

title: **Anyone else great at their career, but TERRIBLE at side projects?**

id: rt43mo

url: [here](https://www.reddit.com/r/ADHD_Programmers/comments/rt43mo/anyone_else_great_at_their_career_but_terr): https://www.reddit.com/r/ADHD\_Programmers/comments/rt43mo/anyone\_else\_great\_at\_their\_career\_but\_terr

num\_comments: 18

num\_up\_votes: 97

upvote\_ratio: 1.0

#### #### Post Text ####

So throughout my career, I managed to succeed despite ADHD by getting clear requirements, and then breaking them up into tiny tasks to knock out one at a time. Knowing that by doing this, I get my paycheck, kept me engaged and motivated, and I've had great performance reviews at every job I've held. However, I am completely TERRIBLE at personal projects. I've had countless ideas, whether its making a videogame, or a website, or an app. Despite this, I've never actually followed through on any of them to completion. I've gotten started, but none of them even got close to completion, other than a couple projects that only took a few days. But any project that requires months of effort(ie making a game) has went nowhere. Has anyone else struggled with this? I consider myself an ambitious person and have always wanted to have a side gig making games, But I have not been able to pick 1 idea and stick with it. I think the issue stems from the fact that I run into open ended problems, and then I struggle to figure out how I will overcome them, then just get overwhelmed, because a project without clear requirements cannot be split up. Has anyone struggled with this before? Or if you overcame this, how did you do so?

#### #### Comments ####

##### Commenter\_2

ID: hqqgio0, Upvotes: 37

Yep give me a defined project with a clear end result and I am the best systems admin you have ever had the pleasure of working with. I can even suggest various technologies to implement to get you to the end result. Let me loose with artistic discretion or just tell me the end result and expect me to make critical decisions on how to get there and I am paralyzed with the fear of making the wrong decision.

##### Commenter\_3

ID: hqqj6og, Upvotes: 18

Im great at starting them!

##### Commenter\_4

ID: hqqk8a0, Upvotes: 9

I'm bad at both lol. Yet to find a job I am actually good at or enjoy doing. Now I'm looking for a new job again surprise surprise. What stack or technology do you use for work?

##### Commenter\_5

ID: hqr278n, Upvotes: 5

I used to be able to finish them while not doing programming as a career. Now I use up all my fuel at my job, so feels like not much fuel left for projects.

##### Unknown\_User

ID: hqr9a3o, Upvotes: 5

I don't think of it as being terrible at side projects, I think of it as saving my limited energy for where I know I will be rewarded for it.

##### Commenter\_6

ID: hqqw7bj, Upvotes: 4

All the time!

This is basically my life, with a few rare exceptions: <https://www.commitstrip.com/en/2014/11/25/west-side-project-story/>

##### Commenter\_7

ID: hqr3g2x, Upvotes: 3

What finally made it work for my was using esp32 to control motors, led strips and light to make my diy smart house.

All custom firmware in c++ that interact with home assistant for the ui and the non diy smart stuff.

##### Commenter\_8

ID: hqr2mw7, Upvotes: 2

I'm at the beginning of my career, and despite wanting to start a number of projects to aid my learning & career development, I always struggle to get them off the ground

##### Unknown\_User

ID: hqs4fmz, Upvotes: 2

Can't pitch in from my own experience, since I don't consider myself to be great at my job yet.

However, I think you might find what Amy Hoy has to say interesting. She's got ADHD and has a book that opens with the exact problem you're outlining.

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/23700819-just-fucking-ship>

##### Commenter\_9

ID: hqucd37, Upvotes: 2

Opposite for me, currently. I feel so much more passion towards my side projects since they involve my creative interests. I love my work team and am passionate about the apps we're creating still, so I feel a bit terrible for getting burnt out and putting more effort into my side projects lately, but man, having the freedom to create what I want without judgement gives me all the dopamine. Which is why I'm going to start being more vocal about my ideas at work for my New Years resolution.

##### Commenter\_10

ID: hquglcz, Upvotes: 2

For me it's the barrier of setting up my dev environment at home. We have a ton of CLI and other dev focused tools that make my job way easier at the office but which I don't have access to at home.

It just feels so mentally exhausting to start a project if I have to do tedious, unrelated work before I'm allowed to begin.

##### Unknown\_User

ID: hqvil4f, Upvotes: 1

Could you copy the tools to an external drive and bring them home?

##### Commenter\_11

ID: hqrgi7x, Upvotes: 1

I am awful at any side projects, all enthusiasm and no follow through XD. Honestly the only side projects I've ever successfully worked on are ones where there are other people and deadlines to drag me through ahah. But then I got burnt out and had to quit doing it... so yeh. I've decided I enjoy my job and that's enough, I don't need to be good at everything.

##### Commenter\_12

ID: hqs893x, Upvotes: 1

I can do one or the other. When I'm not working then I can actually get something done on my side

projects. If I'm working then that's essentially all I manage. It kind of sucks

##### Commenter\_13

ID: hqt26x1, Upvotes: 1

Okay this might be mostly due to me... Ticking different. Which seems to be something I have seen most often in women.

I **do not do** side projects. Never. In my whole academical career I did one: an Advents calendar for my mom.

One part of this is that I already find having to organise, somit and order my real work quite tiring. So I enjoy just... Waving by. Doing art, crocheting. Things that have a more clear start and end and lower timeframes.

Maybe that is something that helps you in... Finding a way to make side projects more that direction.

Furthermore it may help to get with a group with people.

##### Commenter\_14

ID: hqtho65, Upvotes: 1

My jobs all make me sign over the rights to anything I build in my off-hours as a condition of employment so I don't even write down my ideas

##### Commenter\_15

ID: hqtw37h, Upvotes: 1

The trick is ruthless descoping.

Picture this: you just got a great idea, you're all jazzed about it, etc.

As soon as you start working on it, the clock starts ticking. It's going to be about a week before you lose interest. So what you need to do is to guarantee that you'll finish an MVP by then.

Then, you write up all the next steps somewhere (I just use gh issues) and put it to bed for a while.

Use the MVP. If you're interacting with your app a lot, you'll start to want it to do more things (from a user's POV)

The next time you get some time (I usually get a kick around the holidays) you can work on it again.

Rinse and repeat. I only work on my app for an extended period of time like once a year, but I'm still motivated. Partly it's because I've got a sizable number of users and they engage, partly it's because I spend the whole month of December mentally preparing, partly it's because I want to improve the app for my own benefit.

##### Commenter\_16

ID: hqufojk, Upvotes: 1

I've found that I perform well when there are immediate and tangible consequences from someone other than myself.

Perhaps you could have a friend or group of friends arrange a punishment to give you a consequence other than disappointment in yourself, because that disappointment is not a motivator.