

# Five easy steps to beat procrastination

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Do you let inertia or procrastination stop you from working on the things you know you should be working on? I have some easy to implement ideas on how to beat procrastination.

Let's face it, one of the most 'convenient' things about being a soloist is that there is always plenty to keep you busy. You can legitimately while away your available hours doing 'stuff' without ever getting to any important/critical/strategic tasks.

So you're procrastinating, but you can tell yourself that you're doing work that needs to be done at some point, so it's not really procrastinating, because you have been productive at least ...

I've been there, done that. And I've almost always regretted it when the work that needed to be done (ie – the important work), ended up being done as a rush job at the last minute.

So I have been having a good look at this pattern to see if there isn't a way to break it. Here are my five steps on how to beat procrastination and inertia:

## Step one: have a plan

Always, always plan what you want to achieve the night before. Start the day with a clear idea of what you want to achieve. Sitting down at your desk without a plan makes it far too tempting to do that other stuff – and before you know it, half the day has gone by without anything particularly tangible to show for it.

## Step two: know yourself

Know your energy levels. Some people work best in the morning, some at night. Know yourself, and schedule the work that requires good brain attention at the times of highest energy. You can always do that 'other stuff' during times of lower energy.

## Step three: chunk it up into manageable pieces

Sometimes the overall task is too big and daunting and it is hard to know where to start. If you have a big project or task, break it down into more specific SMART tasks (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound), then schedule those tasks. Diarising 'write book' is unlikely to yield too much action, but 'write 500 words of chapter one by lunchtime tomorrow' will definitely get you on your way.

## Step four: have an honest chat with yourself

If you find yourself getting stuck doing something, either avoiding it or putting it off with some pretence or other; spend some time doing some active pre-thinking about the task. At the risk of sharing too much information, I often do this thinking in the shower or bath – when I can properly reflect on it without being interrupted. Ask yourself:

- **What is the block to doing the task?** Is the task is too daunting? Are you worried about some component of it (for example – is it an unpleasant task?) Are you scared that someone will reject you/your proposal? Do you need to have a stern chat to yourself around the implications of not doing it? Do you need some external help to get you through your blocks? Are you self-sabotaging your potential success? Somehow, naming your blocks and fears can help you come up with a plan for how to manage them.
- **What will it feel like when you have completed it?** Take a moment to revel in that feeling. Is it getting you closer to a bigger goal or success?
- **What's the first thing you would need to do to get moving on it?** That is, in your mind, start writing the first paragraph you'd need to write, or what you'd say in the first phone call. Imagine yourself doing this very first thing – and then what's next from there? Often, just thinking through the specific steps in detail seems to kick up my energy level and makes it easier to get me moving.

## Step five: just do it

Which leads me to this: if the planning and the thinking don't work, then Just Do It.

Action begets action; movement begets movement. It doesn't need to be perfect, but at least you will have started. And often, it is just the motion of starting that is all that is necessary to overcome the inertia caused by procrastination.

*Do you have a favourite tip to help you beat procrastination?*

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This can mean anything from getting the **people basics right**, to the **solving of a systemic or difficult people or team problem**, to the **introduction of complex organisational and cultural changes**. Why do I do this? Because I know that the bit that makes work unpleasant usually is when people interactions start to go wrong. I love working with clients to help them resolve issues or put in place approaches so that the issues don't arise in the first place, rather than for them to spend hours lying awake at night trying to work out how to move an issue (or person) forward.

There are lots of consultants out there; so how will you know if I am the right person to work with you and your business? Clients have described me as part confidante, part strategist, part tactician. Clients say that they have a sense of relief that things are being dealt with, and that they are no longer alone in trying to deal with an issue (particularly complex or long standing issues). They say that it is not just the quality of the advice but the depth of the advice. That they feel that they have someone on their side. In answer to the question - what do you do?

I work with either individual clients (usually via a coaching relationship) or organisations either at the team or organisational level. Sometimes I am working with a CEO on people strategy, a team on high performance and coaching individual employees, all in the same organisation. I can work in organisations for a discrete period of time or a specific project. Other times, it is an ongoing and varied relationship that evolves as the organisation evolves. I work as a **human resources, culture & change** and **industrial relations consultancy** for businesses in **finance, manufacturing, resources, oil and gas, government, retail, services and not for profit sectors** – both in Western Australia and nationally.

These include both smaller 100-500 employee organisations and large global businesses. I am also the author of *Do What You Say You'll Do* (a book for new leaders and those reinventing their leadership styles). Check out the website here: [www.dowhatyousay.com.au](http://www.dowhatyousay.com.au) and Enterprise Agreements: Made Easy (a book on how to easily negotiate an enterprise agreement that meets the needs of all parties). Check out the website here: [www.easmadeeasy.com.au](http://www.easmadeeasy.com.au)

To find out more about the person behind the business, take a look at my [Flying Solo Spotlight profile](#).