



# Become an **Expert** Procrastinator in 2007

*Laura Ashley-Timms, the Licensing Industry's very own Coach, has teamed up with Total Licensing to challenge you to improve yourself and your business.*

*So read on... and then send in your questions to be answered in our regular 'Coaching Corner' feature.*

***A New Year and with it a new opportunity to really excel at something. I trust, as a reader of this column, that you have already taken the time to review your last year's performance and that you have set new goals for 2007. I was racking my brains to think of what would be the ONE SKILL that you could really MASTER this year... something that would be as valuable to you whether you are a Managing Director or a Licensing Assistant. Suddenly it came to me... become an expert PROCRASTINATOR!***

Let's be completely honest, we can all procrastinate to some extent, but how good are we really? If I was to push you could you look me in the eye and call yourself an Expert in this field? If not read on, what follows are the top TEN areas that you can focus on this year to really hone your skills!

## **The 10 Steps to Procrastination Expertise**

So how can you move your average performance of 2006 up a notch this year? Don't forget YOU have to TAKE ACTION if you want to make changes. So make notes as you go through this article of what you are going to commit to do differently.

### **1. SET UNINSPIRING AND DEMOTIVATING GOALS**

This is really fundamental. An expert procrastinator cannot afford to be motivated, so don't set any goals that would a) improve your life b) improve your financial security or c) inspire

you to want to achieve them.

Keep all your goals, simple, achievable and mundane. Or even better, don't bother setting them. If you can manage to follow this simple tip then you will be well on your way to enhancing your procrastination skills.

### **2. SPEND LOTS OF TIME IN MEETINGS**

Meetings can be an excellent way to waste time and can make you feel really important too, as your diary fills up and you become more and more unavailable. So make sure your day is full of them.

The best type of meetings for really good procrastinators are committee meetings, as you mostly just go around in circles looking for consensus. Volunteer for as many of these as possible.

In order to maximise the lengths of meetings:

- make sure they are always in big rooms with comfortable chairs
- Order lots of tea, coffee and cakes
- Don't create an agenda or have any objectives/outcomes
- Don't offer to chair it
- Don't set a time scale for the meeting

If you follow all the above you should be able to really eek out every last procrastination opportunity here.

### **3. DO ENDLESS INTERNET RESEARCH**

Internet research is a great secret weapon. I have one client who admitted to spending 8 hours just looking

for a new freezer for his garage and then at the end of all this time he didn't even order one. He had to do the research all over again a month later! Of course he is one of my Procrastinator Gods, so he would be an excellent model for you.

To maximise this skill remember not to Power search (this can be a disaster if done correctly). A proper Power search may reduce your choice from 400,000 down to 15. How long is that going to take to research? Clearly not long enough, so avoid at all costs. Also remember to keep all searching as aimless fun, don't try and be specific as this could lead to a faster decision, thereby robbing you of the opportunity for more mindless browsing.

### **4. AVOID DECISION MAKING**

At all costs you must follow this golden rule. "Decisions are the stepping stones of progress" (Dominic Ashley-Timms), so avoid them if you truly want to achieve procrastination mastery.

What is really bizarre is that even bad decisions are good for progress as you still move forward by learning what doesn't work and they allow you to refine your strategy. So don't fall into the trap of making bad decisions either, it is best to avoid making decisions completely.

### **5. TAKE LOTS OF UNNECESSARY LONG BREAKS**

There are many ways to refine the long break. Smokers have an upper hand here as they have to leave the building and can go for a long walk on a regular basis. One idea is to pretend

you are a smoker and go out for 10 minutes every hour. That could have great impact on disrupting your concentration and having to start at the beginning again and again when you get back to your desk.

Tea and coffee making is another option. Regular trips to the drinks machine or the kitchen. One way to improve both your skill and popularity is to offer to get a couple of colleagues a drink too.

Of course if you want to show off your improved skills how about drawing up a template with everyone's favourite drink on it, then you could have the excuse to make the entire office a drink...well it would be rude not to!

**6. FIND OUT ALL THE OFFICE GOSSIP**

This is a particular favourite of mine and it doubles up as making you incredibly popular as you hold all the information. If people want to find out what is going on they will surely come to you and before you know it you are the hub of activity.

