

Can you afford to procrastinate?

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Back in my college days, I couldn't start studying for a test until the night before (at least that's what I made myself believe.) I would "try" to study a few days before but my mind would wander off about something else. If I needed eight hours to study, I'd start the night before and stay up all night rather than put in a few hours a day for a few days. I use to procrastinate so much that I made a sign to put above the desk in my dorm room that said, "I don't procrastinate... until I absolutely have to."

It didn't take me long to realize that procrastination doesn't work in the real world, even though some businesses believe in it. I've been in marketing, it doesn't work there. I've been in service, it doesn't work there either. So how can businesses afford to not respond to the consumer's request immediately?

For the last two years I've owned my own web design business (<http://www.ultimatewebdesigning.com>) and for the last seven years I've been in video production (<http://www.ultimatewebdesigning.com/videolson.html>).

Last week, I was doing research on non-linear (computer based) video editing systems by visiting web sites of various manufacturers. Some of the sites had demos online to view and some had videotapes available by request. I called one of the manufacturers and requested that they mail me their demo videotape. They said it would take 4-6 weeks. I said, "Four to six weeks? I plan on making my buying decision in four to six days." Don't they have their marketing material printed and produced ready to be shipped the minute they get a request? When I made the phone call I was pumped about this edit system. In four to six weeks I don't know how excited I'll be about it, especially when their competition will have provided their

demos weeks earlier (via mail or online).

Just a few months ago I responded to an ad in a video trade magazine to receive a free catalog from a video equipment supplier. They said that I should receive it in the next couple weeks. About a month later I received a post card with a web address for their e-catalog. They could've provided this URL in their magazine ad or at least told me that it was in the electronic format. The only benefit they got from doing it this way is they have my mailing address. However, they could've received my e-mail address instead and provided me with more marketing information and not pay to mail them.

In the video industry, people need their videos done "yesterday". I've produced videos with music and pictures to be shown at wedding receptions. The normal turn-around time is two weeks and occasionally a customer might need it in a few days, 99% of the time we're able to accommodate them.

It always makes me laugh when a customer tells me that their daughter's getting married on a certain Saturday so they need the video done on that Friday. I tell them that they can pick it up early afternoon on Friday and they say, "But I'm flying out Thursday evening." Okay, so I'll have it done Thursday afternoon. They then say, "But I'll need to pack all day Thursday." Okay, so I'll have it done on Wednesday. The client starts calling the week before to see if it's ready. When I tell them that it will be ready on Wednesday, they say, "But I would like to have it a couple days in advance so I don't need to worry about it."

I got into the habit of telling the client that it will be ready a couple days before they need it. I then write it in my books that they need it even a couple days before that. They end up getting it almost a week before they expected it.

In today's fast-paced world, people are not patient enough to wait for material that should be readily available. Have you sent an e-mail asking for information and have it take more than a week for a response? Just think of how many web sites you could visit and receive all the information you need while you're waiting to receive basic information from a company that procrastinates.

Along with worrying about providing better service at a lower cost than your competition, you need to provide the consumer with everything they need to select your services...NOW!!!

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