starting with breakfast. Brain healthy foods include leafy green vegetables, lean protein including fish such as salmon, and deeply pigmented fruits and berries such as blueberries.

“Don’t forget some seeds and nuts, some wholegrains and plenty of water to keep hydrated.”

She says sleep also helps

brains rest to restore and replenish energy supplies.

“So seven to eight hours every night of good quality uninterrupted sleep is a must,” she says. “Sleep is the time when the brain does its housekeeping – taking out the trash, laying down memory and regulating mood and emotion. Waking a little grumpy and tired? You need some more sleep.”

### 2 BE ACTIVE

“Move it, because exercise primes the brain for best performance,” she says.

“We pay better attention, we feel happier, and our thinking is sharper if we include 20-30 minutes of regular huffy-puffy exercise in our day and

move more. So stand up when on the phone, in meetings and walk when you have the opportunity.”

### 3 FOCUS

“Let’s face it, if we’re not paying attention, we’re not getting our work done in a timely manner or without mistakes but finding focus can be hard when living in a world of distractibility,” she says.

“That’s why rebuilding attention muscle and implementing a distraction management plan is a must.

“Start with a 10-minute focus session: close the door, turn off your mobile and laptop and practice some heavy lifting focus.”

## Ingredients blend with some mixing

NETWORKERS do not have to be the loudest person in the room at work-related events but they still need to know how to work the room.

Entrepreneur and author Alan Manly outlines his four steps to get over the fear of networking.

“You might be surprised that with a bit of practice you too will be making a wider range of contacts and may even meet some new friends,” he says.

### 1 FIND A FRIEND

If you are not already a member of an industry body or do not receive invitations to events, find someone who does and ask to be their guest.

“Once at the meeting this person will no doubt



introduce you to their friends,” Manly says.

### 2 MEET SOMEONE

“A certain amount of bravery is required here,” he says. “Approach a small group that are conversing. They will

usually invite you to join in. If not, move along to another group. This method has a high success rate because the others are also trying to network and they know that their next great contact could be you.”

### 3 PRESENT YOUR SPIEL

“Use your elevator pitch,” Manly says. “Don’t be put off because it sounds a bit rehearsed. Networking is mixing with people who can become useful contacts. Avoid time wasters and yesterday’s heroes in the form of folks out for the occasion.”

### 4 ANALYSE THE REACTION

“As you finish your elevator pitch, listen for their response,” Manly says. “If they don’t seem interested, then simply move to the next person. No one is useless but remember you are here to expand your network with people who complement your skill set and contacts.”