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- Cork v Kirby MacLean Ltd [1952] 2 All ER 402, ¶4-130
- Yates v Jones (1990) Aust Torts Reports ¶81-009, ¶4-130
- Overseas Tankship (UK) Ltd v Morts D Mound No. 1) [1961] AC 388, ¶4-140
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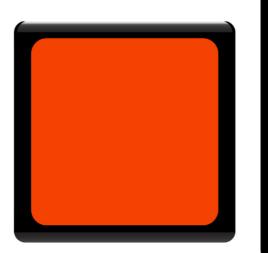
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# C I N T E N T S

7 PROCRASTINATION: WHAT, WHY & HOW TO AVOID IT PRODUCTIVITY



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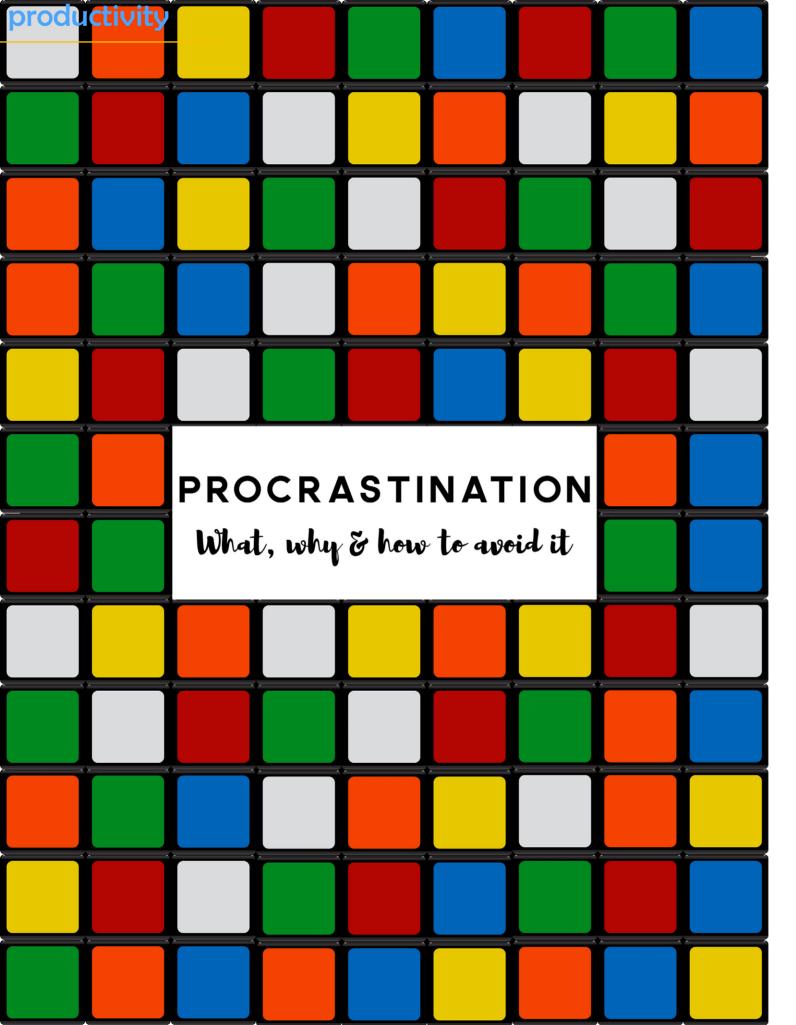
## LETTER FROM THE TEAM JUNE 2017

This issue focuses on something that gets the better of most of us from time to time. Whatever our reasons, excuses or hardwired ways, procrastination can leave us feeling defeated, demotivated, anxious or in dire situations that could have been avoided. Guilty of procrastinating ourselves, this issue is one we needed as much as some of you have told us need it.

After a lot of self-reflection, articles, books and brainstorming sessions, we weeded out some of the most effective ways to deal with procrastination and although we didn't find a magic bullet, we found self-regulation and, as is usually the case, repeated effort to control our urges to give in to doing something other than what we should be doing can help. It's not impossible, but with enough determination and discipline, you can overcome frequent procrastination and significantly reduce unnecessary stress and unsatisfying results or consequences.

