



PROCRASTINATION IS SALES KILLER NO 1

by Leigh Wallinger

Everyone has encountered procrastination in their lives at some stage. For some people getting started on a task is a huge step. For others, starting might be the easy part but following through to a conclusion is a different matter.

Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task which needs to be accomplished. If you are in a sales role, you will see plenty of procrastination when you deal with your prospects and customers. Do you see it in your own behaviour?

Here's a simple test.

Have you put off writing a document – a proposal or briefing paper?

Have you ever planned to make some cold calls but didn't quite get round to it?

Have you missed an internal sales meeting because you were "too busy"?

Have you ever been late submitting your sales figures/reports?

Have you ever been late submitting your expense claims?

Have you got a to-do list with tasks that have been on it for weeks, even months?

Have you missed a seminar/conference because you didn't get round to booking it?

How painful was that?

Procrastination is putting things off, finding something "more interesting" to do, not getting round to it – even tasks we know we have to do. Procrastination seems, at first, to be a simple behaviour but it is, in fact, extremely complex. Psychologists now believe it is actually an attempt to cope with some emotional reactions.

These emotions might be fear, anger or the dislike of some action.

Fear

- Fear of failure is the most common, although a fear of success also appears.

Anger

- Arises when we react against certain situations including "rebellion" against being controlled by others.

Dislike

- Dislike of the work that needs to be accomplished and seeking pleasure to compensate. This distracts us further from our main task.

Procrastination can lead to a feeling of guilt, inadequacy, depression and self-doubt. This can bring about depression, which slows us down still further.

Why do sales people procrastinate?

Sales people are usually "go-getters", who thrive on the challenge to grow their company's business. The nature of their role means they have to have plenty of drive and determination. Even so, many sales people encounter procrastination in themselves. There are many reasons for this:



Poor time management

When you waste time and fail to manage your time wisely. Perhaps you are concentrating on the minor tasks at the expense of the major ones. You may be overwhelmed with the task ahead, so you keep putting it off. You may be uncertain about your goals and priorities.

Poor concentration

Your desk is probably cluttered. Your environment may be noisy or you have constant interruptions. You have a tendency to day-dream.

Anxiety & Fear

You may be worrying over an upcoming event – a presentation or an important meeting –so much that you are not taking action preparing for it. As the event gets ever closer, this lack of preparation adds further to your levels of anxiety.

Negative “self talk”

The little voice in your head that says “I can’t do this” or “I don’t have the ability” or “this won’t work so why bother”. This negative internal dialogue acts as a further distraction and adds to your anxieties.

Distractions within your personal life

Everyone strives for the right balance between their professional work life and their home life. Sometimes, events in your personal life can become a distraction for you at work. The pressures of financial commitments, serious illnesses or relationship breakdowns affecting close family members may well affect your concentration.

So, given these generally negative side-effects of procrastination, your future success in sales will be directly linked to your ability to avoid procrastination.

10 tips to stop procrastination

Tip 1

Use a to-Do list and a Daily Schedule.

Tip 2

Discipline yourself to use your time wisely. Set priorities. Plan your time.

Tip 3

Break big projects down into smaller, less daunting components

Tip 4

Recognise that to start any task there is inertia to overcome. By continually “task-hopping” your energy is wasted just to combat this inertia.

Tip 5

Identify your own goals and objectives. Know where you want to get to.

Tip 6

Continually think about positive outcomes. Think about what a successful outcome would look like, would feel like and would sound like.

Tip 7

Work in concentrated bursts. Group all similar activities together (eg phone calls) so that once you get past the inertia your momentum carries you forward. Once you get going, it’s easy to keep going.



Tip 8

Eliminate distractions – especially things like email alerts, telephone message alerts and ad-hoc interruptions by co-workers.

Tip 9

Have a tidy desk. Keep only the items you are working on in front of you. Put the rest of your “stuff” out of sight – on the floor if necessary.

Tip 10

Discipline yourself to work all the time you are at work. This builds a momentum that counteracts procrastination.

So there you have it. Ten tips to help you overcome the urge to procrastinate. Concentrate on knowing where to spend your energy and make sure that energy is traded for productive work. Get control of your interruptions and distractions, work in concentrated bursts and think about positive outcomes.

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