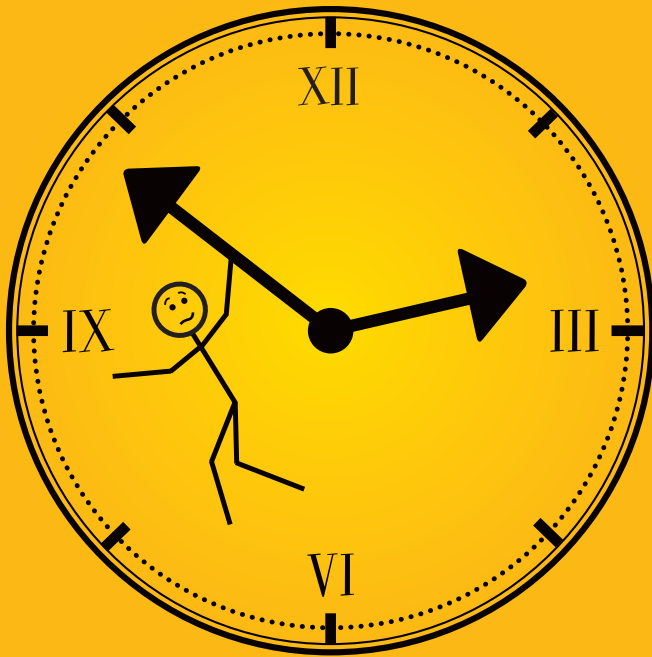


KNOWLEDGE that STICKS!

the skinny on™

time management

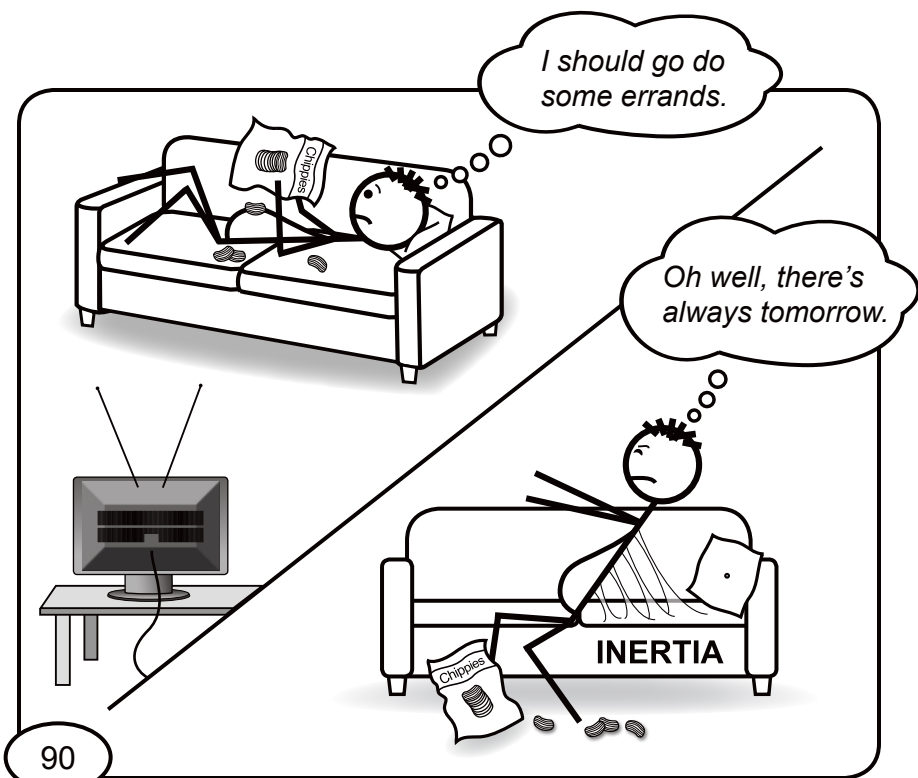
how to maximize your
24-hour gift



BY JIM RANDEL

*"Lose no time. Be always employ'd in something useful.
Cut off all unnecessary actions."*

