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**Dot Calm: The Search for Sanity in a Wired World** by Debra Dinnocenzo & Richard Swegan, Berrett Koehler Publishing, 110 Pages, \$14.95 Paperback, June 2001, ISBN 157675152X

Today, one of my employees came to me with a solution to all my problems – a cordless headset. With a cordless headset, I wouldn't be tied to my desk, and I'd never miss a call when in the warehouse or customer service department, working alongside my employees. There's nothing I dislike more than hearing my phone ring, knowing I'll never get back to my office, pick up and put on my headset, before the call goes into voicemail. So many ways to stay connected. Voicemail. Email. Pager. Cell phone. Laptop. What a world! We can be anywhere, doing anything, and yet never be out of reach of our clients, co-workers, partners, bosses, secretaries, assistants.... But what is the drawback to this kind of connectedness? Unfortunately, staying connected also means we are rarely 'disconnected', and it also means that words, such as "calm", "sanity", and "balance", pepper our vocabulary quite infrequently. You've seen that wine commercial where a group of 30-somethings meet for a relaxing dinner on the lake, and when a phone call comes in for one of the men, he decadently throws the cell phone into the water? Ever felt like doing that? Even while you are compelled to buy more and more technology to stay more and more connected? Well, then, it's time for you to read [dotcalm](#).

You all know that I love "airplane reads"—books that can be read on a flight from Chicago to NYC or LA, gets to the point quickly, and still provides the reader with essential information. [Dotcalm](#) encapsulates my vision of the perfect "airplane read". As you read, you will have moments of enlightenment, moments when the authors describe circumstances you have lived and experienced exactly as they describe it. Here, I must acknowledge that I am one of the people they interviewed in the research for this book. I also must acknowledge that I am not one of the enlightened ones, that I rarely disconnect, but we all have to start somewhere, and I will use this book to move toward a saner life.

In their research, the authors have discovered three major trends that dictate our lives in this crazed, connected world: *Access Overload*, *Information Overload*, and *Work Overload*. Now, limiting access, information, and work would take an awful lot of willpower, but it would also allow me to go on vacation with my wife without a cell phone riding shotgun. The authors provide excellent assistance to help overcome overload, including a website that makes available all of the worksheets in the book. Great idea, because you can share the book with co-workers and reuse the worksheets—wait a minute, I am supposed to sell books.... The book has a multitude of takeaways, pages and pages of practical advice. Examples? Use only one technological tool—voice mail, cell, laptop, etc.—when you're on personal time; voice mail always comes first, as the higher priority items wait in your voice mail; use the "Delete" button early and often (my personal favorite).

Throughout the book, the authors intersperse quotes gathered from their research interviews. The quotes add a realism to the book, as in: "I had no strategy—to disconnect—until I had a baby, a screaming or sleeping child will completely disconnect you!" Ain't that the truth. I think the story that really captures the point of this book is the one by James J. Cramer, CEO of [thestreet.com](#). He tells of the day he got his priorities straight during a very intense day of his life. It is a great story and this is a great book that could, if you let it, change your life, too.