

How to Avoid Procrastination and Perfectionism

By Nancy MacKay, PhD
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Procrastination is the act of delaying or putting off tasks until the last minute, or past their deadline. Researchers define procrastination as a "form of self-regulation failure characterized by the irrational delay of tasks despite potentially negative consequences."

Here are some practical ways CEOs and business leaders can avoid the pitfalls of procrastination and perfectionism.

1

SPEND YOUR TIME WISELY TO ACHIEVE YOUR FULL POTENTIAL

Spend 80% of your time on activities that you have passion, competence, and need in order to achieve extraordinary results. Delegate everything else. Consider completing the on-line StrengthsQuest form (www.strengthsquest.com) to identify your strengths.

ACTION ITEMS

List your top 30 work-related activities. For each activity, assess your ability to do each one based on the descriptions below:

- **Masterful:** extraordinary ability; passion; gives you energy
- **Excellent:** superior ability; no passion
- **Competent:** adequate ability; boredom; little improvement in performance over time
- **Incompetent:** inadequate ability; failure; stressful
- **Caution:** Delegation without coaching and mentoring does NOT work!

2

OVERCOME "THERE IS ALWAYS A BIGGER BOAT" SYNDROME

Happiness and fulfillment are directly related to how we measure success. Winners measure progress. Losers measure ideal outcomes and feel guilty about failing to achieve perfection.

ACTION ITEMS

What is your ideal outcome in the following areas? Where are you today? What has been your progress over the past year?

- Health
- Wealth
- Talents
- Career Success
- Possessions

Strategies to be a winner: (1) don't measure against others; (2) accept that ideal outcomes are a moving target; (3) commit to daily gratitude; (4) celebrate progress every day; (5) spend 80% of your time in your mastery zone; (6) accept that past does not equal future; and (7) make every moment count.

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FOCUS ON THE 80% RULE TO AVOID PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism is about refusing to decide and commit until you achieve your ideal outcome as a minimum requirement. Perfectionism gets in the way of confidence, motivation, and effectiveness.

ACTION ITEMS

- Focus on getting the 1st 80% done as quickly as possible. Beyond the 1st 80%, ask the following questions: Who cares? Who will notice? Can I make a significant improvement? Is the increased quality greater than the lost time?
- Avoid beating yourself up if you don't achieve your ideal outcomes. If you feel that you are never good enough until you achieve your ideal outcomes as a minimum, you won't enjoy the journey.
- Strive for progress, not perfection. Take five minutes every day to celebrate success and to identify your three most important accomplishments.

Four

4

TAKE ACTION TO AVOID PARALYSIS OF PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination is about refusing to take action until the ideal outcome is guaranteed.

- Achievement = (1) Define Ideal outcome; (2) Take Action Using Coaches and Mentors; (3) Learn from your action; and (4) Try something new. Note past does not equal future.
- Needs = certainty + uncertainty + connection + significance + contribution + growth

ACTION ITEMS

How much does your current career meet each need? Which 2 needs are most important to you?

5

MASTER YOUR EMOTIONS TO ACHIEVE EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS

Your ability to achieve your full potential and your quality of life is directly related to your ability to control your emotions.

ACTION ITEMS

What are the consistent positive and negative emotions that you experience in a given week?

- Fulfillment and what you feel is controlled by: (1) movement; (2) focus on positive future; and (3) self-talk smart questions.
- Every emotion serves us if we choose to interpret it in an empowering way to inspire action.
- Logic makes people think. Emotion inspires action.