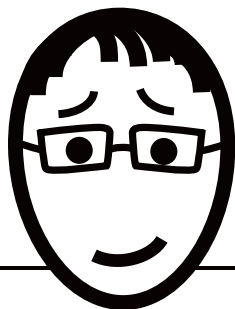
Benjamin Franklin



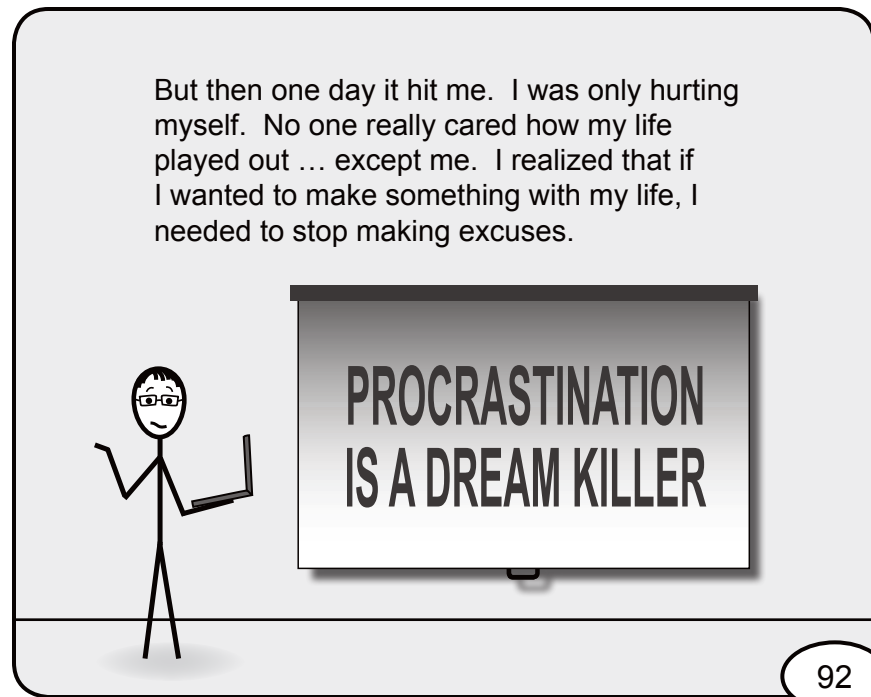
90

I used to be a procrastinator. I always had good reasons why not to start on a project or task. Sometimes the magnitude of the project intimidated me. Sometimes I did not know how to start. And sometimes I was just being lazy. In fact, I used to subscribe to Mark Twain's advice:

"Never put off for tomorrow what you can put off until the day after tomorrow."

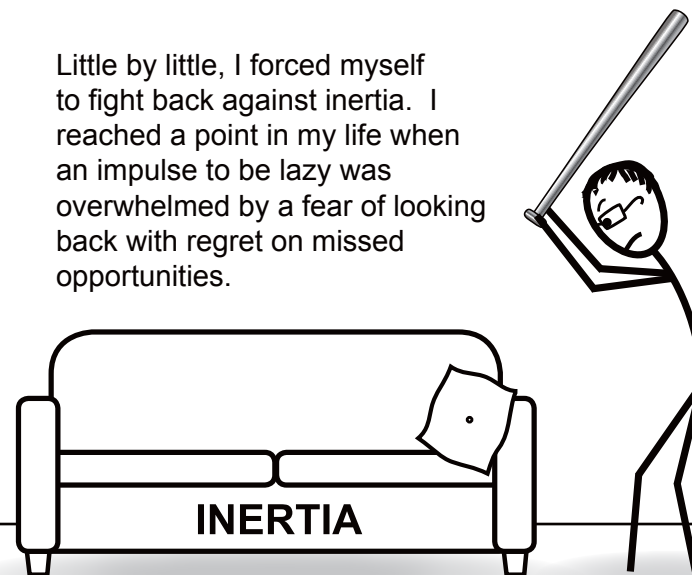


91



92

Little by little, I forced myself to fight back against inertia. I reached a point in my life when an impulse to be lazy was overwhelmed by a fear of looking back with regret on missed opportunities.



93



STRATEGIES FOR DEFEATING PROCRASTINATION:

1. Keep a piece of paper or index card in your pocket with your goals written in bold ink. People who are adept at warding off procrastination are able to connect the result of their action (or inaction) with the achievement of (or lack thereof) their goals. By keeping reminders of your goals handy, you are less likely to delay steps that can bring you closer to your personal dreamscape.

2. Break big projects up into manageable pieces. Most of us are overwhelmed when contemplating a huge project. We look at the height of the mountain in front of us and we think “*what’s the use?*” By dividing that project up into smaller pieces, or by just taking a step forward (even if a small step), the height of the mountain becomes a bit smaller and less intimidating.

