

FOUR TRICKS TO HELP YOU PRIORITIZE IMPORTANT, BIG TASKS WHEN THE SHORT ONES FEEL TEMPTING

Do you ever choose to do short tasks that “drop in” instead of getting on with the more extensive and actually more important tasks you have to do? Then you are in good company. Many people feel the same and it can be a habit hard to break.



But, you probably have good cause to react this way. If you have something big on your to-do list that requires full concentration and is quite extensive, it may feel easier to just do a few small tasks first instead. After all, they are so nice to tick off your list - and the person who asked you to do that small task will be very grateful that you got it done so quickly!

AN UNFORTUNATE POSTPONEMENT

The downside, of course, is that the big, more important tasks get put off and, in the worst-case scenario, you do not start working on them until you absolutely have to in order to complete them before they are due. You have to do them under stress and pressure, which can mean that the quality of the work is not as high as you would like.

Of course, there are tricks you can use to get the important, not-yet-urgent tasks done in good time - even if you are tempted to opt for the quick, easy ones instead.

DO THIS

Here are four things you can do:

- Set partial deadlines so that parts of the big task become a little urgent a few times before the final deadline.
- Block out time in your calendar to work on the important tasks - whatever short tasks that happen to be on your list at the time.
- Make it clear to yourself what the dire consequences will be if you do not start on the important tasks in a timely manner. If you have set aside time in your calendar for the task, write a note in your calendar entry describing as vividly as you can what happened the last time you put off a task for too long and how you became dissatisfied with the situation.

- Resolve to spend at least 15 minutes each day working on an important task that you tend to put off (because other things tempt you). After those 15 minutes, check off that you have managed to devote at least those 15 minutes to a task that is not due for a long time.

BETTER DONE UNDER LESS STRESS

If you use some trick, either one of the above or whatever else that works for you, to prioritize important, not-yet-urgent tasks well in advance, you will finish sooner than at the last minute. Your good anticipation means you will not have to rush through the task and instead you will have time to make the final adjustments that will make the result at least a notch better than if you would have rushed through it. You can feel more satisfied with and proud of what you have achieved!

WHAT'S YOUR WAY?

Do you have some other trick you apply to help yourself prioritize things you are reluctant to do? Perhaps you resort to the classic method of breaking the task down into smaller steps to make it easier to get through. Or, something completely different? Write to me at david@stiernholm.com and let me know. I'm curious to know what works for you.

Thank you for reading this edition of Done!, and welcome back next week.



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