

Goals in Motion

Getting over the need to have everything perfectly in place before you start.

By Michelle Underwood

Perfectionism. The devil of all productivity. Because of my need for perfection I tend to have a difficult time starting certain projects. I have this unnecessary need to have all my pre-start to-do lists completely checked off and have every tool [I think I need] in perfect place before I can actually launch my idea or project. This puts a big road block in my progression and success. It does not stop my progress, but it does take me a much longer time to get to a starting point. The main problem with my perfectionism is that I think the starting point is at my check lists and tool kits. It is a hindrance on my productivity and can be extremely frustrating, especially when I am really jazzed about a project.

In this blog I am going to explore the ways in which I can try to eliminate certain tendencies that hinder my end goals and projects.

Idea 1. Make smaller to-do lists:

I whole-heartedly believe in a good to-do list. I also realize that I often make to-do lists that are way too detailed, which makes them more difficult to finish. I think for me to minimize my perfectionist tendencies I will try making smaller, more concise to-do lists that display only the most important things that I need to get done before my initial launch of a project. If I feel like it is not good enough, I can make a subcategory to-do list that I can work on after I tackle the main points. Lists are extremely important and fun to me so I will never get rid of them (they bring me a lot of joy!), but I know in order to improve my work flow and efficiency I need to make some adjustments in pretty much every process I currently have.

Idea 2. Create drafts of general plans for my project(s):

I think I could work on being more open-minded with having, and creating, backup plans for if/when my original plan does not work out. They typically never go exactly the way I originally imagined them to go, and sometimes my brain freezes when I have to think of a different approach. I think that happens because I get so invested in my original “brilliant” idea that I don’t initially allow myself much room for improvising and improvement. Therefore, idea 2 is to create general backup plans that could work for my initial plan.

Idea 3. Do the biggest task first:

If I just get off my butt and stop over-thinking the process, it will be easier to see the largest item on my to-do list and find a way to get it done, even if sub-category items haven’t been checked off yet. There is usually a way to *get something going* without doing everything necessary to *complete* it. I just need to find that way and embrace it. Getting that first thing on my to-do list (at least somewhat) done will be encouraging and motivate me to continue down the list while efficiently heading through my project towards my end goal. Sometimes there is no end to a project, but sometimes if we create a fake end, it can be more motivational.

Idea 4. Create an end goal for unending projects:

There are many parts of owning a business, owning a home, being a parent, etc. that do not have an end or final moment. Here is a business example: my website. I had been planning to re-vamp my website for an entire year, but I felt as if I didn't have everything perfectly lined up and organized for me to start the process. I knew there was no end to re-vamping it. So I made an end. I decided that my "final product" would be me doing a launch on my social media. There, I created an end to my project, which made it a little easier to start. I also wanted my business and brand to be more personal, more connected, and more fun! I want to represent energy and light. How the heck do I do that with codes, colors, and typefaces? I decided I had to get up and just *start learning*.

Idea 5. Don't stress about it, do something about it:

Idea five's main point is one of my life mottos. I wrote that one day when I was in a very anxiety-driven time of my life, and since I discovered this aphorism, I find myself to be more clear-minded, more relaxed, and more motivated to discover and solve whatever problem I am facing. The most affective way I get over my needy feeling for perfectionism is telling myself to "just get up and do it" and actually standing up as soon as I say or think those words puts me in a physically motivating position, which triggers a spot in my brain that loves determination and productivity. It gets me in motion towards working on my project or goal.

The entire point of reciting, "don't stress out about it, do something about it" is to get me to think in a new brain-viewpoint. Usually when I am freaking out about a task or a problematic situation, as soon as I remind myself of my motto, I start finding solutions and thinking of ways I can do something about it, instead of freaking out. Also, if for some reason I cannot find a solution, or "do something about it", I tell myself, "if you can't do something about it, don't stress out about it, because if you could do something about it, you would.". I know, that sounds a bit redundant and long, but it honestly helps me when I'm super stressed out (yes, I have that whole spiel memorized; it's annoying)!

Idea 6. Create a plan:

No, not a to-do list plan. We covered the list thing already. This is a professional, organized, schedule-oriented plan of action. The only other people I know who love having a plan as much as I do is my mom and my best friend (they would approve of step 6 in a heartbeat!). Making a proper plan of action requires me (personally... this is how *I* plan, it's not for everyone, but hear me out) to work backwards. This can be a bit difficult when you start, but once you get the *last* thing figured out, getting to the *beginning* gets easier and easier. Here's how I do it:

- A. I figure out my end goal (easy enough, we already covered that).
- B. I figure out what the second to last important task is before the end goal is finalized (This is where it starts to get difficult).
- C. I figure out what I need to do in order to get that second to last task done (getting a bit easier...).
- D. I figure out what all the middle, hefty, supportive stuff is for my end goal (a bit easier, but more time consuming and daunting).
- E. I figure out what I need to do in order to get that supportive bulk done (lots of work, yes, but worth it!).
- F. I figure out what the beginning, launching forward with my idea, step needs to be (probably the easiest so far).

- G. I figure out what I need to do in order to begin my beginning step (a bit harder than F, but still not as difficult as D).

That's it, folks. It's not rocket science I've come up with, but it's a chart (I love those too!), a guide, a visualization of my brain laid out in beautiful order that will help me immensely in my attempt ("journey" if you will) to minimize my perfectionism habits. If I am *really* having a hard time with something, I will copy and paste that A-G chart into a new document, color code it, and write my answers to each letter as I figure it all out.

Yes, I am a major nerd. I love lists, organizing, solving problems, learning, reading, color coding, and holy cow do not get me going on labels! But those are a few of the many reasons I am able to successfully own businesses and be my own boss. Not every business owner needs those traits and nerdy sides, but acknowledging that owning a business includes *continuous learning* is something every business owner needs to understand.

Have a lovely day!

Michelle Underwood