



Procrastination is the thief of time

By John A. Gentle, DLP

MY DAD BORROWED THIS QUOTATION from the 17th Century English poet/critic Edward Young and wrote it on the back of an envelope that I now have in my den: “Procrastination is the thief of time.”

It shouldn't come as a big surprise to anyone that he also gave me a sign before I headed off to college in 1960 with the inscription, “It wasn't raining when Noah started building the Ark.” Coupled with my military training, this has, for the most part, defined how I've chosen to lead and manage my life and business practice.

Now, some may say that I have too much time on my hands these days. Maybe so, but that's also allowed me to fine-tune my observations about time and how undisciplined approaches to time management negatively affect supply chain and logistics processes—including best practices, consistency, problem resolution, results, and contingency planning.

Today, it's certainly easy to relate to those who claim they have too much to do and take short cuts in order to finish an assigned task on time. Most of these individuals fall victim to the “express to disaster” approach that they casually picked up from a colleague who doesn't understand the perils associated with not completely understanding a process system—let alone how to fix a complex problem.

I think that it's a lot harder to understand why employees miss deadlines or make errors when activity levels are light and there's more than adequate time to complete all the transactions properly. In these situations, procrastination levels tend to be high and process problems are normally related to a loss of concentration.

They wrongfully assume that because their work load may be light their colleagues work load is light as well; and, of course, everything will work out just fine when they get around to

completing the task. Regrettably, the processes are still running on schedule either with or without their input. Meanwhile, they eventually learn that the opportunities that could have been harvested are lost or accomplished at a higher cost when the work isn't completed on time.

Good companies recognize that focus, pace, and process are inseparable—as is the need for consistency of training and real supervisory oversight. Training must encompass more than simply teaching and testing employees on how to enter data into systems. Quite often significant problems are created when we let a new person sit with a veteran, one who knows their way around the system, rather than a qualified trainer. Remember, a veteran isn't necessarily a qualified instructor. In addition to explaining to employees why process discipline and pace are critical to goal achievement, some companies

need to begin placing a time clock on process charts. This, in turn, will help organizations recognize and track wasted time and opportunities, create KPIs that are time specific, and begin

to realize that old fashioned supervision trumps self-directed work forces and ensures that the right processes are being followed and efficiencies are being harvested—every hour of every day.

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Last year I challenged everyone to think about all the things that could possibly jeopardize your logistics operations. I also asked our readers to strongly consider the plans that you have in place to overcome those individual challenges.

For those of you who didn't take the time to start identifying those needs or are not sure that this is a good investment of time...perhaps this article can convince you that the pathway to success is paved by executing a well-defined and superior process consistently in the same tempo day in and day out. ■

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