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Completing Unpleasant Tasks

By Lynn Cutts

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We all have tasks we don't enjoy doing, but they have to get done. Whether it's doing our taxes, cleaning out the refrigerator, or filing that pile of papers, these are the chores we dread. So we end up putting them off over and over again, until the "To File" pile threatens to avalanche onto the floor, or the science experiment in the back of the fridge develops legs and walks away.

Usually when this happens, we get mad at ourselves, which makes us dislike the job even more. We accuse ourselves of being lazy, of having no self-discipline. But that isn't really the problem. Most of the time, it's simply that the task is unpleasant, or we're not good at it, or it's boring. We get less out of the task than we put into it. Or at least it feels that way.

So instead of berating ourselves about our laziness or procrastination, let's take that energy and use it to figure out how to make that chore more pleasant or rewarding. (Chocolate usually works for me.) Sometimes it's as simple as pulling out a pair of rubber gloves before you tackle the fridge, or brewing a special pot of coffee to sip while you struggle with the taxes. The most effective thing to do is to change your feelings about the chore. Find something positive about it and focus on that. Be glad you have a refrigerator with food in it. Appreciate the fact that you have sufficient income to pay taxes.

Here are a few more suggestions about how to handle the chore you hate.

*Can you make the chore more pleasant? Maybe you could light a candle or some incense, play your favorite music, sip a special brew of tea or coffee, if that's your thing. My daughter does her ironing in front of the television.

*Break a big task down into smaller pieces. Don't clean out the entire refrigerator; just do one shelf. Don't attack all your filing at once, just do ten pieces a day.

*Set a timer, and work on that task for just ten minutes, then quit for the day. You can do anything for just ten minutes. Often, however, once you get started, you want to keep going. That's fine too.

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*Get others involved. When we had to clean out the storage area in our basement, we got the entire family involved. We set aside a Saturday afternoon, and with all of us going at it, making jokes about what we found, the job went smoothly and quickly.

*Attack that chore first thing in the morning, before you've had time to start dreading it. Then you'll feel good, and proud of what you've accomplished, for the rest of the day.

*Focus on how good it will feel to have that task done. Visualize a clean, shiny refrigerator or an empty "To File" box.

*If you can carve out the time, schedule one day when that nasty chore is the only thing you have to do. For example, on my bookkeeping mornings, I don't have to do the filing or work on my marketing

plan.

*Give yourself a reward for completion. Celebrate that you've got it done!

*Finally, is this something that you, and only you, have to do? What would happen if you didn't do it, or delegated it to someone else, or even hired someone to do it for you? Will the world come apart at the seams if your spouse does the laundry instead of you? Will your business grind to a halt if you don't get everything filed away? Sometimes just letting go of the "have to" removes enough stress to make the chore bearable.

So the next time you find yourself facing a chore you abhor, take a few minutes and find a way to make it just a bit more pleasant. Not only will that chore go more smoothly, but the rest of your day will, too.

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Extracting the Most from Your Time

By Mark Nemtsas

As we all know time is supposed to be the most precious resource in business. To help you be the most productive person you can be try the following tips to help squeeze out every last drop of your

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time.

1. The last thing you should do each work day is write down everything you need to do the next day. You'll go home thinking of the next days challenges and return to work refreshed and ready to take on the new challenges. It is essential that you write these tasks down, or better still create time items for each one in one of our timesheet software packages Timesheets MTS or Timesheets Lite for the next day.

2. Prioritize the tasks by deciding which are the highest value added tasks you can do. You can do this by asking yourself questions like, 'What is it on this list that I, and only I can do?', or 'why am I on the payroll here and which if these tasks am I best suited to address?'.

3. Be sure to make the distinction between what is 'urgent', and what is 'important'. An unexpected phone call may need to be dealt with 'urgently', but at what consequence to not completing an 'important' task.

4. To help determine how important as task is figure out the consequences of doing or not doing a task. Are there positive rewards to be gained from completing a task? Are there consequences of not completing a task?

5. Are your tasks just 'busy' work, or are they truly accomplishing something? This uses the the Pareto Principle (or the 80/20 rule) which you can read about here. Basically the concept of this is that 80% of the results are accomplished with 20% of the effort. Are your tasks part of the 80% or the 20%? Obviously if part of the 20% then these should have a higher priority in your day.

Here's to finding more hours in the day!

Mark Nemtsas

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