

A WEEK IN *Learning*

Instant, Free and Easy

Georgia Harris, Learning and Development Program Manager - Mission

One Saturday afternoon, I made a phone call to a family member of mine. When I asked how her day was going, she proceeded to scream and bawl loudly. In her tirade, she vented her frustration with her finances, her significant other, and her friends. She spoke to every area of her life, but I didn't hear any complaints regarding her classes at school. I assumed that since she had left this out of her rant, this area of her life was going well. Once she had seemingly settled down, I tried to steer the conversation in a more positive direction by asking, "How are things at school?" Big mistake! "That is the worst one!" she replied. "My final assignment for the semester is due tomorrow and all these things *are preventing me* from getting it done!" I knew that her semester was over in December, so I was perplexed how she could still have an assignment due in January. My curiosity was piqued, so I asked her to explain how and why she still had an assignment due in January. She explained that, although the course ended prior to Christmas, the teacher granted a January extension for her. Through her explanation, she told me more about the 18-page paper she had due. "How many more pages do you need to write?" I asked. "Fifteen. However, I have so much going on, I can hardly focus on writing. What should I do?" At this moment, I faced the uncomfortable reality that my family member had allowed her procrastination to shroud her brilliance. It was as if Cinderella was granted an opportunity by her Fairy Godmother to be dressed for the ball, but arrived at her destination after midnight!



"Many of us embark upon these incredible journeys without evaluating what it will cost us to finish the race."

- Georgia Harris

Most of us have been ensnared by procrastination before: that last-minute assignment at school, an unfinished project at work, or a missed appointment with a loved one. We have all fallen prey to the voice of Mediocrity, whose mantra is, "If it weren't for the last minute, nothing would get done". Can you think of the last time you missed an opportunity due to procrastination? I can think of many! What I find even more interesting are the excuses we give for the delay. My favorites are, "I am more creative at the last minute!" or "I'll start right after my nap". No matter how recent your encounter with procrastination and mediocrity, we should always remember the wise words of Benjamin Franklin, "You may delay, but time will not".

Let's face it: life happens! There are things that happen in life that catch us by surprise. We often have little control over the "big bang" catastrophes in life (Market Crash of 2008, anyone?). However, even in extreme circumstances, we can reflect on the life-decisions made and personal habits formed that impacted how well we fared in the more desperate times. Like my family member, many of us embark upon these incredible journeys without evaluating what it will cost us to finish the race. How much time will this take? What will I need to sacrifice in order to achieve this goal? Do I have the self-discipline needed to see this through to the end? If not,

Instant, Free and Easy

am I willing to change my habits to get to my goal? In Rory Vaden's book, Take the Stairs, there is a section titled "Instant, Free and Easy". Rory's objective is to convince the reader that goals worth achieving will require more than a desire. In fact, they will demand a change in habit, attitude and commitment to self-management. Here are five takeaways I feel we can all benefit from:

1. **Commit and stick to it:** Accept that any goal worth achieving will not be instant, free or easy. It will require deliberate action and sustained effort.
2. **Set up an accountability system:** Having a system in place, or a person to nudge you along, can help to increase productivity. If you are a leader, set up check-in opportunities for your teammates during the project, and not just project deadlines.
3. **Success requires doing what we don't like:** Somewhere along the line, we have been led to believe that the definition of success is doing only what we enjoy. However, successful people do not look for a way around their challenges; they simply turn them into opportunities for growth.
4. **Change your internal conversation:** Actively spend time listening to your thoughts when faced with a task. If it is coaching you to embrace inaction, counter it with words that help you "own" your actions, like, "I want to" or "I choose to".
5. **Start with the hard stuff, first:** When we procrastinate, we choose to do activities that are less important, or more enjoyable, over activities that require effort and focus. When we start with the less desirable activities first, we cut off the unpleasant feelings sooner and leave the rest of our time to do things we like.

Now that you have the tools to help combat procrastination, it may be helpful to put them into a mental framework that will help you make effective choices throughout your day. I often look at myself as my own company - I have both a brand and a product that I display and deliver to the world. If I produce a great product, but do not deliver it to my customers, I am doing my brand (and customers) a disservice. Take a few minutes to inventory your personal brand and the product you deliver to the world. Would your customers say that you are brand-consistent? When you think of yourself as more than just "a" person, you will quickly realize that your actions and inactions affect more than just you; they have the power to deflate or inspire those around you. Hence, the next time you feel the urge to procrastinate, just remember: someday is not a day of the week.

"Success isn't a matter of circumstance; it is a matter of choice. Finding new circumstances won't make you successful, but making new choices will."

-Rory Vaden

To contact Goodwill's Learning and Development team, please email learninganddevelopment@goodwillaz.org