

Driver or Flake?

Ever had to use up your valuable time to chase others to do what they should be doing, just to be told “*I’ve been very busy*” (Like you’re not!)?

Ever had to chase for a long-outstanding response to an email, only to be told “*I’ve already dealt with the matter*” or “*I don’t yet have anything to tell you*” (and you were supposed to know that...how?!) or “*I’ve been away*” (but failed to set up an auto-response!) or “*I get a lot of emails*” (Who doesn’t?! And to be clear, we are not talking about unsolicited spam, but one from you, with whom they are supposed to be interacting)? Ever had to spend your time repeating questions or points, because someone else couldn’t be bothered to spend their time reading an earlier communication properly?

Ever been blown out of a meeting, but only when YOU called to confirm it or you happened to bump into the other person by chance (leaving you wondering when you would otherwise have known that they weren’t going to show)? Ever bust a gut to reach an appointment on time, only to then have to wait (because the other person’s time is apparently more valuable than yours)? Ever been let down by someone who failed to deliver on an important task and couldn’t even be bothered to give you the heads-up that they were definitely going to miss the agreed deadline?

Of course you can say “Yes” to all of the above. Over an average year, we each lose more time to such things than it would take to earn and then enjoy a seriously good holiday. And it’s not just about being robbed of our time. It often greatly hinders progress in whatever we are trying to achieve. The fact is that a large part of how we interact with others, whether at work or at play, relates to communications and scheduling. How we perform in these areas is essentially a matter of habit and most people habitually perform poorly. In short, most people are flaky!

A relatively small minority of people are not ‘flakes’. This is not to say that they are perfect and faultless saints. It simply means that their operating habits make them GENERALLY more dependable, reliable and less likely to be the cause of irritation, frustration and wasted time for others. It is these people who tend to drive progress in any endeavour, whatever it is – It doesn’t matter whether it is a business project, a group skiing holiday, a government initiative, a charity event, a crime-fighting operation, an alumni dinner or an expedition to the North Pole.

Whatever the subject matter, there will be a majority whose flakiness hinders progress. Hopefully, there will also be a minority whose operating habits help to drive things forward. ‘Drivers’ recognise one another quickly; it doesn’t take much interaction to recognise a fellow driver. There is not only mutual respect between drivers, but a genuine appreciation that each will make the other’s life easier, rather than having the negative impact on one another’s lives caused by flakes (i.e. ordinary people). If you’ve never experienced this mutual respect, you are probably a flake!

Drivers can spot a flake pretty quickly too and the scorn that they feel for them is underpinned by the irritation, frustration and time-wasting that they know is inevitably coming their way. However, flakes rarely know that they are flakes. There are a few who merrily declare “*I’m afraid I’m hopeless*”, as if there’s nothing they could do about it. However, most are unaware of how they differ from drivers, other than possibly thinking that one or two people in their lives are “*uptight and should chill out*”. Well, drivers could do more chilling, if flakes didn’t waste so much of their time!

Being busy is no excuse for flakery. Indeed, genuinely busy people have to be efficient to get everything done (including chasing flakes!). This is very different to being quite busy and very disorganised, like so many flakes. Drivers tend to be very busy, as they are those sort of people (“*Give a job to a busy person*”), but they are efficient and do not waste others’ time. This might take the form of an auto-response while away or telling someone “*Your email received. Will respond fully later*” or letting them know that an agreed task will now be delayed - Other people informed, their expectations managed, their time not wasted.

Clearly, many flakes have a huge amount to offer in experience, expertise, knowledge, creativity, talent, skill, etc, but their flakiness detracts from their overall usefulness in any endeavour. To be blunt, flakes are

simply less than they could otherwise be with whatever positive attributes they do have. Also, contrary to how some flakes might suggest, it isn't a case of 'Either Or', so don't fall for that one. Plenty of experienced, creative, talented and skilled people manage to be drivers too. Therefore, however brilliant and talented you are in other ways, you need to ask yourself:

"Do I want to be a driver or a flake when it comes to communicating and scheduling with others? Do I want to be efficient and organised, or flaky and unreliable? Do I want to help make things work or to mess people about? Do I want to be known as someone who drops the ball or as a safe pair of hands? Do I want to be respected or despised by the drivers with whom I interact?"

Anyone can decide to be a driver; it is just a matter of self-respect, valuing your own time and that of others, and following a few simple tips. Tips here are only suggestions from which to cherry pick. Any 'instructional tone' or apparent bossiness is purely in the interests of clarity!

