

Quiet Times, Cones of Silence, and Focus Lights: Insight into the War on Interruptions at ABB

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Dr. David Shepherd



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Abstract

Interruptions are one of the most pervasive time killers in modern office life. Questions that start with “This will only take a second...” waste hours of the average employee’s time over the course of a single week. Fortunately, at ABB, this is a problem we are attacking with a variety of solutions. Groups within ABB have piloted solutions from enforced quiet times, to manual “Do Not Disturb” signs, and now even automated “Do Not Disturb” lights. In this talk we’ll discuss the evolution of interruption-reducing solutions, highlighting the faults found with each, and we’ll present the most promising solution, the Focus Light, which has now been piloted in over six countries with over 200 employees.

About the Speaker

David C. Shepherd is a Senior Principal Scientist with ABB Corporate Research where he leads a group focused on improving developer productivity and increasing software quality. His background, including becoming employee number nine at a successful software tools spinoff and working extensively on popular open source projects, has focused his research on bridging the gap between academic ideas and viable industrial tools. His main research interests to date have centered on software tools that improve developers search and navigation behavior.

Reception in Dunn Hall 336 - 1:30pm