I was visiting another office of my firm and asked one partner’s assistant if I could stick my head in his office to say “hello.” She wasn’t sure. He was “preparing for trial,” but she thought it was probably ok.

He was sitting in a comfortable chair, as far from his desk, phone and computer as was possible without leaving the room. No table in front of him. No stacks of paper scattered around the floor. All he had was a pipe and a legal pad, apparently full of his own notes.

I envied him the luxurious focus he was able to give to a single thing. My practice is never like that. I’m checking e-mails while I’m on a teleconference in between editing contracts, pleadings and bills. It often feels like the busier I am, the less I actually get done.

So when a friend recommended Dave Crenshaw’s *The Myth of Multitasking: How “Doing It All” Gets Nothing Done*. I was intrigued.

Crenshaw’s book is an easy read. Like a lot of this sort of thing, it’s built around a single, slightly counterintuitive idea that seems fairly obvious once it has been articulated. But, *The Myth of Multitasking* includes some engaging examples that help drive the point home – sometimes you can get more done by paying closer attention to fewer things at any given moment.

For me, the best test of a business/self-help book is whether I come away with any concrete ways of doing something better. This book inspired me to turn off the Microsoft Outlook function that creates a pop-up notice and a sound every time I get an e-mail. This small step actually made a substantial and immediate impact on my ability to focus on whatever matter I’m working on. For instance, I’ve written this entire review without seeing or responding to a single e-mail. I’ll check them as soon as I’m done.

The Professionalism Committee of the VBA’s Law Practice Management Division has been sponsoring “Integrated Life in the Law Book Luncheons” around the state, where lawyers gather to discuss one, two or three books. The focus of the discussion is always: what lessons about my life and practice can I find in this book? The books have included novels, histories, travel logs and, yes, some business and self help books. But the books really serve as a catalyst for conversation with peers about integrating our practice into our lives in increasingly satisfying and empowering ways.

There’s no pipe smoking (or any other kind) allowed in my office suite, and I really can’t ignore the phone or e-mail for very long. But a couple times a year, I can turn off my smartphone and enjoy an hour of conversation with a few of my fellow VBA members over lunch.

Stay tuned for information about an upcoming book luncheon near you, or check the LPMD page of the VBA website for more information. – Jim Guy