In other news, you might've noticed less frequent online articles for which we would like to offer our deepest apologies! As a small team and even smaller engineering team, we've been slogging away at the design and development of our upcoming app and soon-to-be-published website changes. With each of us now writing for the magazine, expect more frequent articles again very soon.

Stay productive & thanks for reading, the Roadmap+ Team



Procrastination is roughly described as the putting off of some task that would best be worked on now, in favor of a more enjoyable or gratifying task. While it's not considered a psychiatric condition, it is an abnormal response to tasks we don't wish to tackle, which generally produces undesirable outcomes. Studies show around a quarter of adults and up to 95 percent of university students around the world procrastinate regularly, with little difference between the genders.

There are numerous reasons why we delay tasks. The most common include perfectionism, the fear of failure, low self-efficacy, task aversion, the desire to do something more immediately gratifying or pleasurable, perceived low value of the task, impulsivity, ingrained habits, blaming external factors, stress, anxiety or outright work avoidance.

Most researchers agree that no matter which way you turn it, procrastination is a negative activity that is best avoided. At work, it can result in lower salaries, limited opportunities, even retrenchment. At school or university, it means late submissions, lower grades, postponed graduation or dropping out. In life we see higher debt, loneliness or poor health and wellbeing. And in general, people who procrastinate are more likely to suffer from higher stress, anxiety, debt, lost time, regret, lower selfesteem and underachievement.

Some studies found a positive strand of it, namely active or strategic procrastination, based on academically sound or successful university students. These students delay tasks because they believe they work better under pressure, the task is easy or that it would be more exciting or challenging under pressure. However, active procrastination hasn't been strongly linked to higher GPAs or high quality output. Because active procrastination requires expert forecasting of required effort, it may only benefit tasks outside of the academic sphere where the procrastinator has ample experience completing similar tasks.

Furthermore - and this is an issue of procrastination in general - anything done within a

#### productivity

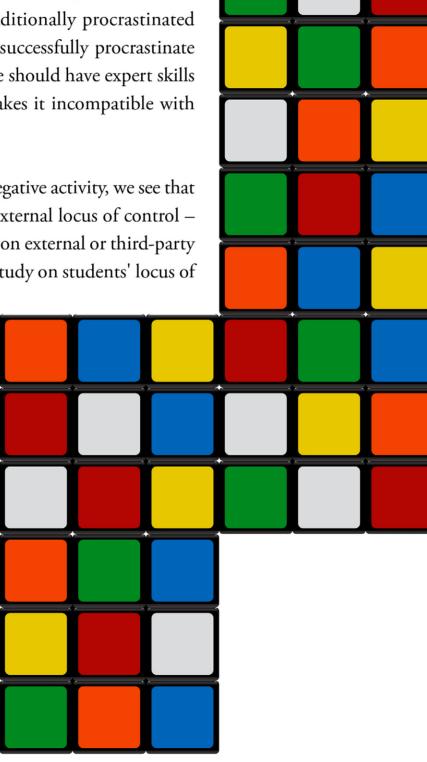
constrained or restricted time will likely be completed under stress. Stress leads to human error, feelings of being overwhelmed, having to slow down, delaying the current task further and ultimately procrastinating other tasks as a flow-on effect.

Additionally, until a successful result is confirmed, it's difficult to distinguish between a task that was traditionally procrastinated versus actively procrastinated. Thus, to successfully procrastinate actively in any domain, it's clear that one should have expert skills or knowledge about the task, which makes it incompatible with unfamiliar tasks.

If we pivot back to procrastination as a negative activity, we see that it has been strongly associated with an external locus of control – the belief one has that outcomes depend on external or third-party factors as opposed to one's actions. In a study on students' locus of control, those that had an internal locus

were more likely to begin, complete and submit assignments earlier than students with an external locus. In a sense this is similar to studies that found extrinsically motivated tasks were more likely to be procrastinated as they were deemed low in value, because they were seen as irrelevant or of no benefit in future.

On the other hand, perfectionism and a fear of failure sees tasks delayed due to an unrealistic belief in one's abilities or because they have high expectations of themselves, so much so that what they want to achieve on a task is unrealistic.