Tasks

It is important to keep a record of your commitments to other people and theirs to you, without having to rely on memory. It is both more efficient and far more relaxing than clogging up your mind with reminders. Obviously, most people keep a diary of their schedule of appointments, but your interaction with others relates to so much more than just when and where you have agreed to meet, skype or call. What tasks have you each committed to completing and by when? What further tasks will such completions trigger, possibly involving others? What information have you given or received? What questions have you asked and when did you ask them?

Technical advances have made things so much easier than in the days of paper lists. It is now easy to keep all records on a PC, mobile or other device, updating them swiftly and easily. References here are to Microsoft's Outlook, but the same tips can also be applied to other 'organiser programmes'. The key elements referred to here are 'Mail', 'Tasks', 'Calendar', 'Notes' and 'Contacts'. Those using an organiser programme other than Microsoft's Outlook can simply apply the tips here to the equivalent elements of whatever programme they have. However, it is crucial to have a task element that allows Tasks to appear according to action dates.

If you use Calendar as a task list, it will become cluttered and achieve neither the purpose of a calendar nor that of a task list. Your Calendar is there to remind you of your appointments; who, when, where. You should be able to see your availability at a glance, so the less clutter there is the better. If the location is one that you visit often, its address should be in Contacts. If there are things that you want to remember to do or say in conjunction with an appointment, create a Task with that date. Some people use pop-up alerts to remind them of appointments. Others create Tasks ("*1300hrs Fred, Lunch, The White Horse*") as well as Calendar entries, thereby only viewing Calendar for availability, with all of their reminders for the day shown together in Tasks.

Use Tasks not only for one-off jobs ("*Write Letter to Robert*"), but also to manage ongoing areas of your life and your interactions with key individuals, or projects that may last a few weeks or months. These 'ongoing' Tasks are likely to have only the name of the overall subject in the subject box, with all the related things that you are doing or are awaiting from others in the body of the Task. This can include actions to be triggered by other things, references to emails, etc. You may decide to highlight ongoing Tasks by prefixing the title in the subject box with a common sign, to differentiate them and avoid deletions. One or more '1's works well ("*111 Domestic Accounts*").

Try not to clutter up even ongoing Tasks with too much information. The place for reference information is Notes. This might consist of lists, figures, etc, that are useful to have to hand, but do not essentially represent actions to be done by you or by others. The place for in depth detail of actions due from others is email. You might keep in a Task a high level of detail on actions to be carried out by YOU. However, there is no point in keeping such detail in relation to actions due from OTHERS in a Task that only you will see. Set out the detail clearly in an email and you will each have a copy. You can make reference to the email in

the relevant Task, in such a way that you can find it quickly; “*Responses due from Fred (see my email of 0935hrs on 15.01.19)*”.

If you plan to carry out an action once another action has been completed, put that in the Task “*Responses due from Fred (see my email of 0935hrs on 15.01.19) – Tell John Smith new prices*”. The more you put in the Task, the less you have to remember and the more relaxed you can be. Downtime isn’t proper downtime if your brain is subconsciously trying to retain numerous things of varying importance. The same applies to being able to focus properly on a matter at hand, without part of your brain having to concurrently juggle a whole load of things to be remembered. The more you record, the less you have to remember, so the more relaxed and/or focused you can be.

You can reduce clutter and save time spent in managing Tasks, by using your own abbreviations (As long as you are consistent and remember what your own ‘shorthand’ means!). For example; “*Responses due from Fred (see my email at 0935hrs on 15.01.19) – Tell John Smith new prices*” might be abbreviated to “*F Answers to ME150119-0935 – New prices to JS*”. Other time saving tricks (in Outlook) can include right clicking an email and dragging it into Tasks. This gives you the option of either putting the content of the email into the body of a new Task or putting the email in as an icon (In either case, the new Task’s subject automatically becomes the same as the email’s).

Make sure that each Task is set for a date on which you might reasonably hope to complete it (if it is a one-off Task) or might reasonably hope to address and progress it (if it is an ongoing Task). On most days, you probably won’t get round to all the Tasks that you have set yourself – That’s life! However, at least you will start the day knowing what you hope to achieve and you will end it being clear about what Tasks remain outstanding (and can change them to new dates when you hope to have time for them). In this way, nothing gets forgotten and you remain in control, without having to go to the effort of actually remembering anything.

