PERSONAL & BUSINESS

I Solve My Hardest Design Problems in the Shower

By **Keith Parsons, CWNE #3** · 2026-07-01 · originally on LinkedIn

I solve my hardest Wi-Fi design problems in the shower. After 25 years, I trust that more than my whiteboard.

There is a brain-science post going around about the Default Mode Network, the part of your brain that lights up when you stop concentrating and step away from a problem. The core of it is real. I have lived it for a quarter century. The trouble is it gets the science wrong in five specific ways, and the wrong parts are the parts everyone is quoting.

Marcus Raichle found the network in the late 1990s and named it in a 2001 paper. Your brain is 2% of your body weight and burns about 20% of its energy. All true.

Here is what to stop repeating: The Default Mode Network uses 20% of your body's energy." No. The whole brain does. The network is one piece inside it.

60 to 80% goes to the network." Mislabeled. That figure is the brain's constant internal signaling, not one network. The honest version: the extra energy a hard task adds is tiny, under 5%.

A break makes you 40% more creative." The 40% is real, but only for problems you were ALREADY working on. New problems got zero benefit.

Insights vanish in 90 seconds." Invented. No study behind it.

Strip away the bad numbers and the real takeaway is sharper. Incubation only works on a problem you have already fully loaded in. The walk, or shower, does not invent the idea. It finishes what your focused brain started.

That is exactly how good Wi-Fi design works. Load every constraint first, the client mix, the data rates, the materials, the survey data, the co-channel contention you are trying to avoid.

Engage it hard until the whole tangle is in your head. Then step away. More often than I can count, the answer that would not come at the desk arrives in the shower.

A blank mind on a walk stays blank. Load the hard problem first, then go for a walk, take a nap, do something that doesn't need focused attention.

I cannot claim my experiences prove any of those quoted numbers. But the practice the science points to is the one I already live.

What is the last hard problem you solved away from your desk, and had you done the focused loading first?

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