As such, when it comes time to sit down and work, self-doubt increases and the delay becomes an escape from having to produce grand work. It is also used later as an excuse for not achieving their own unrealistic goals. "If only I had more time, then...", "if only they didn't", "if only", "if only". Multiple issues exist in this conundrum.

Firstly, unachievable goals are demotivating for anyone – why commence something that cannot be done? Secondly, nothing is perfect and

something certainly won't be anywhere near perfect if it's rushed at the last minute. With a fear of failure or as a perfectionist, one's true ability is never realized or revealed, so the issue compounds and endures. By setting realistic and achievable goals and committing to regular progress, the perfectionist or failure fearer can get closer to the person they want to be, rather than the person procrastination presents.

Low self-efficacy is at the other end of the spectrum and one of the leading causes of procrastination. It's the belief that one is not capable of performing a task, so it's avoided as way of coping and avoiding stress. As can be expected, the delay increases stress and worsens one's selfefficacy level further. In these instances, thinking back to times when a similar task was successfully completed, positive feedback was received or a seemingly difficult task wasn't what it seemed can be beneficial. Breaking down the task or project into smaller pieces can also help.

Of course, mental health issues have been linked to procrastination; some studies question whether or not they feed each other. For those more serious cases, the solution is unlikely to be self-awareness and selfregulation. However, if your procrastination resembles a bad habit or is merely to avoid work, then self-awareness and self-regulation can assist.

#### productivity

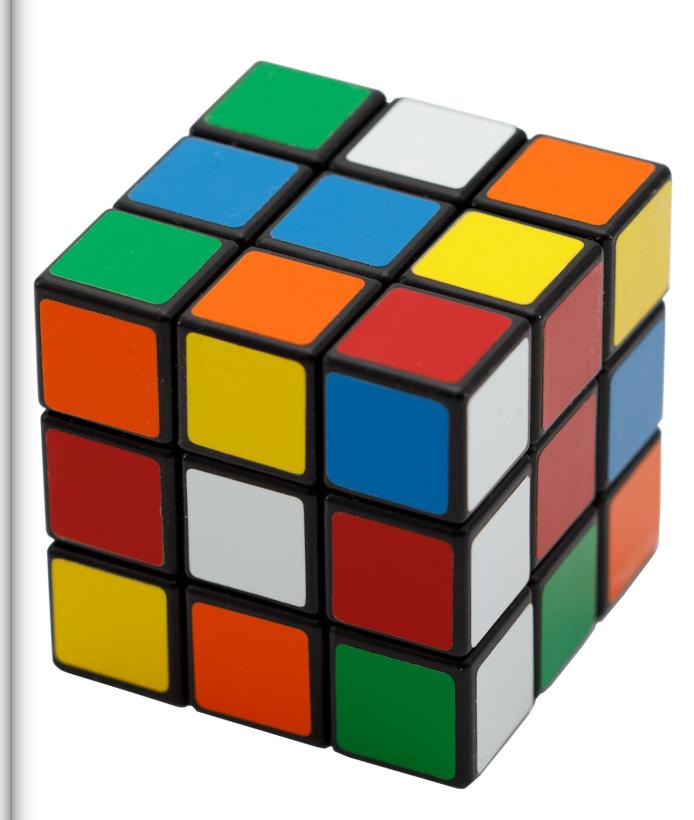
For those of us who are guilty of workavoidance, relax, because it's often been shown to be the strongest indicator of procrastination. It's the guilty pleasure of putting off work because it's too hard, takes too long or provides little or no immediate satisfaction. We opt for something easy or enjoyable, or both. Some liken it to a habit. Others blame distractions. Fortunately, it may be one of the easier procrastination issues to solve.

When we really think about it, most of us know why we choose to procrastinate. If you tune in to your internal monologue and listen out for negative feelings toward a task, recognize them and choose not to act on them. Persevere and get started. Repeat this action until you can honestly say you've done enough. The same goes for distractions.

