

8 Ways To Overcome Procrastination

By Andrew Laing & Gary Wilkinson

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1). Do it once.

How many times do you receive a letter or email and read it, and then put it into an action tray for another occasion?

Needless re-reading of emails and letters achieves nothing.

When you first read a letter or email, you generally know what action needs to be taken. By reading the letter twice, this only doubles your reading time and the job is still not done.

Answer the letter or email the first time you read through it.

The benefits are that you:

Save time.

Create better customer satisfaction

Accomplish a task that otherwise would have prevented you from doing more important things.

2). Clear your mind.

It is so easy to get ourselves bogged down thinking about all of the jobs that we should have done but haven't got round to doing yet.

The sheer volume of tasks that we need to do on a daily basis, but haven't got round to doing distracts us from concentrating on and completing the immediate tasks ahead of us.

This calls on us to prioritise our tasks.

While this can be a good way of determining what jobs we should do first, it can also be a good excuse NOT to do something.

We always tend to do the jobs that we enjoy first and all of the unimportant tasks get put off until another time...if they ever get done at all:o)

This is dangerous as it means that we still can't focus on the task in hand properly as we are conscious of the jobs that we know we should be doing but are putting off. I have lived my life by making lists for a long time, however this wasn't always constructive.

I remember being so proud of my list of tasks for the day until it dawned on me that the last few items on my list never, ever changed.

These were jobs which needed to be done, but ones that I considered to be 'low priority'. As a result I was always concentrating on the 'high priority' tasks.

I then decided that if I had considered the job important enough to be listed in the first place then it had to be actioned that day.

I was soon able to eliminate these smaller tasks very quickly and was able to get on with my more important jobs with a clear conscience.

I then made it my goal not to let tasks accumulate in the first place.

The benefits are:

That my level of concentration has increased

Not only do I finish more tasks, but I finish them off better and more efficiently than before.

Concentrate and focus on what you are trying to do and don't be distracted by all of the things that you haven't done.

3). Solve problems before they grow into disasters.

It doesn't matter what job we are in, things are bound to go wrong at some point or another.

The more experienced we become in our job we will be able to spot the warning signs of an imminent disaster looming towards us and do something it.

If not, then the problem will just get bigger and it will take longer to sort out and it could be damaging to our business.

Why take the risk?

Get into the habit of solving problems as soon as you spot those warning signs and you will catch them while they are still small, stopping them from becoming huge, time-consuming disasters.

The benefit is that you will have more time to concentrate on the more important things.

4). Look at ways of reducing interruptions.

Let's face it, if it wasn't for all of the interruptions, we would have got all our jobs done...right?

Most of us, at one time or another, have had to justify the reason for not getting a job done is because of interruptions.

However rather than try to tackle them, some think that controlling interruptions is beyond their control and something that comes with the territory.

When I first told my friends that I was working from home they interpreted this as, "I am free for you to pop in for a coffee and chat anytime you want. When I say I work from home what I mean is that I sit around and watch T.V. all day long".

After months of interruptions and attempting to give them polite hints I had to resort to giving them timetables on when I would and would not be free. If anybody chose to ignore that, then, when they called I would firmly but politely tell them that I was working and couldn't be disturbed.

They soon got the message.

Another reason for interruptions though could be as direct result of us not having got a job done in the first place.

As a result, this delays things even further as not only do we have to deal with the job in hand but we also have to deal with the person wanting to know why the job isn't done yet, which creates even more work.

This also has a knock-on effect as we feel bad about not having done the work in the first place. None of us like having to make excuses when a person is relying on us.

So, to avoid the interruptions, do the jobs related to them.

You get to spend more time doing a good job for that person and less time explaining to them why you haven't done it.

Gain a reputation for getting a job done on time and you will eliminate the interruptions from your clients wanting to know why their job isn't completed yet.

5). Get rid of Backlogs.

If you have an accumulation of backlogs, you must address these if you are going to get your work flow under control.

Backlogs create their own additional work, so if you want to cut down on your workload then you will need to get rid of these backlogs as soon as possible.

How?

Use these five simple steps:

- 1) Identify the backlogs.
- 2) Prioritise what backlogs you need to tackle first.
- 3) Schedule time each day to tackle some of the backlogs and eliminate them.
- 4) Identify the cause of the backlog.
- 5) Take steps to prevent the backlogs from building up again.

Once you get rid of these backlogs then you will be able to get on with running your business efficiently again.

6). Keep focussed

If you fail to identify backlogs or prevent interruptions or stop small problems from turning into major disasters then you will become overwhelmed by all of the jobs that you need to do.

You won't be able to focus on the important tasks ahead of you.

You want your business to progress and not be stuck in a perpetual state of disasters and procrastinations.

Stay focussed on where your business is going and move towards your goals, getting rid of problems along the way.

7). Don't worry about it.

The more that you put off the worse that you will feel and this will have a detrimental effect on your business.

All of us are prone to putting off unpleasant tasks. Facing up to these tasks and completing them isn't always easy, but the consequences of not doing them can be much worse than not dealing with the task as soon as possible.

What then happens is that we will end up dwelling on the task that we should have done and worry about not doing it.

It prevents us from being able to get on with our business with a positive and constructive attitude.

Perhaps you can think of some big problem that you have had in the past. No amount of worrying solved that problem. It was only when we took decisive action that the problem could be resolved.

If you learn to face up to a problem or unpleasant task and do something about it, you will find that your worries will disappear rather quickly.

Quite often though we can make the problem appear even bigger because of our reluctance to address it.

One effective way to overcome this is do the least liked task first.

Mark Twain once said: "If you have to swallow two frogs, swallow the big frog first...and don't look at it for too long."

It's good advice.

Choose the job that you enjoy the least and do that first.

The benefits will be two-fold:

Not only will your next task not be quite as bad but it will also give you a self-confidence boost.

8). Feel better about yourself

This will be automatic if you use these rules to overcome procrastination.

By completing the hard jobs first and eliminating problems before they get a chance to grow you will get rid of a lot of negative feelings and anxiety.

Your self-confidence will grow and you will feel better about yourself.

This will be reflected in the way that you conduct your business and your clients will have a lot more confidence in you too.

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