

# VOMO - The Value Of Missing Out

You know the feeling as you watch your friends doing something online or at an event which you're witnessing from afar. You get that terrible feeling where you really wish you were there to experience it first hand. We call this FOMO which stands for Fear Of Missing Out. The problem with FOMO ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear\\_of\\_missing\\_out](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear_of_missing_out)) is...well there are actually a lot of problems with FOMO including:

- **FOMO is manufactured and self-fulfilling** - the more you get among a large crowd and see the events and learning opportunities then the more you may find yourself enjoying the addiction of being close to it which means taking time and attention from other things
- **FOMO creates an unhealthy sense of a lack of belonging** - there is an actual psychological impact when people are missing the crowd which includes increased stress, feeling of a lack of belonging and importance, and that can trigger other negative behaviours and feelings
- **FOMO consumes your time, attention, and reduces focus on what you are in front of** - you may be right in the crowd of people while searching out your social media feed to see what's next and missing out on key personal interactions which were the original reason you attended these events
- **Being there is not going to fix FOMO...because it comes back** - FOMO is a permanent condition until you learn to break the habit and realize how to balance being at events and places with being effective at not being at them
- **You can't be everywhere at once** - while you're trying to be everywhere you find yourself not even successfully being where you are at the moment and this can trigger an almost paralyzing effect where you lose attention, increase stress, and the list goes on with the potential negative psychological effects

What's the solution? It's actually very easy once you make the choice to embrace not just being outside of the event but to actually detach from the feeling of loss from not being there.

There was discussion about VOMO on the podcast in Episode 71 with Ethan Banks here: <https://discoposse.com/2019/03/22/podcast-episode-71-productivity-hacks-and-deep-work-with-ethan-banks-ecbanks-of-the-packet-pushers/>

## **Enter VOMO - The Value Of Missing Out**

In the early part of my foray into the tech community I watched the adventures being chronicled on Twitter and wanted so eagerly to be a part of the activity. Having a chance to be there live was finally a chance to experience it first hand. It was exhilarating. There was always little micro-gatherings at the event and party opportunities for after-hours catch up with people from all around the world who I had followed on Twitter for all of those years.

Then I realized what was happening. The more I was seeking the group and they sought me, the more I felt that I was missing another part of the same event. I started to notice that more people were 30 minutes into their chat and already deciding (with faces down in their phones) where to go next to do something else. But...but...we are all right here?!

They were in the midst of the event and they still had FOMO. I was talking to the top of people's heads as they put their faces downwards into their Twitter timeline and DMs looking for where

everyone else was who was at the event. There was all this weird back-channel discussion and inside joke exchange which seemed fun at first and then started to hit me that they weren't even experiencing where they were and they were on the way to the next place where they would not be in the moment either.

So, I said "I'll see you at the next" and headed back for a long quiet walk to the hotel. It was glorious. I was seeing the same thing on Twitter already and I got a chance to unwind and relax. The relaxation opened up my creativity and I wrote a blog or two for the following day's news and announcements. I had discovered the value of missing out on the real-time event for a small part of the evening.

## **VOMO for Entire Events**

The next battle we fight is missing the event altogether. As a career technology evangelist who is paid to be in the know on technology, trends, and behaviours, I have a need to be amongst the people who use technology every day. There is seemingly no better place than in the heart of a tech event, right? I was live-blogging keynotes from the community lounges and sharing my insights and then suddenly realized that I could do a lot of that remotely as well. I really enjoy the event experience, but what happens when you have to be at 4 different one-week events in a year and be away from family and your day-to-day activities?

My personal learning was that I could be nearly as effective from afar as I could be right on the floor at the event unless I had specific meetings or locally-accessible things that needed a hands-on touch. This led me to start blogging more and more for events I was not at and these often got more readership because I was offering a truly uninterrupted view and was not caught up in the activity so I had more time and attention to put to it.

In the same way that I had detached partially and gotten work done before, I was now able to wholly miss the in-person event and be as effective or sometimes more effective at contributing to that event and to the work I did related to it. I had expanded my ability to find the Value Of Missing Out.

## **VOMO is Freedom to Detach and Still be Connected in Your Chosen Way**

The reason that I needed to experience VOMO was that there were literally multiple events at the same time in different parts of the country where each was as important as the other. Learning to experience them without needing to be there was a necessity. Doing so also unlocked time, creativity, and reduced the stress levels of feeling like something was being missed.

VOMO is about freedom to experience things in your way and to be guilt-free and attention-rich. The more I travel to events the more I find myself doing some partial VOMO to get really productive work done. It's not that we don't enjoy meeting lots of friends and our peers in the community. The trick is finding the balance of getting what you want out of the event without it taking something out of you. Freedom is a wonderful thing.

I hope that you experience some VOMO soon and enjoy it as much as I do. Remember our list at the top and how this affects us. Time to take back your freedom and enjoy the Value Of Missing Out.