

# LifeMap<sup>SM</sup>



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

January 2014

## This Month's Message:

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## How To Stop Procrastinating.

Welcome to a new year of LifeMap. For the last 8 years our goal has been to help you set and achieve the goals you want for all elements of your life: work & career, health & well-being, relationships with family and friends, financial common sense, planning for and enjoying retirement and, last but not least, fun. The way we try to achieve this lofty goal is to supply practical ideas based upon high-quality information from reliable sources along with a monthly serving of realistic optimism & supportive motivation

Long time LifeMap community members know I'm not big on New Year's resolutions. They tend to focus on one thing, be fairly vague (e.g. lose weight, read more, get a new job, etc), and not have any measureable indications of progress or incremental timelines. But any milestone during the year (i.e. New Year's, birthday, anniversary) is a good time to focus on

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where you want to go and what may be holding you back from getting there. One such hurdle many of us face is procrastination.

Procrastination is a self-defeating behavior and it is often driven by fear. It will take a bit of introspection and maybe a bit of counseling to uncover what fear may be at work in your case. Sometimes all it takes is a good heart to heart talk with an honest and intimate friend. Procrastination can be driven by a fear of the unknown which makes a familiar and unproductive path seems more comfortable than a new, productive but as yet untraveled option. Anticipating and fearing failure often causes us to unconsciously continue the same behaviors that haven't worked in the past - essentially holding us back from efforts to change or succeed. That way we can tell ourselves "well, I didn't fail because I never really put any effort into it." I have observed (though less frequently) a fear of success in people who feel rewarded (consciously or subconsciously) in some way for maintaining self-defeating (albeit comfortable) behaviors or by not making a positive change. Think of someone who avoids a promotion for fear of not being "one of the guys" any more.

Perfectionism is another driver of procrastination and I often find it in high-achievers. Always striving to be perfect is not only an excessively tiresome trait, it is the reason why perfectionists can find a million ways to postpone what they fear they cannot do perfectly.

Perhaps you want to do some work to uncover the why's of your procrastination. But regardless of what you find here are half dozen ideas and some other resources to help you overcome procrastination in pursuit of your goals. Try one or two - TODAY - and see what works best for you.

### Paths Forward

**\* Start the Day With a To-Do List.** Include all tasks big and small. Do not include stuff you already do everyday just to plump up your list. Checking off items as you go gives you a strong visual cue that you are making progress and help builds your sense of accomplishment. Include a time deadline if that helps (i.e. daily report done by 9:30 or buy supplies for garage project by noon). Halfway through your workday review your list and move still undone items of most importance to the top of your list.

**\* Tackle the Big Stuff First.** It's a real motivator if you get something big out of the way early in your work day because it helps you build your sense of competence and pride. Some tasks are so big that you cannot complete them in one day. Break these out into incremental steps. Addressing one or two every day breaks the project down into something less intimidating. And, again, checking off items provides a visual cue that you are making progress and helps relieve the stress that such projects can generate.

**\* Is Good Enough Good Enough?** Above I referenced the link between perfectionism and procrastination. No matter if

you are a physician doing surgery or grocery bagger you want to do the very best job that your training and skills allow. But, if you suffer under the burden of perfectionism you must ask yourself " Does *everything* I do have to be perfect?" You already know that the answer is no. But you've got to ask the question before you can move forward to address those things you've been procrastinating in order to give yourself permission to begin. As our pal Confucius says, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step". Yes, the bridge you're designing needs to be as perfect as humanly possible but planning a holiday dinner or re-grouting the bathroom - not so much. If you have time left over after getting the delayed task done *good enough* and you have your other must-do tasks completed you can always go back and tweak it a bit. Perfectionists take note; I said "**a bit!**"

\* **Beware of Distractions.** A dusty lamp, a grubby keyboard, a dog that wants attention, a noise outside the window, no noise outside the window - I can gin up a thousand reasons not to plant myself down and finish a writing project. Other folks tell me their work distractions include checking emails as they come in, internet surfing, noisy co-workers, taking all incoming phone calls, checking their portfolio and the like. If walking the dog or taking a call from your boss *really* needs doing right now then do it. But if you are a procrastinator you've got to psych out if you are just using these kinds of distractions to enable you to put off the inevitable. And this leads to stress and feelings of incompetence and defeat. Take a moment and list out your most powerful distractions. Stick motivational notes on the phone, the computer screen or wherever such as "Is this crucial?" or "Right now? Really". Remove books, magazines, reports or anything else that distracts you from the line of sight from where you work. If it's both safe and appropriate you may want to try noise-cancelling headphones.