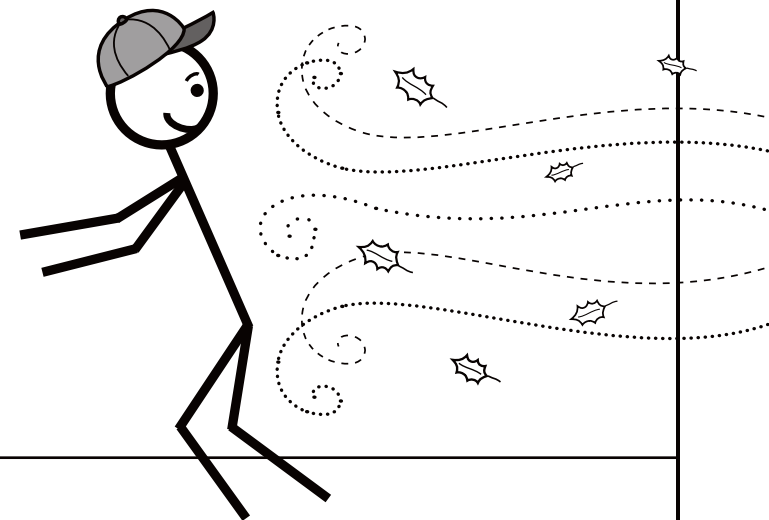
3. Train your mind (awareness) to recognize the first signs of laziness or procrastination. We can all feel ourselves getting tired or lazy. We know we should do something but just don’t feel like it. When you first begin to experience that feeling, that is the precise time to jump right up and get going. This is an anti-procrastination reflex that can be developed and strengthened.

4. Always carry a means of taking notes. Your cell phone (or good old-fashioned pad and paper) can be used to memorialize thoughts or ideas. At times you may not have an opportunity to start into a project but you can at least make an outline, or a to do list, or just scribble down some ideas. Putting those thoughts in writing will help propel you into action the next chance you have to get started.

By the way, there is some good news about inertia: it is actually **two** forces of nature. One that tends to keep immobile objects in place **AND** another that keeps moving objects moving. This means that once you fight off the impulse to stay put, to do nothing, and start moving forward, you will be **the beneficiary** of inertia. It’s like having the wind at your back.



INERTIA CAN ALSO
BE YOUR FRIEND



The point is that you can beat procrastination. After all, procrastination is all in your mind. While there are challenges you will face in life that are not within your control, fighting off procrastination is not one of those.

People who develop the mental strength and fortitude to deal with procrastination and the other challenges we all face are most likely to achieve their dreams.



**PROCASTINATION
IS A DREAM KILLER.**

97

Time management and mental fortitude go hand in hand.

Those who develop mental strength are more likely to:

- (i) keep on schedule/plan;
- (ii) make appropriate choices;
- (iii) maintain good focus; and
- (iv) defeat procrastination.



**MENTAL FORTITUDE IS A SKILL
THAT CAN BE DEVELOPED**

98

I have studied mental fortitude for 25 years. I do not believe people are either born with it ... or not. Rather I believe it is a skill that can be developed like any other.



Here are the three points to understand in order to begin developing strong mental fortitude:

1. **You are not your mind.** Rather, you are the higher being hearing your thoughts. As a result, you have dominion over negative thoughts in your head – thoughts, for example, of procrastination or laziness.

Eckhart Tolle makes this point in *The Power of Now*:

“The single most important step you can take is to learn to dis-identify from your mind. At some point you will smile at the thoughts in your mind, as if they are antics of a small child.”

2. **Thoughts are things just like any other tangible item.** Napoleon Hill first made this point in 1936 (*Think & Grow Rich*). When you conceptualize a thought as a physical object, you control it. You can kick thoughts of procrastination right out of your mind, just like you would toss a misbehaving cat out of the house.

3. **Your brain can only process one dominant thought at a time.** When you feel a thought creeping into your mind, a negative impulse for example, train yourself to think of something else – a strong positive image or idea. Focusing on the positive thought will replace the negative thought, and your brain will thereby lose its negativity.

99

Let's now get into a little bitty of the nitty gritty of time management ... I want to address specific ideas for using every hour you do have in the most powerful, effective way possible.

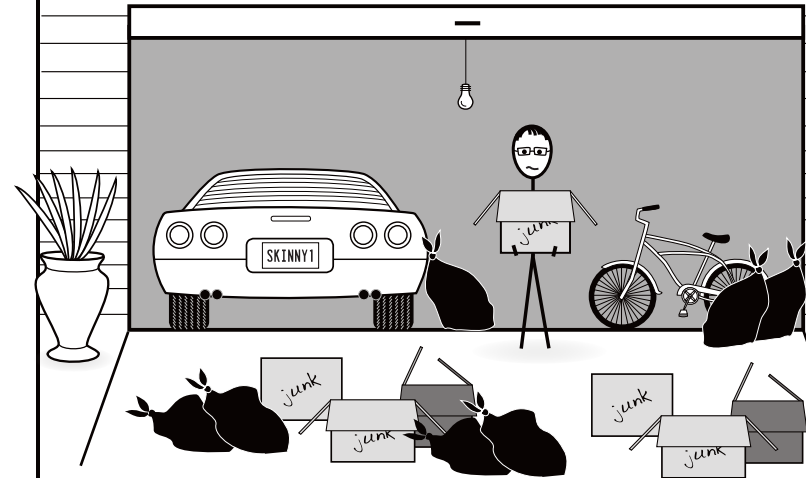
First and foremost I want to speak about clutter.... Yes, clutter. Clutter is the enemy of effectiveness.

