

WORK ETHIC

INTERMEDIATE

**STRUCTURED
PROCRASTINATION**



SKILL ADDRESSED:

Work Ethic

LEVEL OF CHALLENGE:

Intermediate

TITLE OF ACTIVITY:

Structured Procrastination



INTRODUCTION TO THE SKILL

According to a survey by Vouchercloud, only 21% of UK office workers sampled believed that they remained productive throughout the day, with an average time of 2 hours and 23 minutes spent working productively. These workers seem to have nailed the first part of what this activity aims to teach you – the ability to assess your own motivation to work well – but fail to demonstrate the second, more important, part; using the tools and techniques required to fix it.

But why enhance your own productivity? Productivity isn't just good for your company, it's good for you, too. By becoming more efficient in your work, paradoxically, you may actually end up with more free time as tasks become quicker and easier to handle. An increased sense of responsibility will contribute to your self-confidence and wellbeing, and you're less likely to suffer the most acute symptoms of stress.

In this activity, you will learn how to use "structured procrastination" to increase your own productivity. Classical philosophers preferred to dwell on their thoughts for extensive periods. Ancient Egyptians saw procrastination as "Waiting for the right time", and many of the world's most famous and successful people are procrastinators. We will reimagine procrastination and the potential it has, to influence positive performance in work.

THE CHALLENGE

In this activity, you are asked to imagine that you are employees of a busy company with a hectic schedule. Break into three smaller groups, each representing one of three types of employees: Productive Workers, Procrastinators and Structured Procrastinators.

When you have thought of how you would approach your working day as the type of employee that your group has been assigned, consider the benefits of that type of worker, as well as some of the negatives. Weigh up whether active procrastination can actually be beneficial, or whether procrastination is negative in every case. Discuss the relationship between productivity and procrastination, both active and passive.

STRUCTURE

STEP ONE:

Understand what each of the labels means.

- **Productive Worker:** As the name suggests, this is an employee who is at their peak productivity. They work intensely, consistently, with intention, and produce good quality results. They are unafraid to “swallow the frog”, IE, tackle the biggest problems first.
- **Procrastinator:** An employee who habitually puts off doing things. They engage in passive procrastination, doing nothing of significance to while away the time.
- **Structured Procrastinator:** An employee who is a natural procrastinator but has managed to tame it to some degree. They engage in active procrastination, distracting themselves from one deadline with another. This generally involves them taking an alternative approach to tasks, such as directing their attention toward several smaller, more approachable objectives first.

STEP TWO:

From the following list of tasks, discuss the order in which your type of employee is likely to structure (or not!) their day:

- **Urgent:** Finish PowerPoint presentation for the meeting with the CEO, submit taxes and accounts for end of year review.
- **Important:** Type up a media response to a journalist enquiring about the company’s work, review new business policies before they go to print.
- **Regular:** Respond to several emails from clients, reorganise the company calendar, print off an employee handbook for the new staff member joining next week, draft new templates for letters to clients.

STEP THREE:

Consider the following questions:

- Which type of worker is most likely to suffer burnout?
- If you tackle small problems first, actively procrastinating like the Structured Procrastinator might, do you think you’ll get more or less productive as the day goes on?
- What improvements can a Procrastinator learn from a Structured Procrastinator to make themselves more productive?



- What are some of the positives and negatives of each type of worker?
- What types of structured procrastination could you use in your own work?

Useful Resource: [Structured Procrastination - John Perry](#)

DEMONSTRATION AND EVALUATION

In completing this challenge, you will have come to understand some of the potential benefits of structured procrastination as opposed to constant, outright productiveness.

- What did you learn when completing this challenge? Why is it important to know?
- Did you feel that you communicated your opinion effectively?
- Do you think you will apply any skills learned in this challenge in your real work? Why / Why not?

Well done! You have completed the challenge. We hope you enjoyed the activity and encourage you to check out the Final Assessment quiz for the Intermediate component of INTERFACE's infographic on Work Ethic. Now that you've completed the first half of the Work Ethic resources, you can consider moving to the Advanced section!





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Co-funded by
the European Union

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