

Obstacles to Success (and what to do about them)

<http://top7business.com/?Top-7-Obstacles-to-Your-Goals-and-What-to-Do-About-Them&id=6195>

- 1. Procrastination.** Is there a voice lurking in your head, whispering to put projects off? Shouting, even, to wait another day, or week, or year? Procrastination may have made a nest for itself, right in the middle of the things you need to get done. That means that you're looking at your key tasks, or trying to look away, and actively avoiding them...

Try this instead: Notice procrastination early on—right when the creature first begins to rear its ugly head. Then ask yourself an important question: What do I need to do to get the job done? Quickly write down your answer. Don't think about it too much. For example, say you've been tasked with planning the department's summer party and planning is not your strength. Instead of staring at your blank MS Word document entitled "Party," start typing out the key things that need to occur: Location, Invitations, Activities, Food, Entertainment. Then type out the tasks that go with each area. This will spark momentum and build an action plan.
- 2. Lack of Time.** No matter who you are or where you are, each of us has 24 hours in a day. That's a fact, right? Yet with all of the things that tug at your attention (work, family, commute, etc.) dedicating time to your goals can be tough. To get through your day and get to what's important; you have to stop your to-do list from growing...

Try this instead: Narrow down your top 3 priorities of the day. How many things are on your to-do list right now? Change the way you use your list by focusing on what's important. Ask yourself, "If I could only do 3 things today, what would they be?" Then go to work on those things first. If you schedule and check off things that matter that day, you'll feel a sense of satisfaction at the end of the day. Wouldn't you enjoy that more than trying to cram in the 54 items on your list and wondering what you actually got done? Create a challenge at which you can win. The 3 priorities a day is that challenge.
- 3. Not Knowing Where to Start.** You walk into your bedroom and feel your heart pound. You look at the 6 piles of paper spread across your dresser and floor, then scan the 17 sticky notes with reminders on your computer desktop. Your chest tightens as you ask yourself, "Where do I start?" Walking into a scene like that can stall even the most disciplined professionals...

Try this instead: Pick one project and spell out a specific goal

going to make the most difference for you.

6. **Lack of Motivation.** One problem is that a lot of goals are set from the head or from the ego. For example, you set a goal to go to law school because your father's a lawyer and your sister's a lawyer, and you want to make them proud. But is it really your goal? If it is, go for it. If it's not, you'll experience much more resistance. It's tough to motivate yourself for something that in your heart of hearts you don't want to do...

Try this instead: Review one of your yearly goals. Why is this important to you? Your answer gives you your purpose for doing something. If your "why" is compelling, it will motivate you. If it's not, make your "why" stronger or re-consider the goal altogether. For example, you might say, "I want to make more money this year." But money for money's sake isn't that motivating. It may interest you when you think about it, but it has to be enticing enough for you to work toward. Why more money? "I want to make more money so that I can send my daughter to a private school where I know she'll thrive." When you clarify the "why" behind what you want you'll feel much more driven and connected to your goal.

7. **Distractions.** How can you block the world out to get the important stuff done? People stop by, friends call, e-mails pop up in your inbox, the Internet lures you, your iPod ear buds beg for a listen... Our world today brims with distractions. Do you long for a moment of peace before you rush out the door in the morning? Do you wish you could find a quiet 2-hour block of time to get that project done? What can you do to close yourself off from distractions?

Try this instead: The solution links back to Obstacle 2: Lack of Time. Carve out concentrated blocks of time for priorities. For example, if you're meeting other students in a study room, close the door, let mobile calls go to voice mail, and mute any "ding" reminders that come from your PDA. This will allow you to give your full attention and provide the quality time that you and others deserve. Also let people know when you're in a no-interruption time or focused work time. In a work environment, get creative. Wear a phone headset so that when people peek around the corner they'll have a signal that you're busy. Or wear earplugs to buffer out conversations.

12. Others misuse your time. Become aware of how and when this occurs and who the offenders are. Avoid the interrupters whenever possible. If avoidance is not possible, send a clear message. Sometimes others do not realize they are breaking your concentration.
13. Get off the phone. The telephone is the perfect interrupter. People do not realize they are interrupting unless they are told. Don't use the phone call as an excuse for a break unless it's time for a break.
14. Learn to say no. This is a valuable time-saver for students and a valuable life skill. Establish parameters. Set limits. And stick to them.
15. Hang a "do not disturb" sign on the door. They work. Using one will eliminate many interruptions.

More Time Management

Knowing how to manage your time is a necessity in order for you to meet the various and numerous demands of college.

Schedule your time by taking the following steps:

- φ Create a *Time Schedule* by charting the days and hours of your week to include time for courses, study, work, sleep, meals, and recreational activities.
- φ Maintain a *Weekly Appointment Book* to include due dates for assignments, tests, study group meetings, appointments, and other activities.
- φ Keep a daily *To Do List* for each day of the week that prioritizes tasks which must be completed that day. Check off items as they are completed.

Give consideration to the following:

- φ Try to schedule time for a subject just before or just after the class meets.
- φ Schedule study time for your most difficult subjects when you are most alert.
- φ Do not schedule study time for one subject for too long at one time. After an hour or so, most people find efficiency is reduced. Try to change to a dissimilar subject, for example, from sociology to mathematics.
- φ Do not schedule exceedingly long study sessions. Few people can study with effectiveness for more than three hours without a substantial break.
- φ Try to stop at an interesting place.

Know yourself: Consider how you best learn, the best time of the day to schedule certain tasks, and your personal likes and dislikes:

- φ If you know you expect to take a half-hour "coffee break" some time between 9 and 10 every morning, do not schedule that time as an "hour of study."
- φ Do not expect to get up early in the morning, expend your energies in exhausting activities all day, and then still expect to study at night. Do your studying when you are alert and energetic. "Run around" when you need to relax.
- φ Decide if you are a "night person" or a "day person" and arrange your schedule accordingly, but be honest in your evaluation. Of course you'll be tired if you stay out late every night. Spend a week getting to know which is right for you.
- φ Do not rationalize that you can study well with many enticing distractions. TV, conversation, reminders of previous exciting activities (e.g. souvenirs and mementos) should not be within your sensory sphere.

When you have developed a realistic, balanced schedule, stick to it:

- φ Discipline yourself to follow your schedules.
- φ Avoid allowing yourself to be drawn away from scheduled tasks.