CLUTTER IS THE ENEMY.



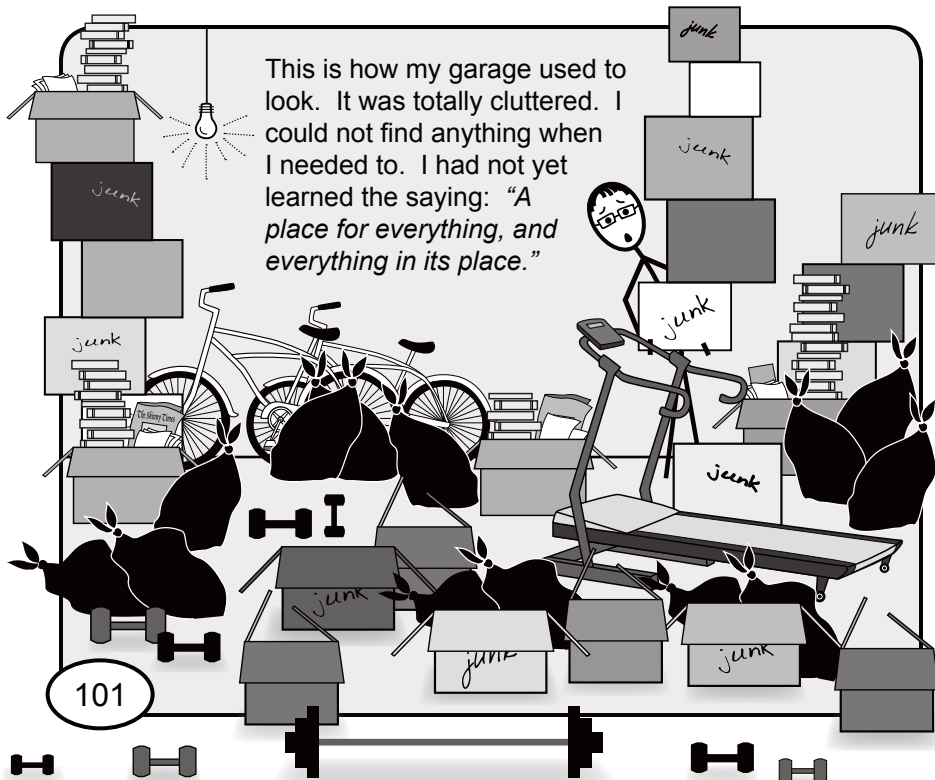
100

Then, one day, my wife had a suggestion. She told me that she would not speak to me until I cleaned the garage. So, I did.



102

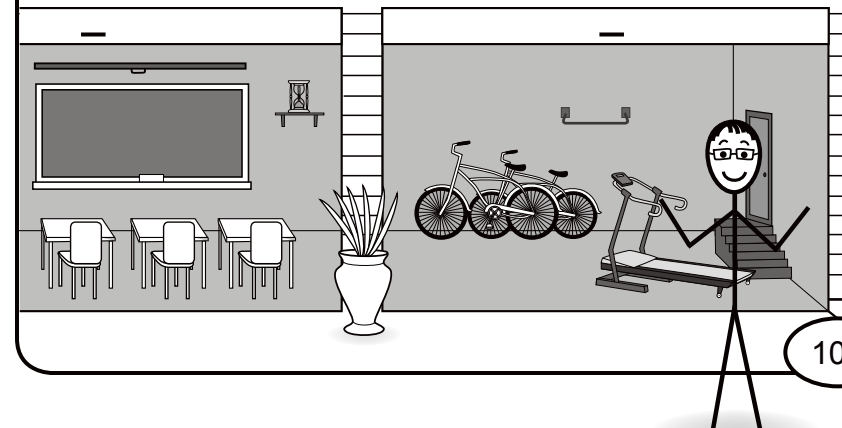
This is how my garage used to look. It was totally cluttered. I could not find anything when I needed to. I had not yet learned the saying: "A place for everything, and everything in its place."



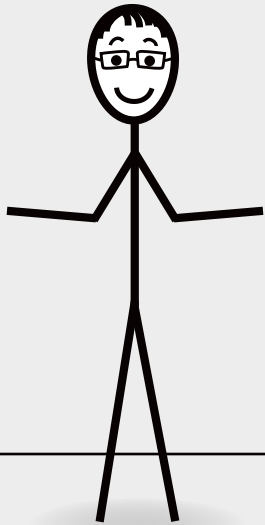
101

And you know what? My wife did me a favor. Simply by getting rid of all the junk, the clutter, my garage became much more functional. I had room to exercise and meditate. I could actually find items that I had stored there. I could hold my classes.

