(http://www.ciob.org/)

Choosing an electrical or electrotechnical contractor?
Minimise your risk by selecting an ECA Member.
(https://ads.atompublishing.co.uk/platform/www/delivery/ck.php?oaparams=2__bannerid=361__zoneid=1__cb=6c7a2a36af__oadest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.eca.co.uk%2Fclient%

MANAGEMENT

How time flies when you're procrastinating

9 May 2013

(https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?irce=https://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/time-s-when-youre-procrastinating/&text=How time flies when ı're procrastinating)

(https://www.linkedin.com/shareArticle?mini=true&url=https://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/time-flies-when-youre-procrastinating/)

(mailto:?subject=Construct flies when you're procrastinating%2(flies-when-youre-p



Maria Willis: Construction coach

First of all it has taken me ages to write this piece, *writes Maria Willis*, and before you all fall off your chairs in mock amusement, it is unfortunately true! Why? Because I was merrily rejecting my own medicine and procrastinating away. It's not that I didn't want to write this or that it isn't important, it's just a prime example of finding other things to do further down the pecking order that take less thought and brain power. Sound familiar?

There are lots of definitions of time, but one I particularly relate to is, "periods or a period necessary or available for a given activity". This, to me covers all aspects of time as every day we fill our time with activities that are necessary (eating, sleeping and of course working, to name but a few). Time is also available for the non-necessary things that you want to do (not that I'm saying you wouldn't want to work of course!).

Now, procrastination is often called the thief of time, and has been defined as "to put off doing something, especially out of habitual carelessness or laziness". I think this is a bit harsh (or maybe I'm in denial?). Another definition I prefer is "to postpone or delay needlessly".

Depending on what role you have in the construction industry, it can be very task-driven, with the likes of reports and valuations needing to be produced on a monthly basis. There can also be other pieces of work like bids, tenders, and responses to contractual letters etc that require a bit more grey matter than others.

Procrastination can attack at any point in time, for example when you know you have a report to write or another task to do and you either don't know where to start with it or you just don't want to do it. It creeps up, pins you down so you can't move and you've no choice but to go and make another cup of tea, have a walk around site, chat to the person next to you about who the murderer was in *Broadchurch* or do something else on the list that is quick and easy.

So, how can we fight back once and for all? We've all been on time management courses and thought, that sounds like a good idea at the time and not done anything with them (or is that just me?!).

I've read a couple of good books on time. The first one is *Eat that Frog* by Brian Tracy. For those of you with batrachophobia (and that's not a fear of bats as I first thought!) I apologise. For the remainder of people reading, they taste just like chicken.

This book is short, easy to read with some really good suggestions. Tracy's ethos is, "if you have to eat a live frog, it doesn't pay to sit and look at it for very long, the key to reaching high levels of performance and productivity is for you to develop the lifelong habit of tackling a major task each morning". In other words, to get into the routine of eating a live frog for breakfast!

The second is *Save an Hour a Day* by Michael Heppell.

Again, this is easy to read which doesn't just cover procrastination but lots of other time-saving activities. One exercise that really stuck in my mind and would recommend doing is the time tracker. This records what you do in 15 minute chunks for a week. I don't think I managed the whole week when I did this, but it was really insightful and it is amazing how much time can be lost in a day.

Taking some of the info from the books, and also from my head, I started to think about a concept of "timefulness". I'm not sure if this exists but it's based on the combination of being mindful (the concept of being in the moment which I have recently blogged about), and thinking about how you *want* to spend your time. I deliberately haven't used the word "need", as I believe that the concept of needing to do something is part of the procrastination battle, *need* and *should* are about external influences, it's about being in control and being at the stage where you want to do something.

So, here's my suggested plan of attack:

1. Be mindful. Be in the moment with what you have to do rather than thinking ahead and flitting between tasks. This can be a challenge in the fast-paced world that we work in and sometimes you have to drop something and deal with an emergency situation. But get into the habit of taking one thing at a time, doing it and moving on.

2. Make "shoulds" and "needs" into "wants". What's on the massive to-do list and how do you change your mindset to make the tasks into wants? What happens if you don't do them? I think we get clogged up by all of the stuff we have to do and we procrastinate on it and think about the outside influences telling us to do things which sometimes makes us procrastinate even more. Let's take back control and *want* to do it.