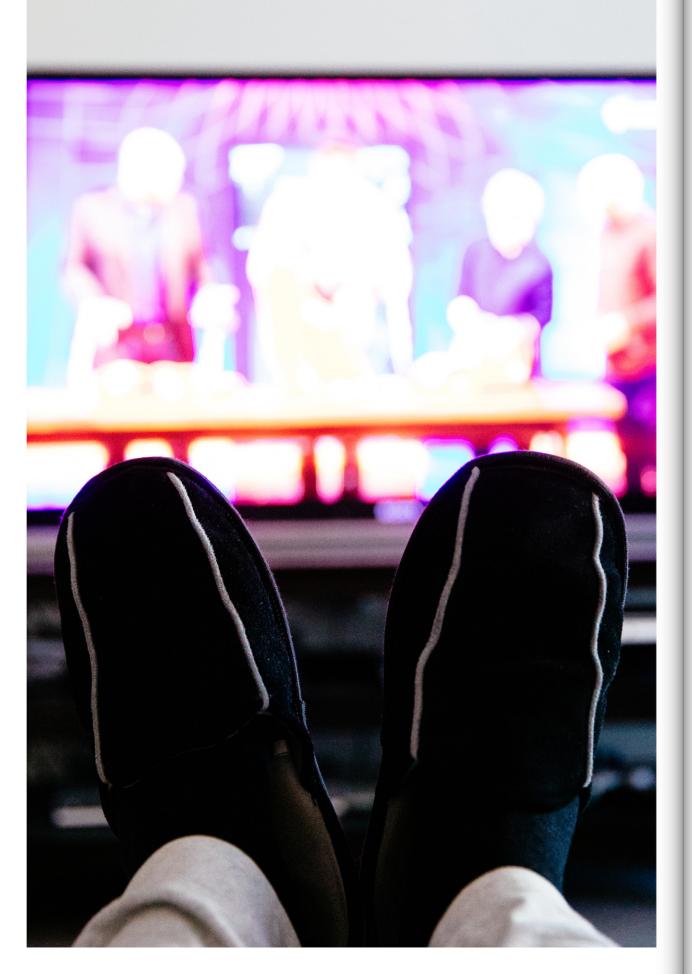
Digital distractions in particular can eat away hours of the day. Random searches, social media, gaming and media streaming are easy and accessible methods of procrastinating. Because they usually sit alongside the thing that you should be working on, use Post-Its, images or apps to prevent being sucked in. The only danger in procrastination avoidance is burnout. Everyone needs to take a break at some point. When creativity is depleted or your mind is boggled, take a break. The difference between a well-earned break and procrastination is the break won't negatively affect time to complete a task. It also won't be undirected, uncontrolled and there won't be something more urgent that needs your attention.

We've only scratched the surface of procrastination, but what we can take away is most of us are aware of it, feel guilty about it and know all about the consequences. Yet, we continue to do it, day in, day out.

The sense of relief we feel when we delay a task for some reason or another is brief. Soon enough, we experience guilt, greater self-doubt, higher stress and often, undesirable or serious consequences. Remind yourself that the more difficult and daunting tasks are often the ones aligned with your life goals, and are therefore the most meaningful and the most rewarding.



#### organize



# BEATINATION

- 1. Evaluate the task. How hard is it really? Why is it important? How long will it really take? We often fear what we don't know or understand, increase stress and miss opportunities. This process will make apparent how much time is actually required to complete the task. Starting is better than not.
- 2. Make it digestible. Break the task down into smaller pieces and set each a due date. This will help you make continuous progress, which becomes addictive, and the work won't seem overwhelming.
- **3. Increase visibility**. That is, make your activity and contribution known to others. Let others know what you're working on, why you need to do it and by when you'll complete it. Provide updates. Ask them to ask you about it.
- **4. Shut out distractions**. A mobile phone sitting on the desk, a messy workspace that needs tidying, an overflowing laundry basket or an open browser with a link to Facebook in the favorites bar are all tempting distractions that can lead the least impulsive procrastinator into the depths of lost time.
- 5. Practice self-awareness and self-regulation. When we become more aware of how we're feeling or what we're thinking, we can then analyze why and react appropriately. When your internal monologue shifts for the worst, tell yourself you'll feel better about getting started than putting it on hold. Those negative thoughts will decrease as soon as you begin and see progress, even if it's only small.
- **6. Habit stack**. Set aside time for a task you've been delaying within a habit loop or stack. For example, sit at desk, close browsers, put phone in bag, open file, *work on horrible task for an hour*, have a coffee, tea or hot chocolate out.
- 7. Reward yourself. Rewards don't always work, but if we're talking about a task you ought to be working on, think of an enjoyable activity to do immediately after and write it on a Post-It. Read it when you feel motivation deteriorating.

