

# THE LAST MINUTE MANAGER

## HOW TO STOP PUTTING OFF WHAT YOU NEED TO GET DONE!

CAREER  
ADVICE



By **STEPHANIE LING**  
stephanie.ling@leaderonomics.com

**Y**OU know you're procrastinating when you find the houseplant in front of you more interesting than your 20-page essay that is due the following week.

Let me start by saying that I have yet to win the war against procrastination, and that is probably why this article was handed in just days before its deadline.

On a serious note however, procrastination is not something to be trivialised. It is ultimately a problem with self-regulation with the emphasis being on self-control.

A good point to note is that procrastination is something learnt rather than something you are born with – therefore it is possible to overcome this habit, albeit with some effort and willpower.

### PROCRASTINATORS UNITE

Everyone procrastinates to a different degree, be it in terms of severity or cause. The first possible reason for why people engage in procrastination would be due to the fact that these individuals are thrill seekers. In other words, they thrive on that euphoric rush obtained when rushing to the last minute to beat a deadline.

They are the kind of individuals who feel that this final dash is what being productive is all about.

On another note, there are those who practise self-handicapping. Called "avoiders", they are the kind who fear disappointment or even attainment. They would rather others think of them as unwilling to put in the effort rather than to be incapable of completing the task.

*"When faced with two equally tough choices, most people choose the third choice – to not choose." – Jarod Kintz*

Lastly, it would be in terms of the decisional procrastinators who merely can't make decisions. When they do not make decisions, its repercussions are not theirs either. So now that we've gotten to know about this ordeal and its culprits, let's talk about how we can fix it.



### LET'S GET THE PROCESS IN PLACE

#### ❖ MAKE WORK BITE-SIZED

Often times we procrastinate because the task at hand appears to be too overwhelming to be dealt with.

Take a step back and break down each task into more manageable sections. We will then be able to put more emphasis on each small step rather than to dwell and be bogged down by the project's entirety on a bigger scale.

Once you enjoy and reward yourself for the little accomplishments, you are likelier to finish the task in the long run.

#### ❖ TIME-BOUND TIMELINE

We always assume that we have plenty of time to get things done and because of that we tend to postpone completing anything. Creating a to-do list with deadlines in tow ensures that we are constantly reminded of the call to action with relation to the urgency required for each task.

With that said, any task that is put off, due to its low priority on the list, will demonstrate one's ability to prioritise rather than an inability to avoid procrastination.

#### ❖ REWARD YOURSELF

Always reward yourself for completing that to-do list within the given deadline.

Positive reinforcement serves as a good motivator be it that five-minute dance party or even that chocolate bar in the fridge that you've been eyeing.

Celebrate the little successes and

remember how good it made you feel to have accomplished it so that you will always have something to remember in future when you are facing roadblocks again.

#### ❖ ELIMINATE PIT STOPS

Put on some noise-cancelling headphones, turn off social media notifications and put that good book aside.

Use apps that help you focus by restricting the number of hours you are allowed to spend on social media. Learn to exercise self-control to ensure that you do not stray from the task at hand.

#### ❖ FIND A BUDDY

If personal accountability is a problem, find a friend who is able to keep you on track.

Friends do make or break you, so get one who is able to inspire and encourage you rather than one who puts you down.

This person should also have personal goals so you will be able to hold each other answerable for your respective projects.

If you wanted to take it to the next level, you could also make your intentions public. This serves as additional motivation as you would want to avoid being chastised by others.

#### ❖ JUST DO IT

The best way to get something done is really to begin. When self-regulation fails, it is usually because shortsightedness takes precedence over our long-term goals.

When an unappealing task is presented to us, we typically seek immediate emotional reprieve by putting it off in order to feel better instantly.

Rather than to give in to that momentary relief, we should stand our ground and push on. Always remember that the negative emotions will eventually pass so embrace it and use it as inspiration instead.

*"Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone." – Pablo Picasso*

#### ❖ RE-CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

In addition to making your task concrete, it is also essential to reduce uncertainties and distractions.

When a task is too vague, we tend to avoid tackling it. That is why it is important to clear these doubts early on so we are able to get some structure and direction towards solving it.

#### ❖ CREATE THAT ENVIRONMENT

It is also important to create a conducive environment. Being mindful about distractions and making an effort to tune them out allows for you to self-regulate and focus better.

#### ❖ MOTIVATION

Should I watch that latest episode of *Game of Thrones* now or should I finish up my pending proposal?

Seems like a no brainer, but that is when the irrational side of human nature steps in to throw us off.

As humans, we tend to engage in temporal discounting which is the act of pursuing a reward that may be small but is more immediate rather than larger rewards that are only available in the distant future.

With self-awareness, we know to focus on the bigger picture instead and that will result in increased productivity.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

With reference to Shia LaBeouf's video that is making rounds on the Internet, he urges us over and over again to 'Just Do It!' Recall the times you had wished that you had started earlier. Today, you have that chance to do just that, so why don't you?

With greater awareness of the problem as well as means for self-control, your procrastination woes can be managed.

■ *Stephanie Ling is part of Leaderonomics Youth and is currently under the Clubs initiative. Her personal passion lies in developing all-rounded youths who are able to impact their communities. Occasionally, she can be seen engaging in sun salutations and headstand poses during her leisure time. To engage with Stephanie, email her at stephanie.ling@leaderonomics.com.*



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