



Corsini's Point of the Week™

August 10, 2009 — Part 3 of 5



Procrastination — Another Mistake You Don't Want to Make

I've heard it said that the only *real* mistake is the one from which we can learn nothing. Truth is, we *do* learn from our mistakes. At least, we learn to not make them again! With that in mind, let's continue to look at **The 10 Biggest Mistakes Salespeople Make (and how to avoid them)**. I'm sharing five of these avoidance tips with you in this series we started three weeks ago.

The first one we talked about was the danger of **not listening**. To have an effective sales call, you have to be a good listener. You have to listen to build a solid, working relationship and position yourself as an advisor to your client. Plus, selling is about focusing on the client—not yourself. (For tips on active-listening skills, check out the Points archive at www.corsini.com.)

You'll also see our Point on another common mistake—a **lack of opportunities in your pipeline**. We encourage our sales-coaching participants to build (and maintain) what we call a Best Bets™ Pipeline. This is a *working* list of both current-client and new-relationship opportunities. Many salespeople experience a “yo-yo” kind of productivity when they fill up their pipeline with opportunities and then concentrate *all* their energy on working those opportunities to closure. When their pipeline is almost empty, then (and only then) they begin to fill it back up. We coach a year-round, ongoing development of new opportunities.

Today, let's talk about **procrastination**. Sometimes it's done with purpose. Other times, we subconsciously procrastinate. **It's an all-too-common mistake perhaps because the reasons for it are so varied**. They include (but certainly are not limited to):

- **Fear of failure or fear of criticism.**
- **Fear of success.** (What happens next when I set this high of an expectation?)
- **Fear of making the wrong decision.**
- **Uncertainty over what to do next.**
- **Lack of education or training** regarding
 - Product
 - Industry
 - Sales

Or any number of other factors.

Understanding why you are procrastinating is key to not doing it. People who procrastinate tend to do what they *want* to do—not what they *need* to do to achieve results.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

*“Tomorrow
is often the
busiest day
of the week.”*

— Spanish Proverb

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Once you understand the “why,” there are a number of ways to avoid making this mistake.

- **Take the first step.** Sometimes simply *starting* a project or task you've put off can put you in a much more positive (and productive) state of mind. This can be as simple as writing down a list of things you need to do. Then you can start working on completing them. If you're putting off a session of cold calls, try scheduling an appointment with yourself to concentrate *solely* on this task.
- **Get rid of distractions.** Close the door. Turn off the cell phone. Disable email. At least until you get started.
- **Set realistic goals.** Don't strive for perfection. Very few things in this life are perfect. Just commit to doing the very best job you can do.
- **Make it manageable.** Sometimes simply considering all the things you need to do on a large or difficult project can cause a kind of operational paralysis. Don't over-think a task. Put your efforts into action. Using the how-do-you-eat-an-elephant analogy, do one or two things today that need to get done. Then move forward.
- **Start with the hard part, and work toward what's easy.** I guarantee you that this one very important tip will help you overcome whatever reluctance you're experiencing. Plus, you'll feel more upbeat about the rest of what you have to do when the easy parts are ahead of you.

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CORSINI'S POINT

Remember, tomorrow is not a day of the week! Stop procrastinating, and don't put it off another day! Then take it one step further: Make a quantum leap, and do things differently and better. Vow to stop doing the destructive and time-wasting activities that fill up your day but not your IRA.

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