

No Time to Waste

By Karel Murray, CSP

It actually happened... I ran out of projects with deadlines. Uncertain at first that I was reviewing my task list improperly, I had "re-booted" my contact management software to ensure the lists were properly "refreshed" and displayed the most current information.

That's wasn't it.

Perhaps it was the way light reflected off the screen, subtly erasing tasks through the bright glare of the sun. But, no, after careful consideration, I realized that I had actually caught up all of my work.

Now what was I supposed to do?

A bit of panic set in. I honestly don't know what to do with myself if I'm not working on some sort of business project. Of course I can take an hour off here and there, but work always remains at the end of my "down time" like a treasured friend. Ever since I can remember, when I make time to "relax", all I can think about are the projects that require my attention... new ideas, strategic plans, and networking opportunities. The home movie queue constantly fills up with good intentions, requiring me to weed through the recordings and select only those I absolutely want to watch. Typically, these movies are replaced by new ones. Why aren't they being watched? I'm too busy.

Or am I just afraid of what might happen if I stop.

Huh.

I started this article yesterday and when I wrote the line "what might happen if I stop", I saved the file, and shut down my computer. Rushing out of the office, I spun my husband around in his chair and yelled with delight "We are going out today and I'm not taking the laptop! What do you want to do or where do you want to go?"

Rick blinked, and being the consummate good sport, he smiled and said, "I don't know...what do you want to do that we both like and can do today?"

I had absolutely no idea. Neither did he. So we took a quick inventory of likes and dislikes:

What Karel Enjoys

Movies	We have seen all the first run movies in town
Reading fiction	Rick reads non-fiction – might as well learn something
Playing scrabble	Rick hates games where you have to spell stuff
Art Museums	Rick likes science museums better
Shopping	Rick only goes if forced

Travel	Needs to be at least 3 hours from our home or it isn't "travel"
Elegant dining	A lot more expensive than fast food – done sparingly
Reality Shows	Rick prefers the History Channel and Discovery

What Rick Enjoys

NASCAR	Noise, cars driving in circles not Karel's thing
Movies	Been there, done that
Travel	Seen local stuff – need to be at least 10 hours from home
Outside baseball	Bees attack Karel...always. Not an option
Any sporting event	Karel will read a book in the stands... other fans hate her.
Camping	No decent bathroom for Karel
Motor Home Shopping	People in a can... The cost for a moving house is too much!
History Channel	Spend my time actually learning something! No way!

Ultimately, we clambered into his truck and started out with no specific destination in mind. My hands clenched in my lap as I worked to keep my fingers still. They are so used to typing it is difficult to quiet them.

We ended up at the Iowa Amana Colonies. Munching on caramel corn, enjoying a family style fried chicken dinner and Rueben sandwich, the day began to look up. I discovered I hadn't thought about work for two hours.

Then it happened. I enjoyed myself so much I didn't want to go home. So we drove some more... ended up in Iowa City where I played slot machines, giving the casino \$35 of our hard earned money and was grateful for the brainless activity. Rick lounged around the outdoor pool, perfectly content to gaze at the clear blue water and bask in the sunlight. The man really knows how to zone out. I envy him sometimes.

We returned home by 4:00 PM. Technically, I still had time to turn on the computer and check e-mails...but I ignored the urge and plopped down on the couch to start the movie marathon. By 11:00 pm, I'd overdosed on movies and retired for the evening - grinning the entire time.

Yesterday, I occupied my day by being close with my husband. J.J. Gordon said "If we are to perceive all the implications of the new, we must risk, at least temporarily, ambiguity and disorder." Thus, without a specific plan other than leaving the house and work behind, we discovered aimlessness can actually result in a final destination – relaxation!

The "Expectancy" Theory Of Motivation (Pygmalion Effect) states that people will be motivated if:

- a) They believe they can do what is asked
- b) If they believe that doing what is asked will result in rewards or the likelihood of reward
- c) If the rewards are meaningful and valued

Put simply, I needed to value my “down time” as much as I coveted my “busy” times. It becomes a process of breaking the of old habits and replacing it with a new pattern of thinking... that what I do can actually wait for a day while I refuel the mental and physical tanks. This is a bit intimidating... because I've never considered that “personal holidays” were needed. Just being in my home with my family and pets was the vacation. Now I realize that through personal conditioning, I had methodically eradicated my ability to just relax.

Now that is a scary thing.

So I bought a CD ROM that provides instruction on Tai Chi and Yoga Relaxation. I didn't have the patience to watch the whole thing.

;-)

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