Works wonders for the Ego and wastes tons of time too. So get practising now.

**7. REVIEW YOUR EMAIL CONSTANTLY THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

Email is a Godsend for the master procrastinator. Emails arrive constantly so what better than to stop what you are doing every time you hear the "ping" and attend to your new email.

Managing email effectively can be a disaster for the master procrastinator so avoid the following:

- Don't set specific times to attend to emails. Bad procrastinators sometimes only look at their emails twice a day. This could be disastrous for you
- Don't delete your Junk mail before you've read it all
- Don't delegate email tasks to colleagues when you could spend time crafting the perfect message yourself.

**8. FOCUS ON ALL THE MINOR PROBLEMS**

Focusing on the unimportant problems is the best way of filling your day without fear of being effective. These are the problems that will not impact THE BOTTOM LINE.

Keep asking yourself... "IS WHAT I AM DOING NOW FUNDAMENTAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS BUSINESS?" if the answer is NO then keep doing it. Stop doing anything that might move you forward.

Become known in the office as someone to come to over all the unimportant stuff, the local agony aunt or uncle, or just a kind listener. This again will help you stay focused not just on your minor problems but on everyone else's too. A true sign of mastery.

**9. REORGANISE YOUR OFFICE OR FILING SYSTEMS**

Another favourite. We all know that an "untidy office/desk creates an untidy mind," so this tip really has a double advantage. By keeping your desk a mess there is almost a constant need to have to reorganise it, find a better system to get on top of it, or just to spend ages looking for that document rather than working on it.

Even better, remember to keep all the paper that comes in then you can also invest unnecessary time filing it.

Some of the top achievers have almost removed paper from their office and insist that all memo's or proposals are no more than 1 side long (i.e. they want their team to communicate the information in simple "headline" forms not in a thesis style tome). This would be far too efficient for you. Remember to keep all written work longwinded and keep your desk snowed under with all that paperwork.

**10. FOCUS ON YOUR COMPUTER**

This final tip may be more for the boys out there. There is nothing better than spending your time with our friend the PC and especially that excellent Windows package. Some things that can really help with your procrastination are:

- Spending time making those minor improvements e.g.

- personalising your desktop
- Helping colleagues with their IT problems
- Fixing the printer
- Upgrading your software and drivers
- Tweaking the settings for improved performance

The list is endless, as is the time it can consume. Whatever you do don't change to an Apple MAC, most of these opportunities will disappear overnight!

**Next steps – taking Action**

All Ten steps can really get you on the road to expertise in Procrastination, but as ever nothing will improve if you don't make a conscious decision to FOCUS and TAKE ACTION.

If you can identify with more than three of these then you are probably well on your way to achieving procrastination mastery. It's time to take a long hard look at the habits you have formed and start making some changes.

1. Choose three areas that you could improve.
2. Score yourself out of 10, where you think you are TODAY against these 3 areas. Next, set an improved score that you want to achieve in a month's time.
3. Make a list of the sorts of things you would have to be doing to justify the improved score by next month.
4. TAKE ACTION.

**Don't forget that for readers of Total Licensing Laura is offering a completely FREE no obligation 30 minute coaching consultation.**

*So go on and pick up the phone, what have you got to lose? Your only risk is spending half an hour talking about yourself...Contact Laura Ashley-Timms at Notion Limited. Tel (UK) 0845 4568217 (Int) +44 (0) 1926 840078 Mobile +44 (0) 7968 164083 laura@notionltd.com www.notionltd.com*

**Coaching Corner**

**Q: In spite of working long hours I find that I am not particularly effective, please advise what simple changes I can make?**

*Marketing Director*

A: Long hours are often a classic procrastination tool. "I work long hours therefore I must work hard". In my experience this is rubbish. Successful people work effectively and as such can often achieve a lot in a few hours, allowing them to enjoy a higher quality of life. Do you ever fill your time with any of the ten areas of behaviour outlined above? If you want simple changes, just STOP doing them NOW.

At the beginning of every day ask yourself "what are the three most important tasks to focus on/complete today?". Do not start ANY other task until you have completed these. If you finish them by 1pm take a long lunch hour! You have already completed your day's work!