3. Prioritise. I like Michael Heppell's idea of sitting down at the end of the day and writing down the "five most important things to do tomorrow" and DO THEM! This can be combined with Brian Tracy's *Eat that frog* concept. Your "frog" is the biggest, most important task, to use his words, "the one you are most likely to procrastinate on if you don't do something about it now. It is also the one task that can have the greatest positive impact on your life and results at the moment."

4. Put the pressure on. I have found that we worker bees work well under pressure when we have deadlines. Pressure can often cause stress but, when we are focused on a particular task we can get in the zone and get it done. Brian Tracy talks about developing a sense of urgency, an "inner drive" which is a desire to "get on with a job quickly and get it done fast". A simple way of doing this as suggested in the book is to adopt the mantra, "Do it now! Do it now! Do it now!" over and over again.

5. Stop being a slave to the email and avoid hijack. Emails can be like time hijackers that land in the in-box, pin us down and make us do things that weren't on the list and can lose us a few hours if we're not careful. Cutting down on the number of times we check emails and being mindful of priorities will hopefully help to keep those ninja warrior hijackers at bay (until they reach for the telephone instead!).

I think that will do for now (don't want the dreaded "overwhelm" to creep in!) Have a great frog-eating week.

Maria Willis is a project manager for a well-known industry consultancy and also a qualified career coach. She blogs at www.constructioncoach.co.uk (http://www.constructioncoach.co.uk)

(https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?irce=https://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/time-s-when-youre-procrastinating/&text=How time flies when ı're procrastinating)

(https://www.linkedin.com/shareArticle?mini=true&url=https://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/time-flies-when-youre-procrastinating/)

(mailto:?subject=Construct flies when you're procrastinating%2(flies-when-youre-p

Comments

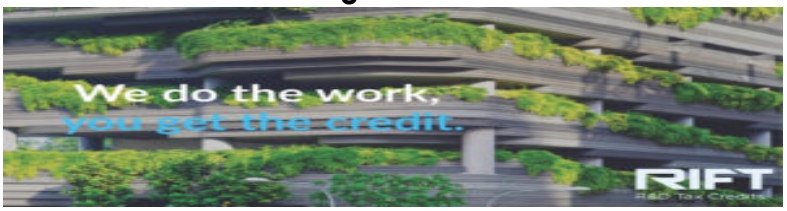
Nice article Delia...
Simon Cummings, 10 March 2020

Excellent piece...well done.
Now what was it I had to get around to doing?
R
Richard Steer, 10 March 2020

Great article – now I must go and put all that into practice!
Claire Hill, 10 March 2020

Time is a made up concept, created by humans for their convenience. Man-age-ment is about counting time to our death. Get a grip 'man', work out what is really important to you and work on that while you still have time.
Dave Stitt, 10 March 2020

Latest articles in Management



Building efficiency and the future of construction

(https://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/building-efficiency-and-the-future-of-construction/)



The role of the finance team in recovery

(https://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/the-role-of-the-finance-team-in-recovery/)



Hefty fine highlights work at height failings

(https://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/hefty-fine-highlights-work-at-height-failings/)



Avoid collisions - save lives

(https://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/avoid-collisons-save-lives/)



Meet a member: Michael Castle FCIOB

(https://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/meet-a-member-michael-castle-fciob/)

NEWSLETTER (HTTPS://WWW.CONSTRUCTIONMANAGERMAGAZINE.COM/NEWSLETTER/)
SUBSCRIPTIONS (HTTP://CONSTRUCTIONMANAGER.IMBMSUBSCRIPTIONS.COM/)
ADVERTISE WITH US (HTTPS://WWW.CONSTRUCTIONMANAGERMAGAZINE.COM/ADVERTISING/)
RSS FEEDS (HTTPS://WWW.CONSTRUCTIONMANAGERMAGAZINE.COM/RSS-FEEDS/)
TERMS & CONDITIONS (HTTPS://WWW.CONSTRUCTIONMANAGERMAGAZINE.COM/TERMS-AND-CONDITIONS/)
CONTACT US (HTTPS://WWW.CONSTRUCTIONMANAGERMAGAZINE.COM/CONTACT-US/)
PRIVACY POLICY (HTTPS://WWW.CONSTRUCTIONMANAGERMAGAZINE.COM/PRIVACY-POLICY/)
© Atom 2020

atom (http://www.atompublishing.co.uk/)

CIOB (http://www.ciob.org.uk/)