Make sure that Tasks are listed in date order, so that you are able to focus on ‘Today’s Tasks’. If something is scheduled for a past date, it should be either addressed immediately or rescheduled. If something is scheduled for a future date, it need not distract you today. If, on looking at ‘Today’s Tasks’, you know that there is just no way that you will get to them all before the end of the day, then just reschedule each with a more realistic date. You may have to reschedule some or even all Tasks, because something unexpected comes up that must take priority, but it won’t be a case of “*I was going to do ‘X’, but an emergency came up and I then forget about it completely*”.

Some Tasks might be way in the future. A friend may have emailed in the autumn of 2018 saying “*Call when I’ve had a few months to settle into my new role and I will help you with your business*”, so you emailed back a quick Thank You and then created the Task “*Gary (ME210918-1536)*” with an action date sometime in February 2019. You can then forget about it completely until it pops up near the top of your task list in February 2019. Even then you may not remember what it means, until you swiftly access the email that you sent to Gary at 3.36pm on 21st September and see the subject matter. You can then send to Gary a forward of that email, taking him up on his kind offer.

To remind yourself that some Tasks MUST be done on a particular day or just as soon as possible, you can (in Outlook) set them as ‘High’ priority (This might include appointments for which you have created Tasks along with Calendar entries). Outlook Tasks can be set in date order first, followed by priority order (with High priority Tasks at the top). Some people use the ‘Low’ priority setting not to denote something of low priority, but to highlight at the bottom of the day’s Tasks something due to happen at the end of the day. Even if you run out of time and have to reschedule some ‘Ordinary’ priority Tasks, you may still want to set off for “*7pm Fred, Drink, WH*” that evening.

Bear in mind that some of your Tasks (or entries in the bodies of ongoing Tasks) will relate to actions that other people ‘owe’ TO you. This is because, at some point, each is likely to require an action FROM you. Your action might be to (a) chase with a telephone call, email or whatever, (b) decide to give them longer without chasing, (c) write them off as a time-waster or (d) tell another party that something YOU agreed to do is delayed as a result (Others’ flakery is no excuse for yours!). What is the first date that you would even

spend time considering which of those actions from you is most appropriate? OK, so give the Task that date. Maybe the person concerned will actually deliver before then, but don't hold your breath – Remember; most people are flakes!

If there was a timetable within which the other party agreed to complete an action, include that detail in the Task, such as '*due 220119*' (Due on 22nd January 2019). Also include a reference to the time and type of your last contact, such as '*ME150119-0935*' (My email of 9.35am on 15th January 2019). If it was an email, there may well be further detail in the email itself. By making reference to its date and time, you can quickly and easily find the email and therefore that detail. By using abbreviations and references to emails, etc, you can quickly create within a Task a short note that tells you exactly how the situation stands, including quite a bit of detail. For example:

"F Answers to ME150119-0935 (tel 200119 due 220119, VM & Text 230119) – New prices to JS" might tell you that you sent an email to Fred at 9.35am on 15th January 2019 requesting certain information (full details of which you can access in that email in your Outlook); you called to chase Fred on 20th January and he said he would get back to you in the next two days; he didn't, so you called again on 23rd, but he wasn't in, so you left a voicemail and sent a text; and when he sends the answers, which include the new prices, you need to remember to pass them on to John Smith. All of that is there, in one small line, without you having to actually remember a thing.

Emails

Emails are particularly important when dealing with flakes. Whereas two drivers might be capable of interacting over a matter swiftly and efficiently by telephone, text, WhatsApp, etc, emails might be appropriate if the matter involves interaction with a flake. Perhaps not surprisingly, it is often flakes who dismiss emails, somewhat sniffily, in favour of WhatsApp and other newer, shinier means of communication. Do not fall for this, as it is far harder to manage a flake (and flakes always need 'managing', whether working for you, with you or above you) once you have let them sidestep email.

Used properly, emails are an excellent means of interaction. They can be sent (or CC'd) to multiple parties, they can have multiple and complex items attached to them, they can be forwarded and they can be kept to form a record of communication. It is important to remember that it is sometimes better just to 'pick up the phone' than to embark on a lengthy email exchange. However, if you want to remind yourself and others of the details of requests made, information provided, matters agreed, etc, emails work well. Sometimes, it makes sense to 'pick up the phone' first and then confirm conclusions and/or details afterwards by email.

