



A Cl.E.A.R. Path Forward™

Welcome to the March 2017 edition of A Cl.E.A.R. Path Forward™. This newsletter is intended for the friends and clients of Kathy Hart navigating personal or professional change in their lives. Each month I provide you with a monthly question, personal actions for clearing the fog, and a recommended book. For this issue, read to the end to see the word wardle created by everyone sending me their Lean In word.

Procrastination - Virtue or Vice?

When I first began working for PG&E many years ago I joined at the same time as another colleague. He was the model of "get it done early." If he was assigned some task, regardless of the effort, he would start on it immediately and finish in record time. As for me, since time immemorial, I have thought of myself as the model procrastinator. I remember innumerable last minute study marathons and bursts of energy to complete last minute Christmas sewing gifts. It took me years before I realized that my procrastination was a deeper symptom of saying "Yes" to too many activities. Once I learned how to harness my need to please with some gentle "No," my procrastination tendency decreased significantly.

Procrastination, when strategically planned, can be necessary and rewarding. Let's talk the colleague I started with at PG&E. His style was to write a procedure as quickly as possible, declare it finished, and then spend weeks and months rewriting constantly to achieve the final product. In contrast, I would create quick, working drafts of a program which I called "straw houses;" easily set on fire with alternative input. Once I had enough input and understood how to achieve maximum approval, I would then spend the time and energy to develop the final product. While my colleague always finished first on projects, I spent considerably less time, energy and effort. My recognition was the amount of forward progress made on multiple projects, with a lot less energy expelled.

ACTION: Examine your behaviors around procrastination. What are your deeper symptoms? Are there ones you want to eliminate/reduce to reduce stress and pressure on you? Are there others that you need to enhance to offer more value-add in your life, both work and personal?

Clearing the Fog - Personal Actions for Strategically Procrastinating

- *Create time for people input:* Be ruthless upfront with identifying the actions needed to complete a project. Then step back and ask yourself, of the actions required, where are incubation opportunities preferred? Maybe, as in the example shared above, it's creating a quick draft, and then shopping to your leadership and users for input and feedback. Perhaps it's reviewing with your kids, significant other, friend, etc. Clearly understand where you need input, then strategically procrastinate to save time and energy.
- *Create time for rumination:* As shared last month in the book *Deep Work*, we all need to spend time ruminating and staring off into space. This is not when you are meditating (though a great practice with many benefits) but rather just sitting in nature, your office (behind closed doors) or wherever you can let your mind wander. This is when your mind has the ability to decouple and re-couple, often making the weirdest connections, which may ultimately solve intractable problems.
- *Create time for experimentation:* Not every piece of work product you create has to be a masterpiece. Make a distinction between the mundane, important, and truly magnificent.

Complete the mundane, with warts and all, as early as possible. Spend a bit more time on the important. Be a perfectionist, reiterate and explore the range of possibilities when creating something magnificent. One of the easiest ways to tell the difference between the three is to ask yourself what is the level of personal pleasure and inner peace you will achieve from the final results?

Recommended reading - Originals by Adam Grant

I purchased this book at the airport because several different colleagues had mentioned it to me in the course of a three-day conference. It was one of the best airplane reads - quick to read, packed with content and show-stopper success stories. Grant defines originality as "introducing and advancing an idea that's relatively unusual within a particular domain, and that has the potential to improve it." He takes it one step further and identifies as "original" those individuals who not only conceive an idea, but "who take the initiative to make their vision a reality." My favorite chapters in the book were on using timing and strategic procrastination, near and dear to my heart, along with the refuting of groupthink as related to simple cohesive groups, and how to leverage to instill even greater originality within groups.

Word wardle from the Lean In word submitted by readers:



Note: If you are interested in creating word wardles, [click here](#).

Invitation: Kathy is speaking at the March 9 meeting of **Successful Business Thinkers** from 12:30 - 1:15 pm. Her topic will be "*Accelerating into Life's Change Curves*" If you are interested in attending click on the link below:

http://www.alamedachamber.com/event/example-event-3/?instance_id=8217