

A Better Way to Coping with Information Overload

By David Brewster

A Better Way to Coping with Information Overload

David Brewster
davidb@businesssimplification.com.au

Business Simplification <http://www.businesssimplification.com.au>

It must be one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. How do we make the most of the enormous potential of the information age - while at the same time avoid being overwhelmed by its sheer volume? The answer may be simpler than you think.

Some years ago my wife and I travelled to London. As many Australians do, we planned to find some work - probably in a pub - and do some travelling.

I clearly remember those early days in London. We were knocked out by the noise, the activity, the history, the endless number of things to do. We spent days just wandering around, soaking up the real life incarnations of a thousand picture book images.

Although we've lived most of our lives in cities ourselves, London gave 'city' a whole new meaning. We felt like the boy from the bush who encounters the city lights for the first time. Overwhelmed. Not knowing where to look. Vulnerable to temptation. At once wanting to do everything yet too scared to do anything.

The information age is having a similar effect on the developed world. It has left us stunned by its scale, its unlimited choice and its phenomenal growth. The 'Information City' has quickly become a very crowded place. It offers opportunity, exciting places to visit, tempting shops and entertainment. But, like London, it has a seedy side too: beggars, brothels and bandits abound.

So what's the trick to coping with life in the Information City? Just as my wife and I had to do in London, we have to come to terms with it. We need to adapt ourselves to it rather than expect the opposite. We have to define our own individual 'space' within this new environment. We have to:

- Learn to filter out the 'noise': avoid engaging with strangers and be hard-nosed when dealing with uninvited interruptions. Learn not to take the ugly side of the big city personally, just as we had to do with the homeless in London.
- Develop the skills needed to get around: in London, if you can't read a map and negotiate the Underground, you will be lost. By contrast, there are many shortcuts to be found if you take the time to find them.
- Find comfort in our communities. We need to carve a niche for ourselves in the virtual world in the same way that we tend to centre ourselves around school communities, associations and our circles of friends in the 'real world'.
- Make deliberate choices. I decided in London that I wanted to get to know the National Gallery really well. So, ignoring all other 'opportunities', I spent every lunch break for a number of weeks at

the gallery. I was left feeling I had conquered a part of the city, rather than beaten by its charms.
- Develop a 'sixth sense' for security. Look ahead and anticipate threats. London in the early '90s was an IRA terrorist target. Everyone in the city developed a knack for seeing an unaccompanied bag from a distance.

If we do these things, coping with life in the Information City will get simpler with time - just as it did for us in London. We will grow to enjoy the excitement and opportunity of this new city, rather than feel overloaded by it.

Copyright 2003, David Brewster

Five steps to better handling information overload can be found at
http://www.businesssimplification.com.au/actions/info_overload.htm

mailto:davidb@businesssimplification.com.au
<http://www.businesssimplification.com.au>

[Get-Articles.com](http://www.get-articles.com) : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)