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#### KEEP IT CLEAN

The benefit of a minimal, hot desk-like workspace is that you'll always have a place free of distractions, one of the most commonly identified triggers of procrastination. Good lighting, a plant, a few pens and scrap paper will free up plenty of space for readingintensive work, creative projects or times when you feel burdened by too much to do, and you'll also be free of tempting distractions that lead to interruptions and procrastination.

#### **USE A PLAN**

A radical workspace or desk change could induce feelings of anxiety about what needs to be done because you can't *see* what needs to be done anymore. But that fear is exactly what can increase procrastination. To keep your head clear, use a to do list or planner and let it be one of the few things that remain within arm's reach.

#### ONLY BRING WHAT YOU NEED

The key is to stay focused and on-task, so only bring exactly what you need. When you've achieved what you wanted to achieve, put that task's related materials away and bring over the next task's material. As switching tasks will require more effort, you'll reduce the risk of stopping early.

#### A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

If it's out of sight, you'll improve your chances of it being out of mind. A nearby bookshelf or cupboard to store anything that isn't relevant to the task at hand (e.g. books, notebooks, smartphone) will support efforts to maintain a clean workspace and it will be the place where you know everything that needs to be done can be found.



#### career

The workplace isn't somewhere we expect ourselves to procrastinate, but we do, much to our own detriment. Various studies show individuals who procrastinate at work are more likely to earn less, be under-employed and are unemployed longer compared to nonprocrastinators. It's highest in self-employed professions, prevalent in white-collar work and less common in blue-collar work.

The causes of procrastination are the same as what we've discussed throughout this issue, but at work it can lead to missed deadlines, costly mistakes, poor appraisals, lost promotion opportunities, team friction, gossip, and sometimes, shortened contracts or retrenchment. So what can we do to reduce procrastination in the workplace and secure our jobs and careers? The true source of the issue must firstly be identified in order to fix it.

A common and probably least harmful source is digital distractions. As we increasingly utilize smartphones, tablets and web applications for work-related tasks, we open ourselves up to the temptations that exist within those domains. The ease and stealth in which we can switch between work application and personal online activity make it a tempting avenue for procrastinating randomly when we should be working.

Autonomy is another cause of workplace procrastination. Like digital distractions, it's more common in white-collar roles. With freedom comes a greater need to self-regulate, which is likely why customer-facing, blue-collar and highly supervised roles are procrastinating less. Workplace procrastination often stems from a lack of motivation, underestimating effort or taking on too much work, lack of training or skills, the belief that the work will feel less boring or that creativity will be sparked when time pressure is high, or even a means of combating stress.

Besides retrenchment, negative feedback, damaged manager, team and department reputations, and animosity felt from colleagues as they become responsible for picking up the slack and fixing mistakes in shorter timeframes, are some of the most troubling outcomes a procrastinator can experience.

Depending on what the source of the problem is, there are straightforward solutions to most. To begin with, it's important to recognize the value of the work we're expected to do, that someone relies upon it and it pays the bills. Encouraging or joining agile projects or Scrum teams increases visibility and accountability, which highlights procrastination and enforces ownership of late work. Block out your most productive hours as a recurring meeting or 'out of office' to minimize distractions and maximize optimum focus periods. Start early or finish late. Take MOOCs or professional education courses to upskill and boost confidence. If all else fails, continue to employ techniques that reduce procrastination, but consider looking for a BAU or operations role that offers less flexibility by way of frequent and shorter deliverables.

### PROCRASTINATION AT WORK

Did you know around 25% of adults are chronic procrastinators? And in some studies, up to 95% of university students procrastinate.

