

Bob Kustka

Factoring Human Capital Into Your Business Plan

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By Dana Knight

Did you celebrate procrastinators week? Better late than never

This column was supposed to run last week. But as I strolled through CVS on the night of my deadline, a new issue of Penny Press variety puzzles attached to my hand and ended up on the checkout counter. I spent that night finishing 17 crosswords, crypto-quizzes and anacrostics.

Before I knew it, a week of word fun had passed and I found myself in a peculiar situation.

My column on procrastination (timed to run last week during National Procrastination Week) would have to run a week late. Perfect. Now instead of whining about how I am a stellar procrastinator, I could prove that I really am.

Anyone feel my pain? Especially when it comes to work? Procrastination is prevalent in offices nationwide. We somehow manage to get things done on time (most of the time) but often are pushing until the last minute.

But why? I like to think not because we are lazy, loafing dawdlers but because we are perfectionists. If we can't do it perfectly right now, why not wait until tomorrow when we can pull out our A game?

In reality, it's about being selfish.

"It's something I don't like to do, so I just put it off," says Bob Kustka, chief executive officer of The Fusion Factor, a human resources consulting firm in Massachusetts. He is an expert on procrastination (which doesn't mean he does it, just that he's studied it and knows a lot about it).

Other reasons for putting off until tomorrow what we could do today are fear and anxiety. People get overwhelmed. They don't know where to start, so they don't start at all, Kustka says.

Two major types of procrastinators wander not so productively through this world.

The relaxed types view their responsibilities negatively and avoid them by directing energy into other tasks. The procrastinator avoids situations that would cause displeasure, indulging instead in more enjoyable activities. Sounds familiar.

Then there are the tense-afraid types. They usually feel overwhelmed with pressure, unrealistic about time and uncertain about goals. Feeling that they lack the ability or focus, they tell themselves that they need to unwind and relax.

This procrastination thing is so popular that last week was dedicated to encouraging people to put off some duties without feeling guilty. Not coincidentally, last week also was National Sleep Awareness Week. Now the free week is over. It's time to overcome our bad habits. Kustka offers five D's to productivity:

- **Decide.** When faced with a daily to-do list, first decide the priority of each task.
- **Do it.** Face the task right now and get it done. Sometimes you waste more time thinking about doing it than it would take to do it.
- **Designate.** When a task cannot be completed quickly, set a time for it later in the day or week. He suggests making appointments with yourself (actually schedule it into your calendar).
- **Delegate.** When faced with too much work and not enough time, see who else in the office could help out.
- **Dump it.** Yes. There are some things that can be trashed. Don't be afraid to delete.