

Hang on a minute!

DOUG SACKS takes some time out to examine how modern media consumption keeps everyone busy.

People are being brainwashed into thinking they are constantly pressed for time, so look to economise any way they can.

First, we'll discuss a headline that caught my eye recently. Then we'll get to my gripe of the month.

For those who can't wait to hear the gripe or are just 'too busy' to read this entire column, skip down about halfway.

I'll understand.

The headline read: *'Ad spending forecast to shift more to direct marketing'* and it was about a report in the latest edition of private equity firm Veronis Suhler Stevenson's *Communications Industry Forecast*.

It said consumers will foot more of the bill for the media they want over the next five years as advertisers shift their spending from traditional media to direct marketing. Spending by consumers and advertisers accounts for about half the \$876.3 billion that went last year to media and communications (not including phone connections). That total, which includes spending by marketers and institutions on

business-to-business media, will rise to \$1.18 trillion in 2012.

James Rutherford, VSS managing director was quoted as saying: "You could call 2008 a tipping point with consumers poised for the first time to spend more on media than advertisers will."

Rutherford says it takes longer to read a book, newspaper or magazine or to watch a TV show than to get information or watch videos on the Web. Next year, people will devote more time to video games than to consumer books, and in 2010, games will pass consumer magazines. The report says:

● **Newspapers.** Spending will fall 2.4 per cent a year to \$55.3 billion in 2012. Digital will account for 14 per cent of the total, versus five per cent last year. The biggest problem will continue to be classified ads moving to websites. Newspaper classifieds will plummet an average of 11.3 per cent a year through 2012 to \$7.5 billion

versus declines of 2.3 per cent a year from 2002 to 2007.

● **TV.** Although growth in ad sales will slow for broadcasters, online ads and payments from cable and satellite providers will lift revenue 3.8 per cent a year to \$58.8 billion in 2012. Cable and satellite will rise 7.3 per cent a year to \$188.9 billion.

● **Music.** Digital downloads will outsell CDs in 2010, leading the beleaguered industry to an average increase of 0.9 per cent a year, to \$12 billion in 2012.

Soundbites and doomsayers

OK. Hidden within all this is a statement that gets me thinking: *'It takes longer to read a book, newspaper or magazine or to watch a TV show than to get information or watch videos on the Web.'*

There are two implications here, which may or may not be troubling. Firstly, that attention spans continue to decrease.

True. People have time to waste but waste it watching things. Reading takes too long. All the public wants is a quick sound bite.

Maybe, maybe not. The doomsayers have been predicting the death of the book for a generation now, yet it is still here. First it was TV and then the Internet that would put an end to reading. But book sales and library patronage continue to thrive.

Secondly, people are being brainwashed into thinking they are constantly pressed for time, so look to economise any way they can. TV News reflects this now. Quick one or two-sentence reports are all you get, then its on to the next mini-story.

Newspapers are following

The 'busiest' types, reactively multi-tasking, are sheep and, like sheep, have limited value.

suit with quick-to-digest snippets of news. Websites are the royalty of the quick-snippet of news or gossip, often based on unsubstantiated reporting.

Gossip has become news.

Rumours and innuendo are now routinely accepted as fact.

Is this because the media THINKS this is what we want and are forcing it upon us?

I hope so.

Because the alternative is even more frightening - that we have fully bought into the myth of busy-ness. Not business, but *busy-ness*: Busy people are important people. Busy people are productive people. So, be busy all the time. If you do have some down time, then you must not be doing enough. Keep busy. Multi-task.

Important people get lots of phone calls and emails. Work that cell phone. Thumb those Blackberries. But does keeping busy really equal being productive? The reality is too harsh for most.

Truly productive people are the ones with vision. Vision is triggered by thoughts. Thoughts lead to ideas and concepts. Vision creates business. Vision employs people. Vision pays taxes.

Vision comes from seeing opportunity. This is accomplished by absorbing information through a variety of external sources, comparing and synthesising all this and then, taking action. Absorbing pertinent information can be hampered by too much external and valueless stimuli.

The 'busiest' types, reactively multi-tasking, are just sheep and, like sheep, have limited value.

Valuable time
But American workers have been convinced that putting in the hours, even unproductive hours, shows they have value.

Americans may work twice as many hours as a Dane or a Frenchman, but are they twice as productive? Are they even AS productive?
As an American, even thinking this is heresy. If word of this gets out, they'll exile me to some European locale where more relaxed and contemplative, socialistic people live.

If the President of the US can go to bed by 10pm every night, the rest of us need to realise that maybe our time isn't that valuable or essential. Wait . . . that's a really bad example. Maybe this president should have stayed up until midnight for the past eight years.

Who or what has convinced us that we are so important, and our work is so essential that we have no free time? Or, much more importantly, that free, unstructured time is wasted time?
Some visionary companies encourage and even insist that a percentage of unstructured time be part of

every worker's weekly schedule. They have found that the best ideas come out of this small percentage of unstructured time.
My advice: take your time. Re-read this column. Read the entire magazine. There's a lot of good stuff inside these covers. Read, absorb and then react.

You'll be a better person for it. More charming. More eloquent. A hit a parties. Sure to get that big promotion. Maybe even your wife or husband will find you interesting!

No, that's just too much to hope for.



Growth predictions

Media growth expectations versus growth in the past five years

	Five-year annual growth	
	2002-2007	2008-2012
Cable/satellite TV	10.4%	7.3%
Entertainment media	2.6%	5.2%
Newspapers	0.3%	-2.4%
Broadcast TV	2.8%	3.8%
Pure play Internet/mobile	12.6%	14.3%
Broadcast/satellite radio	2.3%	1.9%