The garage example is a metaphor. We all have both physical and mental clutter in our lives. It may be in your garage, or on your desk, or in your mind – that sense of being overwhelmed by too much to do. Wherever, the act of discarding and organizing can be liberating.



103



Experts on time management teach us that clutter is destructive to productivity.

Clutter causes stress.
Clutter leads to inaction.
Clutter decreases effectiveness.

104

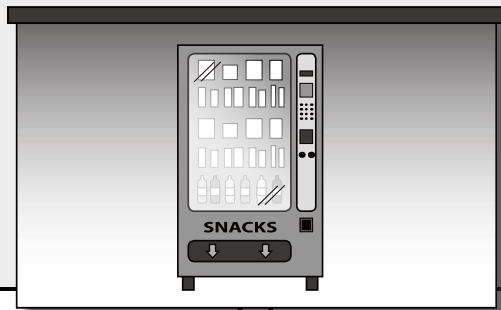
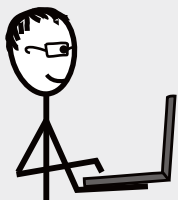
“The short-term memory part of your mind – the part that tends to hold all of the incomplete, undecided, and unorganized “stuff” – functions like a RAM on a personal computer. As with the RAM, there’s limited capacity; there’s only so much ‘stuff’ you can store in there and still have that part of your brain function at a high level. Most people walk around with their RAM bursting at the seams. They’re constantly distracted, their focus disturbed by their own internal mental overload.”

Getting Things Done, David Allen
(Penguin, 2001)

106

Most of us have a brain like a vending machine. You put a couple of things in and then something falls out.

Time management experts suggest that by developing tangible systems to process and retain what we need to do, we give the brain a rest. It no longer has to struggle to deal with all the incoming stimuli, or to remember everything you need to accomplish.

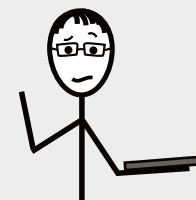


105

The quote above is from David Allen, one of our country’s top thinkers on the subjects of time management and productivity.

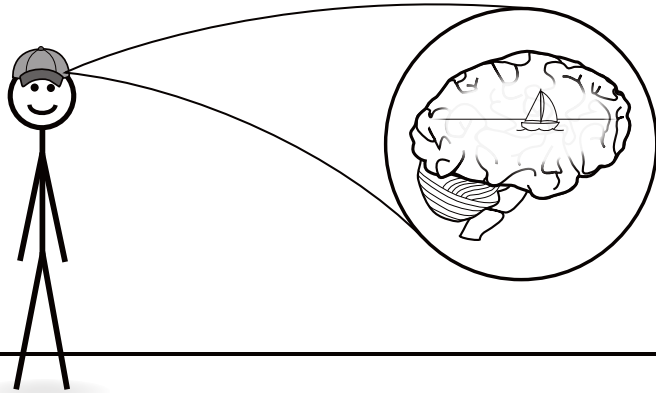
Allen suggests that by developing good techniques and systems for collecting and storing information, we can develop a “mind like water.”

A “mind like water”?



107

When Allen proposes that you want “a mind like water,” he is suggesting a mind free of clutter. Think of a calm lake on a beautiful sunny day. No ripples. No waves. An easy serenity. By developing systems for processing and retaining information, you free your mind for important functions like analysis and creativity.



108

Here is my summary of the most important techniques for effective time management from David Allen’s excellent book, *Getting Things Done – The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*:

- 1. Make your work area attractive and equip it with everything you need to work.** You should enjoy spending time in your work area. Everything you want and need should be near at hand.
- 2. Create a filing system.** Just the act of putting all material relevant to a particular subject in one place (file) is a huge step toward better time management and organization.

109

3. Develop ONE list where you write or type EVERYTHING that requires your attention. By trying to remember too much, you clutter your brain. The point is to get it out of your mind and down on paper.

4. Move every item. As much as possible, every piece of paper, every e-mail, text or voice message should be acted on when you first see or hear it. Don’t leave anything “for later.”

5. Exercise one of three choices for every item. Make a decision to: (i) act on it immediately, (ii) toss or delete it, or (iii) incorporate it into your one list for further action.

6. Convert thoughts to action steps. Don’t write on your list “consider this” or “analyze that.” Put down specific action steps. Instead of “consider this,” put down exactly what you will do (for example): “(i) read about ___, (ii) speak with Bill about ___, (iii) make decision about ___.”

7. Once you decide on action steps, take action if possible. As to anything that you can do in two minutes or less, do it now.

