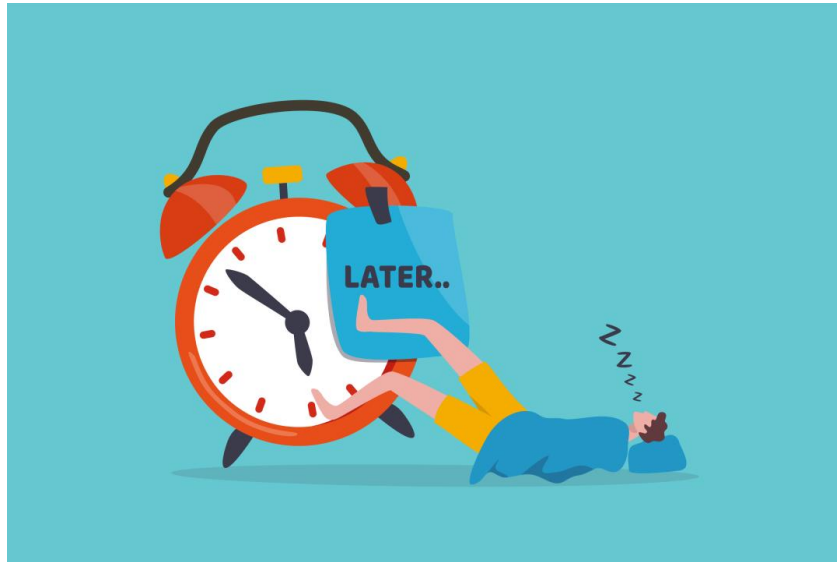


From Delay to Delivery: Breaking the Procrastination Habit



Abraham Lincoln once said “Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle.” Whether at work or at home, we all procrastinate. Life is busy and many of us are juggling a variety of tasks.

As your “to do” list grows, it’s often hard to get started. Research shows that procrastinators aren’t lazy or have poor time-management skills, they’re often busy with less urgent activities driven by impulses, emotions or worry. Putting off key tasks can take a significant toll on both output and morale, yet even high-performing professionals struggle with it. The good news is that procrastination is a habit – not a personality trait – and habits can be changed.

What is Procrastination?

Procrastination is defined as “the voluntary delay of an intended course of action despite expecting negative consequences for the delay.” It’s different from a planned postponement or a strategic delay. When we procrastinate, we *know* we’re acting against our own interests, yet we do it anyway.

There are many reasons people procrastinate. These include a fear of failure, to perfectionism and lack of motivation. Perhaps we don’t see the task as meaningful. The feeling of being overwhelmed can also lead to paralysis leading to even further delays.

Over time, procrastination can take its toll on our physical and mental health, as well as on organizational productivity. In the professional workplace, reliability is currency and work that’s delayed has a reputational impact beyond the actual delay itself.

Given the potential high cost of procrastination, here are 6 ways to break the habit:

Break Down Your Tasks

Instead of feeling overwhelmed by your “to do” list, break down tasks into small achievable steps. Rather than telling yourself “Write report”, start with “Write down draft titles and list a few key points.” This builds momentum and gives you the motivation to continue the task. Don’t set unattainable goals. This leads to frustration and disappointment when it could have been handled more effectively.

Give Yourself a Break

Practice self-compassion and avoid self-criticism or you might spiral into more avoidance behavior. Remember that most people are going through the same thing so, reframe the exercise to something like “Everyone struggles and I’m learning.” Be kind to yourself. Self-compassion can move you forward more productively.

Eliminate Distractions

Procrastination is often the result of distractions. It’s critical to identify any distractions that might be holding you back or hindering your productivity. If you need to do one thing – for example, cold calls – maintain your focus and don’t monitor your email or social media during this time. Exceeding your planned timeframe for a specific task can negatively impact your entire schedule for the day.

Adjust Your Mindset

One way to effectively change self-behavior is to reframe self-identity. Stop calling yourself a procrastinator, and start seeing yourself as someone who can deliver results. In business, identity shapes behavior, behavior shapes habits and habits shape performance. High performers act like people who finish, so try to model yourself after them. Don’t dwell on the negative and have confidence in yourself!

Reduce the Number of Decisions

Every decision we make impacts our energy. Should I hit the gym today or tomorrow? Should I lunch with Fred from accounting or go solo to finish up my presentation? Asking too many questions compels us to make decisions which end up draining our energy and diminishing our self-control. Try to reduce the number of decisions you have to make throughout the day by making them ahead of time. Pick out your clothes the night before and decide in advance which days of the week you’ll exercise.

Reward Yourself

Set up a reward system for completing tasks or meeting deadlines. This increases motivation by creating positive associations with task completion. Enjoy your favorite

snack, take a 15-minute walk or buy a fancy coffee. Remember that each step forward is another victory in the battle against procrastination.

In today's competitive workplace, the people who move from ideas to action quickly are the ones who truly stand out. Procrastination is a complex behavior stemming from issues deeply rooted in our psychology and biology. The goal isn't to eliminate procrastination entirely, but to develop a healthier relationship with our tasks and responsibilities.

Overcoming procrastination is a journey, not a destination. It's a professional habit that can be redesigned. By minimizing distractions, shifting our mindset and prioritizing progress over perfection, individuals and teams can turn intention into execution.