

CHAPTER 5

Practice Creative Procrastination

“Make time for getting big tasks done every day. Plan your daily workload in advance. Single out the relatively few small jobs that absolutely must be done immediately in the morning. Then go directly to the big tasks and pursue them to completion.”

Boardroom Reports

Creative procrastination is one of the most effective of all personal performance techniques. It can change your life.

The fact is that you can't do everything that you have to do. You have to procrastinate on *something*! Therefore, procrastinate on small tasks. Put off eating smaller or less ugly frogs. Eat the biggest and ugliest frogs before anything else. Do the worst first!

Everyone procrastinates. The difference between high performers and low performers is largely determined by what they *choose* to procrastinate on.

Since you must procrastinate anyway, decide today to procrastinate on low value activities. Decide to procrastinate, outsource, delegate and eliminate those activities that don't make much of a contribution to your life in any case. Get rid of the tadpoles and focus on the frogs.

Priorities versus Posteriorities

Here is a key point. To set proper priorities, you must set posteriorities as well. A *priority* is something that you do more of and sooner, while a *posterriority* is something that you do less of and later, if at all.

Rule: "You can only get your time and your life under control to the degree to which you discontinue lower value activities."

One of the most powerful of all words in time management is the word "No!" Say it politely and courteously. Say it clearly so that there are no misunderstandings. Say it regularly, as a normal part of your time management vocabulary.

Say "no" to anything that is not a high value use of your time and your life. Say "no" graciously but firmly to avoid agreeing to something against your will. Say it early and say it often. Remember that you have no spare time. As we say, "Your dance card is full."

For you to do something new, you must complete or stop doing something old. Getting in requires getting out. Picking up means putting down.

Creative procrastination is the act of thoughtfully and deliberately deciding upon the exact things you are not going to do right now, if ever.

Procrastinate on Purpose

Most people engage in *unconscious* procrastination. They procrastinate without thinking about it. As a result, they procrastinate on the big, valuable, important tasks that can have significant long-term consequences to their lives and careers. You must avoid this common tendency at all costs.

Your job is to deliberately procrastinate on those tasks that are of low value so that you have more time for those tasks that can make a big difference in your life and work.

Continually review your duties and responsibilities to identify those time consuming tasks and activities that you can abandon with no real loss. This is an ongoing responsibility for you that never ends.

For example, a friend of mine, when he was single, was an avid golfer. He liked to golf three and four times a week, three to four hours each time.

Over a period of years, he started a business, got married and had two children. But he still played golf three to five times a week until he finally realized that his time on the golf course was causing him enormous stress at home and at the office. It was only by abandoning most of his golf games that he could get his life back under control.

Set Posteriorities on Time Consuming Activities

Continually review your life and work to find those time consuming tasks and activities that you can abandon with no real loss. Cut down on television watching and spend the time saved with your family, or reading or exercising, or doing something that enhances the quality of your life.

Look at your work activities and identify the tasks that you could delegate or eliminate to free up more time for the work that really counts. Begin today to practice creative procrastination, to set posteriorities wherever and whenever you can. This decision alone can enable to get your time and your life under control.

Eat That Frog!

1. Practice zero-based thinking on every part of your life. Ask yourself continually, "If I was not doing this already, knowing what I now know, would I start it up, or get into it again today?" If it is something you would not start up again today, knowing what you now know, it is a prime candidate for abandonment or creative procrastination.

2. Examine each of your personal and work activities and evaluate it based on your current situation. Select at least one activity to abandon immediately, or at least, deliberately put off until your more important goals have been achieved.