

How to effectively overcome your procrastination

Author: Takudzwa Vanessa Machingauta . July 2020

Once in awhile everyone pushes pending tasks off to a later time. Chronic procrastinators, however, avoid tasks and may deliberately look for distractions. Napoleon Hill (1937), famously said, “procrastination is the bad habit of putting off until the day after tomorrow- what should have been done yesterday”.

A study done by the Telegraph in 2015 concluded that the average person loses approximately 55 productive days to procrastination. Common reasons that come from people who put off tasks right until the last minute range from sheer laziness to only being able to work well under pressure. According to Psychology Today, procrastination is driven by a variety of thoughts and habits. They put across the hypothesis that fundamentally, we avoid tasks or put them off because [we do not believe we'll enjoy doing them](#), and want to avoid making ourselves unhappy, or we [fear](#) that we won't do them well.

Psychologists Axel Grund and Stefan Fries (2018) bring in a different school of thought. They classify procrastinating behaviour as reflecting not just failure to follow through with our intentions, but not holding the intention to be on time in the first place. This is because an individual will have a clear knowledge of the consequences of not adhering to stipulated deadlines and not comply anyway.

Generally, literature seems to converge to four types of procrastinators. These are; The perfectionist, The Dreamer, The Avoider and The Crisis Maker. A few websites have ad-hoc tests to classify procrastinator's into the category that they fit into. Going more into detail into the different types of procrastinators;

The Perfectionist

A perfectionist is an individual who refuses to accept any standard short of perfection. Procrastination from a perfectionist comes from dreading to start a task because they get stressed out about getting every detail right. They can also get stuck in the process even when they've started since they're just too scared to move on. This will also mean that all the other projects and keep getting pushed back.

To encourage more productivity to the perfectionist, it is recommended setting reasonable time limits on work so that other projects are not affected. Procrastination from a perfectionist comes more from time-management issue than anything else. Setting goals for each task that are SMART i.e Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-based will ensure that the individual does not get sidetracked by minor details.

The Dreamer

This type of procrastinator who enjoys the planning process but rarely actions their resolutions to

completion. They're constantly coming up with new projects to take on — and then getting bored with them a week later. They're intrigued by the latest trend and will be quick to implement but not follow through. This is also referred to as the shiny object syndrome.

To overcome this type of procrastination, one must resolve to see themselves to the end of a project before starting another one. Multi-tasking is not necessarily a bad thing but not when it results in numerous incomplete projects at deadlines.

The Avoider

The avoider comes down as the stereotypical procrastinator. Individuals in this category put off doing unpleasant tasks until the very last minute. The tasks can be seen as challenging and requiring too much effort.

A way of going around this would be to break down the tasks into subsections so it does not look too daunting. Starting with the more complex aspects may enable one to feel motivated to complete the remaining sections.

The Crisis Maker

This is the group of procrastinators who believe that they work best under pressure. The crisis maker tag comes from that they will deliberately create stressful conditions, i.e. wait until the very last minute to begin a task. This external stimulus prompts an adrenaline rush resulting in action. The downside to this, however, is that quality of work is greatly affected as there is little time to go back and check for errors. In the long term, this affects the reliability of the work that is done by this type of individual.

If one still insists that they can only work under pressure, they can manoeuvre this by creating better timed artificial conditions for themselves. One way would be to use The Pomodoro Technique developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s. The crux of this technique is to work in short, intensely focused bursts, and then give yourself subsequent brief breaks to recover. This is a method that will simulate the conditions of urgency but one will be way ahead of the actual deadline.

Procrastination if left unchecked, can become a debilitating habit. To beat procrastination one has to admit that there is a problem, figure out why they tend to procrastinate and then address this habit with a relevant strategy.

Takudzwa Vanessa Machingauta is a consultant at Industrial Psychology Consultants (Pvt)- a business management and HR consulting firm

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