In most cases, it makes sense to build a chain of emails until a matter is concluded (by sending each new email as a Reply, Reply All or Forward of the last, as appropriate). This keeps everything (except attachments) in one record, making for easy reference for all concerned. You can find and access it all swiftly and easily, by keeping a simple reference (such as "*ME150119-0935*") in the relevant Task. Keeping emails in email chains also makes it harder for flakes to ignore things that they or others have sent, said, been told, etc.

Amongst other things, a series of unanswered 'chasing' emails is there for all to see (If you have to chase more than once by email, always do it as a forward of the previous email). Email chains can also save you from wasting time having to repeat yourself; "*Please can you provide answers to the questions in my email of 15.01.19 further below here?...*". If a flake sends you a 'fresh' email that ignores and/or conflicts with other emails sent before, you are well within your rights to block, copy and paste it into the chain before replying.

Sometimes, other people will use Reply All to continue a chain with the same recipients, but starting a discussion on a new subject. In such cases, it can sometimes be helpful to amend the subject title going forward. However, whether individually or in chains always remember that emails can be dangerous. They are not secure and you must always be careful what you write and what you attach. Chains are only appropriate if all emails in them should be seen by everyone receiving them. Before sending an email as

part of a chain, be sure that there isn't an email further down in the chain that shouldn't be seen by one of the people to whom you are sending the email!

If you are sending an email containing any degree of detail or complexity, ensure that it is clear and conveys what you want it to. This may sound obvious, but it bears stating. If the email covers a number of points or questions, break them into sections (maybe with headings), bullet points or whatever is appropriate. Sometimes it might help to highlight in bold questions, actions required of others, etc. It should be possible for the recipient(s) to work through the email swiftly and easily, glean the relevant information and identifying things required of them. Before sending an email, read it through slowly and carefully, imagining that you are the recipient, rather than the sender.

If you receive an email (from anyone with whom you are choosing to interact), always acknowledge or respond somehow within a REASONABLE amount of time (Do not feel that you must answer every email immediately, as that makes you unproductive, but there is a balance). This might be in the form of a full response addressing all of the issues referred to or just a holding email ("*I will revert to you by...*") or a telephone call or whatever. However, you should NEVER give the sender reason to have to send another email or call or text to chase for a response. The question "*Did you get my email*" is a polite way of saying "*You are a flake who has used up some of my valuable time in having to chase you*".

Clearly, what constitutes 'a reasonable amount of time' will depend on the circumstances, subject matter, etc. Also, life has its pecking orders and you may consider yourself to be very much more important than the sender, with the right to take longer in responding to them than you would wish for them to take in responding to you. Beware, as this seldom works, usually encouraging inefficiency in others or simply showing you as a flake. Drivers are either interacting with people or they are not. They are interested in efficiency in both directions, regardless of pecking orders.

The 'Out Of Office' auto-response is an excellent device. If you are going to be too busy to respond to most emails, either focusing on an important project or relaxing on holiday, an 'Out Of Office' auto-response sends that holding email without you having to do a thing. The key point is that you have managed expectations (instead of just leaving people wondering, then you eventually saying "*I've been away*"). Regarding content, less is probably more; date back, whom to call in an emergency in the meantime, etc.

When you have the time to address an email properly, work through it methodically and ensure that you address all elements requiring any response or other sort of action from you. If you have been asked to provide an action or answer, either provide it or say that you cannot do so yet (with a timescale of when you can) or even say that you cannot do so at all. Do not just ignore the request. The sender should never have to prompt. If you have said that you are going to have to find something out and get back to the sender...set a Task for yourself (including email references); "*Ask F for new prices – Send to JS (ME140119-1110)*".

Depending on the nature of the working relationship, it might be appropriate to save time for all concerned by answering 'inline'. This simply means that you provide swift answers/comments directly under the sender's questions/points within the text of the sender's email, using CAPITALS or whatever to differentiate your text (You may use a different colour or font, but that sometimes does not come through as different on other people's devices). Answering 'inline' may not be appropriate, if your working relationship with the recipient(s) requires more formality.

In the same way, time can be saved by dropping the topping and tailing of emails. However, it is important to ensure that such familiarity is appropriate, as it can otherwise come across as aggressive. Other email 'protocols' include whom to put in the 'To' and 'CC' boxes. In general, it is assumed that anyone who is expected to either respond or deliver an action will feature in the 'To' box, with those in the 'CC' box copied for information only. Consider carefully before responding with 'Reply All' if you have been BCC'd (blind copied) on an email. Those in the 'To' and 'CC' boxes may be offended by the fact that the sender BCC'd you.

