

The number one killer of project success!

Procrastination: a transient verb meaning “to put off intentionally and habitually”

Okay, we all procrastinate. If it's bad for us, why do we do it? Unfortunately, it's not like cookies, which are bad for us (sort of), but taste so good. Good project management skills can help avoid this killer.

Top reasons for procrastination:

- *It is not “due” this week.* Other classes with more eminent due dates often take priority over project work. A solution: schedule specific times each week to work on the project – hopefully, all team members can be available for this time when team work is required.
- *I'm not sure what I'm supposed to be doing, so I'll work on something else.* A solution: ask your team mates for help, spend time figuring out what you should be doing for the project rather than working on some other class.
- *I'm getting tired of working on the project, I'm getting tired of my team mates attitude, etc.* Bummer. If only we could love one another...Solution?... How about “opportunity”: this is a great opportunity for you to overcome a common obstacle. This can be a valuable “point of discussion” in a job interview. If you can be productive in a difficult situation, that's something potential employers are looking for. How? I don't know...just do it...
- *I didn't get the part I ordered, I ordered the right part but it was out of stock, etc.* Solution: expect this, plan for it (leave time in the schedule for it).
- *I'm waiting for someone to provide me information (team members or others).* A solution: DO NOT WAIT, ALWAYS keep making progress. If you have to wait for one thing, work on something else for the project.

REMEMBER project due dates are fixed! If you fall behind early in the project, you will HAVE TO MAKE UP the time later. Don't fall behind!

Besides the above bulleted items, the following can prevent falling behind. First, you have to know when you are behind. Creating and using a schedule with 6 to 12 major milestones can help. Meet the due dates for each milestone even at times when you are not prepared to do so. In other words, you may have a milestone for selecting the material for a critical component. The engineer responsible for that decision wants to slide the due date one week because he is waiting for a critical piece of information. Be careful, it is often better to make the decision when it is required even with limited information (that is almost always the situation in real practice) rather than to seek the “ideal” solution. Remember “*The perfect is the enemy of the good*” (Voltaire).