

CHAPTER 9

Prepare Thoroughly Before You Begin

*"No matter what the level of your ability,
you have more potential than you can ever develop in a lifetime."*

James T. McKay

One of the best ways for you to overcome procrastination and get more things done faster is for you to have everything you need at hand before you begin. When you are fully prepared, you are like a cocked gun or an archer with an arrow pulled back taut in the bow. You just need one small mental push to get started on your highest value tasks.

This is like getting everything ready to prepare a complete meal, such as eating a big frog. You get all the ingredients out on the counter in front of you and then begin putting the dinner together, one step at a time.

Begin by clearing off your desk or workspace so that you only have one task in front of you. If necessary, put everything on the floor or on the table behind you. Gather all the information, reports, details, papers, and work materials that you will require to complete the job. Have them at hand so you can reach them without getting up or moving.

Be sure that you have all writing materials, computer disks, access codes, email addresses and everything else you need to start and continue working until the job is done.

Set up your work area so that it is comfortable, attractive and conducive to working for long periods. Especially, make sure that you have a comfortable chair that supports your back and allows your feet to sit flat on the floor.

Create a Comfortable Work Space

The most productive people take the time to create a work area where they enjoy spending time. The cleaner and neater your work area before you begin, the easier it is for you to get started and keep going.

One of the great techniques for overcoming procrastination (eating frogs) is for you to get everything completely ready that you need to work, in advance. When everything is laid out in order and sequence, you feel much more like getting on with the job.

Get On With the Job

It is amazing how many books never get written, how many degrees never get completed, how many life changing tasks never get started because people fail to take the first step of preparing everything in advance.

Los Angeles attracts people from all over America who dream of writing a successful movie script and selling it to one of the studios. They move to Los Angeles and work at low level jobs for years while they dream of writing and selling a popular script.

Recently, the *Los Angeles Times* sent a reporter out onto Wilshire Boulevard to interview passers by. When people came along, he asked them one question: "How is your script coming?" Three out of four passersby replied, "Almost done!"

The sad fact is that "almost done" probably meant "not yet started." Don't let this happen to you.

Launch toward Your Dreams

Once you have completed your preparations, it is essential that you launch immediately toward your goals. Get started. Do the first thing, whatever it is.

My personal rule is "get it 80% right and then correct it later." Run it up the flagpole and see if anyone salutes. Don't expect perfection the first time, or even the first few times. Be prepared to fail over and over before you get it right.

The biggest enemies we have to overcome on the road to success are not lack of ability or opportunity, but fears of failure and rejection, and the doubts that they trigger.

The only way to overcome your fears is to “do the thing you fear,” and as Emerson wrote, “the death of fear is certain.”

Wayne Gretsky, the great hockey player, once said, “You miss every shot you don’t take.”

Once you have completed your preparations, have the courage to take the first action, and everything else will follow from that. The way you develop the courage you need is to “act as if” you already had the courage, and behave accordingly.

Take the First Step

When you sit down, with everything in front of you, ready to go, assume the body language of high performance. Sit up straight, sit forward and away from the back of the chair. Carry yourself as though you were an efficient, effective high performing personality. Then, pick up the first item and say to yourself, "Let's get to work!" and plunge in. And once you've started, keep going until the job is finished.

Eat That Frog!

1. Take a good look at your desk or office, both at home and at the office. Ask yourself, “What kind of a person works in an environment like that?” The cleaner and neater your work environment, the more positive, productive and confident you feel.

2. Resolve today to clean up your desk and office completely so that you feel effective, efficient and ready to get going each time you sit down to work.