



Take back focus time from fragmentation

Recently I have been noticing that my time has been heavily fragmented. Ideally there should be several large bulks in a day of work:

you start your day with a 30-min standup meeting,
and code for 1 - 2 hours on your own.

After lunch,

you spend 30 mins reviewing your colleagues' code,
and maybe have another 15-min with them on a quick discussion.

Now it's around 2pm, you continue the implementation work from morning for another 1 to 2 hours.

You spare some time in designing a new feature; and wrap up your day by reflecting and making sure there's no bug left before you check out.

However, I don't really have clear memory on the last time I had such a "typical" day. For now, my day has been cut up - on Slack, there're many

- quick pings,
- quick questions
- quick syncs

Usually these "quick actions" are longer than quick, while you may think "quick" means around 5 mins, they can easily expand to 30 mins or longer. Often, these quick threads will reproduce meetings - quick alignment for sure.

From my perspective, this is not good for productivity. Brain's switching contexts all the time, and all these quick actions preemptively take brain's CPU time, left very limited time for brain to process other tasks. It's also not right to have tasks' priorities been messed up - it's crucial to classify them: high - all you need to do is it right now, medium: need to do after high priorities, but important not to be interrupted by low; low: may be good and useful to take, but never should they preempt high and medium.

There were some methods I took to combat this,

1. Block focus time period on my work calendar. It doesn't work. People just ignore that and schedule meetings or ping me.
2. Set Slack status to be "focus - slow response". It just doesn't work like (1).
3. Share my honest thoughts with people that I hope to have focus time and rather than jumping into threads immediately I am pinged, I will process them several times a day. This worked for a while, but not continuing because people have high expectation that the longest delay between they send you a message with you reply should be ≤ 30 mins.

I'm thinking about combining (2) and (3), and set a principle for myself - to exit Slack at all during focus time. I can still be reached by phone, if it's urgent. Also, every time people request me to prioritize a new "quick action", I will confirm with them the priority level - is it p0 for me, or can it happen after 2 hours? It's always important to set the rules clearly.