\* **Buddy Up.** Ok, I admit it. I *really* dislike garden and yard work. I figure if the Good Lord wanted grass to grow 2 inches and then stop growing He wouldn't have created sheep. But my town, homeowner's association and spouse will not allow me to have sheep. Or goats. Or spray deathly chemical weed killer between the tomato and bean plants. I discovered that whining about this is no solution and procrastinating only creates more work for later on. I found what works is buddying up. I trade some yard chores with friends and neighbors and share (the minimum necessary) garden work with my wife. If you have certain mandatory tasks that you continuously procrastinate try recruiting someone to help you get going on it. Many hands make for light work and good conversation helps creativity, good humor and motivation. The key here is to reciprocate. If you want someone to partner with you on something you've got to be willing and able to partner with him or her when they need help.

\* **Fun Idea.** As I close my LifeMap seminars and workshops I often pass out notepaper and an envelope and ask participants to write a letter reminding themselves of what they've learned, or to outline an insight they've gained or list

a couple of concrete steps forward that they have chosen to make. I have them self-address the envelope, seal the letter inside it and sign over the seal to ensure it won't be opened. I collect them and mail them out a month later. Most folks enjoy the reminder and get a benefit from it. If this kind of thing appeals to you try going to FutureMe.org where you can write yourself an email and set a future date for delivery. (I do this monthly and, yes, it both helps and is fun.) Who better to nudge you in the ribs to stop procrastinating on something than yourself, eh?

**\*Take a Break / Make a Fresh Start** If you find yourself running in circles, blocked on a certain task or just trudging along with little motivation you can always take a brief break. Get out of your chair, stretch, walk around your work space, if your window opens do so and get some fresh air or else maybe go outside for a brief break. The key here is that to try this only if you've already started and made some bit of progress on a procrastinated task. Otherwise these ideas are just more distractions. In all cases taking regular breaks are good for your back, neck, posture and attitude. On my system I have an Apimac Timer (freeware at [www.apimac.com](http://www.apimac.com)) with which you can program your Mac, iPad, or iPhone to play a tone or song on a designated schedule. When I suddenly hear Tito Puente playing *Oye Como Va* I know I'm due for a stretch break with the bonus of boosting my mood and energy.

**Additional resources:** Over the years I have read many books on how to overcome self-defeating behaviors. If you want more ideas than I've shared above on how to overcome procrastination I recommend the following books. Their specific focus is included in their titles.

[The Procrastination Cure: 7 Steps To Stop Putting Life Off](#) by Jeffery Combs (Oct 15, 2011)

[Mind Mapping for Writers: How to Improve Productivity, Overcome Procrastination, Get Creative and Finish Writing That Book - Using Your Lack of Focus as an Advantage](#) by David Lynch (Feb 27, 2013)

[The Now Habit: A Strategic Program for Overcoming Procrastination and Enjoying Guilt-Free Play](#) by Neil Fiore (Nov 1, 1988)

**Another idea:** A long-time member of our LifeMap community, Bob Martel, is a consulting hypnotist and has produced a new 3-part audio program to help you overcome your procrastination, believe in yourself, eliminate distractions and achieve your potential. This four audio package is available for \$99. and includes a free bonus audio to help you take more control of your weight management. If this resource is something you'd like to try just mention that you heard about it here and Bob will give you a \$10. discount. For more information contact: [bobmartel@comcast.net](mailto:bobmartel@comcast.net)

**LifeMap** is about providing you with the ideas, tools and techniques to help you achieve your goals in every element of your life. Here's to making 2014 your best year yet!

## · Need Career Coaching?

The best investment you can make is in your career, your future and yourself.

email [drpaul@drpaulpowers.com](mailto:drpaul@drpaulpowers.com)

## · Tired of boring meetings??

Have Dr. Paul speak at your next off-site meeting or conference. Fast-moving, practical, motivating presentations from an acknowledged leader in the field of career and personal success.

**<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/speakingschedule.html>**

## Resources

· Are you or someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?

The best, concise, all-round job changing guide available. Revised Edition [Winning Job Interviews](#) by Dr. Paul Powers.

In this easy-to-follow, step-by-step book, Dr. Paul Powers demystifies job interviewing, explains why the process actually favors the job hunter, and shows how you can dramatically improve your interview skills.

Packed with solid, practical information and laced with both humor and "kick in the pants" motivation, *Winning Job Interviews* is the book you wished you had before your last interview... and is mandatory preparation for your next one!

· Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? Order your copy of [Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding A Job You Love](#) by Dr. Paul.

**<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/booksandarticles.html>**

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Have an issue or question you'd like Dr. Paul to address in a future edition? Send an email to the email address list below.

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Sincerely,

Dr. Paul

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