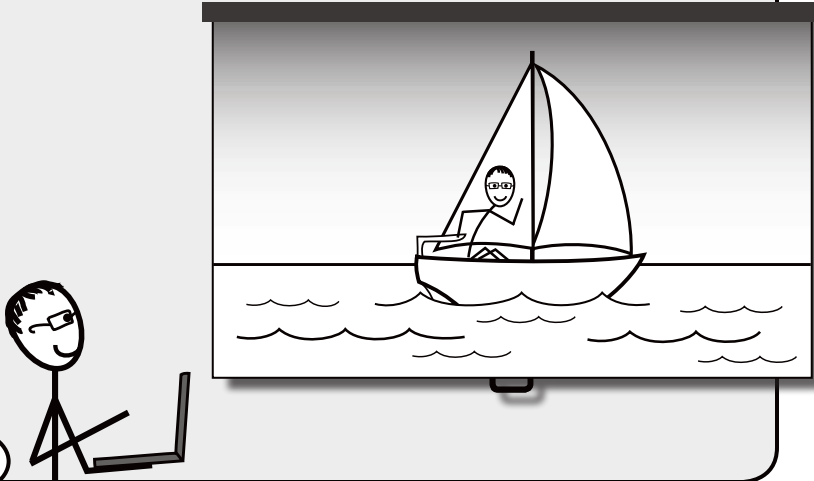
8. Maintain a good “tickler” system. Any reliable method that reminds you what you need to do and when, is fine.

9. Review weekly your systems for retention and productivity. Are your systems working as well as they should? Are you still burdened by trying to remember too much? Make changes as needed.

10. At least once a month, revisit your long-term goals. Are you making the right choices on a regular basis to move yourself closer to your goals? Or are you spinning your wheels? Make sure you are moving in the right direction!

110

By clearing the mind, good things happen. Here I am on a sailing vacation I took last month. Away from the meetings, the cell phone, the blackberry and other daily stresses, I was quite productive. I wrote every morning, and I liked what I wrote.



111

This is me last night after dinner. As you can see, I am trying to do too much at once. This is another form of clutter – trying to jam too much activity into too little time or space.

Sometimes time and effectiveness are counterintuitive. There are many times when you accomplish more by trying to do less. Remember that thought as we will come back to it, but first I would like to bring up a new topic – PLANNING.



112

Planning simply means deciding **in advance** exactly what it is that you need to do in a given time period.

Many of us hate to plan. We live in such an action-packed society that we hurry around doing, doing, doing, and never step back to analyze what exactly is it that we are doing ... **AND WHY.**

Perhaps you have heard the semi-humorous expression, **READY, FIRE, AIM.** That expression describes how many of us go about our days.



113

The problem with **READY, FIRE, AIM** of course is that energy is consumed “shooting” **BEFORE** the target is identified. That is **not** the right approach.

Instead, our objective should be to use our energy as effectively as possible by considering **in advance** where, when and how we wish to take action.

That means planning!



114

You should spend at least ten minutes to plan each of your days. If you are a night person, do it the night before. If you are a morning person, do it the morning of.

Ask yourself questions like:

What is it that I want to accomplish today?

How much time do I have to do that?

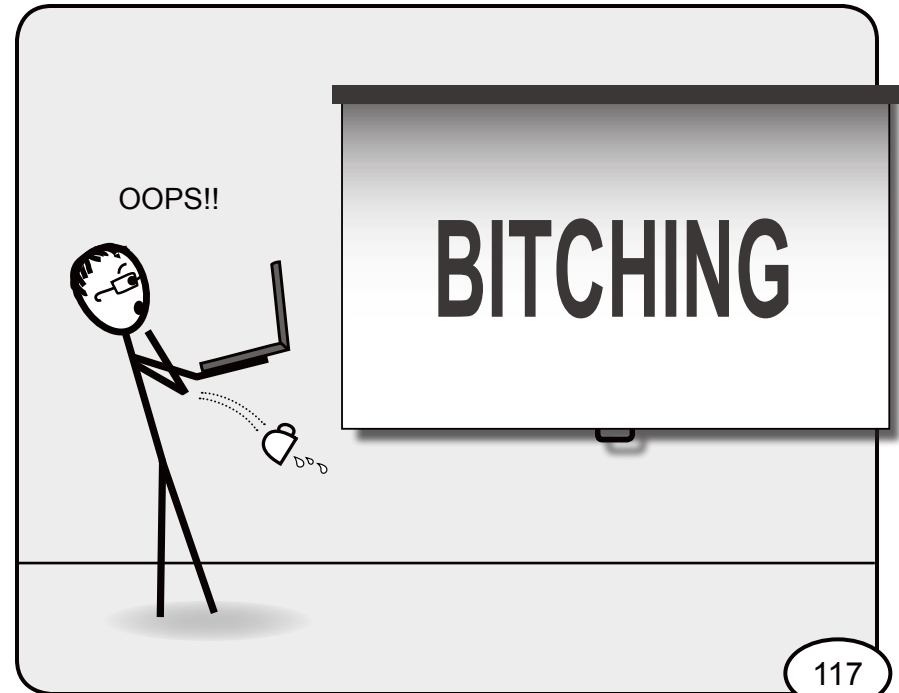
Can I defer doing some items which are not important to another day?