If someone is kind enough to introduce you to someone else by email, the protocol is simple. Each person being introduced responds with an email, in which they first thank the introducer and then address the other person directly; *"Dear X, Thank you for this kind introduction. Dear Y, Good to meet you by email...etc"*. That way, the introducer knows that both people have seen the email and both have responded to it. They are now in contact. The introducer's job is done and they can leave it to the two of you to get on with it. Depending on the context, you both might continue to CC the introducer, but that usually isn't necessary.

Some people choose to keep old emails (sent and received) in multiple folders, in order to separate out projects or individuals. By using email references properly in Tasks, you shouldn't need more than two folders (*possibly with two more for older emails). You need one folder for emails that you have sent (a 'Sent' folder) and another for emails that you have received and read (a 'Read' folder). If you are looking for something, the emails in those folders can be reordered according to recipient/sender or according to subject, with one click. When you are done, it usually makes sense to then reorder them by date again and keep them ordered that way by default.

*If your Outlook (or other mail facility) is hosted and capacity is limited, you may decide to keep much older emails directly on the hard drive of a PC or a tablet in two folders (maybe calling them 'Sent before 01.07.18' and 'Read before 01.07.18'). In this way, you can retain the emails, without over-loading your hosting facility. It is relatively simple to link the two folders to your PC/tablet Outlook interface so that, when you are using that PC/tablet, they operate like any other folder. Just remember, if your Outlook (or equivalent programme) is synched between multiple devices, changes you make within those folders on that PC/tablet will not be reflected on other devices.

A key tip is never to let your inbox remain clogged or important things will go unaddressed. Some people attempt to use their inbox as a task list, leaving it clogged up with emails of varying importance to be dealt with (or not) at some point. This is as inefficient as trying to misuse Calendar as a task list. It is well worth going through your inbox regularly and clearing everything from it one way or another. It need not take long, because there are only five things that you will ever want to do with an email; act on it urgently, act on it later, forward it and/or store it or delete it.

If you act on something straight away (including making any related references in Tasks), you would then either store it or delete it, as appropriate. If something is less urgent and you are going to act on it later, you can swiftly convert a copy of the email into a Task (right clicking and dragging to Tasks, as described earlier) and/or make reference to it in a Task (*"Jane email 180119-1210"*) and store the email. Whatever the case, it doesn't need to sit clogging up your inbox. Having stored, deleted and/or forwarded everything else, you will have a nice clear inbox.

Meetings & Scheduled Calls

To avoid wasted time, it is often worth confirming by email a scheduled meeting, conference call or skype. It avoids misunderstanding and acts as a reminder to others with whom you have the appointment. If so, put the date, time and place in the Subject Box of the email. If it is a call or skype across time zones, make that clear; *"Skype Wed 21st Jan 0900UK/1700HK"* (Many a conference call has fallen foul of time zone misunderstandings!). Some people send an Outlook Calendar invitation. That can be slightly annoying for drivers, who will already have made the appropriate Calendar entry! However, it's good to know that the other party has it in their diary!

Creating Tasks in relation to appointments (as well as making Calendar entries) may appear to be overkill, but has some logic. It means that all the things you plan to do in a given day, whether appointments to be met or jobs to be done, appear together with one glance at the day's Tasks (although Outlook does allow you to display the day's Calendar entries next to Tasks on your PC, these may not appear on your mobile). Also, you may wish to remind yourself of various things related to an appointment (Points to make, questions to ask, etc). These should not clog up your Calendar, which should give you an uncluttered view of your schedules and availability. It is also quick to do – Having made a Calendar entry, just block and copy the text and stick it in a Task.

If it is a physical meeting, make sure that you and other parties have one another's mobile numbers. It often cannot be helped that one party is delayed, but it matters a lot less if they let others know. Far better to be catching up with emails, having had a text saying "*Running late – 10 mins*", than to be left waiting and wondering if the other party has forgotten or if maybe there has been confusion over the meeting place. As with all interactions with others, put yourself in their shoes and remember that they don't know what you know, unless you tell them! It doesn't even matter if you send a text saying that you will be late, but then manage to make up time and arrive punctually.

