

Report on **Business**

Bye, bye procrastination, hello, productivity

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The scenario

I am the classic procrastinator. I always mean to do far more than I actually accomplish. It took me five years to do a four-year university degree.

On my off days, I read the newspaper for two hours before doing the breakfast dishes. In the office environment, I survive because my work involves immediate, real-time actions that I know very well, and very little long-term planning. Still, my procrastinating has hurt my career.

Funny thing, though: When I do work, I actually enjoy it and often have a hard time stopping. Any mentoring on becoming more a person of action?

The advice

There are many reasons for procrastination but, as you described, this habit doesn't serve us well. If you want to make a change, remove judgment on this as a character flaw and see it as an opportunity to replace limiting habits with more productive choices to have more success at work and in life. That's a more inspiring proposition.

Here are some tips:

Question your actions

You need to get started to build momentum. A helpful way to kick that off is to ask yourself positive, action-oriented questions that will motivate you to move forward. For instance: "What can I do right now to get started on task X?"

And when you catch yourself procrastinating, ask: "How does my choice to procrastinate rob me of my desire to be more productive and fulfilled? What can I choose differently right now so I can be more successful?"

Consider posting these types of questions somewhere visible until you get into the habit of asking them more automatically.

Schedule it

Since loosey-goosey doesn't work for you, force yourself to follow schedules.

Use day-timers, alarms and other devices to prompt you to start and keep you on track.

Leverage strengths

Since you work well when real-time actions within short time frames are required, incorporate more of them into your day.

For instance, establish daily to-do lists, assigning tasks with start times and deadlines.

Be as specific as possible. For instance, don't just tell yourself that you have to send out an e-mail. Instead write: "Send e-mail to John by 11 a.m." Writing out such specifics sets out the intention, adds focus and spurs more purposeful action.

Break it down

If a task feels too big or overwhelming, divide it into smaller, actionable chunks. Again, focus on the start, then keep asking yourself what must be done next. Once you get going, you will probably move forward more easily.

Be mindful

of the moment

If you tend to get lost in time, practice becoming more mindful of how you use or lose each and every moment. With more awareness, you can choose to use your time more responsibly.

Celebrate successes

Acknowledge the victories, large and small, along the way.

Notice what happens to your energy level, confidence and mindset when you use your time more productively. I bet you'll feel differently about yourself and be more motivated to keep practising these new habits.

Say goodbye to procrastination and hello to productivity.

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