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Are You a Pro at Procrastination?

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Procrastination. We all do it to some extent, but did you know that the degree to which you procrastinate can keep you from success? When coaching my clients on time management issues, undoubtedly procrastination comes up as one of the stumbling blocks to getting things done. Do you make any of these statements?

I work best under pressure.

I'm much more creative when I do things at the last minute.

I have plenty of time. My deadline is not until tomorrow.

So why do we do it? People procrastinate for different reasons. Do any of these ring true for you?

- Poor time management, often associated with a distorted sense of the time available
- An inability to prioritize tasks
- "Biting off more than you can chew" – creating an overload of tasks at a specific time
- Not knowing what is required to do the task
- Feeling overwhelmed by the task(s)
- Fear of failure or not meeting your own standards
- Fear of success and its possible consequences
- Perfectionism, having unrealistic standards
- Boredom – task is not interesting or not important to you
- Avoidance of things which are disliked or difficult

How to Overcome Procrastination

Procrastination is a habit and to overcome procrastination you need to create new habits. As you know, habits are hard to break. Before you can create new habits, you need to take an honest assessment of how you manage your time; identify the reason(s) you're procrastinating (see list above); and examine the typical procrastination excuses that you use. Once you have a clearer understanding of your behavior patterns, you'll be able to develop new behaviors that are related to your specific issues.

A misconception is that this is a one size fits all solution. Only you can discover what obstacles are in your way so that you can overcome them. Your reasons for procrastinating are personal to you, and once you bring them to your awareness level and create a plan of action to make changes, you will see results that will work for you.

Tips to Create New Habits

- ✓ Think about the consequences (identify the negative results of not completing the task).
- ✓ Get organized. Make a "to do" list of what needs to get done.
- ✓ Schedule your activities that need to get done when you are at your peak productivity time. So, if you are an early bird or a night owl, take this into consideration.
- ✓ Don't over schedule yourself. Be realistic in what you can get done.
- ✓ Break large tasks into smaller, more manageable projects.

- ✓ Visualize yourself completing the task successfully and how you will feel at that time.
- ✓ Research what you don't know.
- ✓ Delegate it to someone who can help you (get some coaching).
- ✓ Motivate yourself with a reward for completing the task (make it exciting -- something you wouldn't ordinarily give yourself).
- ✓ Dwell on your strengths on tasks you have accomplished.
- ✓ Stop trying to be perfect. Are your standards too high? It's better to produce something rather than nothing!
- ✓ Make a decision. Sometimes it is better to risk the possibility of making a mistake than to not make the decision at all.
- ✓ Minimize distractions. Turn off the email notification sound on your computer; silence your phone; or hang a Do Not Disturb sign on your door.
- ✓ Implement the "Do it now!" mantra. Whenever you catch yourself thinking, "I can do this later," think "DO IT NOW!" Every time you follow through and do it now you are reinforcing the positive habit of action.

Success = Action

Successful people take action. They manage their time by planning for the future and setting goals and action plans. Habits of procrastination will keep you from taking action and acquiring the success you deserve in your life.

The challenge is to consistently practice new behaviors and overcome self defeating habits that keep you from your goals. There is no magic wand. Increasing your awareness and having clear strategies to stay focused will show results. If you have any stories or comments about dealing with or overcoming procrastination, visit my Facebook Fan Page at www.facebook.com/ElkayCorporateAdvisors and share on my wall. ■



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