



Watching Time Roll Away

By Chanon Collins

Have you ever taken a stroll through your organization and just watched people at work? You probably saw many different time management styles from Otis Redding's "wastin' time" to Lewis Carroll's White Rabbit scurrying against a deadline. Don't let this eye-opening experience become wasted time. Use this knowledge of time management skills to assist your "dreamers" and "crisis makers" in becoming controllers of time.

Dr. Linda Sapadin, an adjunct professor with Hofstra University, has penned an interesting text about time management. Her book – About Time: The Six Styles of Procrastination and How to Overcome Them – explores the various styles of time management, or lack thereof, and offers numerous suggestions on how to overcome these self-defeating behaviors. Dr. Sapadin offers these quick assessment questions to determine your level of procrastination:

- Do you set unrealistically high standards that make it difficult for you to start a project?
- Do you get lost in details and find it difficult to get a project finished?
- Do you leave projects for the last minute hoping that time pressure will motivate you?
- Do you take on so many projects that you can't focus on what needs to be done?
- Do you avoid doing projects because you are angry that you need to do it?
- Do you sometimes avoid a task because you fear doing it?

Those suffering from Perfectionism are paralyzed by the fear that they might fall short of their impossibly high standards. These individuals become lost in the details and attempt to control every aspect of the task. Dr. Sapadin offers an unusual antidote for this malady.

She suggests that Perfectionists practice making mistakes, i.e. leaving a messy desk for the evening or ignoring a grammatical error in a memo. Being a sufferer of this malaise myself, I become apoplectic at the thought of uncorrected errors, but I am willing to try the "messy desk" in the name of progress.

Dreamers are known for their great ideas, but they fall short in the implementation stage. Managers can help these fantasy workers by allowing them to focus on the smaller parts of a project. This way the Dreamers will not be faced with the grandiose scope of the complete project.

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Every organization has a Crisis Maker. These are the individuals who thrive on chaos and are proud to meet a deadline head-on. Dr. Sapadin has found that Crisis Makers are motivated by adrenaline. In order to manipulate their energy, try rewarding them for meeting early deadlines by offering time off to participate in some type of extracurricular activity that would provide their much needed adrenaline rush.

The Overdoer is the one in the office who will take on any task, usually to avoid the tasks at hand. These individuals need to learn to prioritize and delegate and above all – learn to say “no.”

The Defier is a covert rebel. This person will agree to any task and then conveniently forget to do them. These people seem to feel controlled by those issuing the task and have chosen this behavior as a form of retaliation. Managers can help Defiers by focusing on the personal worth or reward that will be achieved by a job well done.

The final style identified by Dr. Sapadin is that held by the Worrier. This person fears any task that takes him or her from the narrow comfort zone. Sapadin suggests confronting the fear of daunting tasks and realizing that the “worst” is never really as horrific as expected.

We are all victims of time at some point in our day. Unfortunately the Mad Hatter was right – if we knew Time as well as he did, we wouldn’t talk about wasting it. Take control of your day and your time by recognizing those opportunities to maximize time. Leonardo da Vinci’s thoughts still ring true today – “Time stays long enough for those who use it.”

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