Is there a logical order to doing what I need to get done?

By taking just ten minutes to reflect on what it is that you want to accomplish and how you are going to do so, you can dramatically improve the odds that **what you want to happen will, in fact, happen.**

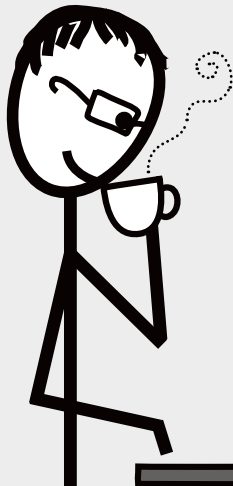


115

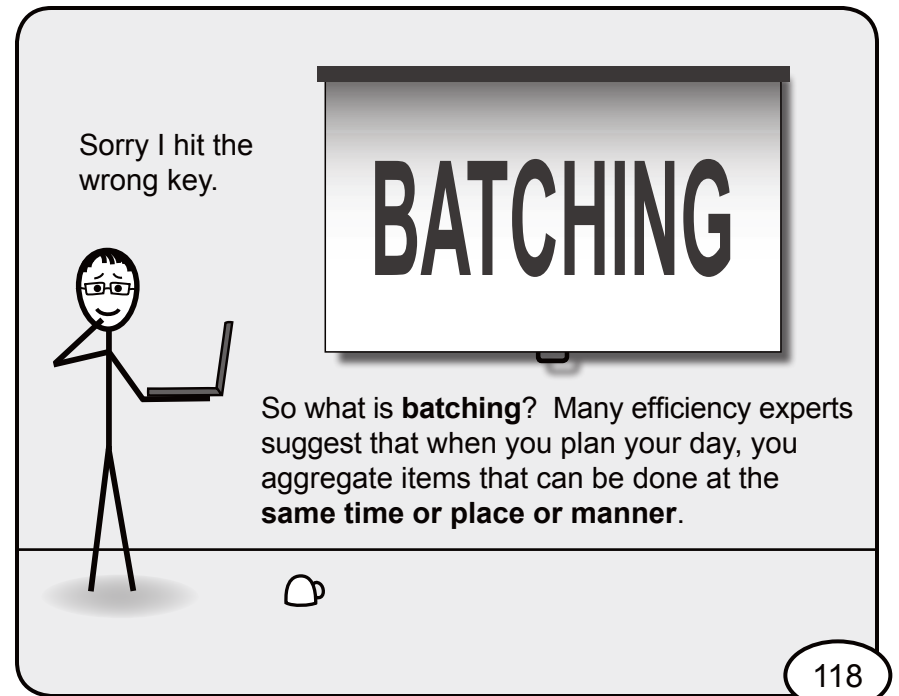


117

As to planning your day, here's a new word you have probably not heard of... just give me a second to type this.



116



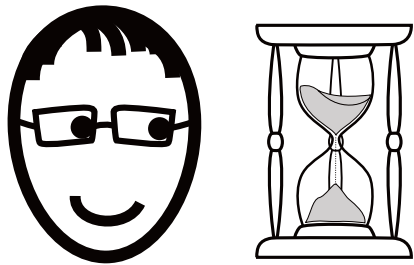
118

For example, let's say that you have to drive across town to accomplish X. You originally thought you'd do that around lunch time. But, when you started planning the day, you recalled that later in the day you need to be across town to pick up Y. And, when you consider doing X and Y, you reflect on Z – a meeting you will be having across town in 2 days. You decide that X and Y can wait, and 2 days from now you take one trip across town to accomplish X, Y and Z.

You have batched these three chores into one trip – saving you lots of time.

119

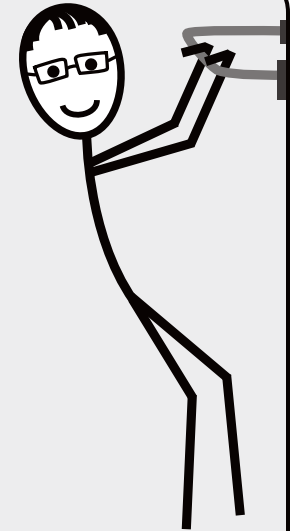
The point of batching, which is a subset of planning, is to think about ways to aggregate chores in a manner that allows you to accomplish them in less time than if you did each one on a separate schedule.



120

A close cousin of planning is preparation.

Thomas Edison said that "success is 90% perspiration and 10% inspiration." I would like to suggest that "success is 75% perspiration, 15% preparation and 10% inspiration."



121

On the screen is a mantra I use to remind myself of the importance of preparation.