Less to do with scheduling and communications, but worth a mention anyway, is a tip known by some as 'Lift Rules'. If you and a colleague are entering a building on your way to a meeting or leaving it afterwards, it is important to remember that the people around you (in lifts, lobbies, etc) may well be connected with those with whom you are meeting. A classic example is the team that has just delivered its pitch or negotiation and starts to 'post-mortem' going down in the lift afterwards. Having built up to an important meeting, maybe over many days of hard work, the release of tension once it is over can lead people to blurt out all sorts of things best said in private.

Further Tips

Make sure that your Outlook (or whatever programme you are using) is backed up. You must feel comfortable that the theft, loss or damage of one device does not mean losing all your records. You may do this by using two or more devices (such as telephone, PC and/or tablet) that synch with one another or you may use a cloud facility. Whatever is the case, ensure that you are covered.

If you have decided to write off a flake, you want to be able to remove them from your Task list. However, if you do so, even with the ball left firmly in their court, they may subsequently contact you suggesting the reverse to be the case. To cover for this, you can create a large Note into which you copy the last Task entries relating to all the flakes (alphabetically) whom you write off. That way you can purge the flakes from your Task list, but still be in a position to immediately access the last state of play, should they decide to resurrect themselves back into your life.

Cash Debts

Having to be chased to do a task or respond to a communication is 'time theft', as it uses up the valuable time of whoever has to chase you. However, far worse still is to have to be chased by another person to pay an actual financial debt. This need not relate to repayment of an official loan and may simply be a matter of reimbursing a friend who has paid for tickets, organised a group dinner or covered any other sort of expenditure on behalf of others in a clear and reasonable expectation of reimbursement. To have to chase a friend for money is embarrassing. To be so chased by a friend SHOULD be mortifying! It betrays a far greater character flaw than just that of being a flake.

Conclusion

A few key tips and points to remember are as follows:

- What you keep in electronic form, you don't have to remember, enabling you to focus properly on matters at hand when working and to completely relax when not working.
- Being properly organised will make you more efficient and will enable you to manage others so that they are less likely to let you down, waste your time, etc.
- Being efficient doesn't have to be time-consuming – With your own shorthand and date-time references to stored emails, you can tell yourself a lot with a little (and SAVE time).
- Keep your Tasks sorted in date order (Only today's Tasks deserve your attention today).

- Don't try to use Calendar or your inbox as a task list (It will be inefficient from all angles).
- Try never to be in a situation where someone needs to chase you (If the ball is in your court either play it or, if you cannot yet do so, send a holding message saying so).
- Put yourself in the shoes of those with whom you interact; "Is this email absolutely clear?"; "Do they know I'm running late?"; "Are they aware that the info isn't available yet?".
- Never, ever leave overdue the payment of a personal financial debt.
- Always ensure that your records are backed up.
- Talent, skill or expertise are no excuse for flakery (Plenty of talented, skilled and expert people are also efficient).
- Anyone can decide to be a driver.

As previously stated, nobody is suggesting that drivers are perfect beings. They forget things, they miss appointments and they let people down, just like everyone else. What makes them different is that they do these things a lot less, because they at least set out to be efficient. They habitually use simple systems to make them far less likely to forget things, miss appointments or let people down in other ways, with the result that they are GENERALLY more efficient and reliable than the average flake. Other drivers appreciate this and it never feels so bad being let down by someone who you know does not make a habit of it. Being consistently let down by a flake is wearying.

Flakes often try to excuse their inefficiencies by saying how busy they are (and maybe this makes them feel important too). Hearing this makes drivers' skins crawl with weary scorn (behind the polite smiles!). Just to be clear, there is nothing wrong with saying "*I'm very busy, so I won't be able to deliver until...*". That is called good planning and, crucially, it puts the other party in the picture from the start, managing their expectations. Again, everyone gets swamped and fails to deliver according to agreed schedules, just as nobody is on time for every appointment. However, a driver does not make a habit of it and usually keeps others informed when things will be delayed.

You may have read this all the way through and think that it amounts to no more than a heap of anal control-freakery! However, imagine a world full of drivers, where time was seldom wasted, things did not constantly need to be repeated and people who agreed to do things either did them according to schedule or told you as soon as they realised that they could not. How much extra time would you have in which to achieve things or simply to relax and enjoy life? Well that is never going to happen!! Flakes have always outnumbered drivers and they always will (How telling that iPhone's basic package doesn't include Tasks!).

However, you can at least not be one of the flakes responsible for causing life to be a treacle-wade, you can make your own life a little easier and you can enjoy the respect of fellow drivers.