# STOP

## PROCRASTINATING!

#### WHAT, WHY & THE CONSEQUENCES

Procrastination is delaying what needs to be done now for something less urgent, more enjoyable or immediately gratifying. In students, procrastination tends to derive from low self-esteem, perfectionism, fear of failure, dislike of the task, the belief that they can work better under pressure, busyness, balancing social and academic life, the desire to do as little as possible or only what's necessary, to reduce distress

caused by the task, or in some cases, it's the result of an existing mental health issue, such as depression.

Although procrastination delays the undesirable task, research shows it often results in lower than expected or achievable grades, low GPA, stress, anxiety, cramming, missed or late assignments, poor performance on tests, and dropping out.

#### PRACTICAL WAYS TO STOP IT

- Recognize it before it occurs. Keep a list of scenarios that precede procrastination. Were you about to pick up the tv remote, game controller, your smartphone or dive into bed? Were you experiencing negative emotions when you sat down at your desk, glancing at a stack of books? Did a friend just text you to do something today? Before proceeding, ask yourself if that's something that urgently needs to be done and if you were about to procrastinate. Then, don't.
- Break down tasks and set interim due dates for yourself. Ask a non-procrastinating friend or relative to act as your project manager and report weekly progress.
- Know your optimal productivity time and commit to studying at those times. If you're always tired in the morning, dedicate a few hours each and every afternoon to study. Do more when you can, but stick to the hours you know you feel freshest.
- Regularly practice the above to develop a habit of stopping procrastination before it turns into a bigger problem.

#### SIMPLE SOLUTION. CHALLENGING IMPLEMENTATION.

There's no clear, one-size-fits-all solution to procrastination, probably because there are numerous causes of which some are serious. But if it's plain old study procrastination that you're trying to solve, the general consensus amongst researchers is to firstly be aware of the problem, recognize it when it occurs or is about to occur, and choose not to follow through with it. It sounds simple and eventually, it will be.

#### EXPERIMENT

Habit stacking is one of the easiest ways to ensure you don't procrastinate on particular tasks. Each morning or evening, try using use a step-by-step ritual: Get out of bed. Shower. Brush teeth. Put phone in a different room. Go to desk. Set timer to 2 hours. Don't pause timer! Read / highlight / annotate / take notes. When alarm goes off, have breakfast.

# 10 Serves Ver Day FRUIT & WEG IDEAS





Earlier this year, Imperial College London recommended 800 grams of fruit and vegetables per day for a longer life. At around 10 serves per day, this doubles the previous recommendation of five serves per day.

The recommendation was based on an analysis of 95 studies that linked higher consumption of fruit and vegetables to a decreased risk of disease and therefore greater longevity.

Ten serves may sound like a lot and it can be a lot in calories and sugar if we're not careful. If you're taking supplements or suspect a deficiency in certain nutrients, consideration must also be given to the nutrient values within your chosen fruit and vegetables. Say you're taking a multivitamin containing vitamin A, avoid eating a cup of peas - high in vitamin A - each meal as it could, for example, impact liver health. If you have concerns it's best to consult a professional before altering your diet as each of us have different needs and lifestyles.

For this article, we've selected ten serves of commonly found fruit and vegetables that are either ready to eat or require very little preparation.

- One medium-sized fruit, such as one apple, pear, banana or orange.
- Two small-sized fruits, such as two kiwis, two plums or two apricots.
- One medium-sized vegetable, such as one tomato which could be sliced and sprinkled with pepper on a slice of rye.
- One cup of cut fruit in a can without the syrup.
- Add half a starchy vegetable to lunch or dinner in the shape of half a potato, half a sweet potato, half a small taro or half a cassava.

- A mini vegetable bowl of two cauliflower florets (a quarter of a serve), half a cup of leafy greens (half a serve) and quarter of a cup of pumpkin (a quarter of a serve).
- A small scoop or handful of dried fruit. No more than 30g per serve is recommended.
- Half a cup of lentils, peas or beans.
- Half a grapefruit.
- Half a cup or 125ml of juice. ■





