

Member's Quarterly

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President's Message

Procrastination: There's Always a Price to Pay

It's time to treat this condition

Benjamin Franklin was spot-on when he said "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today."

There are many reasons why we delay, defer or just ignore a task that's right in front of us. Unless you are seriously ill or have to do something else that is clearly more important or time-sensitive, you are probably procrastinating. Simple definition: putting off what you should do today in order to think about doing it tomorrow or the next day. Many senior executives feel that procrastination is one of the biggest problems throughout their entire organizations.

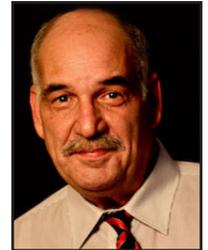
Why do we procrastinate? According to the collective brain that is the Internet, I found numerous possibilities. They range from anxiety to fear of failure, from feeling overwhelmed to perfectionism. There are also some great psychological theories that talk about demotivating factors that limit our self-control and hindering factors like mental exhaustion, but actually they are just excuses. These excuses or alibis allow us to postpone doing something that we will ultimately have to do anyway.

The answer that I was actually looking for is how do we deal with procrastination. Luckily the online hive mind had some insights on that issue as well. It seems the best way to avoid unwanted or unnecessary delays is to start by trying to figure out why you do it — exactly why you do it. Consider some recent cases where you put things off and why you did it, even though you knew that you shouldn't. You may be able to identify the source of your problem such as perfectionism or fear and deal with it more effectively than hiding your head in the sand and hoping it will disappear.

Next, you make a plan on how to deal with future issues. That plan should include some goals and markers along the way to show your progress and your accomplishments, great and small. This will actually show you where you were successful. You will then be able to replicate this with more complex situations that you may have wanted to avoid.

Unfortunately, we may never get rid of all procrastination, but we can certainly diminish it. By the way, Benjamin Franklin also said "He who waits upon fortune is never sure of dinner."

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