By thinking ahead, by preparing, you are likely to reduce the effort you will need to complete whatever task is in front of you. To use a woodcutter metaphor – by sharpening your axe ahead of time – you reduce the energy you need to do your chopping.

**PREPARATION
REDUCES
PERSPIRATION**

122

Sometimes I even prepare for important meetings or phone calls. I know that during these meetings or calls I will have a limited amount of time to influence those in the room or on the phone. I want to use my time as powerfully as I can so decide **in advance** – the key points I want to make in the meeting or call.

In doing so, I try to create for myself the most effective meeting or conversation possible.

123

Just a few days ago, I even prepared for a “chance” encounter.

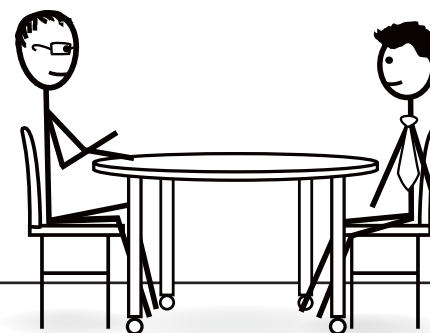
I knew that I was going to be in an office suite where a man I had been trying to meet had an office. I had a rough sense of his schedule. My goal was to try to find a way to “bump into” him and ask for five minutes of his time.

And so I prepared by orchestrating how we might “bump” into each other. I prepared by thinking through what I would say to him when we did and, of course, how I would use our five minutes together if he was willing to give me some of his time.

124

As it happens, I got “lucky”. My plan for meeting him worked, and he was gracious in giving me five minutes of his time.

Given how well prepared I was, I feel that I effectively presented my proposal to him. Time will tell what he’ll do, but no matter what – with preparation – I moved the ball forward.



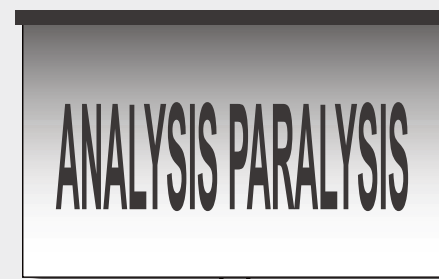
Important Person

125

As with most things in life, planning **taken to the extreme** can become a negative.

As Einstein said: “nothing happens until something moves.”

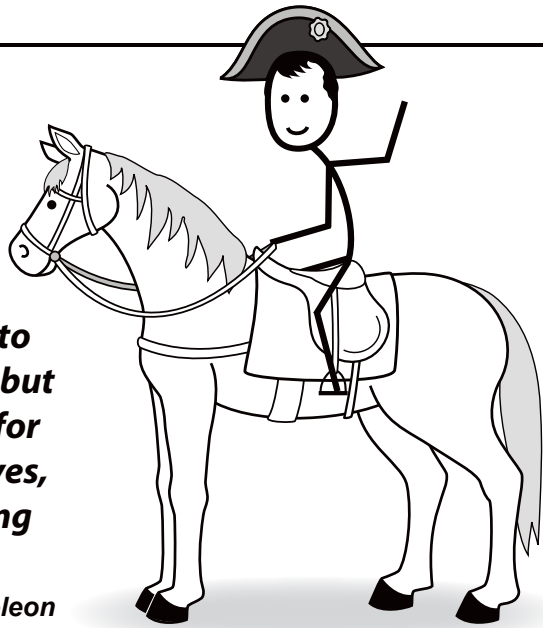
Some people overindulge in the planning process. They analyze and analyze and analyze because that can be easier than actually making a decision. Sometimes this process masks a fear to take action. At some point you need to take action, or at least make a decision that action is not the right course. Then move on.



126

“Take time to deliberate, but when time for action arrives, stop thinking and go in.”

Napoleon Bonaparte



127

AND NOW ON TO A REALLY BIG TOPIC:

TO DO LISTS

128

The physical product which manifests all your planning and preparation is the To Do List.

I am pleading with you: PLEASE START MAKING TO DO LISTS!



129

Do you remember David Allen’s point about “a mind like water?” He maintained that the calmer your mind, the more productive you would be. And he proposed that one way to develop a calm mind was to create systems for collecting and processing information.

That is the point of a To Do List. It is simply a system by which you collect and manage – in one place – everything that you need to remember on a going forward basis.

130



the skinny on™

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Steve Pagliuca, Managing Partner, The Boston Celtics

learn how to:

- beat back the impulse to procrastinate
- focus, focus, focus
- improve your memory and speed-reading
- “multi-task”
- create a time journal
- triumph over distractions
- create a goals-step-time analysis
- make the most of gaps
- make your use of time powerful and impactful
- prioritize
- batch for effectiveness
- execute on the 80-20 rule



about the author: Jim Randel is an attorney and entrepreneur who has studied topics of financial literacy and personal achievement for thirty years.

learn more at:
theskinnyon.com