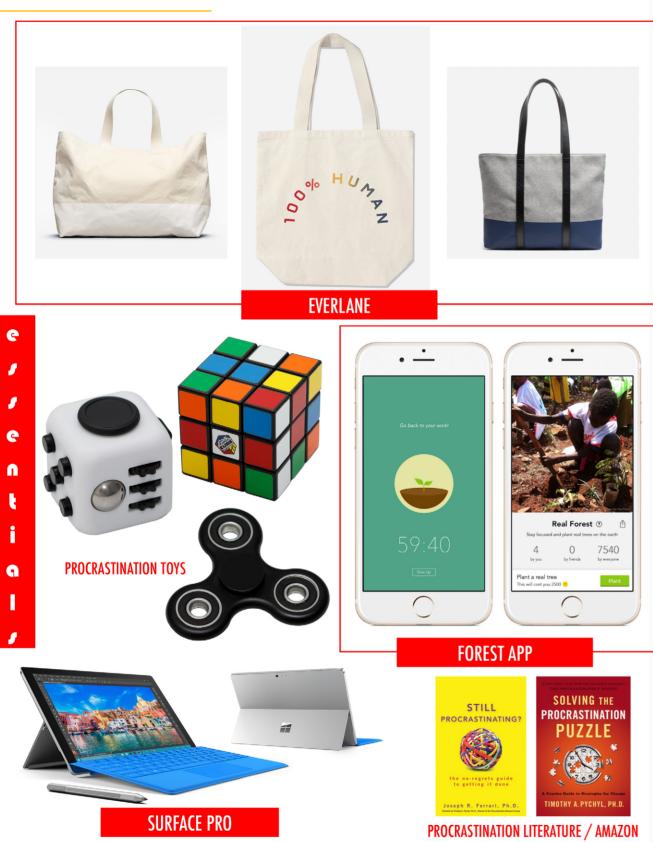
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#### extras



Top to bottom: The Beach Canvas Tote, Human Pride Canvas Tote & the Dipped Zip Tote by **EVERLANE**; fidget spinner, fidget cube and **Rubik's Cube** available from most toy or department stores; Forest app to improve focus and save the planet available on iOS and Android by **FORESTAPP.CC**; the new Surface Pro shown with Surface Pro Signature Type Cover by **MICROSOFT**; Still Procrastinating? by Joseph R Ferrari and Solving the Procrastination Puzzle by Timothy A Pychyl are must-haves written by the authorities on procrastination, on **AMAZON**.

## PROCRASTINATION IS THE ART OF KEEPING UP WITH YESTERDAY.

ON MARQUIS

#### extras

# **10-MINUTE BREAKS**

BREAKS 25-27

#### **25. RECALL FOR YOUR BRAIN**

Tracking what we eat daily in a notebook or planner has been proven to assist in weight loss and management, but it can also assist our brains. Write down what you ate the previous day, each day, meal-by-meal. It's surprisingly challenging, but within weeks of practicing this daily you should notice an improvement in your memory prowess.

#### 26. EAT A SERVE OF FRUIT or vegetable

As an eater of all food groups, consuming enough fruit and vegetables each day just got harder. Imperial College London recently found 10 serves or around 800 grams of fruit and vegetables a day the ideal amount if you want to live longer. So next time you're feeling peckish or reaching for a cookie, instead consider chomping on an apple, a banana, a cup of grapes or dipping a chopped carrot into some hummus.

#### **27. WRITE FREELY**

Putting our feelings or thoughts to paper or into a notetaking app is said to be therapeutic. Not only that, but writing tends to improve with practice and it's often required in high school, university and in the workplace. If writing about your feelings or thoughts makes you squirm, you could start a notebook or even a blog about an interest or hobby of yours, documenting your activities or progress.

# Resources

#### • Past Issues

www.roadmapplus.com/magazine/pastissues

#### • Useful Productivity Links updated

www.roadmapplus.com/magazine/resources/useful-productivity-links

• Issue 9 Inspiration Gallery poster www.roadmapplus.com/magazine/resources/downloads#inspo

#### • **Give Back** www.roadmapplus.com/magazine/article.php?id=i8ess

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#### From the website

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Peas vs Lentils

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**Tips for Effective Meetings** 

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24 Hours Before an Exam

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#### Just get started.

Timothy A. Pychyl Solving the Procrastination Puzzle

#### SEPTEMBER 2017

**SLEEP** 



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