



Tool #3 - Part A

Stop Procrastinating - Now!

Part A Includes:

Lesson

Quiz

Goal Setting

(Each tool is presented in a 2 part lesson format.
Part B will follow in two weeks)

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Employee Success Toolkit

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It's 5 PM and everyone is going home from work - except you. You can't believe it! You still have the weekly inventory report that must be completed before you leave. You knew you had a deadline, but you just waited too long to get started. You did it again! You procrastinated! Why do you put things off to the last minute?

"What many people don't realize is that procrastination is an automatic habit pattern used as a means of avoiding tension. It is kicked off by some form of discomfort such as feeling uncertain or insecure about something. These habit patterns are the barriers to overcoming procrastination," says William Knaus, Ed.D., a psychologist who is the foremost authority on procrastination and the author of "The Procrastination Workbook."

Why do you avoid certain situations?

1. Are you an overachiever? In your drive to be recognized, have you taken on too many projects?
2. Are you afraid of a project? Is the scope too large or outside your field of expertise? When asked to work outside our comfort zone, the natural reaction is to avoid the unpleasantness.
3. Are you too detail oriented? If you spend too much time on small details, you will not be able to complete the task in a timely manner.
4. Are you avoiding a potentially boring task, hoping that a last minute deadline will motivate you?

Dr. Knaus divides these habit patterns into Three Barriers that prevent you from overcoming procrastination:

Mental Diversions

If you think, "I'll get to it later when I'm better prepared to think more clearly," then you've fallen into the procrastination trap that's called the Manana Diversion. You've fooled yourself into thinking that later will be better.

Action Diversions

This is when you procrastinate by going to the water cooler, doodling, calling someone on the telephone, doing something else on your computer, etc. No one wants to deal with an irate customer, for example, and anything seems more important than returning that telephone call. Or say you are in charge of the company's annual event and you do not know how to go about it. Even cleaning out your desk seems more agreeable than facing the task.

Emotional Diversions

Some office tasks are just not very inspiring or motivating - they're drudgery. If you wait to be inspired to do something that most people would consider being a drag, you're going to be waiting a long time. If you look at the task with a negative attitude, it will be a negative experience.

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Corrective Measures

1. If you are an overachiever, rethink your attitude toward the project. Instead of worrying about absolute perfection, think in terms of realistic outcomes. Ask yourself which outcome is more important—a project absolutely perfect in every minute detail but is not on time (possibly losing a valued contract for your company), or a project which is as good as it can be given time limitations.
2. The answer to conquering fear of a project is to make, “Just Do It,” your motto. Fear only escalates the longer you put off the task. Most times you will find your fear was unrealistic and the task was not as difficult as you first thought. The reward is that you will feel more confident.
3. When you recognize that you are too detail oriented, think about ways you can overcome this stumbling block. Delegate some tasks to others. Prioritize items in order of importance. Which details are crucial to the success of the project and which details are of secondary importance?
4. Leaving work to the last possible minute could be a pattern difficult to break. Did you always do school assignments at the last minute? Chances are you were capable enough to pull out a good grade. But now that you are in the business world, this pattern will not provide those positive results. And, there is much more at stake than a grade on a report card. Meeting a deadline with less than your best work may cost your company money.

Dr. Knaus advises these steps to overcome procrastination:

The “Crystal Ball” Approach

Look into the crystal ball and see two paths. One is the path of diversion and where it leads. The other path is tackling that which is frustrating, and predicting where it is going to lead. The first path is certain because you’ve gone through it many times. The other path is not very clear, because you may not get to your destination. However, by taking this path, you will have taken a step toward overcoming procrastination.

Five Minute System

Commit yourself to your task for five minutes. At the end of five minutes you decide whether you will commit for another five minutes, etc., until you have completed the task, or you have run out of time, or you have a good reason not to continue. By putting yourself into the process for at least five minutes, you are already living through the frustrations that are a part of the activity, and you are making a series of decisions that are forward moving.

Plan In Reverse

Many people set goals but don’t have a plan.

First, visualize your goal as a target. Imagine the arrow in the center of the target. Imagine the trajectory of the arrow as you pull it back, release the arrow and hit the center of the target. In other words, visualize your outcome first, and then work back from it. Where do you

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want to end up? What do you do just before that? And what do you do just before that, etc. By doing this, you are automatically creating a plan. The key is that you are telling yourself ahead of time that it is all in small parts.

Building Frustration Tolerance

If you can develop high frustration tolerance, you will get ahead further in your life because you do not have things burdening your mind. By tackling your challenging tasks with persistence until they are done, you are able to build frustration tolerance.

Dr. Knaus provides these words of wisdom: “Even if you do not overcome the discomfort, you have lived through the frustration, which creates this powerful message--you can organize and direct your activities for a productive result, and you do have control over yourself. It is better to recognize that doing reasonable things, in a reasonable way, within a reasonable time, gets things done, and that way you end up doing rather than stewing.”

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Expert quoted:

William Knaus, Ed.D., author of *The Procrastination Workbook*, Published in 2002 by New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

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Tool #3 - Quiz
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Complete the quiz, and give the answers to your supervisor.

Name _____ Date _____

1. What are some of the reasons people procrastinate?

2. What can an overachiever do to overcome procrastination?

3. How should you deal with a boring task?

4. What should you do if a problem is complex?

5. Name three types of diversions people use that prevent them from overcoming procrastination.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Tool #3 - Your Goals to Stop Procrastinating

Name _____ Date _____

What are your 3 main goals for this month to stop procrastinating?

Make a copy of this to give to your supervisor, and keep one for yourself.

Post your goals in your workplace where you can easily see them.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Signature _____

In two weeks you will receive Part B of this lesson. It will contain:

- The 7 key points from this lesson to refresh your memory, and
- A place for you to record your progress toward your goals.

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Additional Resources

All are available on The Confidence Center Web at

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Special days you can celebrate for every month of the year.

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Jokes, cartoons, and more - when you just need a break.

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