

Hi

I started writing this email yesterday and I'm still writing it today . . .

It all began well, but as soon as I got stuck on a certain sentence my mind began to wander . . .

Before I realised it I had checked my inbox . . . made a coffee . . . read the newspaper . . . answered a couple of emails again . . . wrote a few headlines for something completely different and even downloaded a couple of songs from iTunes . . .

. . . and where was I . . . um . . . ah yes, when I came back to this email my concentration was lost and I had to start all over again . . .

I'll be straight with you. I'm a lazy so-and-so. I get distracted very easily and have to push myself very hard to complete tasks.

Yes, I'm a chronic procrastinator. I put important things off until later in the hope that somehow they will just come together themselves. Of course this won't happen . . . but I live in hope!

I receive emails from people all the time asking me how to stop procrastinating and get things done. Well, take it from someone who knows A LOT about this subject, there are a few tricks I use to take action that you might be able to adapt to your own circumstances.

First, get a loaded gun . . .

When I find it difficult to motivate myself, I use my imagination. I pretend that there is someone sat next to me with a gun pointed at my head and am given an ultimatum.

(I should mention this is not my own idea, but one from the great (late) Gary 'King of Copy' Halbert.

Incidentally he died of natural causes and not a virtual bullet! You can check out the master recorded live at a seminar here:

<http://www.garyhalbertlive.com/>)

Let me give you an example: I have exactly one hour to finish this email. Not only do I have to complete it in this time, but I have to pour as much passion and effort into making it so good that I will move people who read it to do something positive themselves.

If I don't finish with the hour or I haven't given 100% effort, then I will be shot!

Strange perhaps, but if you can really enter into the visualisation it can produce amazing results. I have used it every time I write a marketing promotion for a new product. I also used it when I first started my company . . .

What you are really trying to do with this technique is heighten the emotional attachment you have to your actions. What will happen if you don't achieve your goal?

Ok, that's the stick. What about the carrot?

Think about the positive results of completing an important task. If you are working towards launching your home business or additional income earner, there payoff is easy to visualise.

When I launched my business, I had a clear mental picture of all the positive effects - me owning a beautiful Georgian house in Central London, eating in the finest restaurants and wearing a bespoke suit.

Yes, I know it is all very shallow and materialist, but those are the things that I aspired to at the time. And yes, these things do matter to many and for better or worse are equated with success.

Another more immediate payoff is to give yourself a small reward for completing each important task.

And don't forget the emotional benefits of taking action: the satisfaction of doing something that is improving your lot; the pride your family will feel; the envy of your friends and neighbours.

Now, if you can bring these feelings of positive and negative consequences really vividly into your mind,

something can happen. You can, temporarily at least, trick your procrastinating self into stepping aside.

Ok, if all that is a bit intimidating (if not downright weird), here are some other - perhaps less extreme - ways to give yourself a kick up the backside:

- \* Unpleasant tasks rarely turn out to be as bad as you think. So do these first and give yourself a reward for doing them. There's a strange satisfaction in ticking off these nasty jobs from your todo list.

- \* Starting a home business can seem a huge and daunting task: break large jobs into smaller, more manageable tasks. Give yourself small rewards for completing each difficult task. Equally, punish yourself for failure to complete a task. Do this by withholding the reward.

- \* Share your plans with others: set a specific date and let your family and friends know about it. Make a bet with your family, friends or co-workers that you will finish a particular project by a specified time, or find other ways to make yourself accountable.

- \* Block your time for projects: when I am writing this eletter, I usually lock myself away for 3 hours after dinner and just try to write.

- \* Remove temptation: turn off your mobile phone. Don't check your emails. Remove clutter from where you are working. Tell your family that you cannot be disturbed for these few hours.

- \* Overcome your fear of failure: many people delay taking action because they are worried about things not working out. Stop focusing on the negative outcome and instead concentrate on the present.

- \* Overcome the fear of success: this is more common than most people give credit - some people are worried about what will happen if their business does take off. What will I do about tax or setting up a company? What about my office? Who cares about that right now! That's a great problem to have . . .

when it happens. But don't let it get in the way of you actually taking action.

\* Develop a clear mental picture of the completed task and how you will feel at that time. Maintain a focus on the end result, not just the process. Remind yourself how good you'll feel when you're finished.

\* When you have accomplished a task, mark it out on your to do list with a pen. It gives you visual confirmation that you are getting somewhere.

\* Set deadlines for completion. Try assigning yourself small-scale deadlines ' for example, commit to reading a certain number of pages in the next hour.

\* Partner up: if you find starting a business daunting, find someone to join you. I was lucky enough to work with Heloise. Each of us would encourage the other to complete tasks and stick to the plan.

Right, I'm off to reward myself with a Mayan Magnum ice cream . . .

Cheers

Nick

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