

MODULE SEVEN: HOW DO I GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD?

THE HIGHLIGHTS

**"Vision without action is only a dream ... ACTION without VISION passes the time...
VISION combined with ACTION can change the world!"**

Your Action Plan

Historically, artists are good at creating plans. They are self-reliant and have proven time and time again that their "crazy ideas" can actually be brought to life. In a world of ever increasing complexity, where the responsibility of planning has become a key tool for success, the challenge for many artists is to take the process out of their heads and put it on paper.

Creating a written plan of action is a crucial step in preparing for work. An action plan is a map that plots out the step-by-step journey you must take in order to achieve your goals. Of course, an action plan can also be used to manage your personal day-to-day affairs, finances, education or training, as well as your own business.

An effective plan is a key component in the management of all the facets of your work life, regardless of whether you are self-employed or working for someone else. For artists, who generally don't work in traditional job structures - no fixed work schedule, no office building, no manager - the lack of structure allows you to easily relax into any bad work habits you might have. Action planning counteracts this by encouraging the establishment of individualized, flexible timelines, which can then become the foundation upon which you build success.

An action plan lays out what has to happen and when, what you've got, and what you need. It differs fundamentally from your business plan. A business plan is a strategic map setting out your overall goals. An action plan presents an operational map related exclusively to one project.

To note: an action plan does not replace a business plan. In the most formal sense, a business plan is a document which interconnects all of the various components that comprise a business - concept, marketing, operations, finances - and meshes them into a cohesive whole that can then be regularly reviewed and revised by those people responsible for running the business. Formal business plans are often necessary when applying for a business loan at a financial institute, or in order to qualify for certain government programs and grants.

Making the action plan work for you

Developing an action plan, and modifying it as required, is an important project management tool. Once the project starts, real life rears its ugly head. Nothing will go exactly according to plan. If the project is well structured, the anticipated profits can survive the worst of disasters provided you are tracking their development, allowing you to adjust the plan in time to fit the new reality.

You are bound to forget and misjudge things. Planning and tracking in detail lessens the likelihood that unforeseen events will sabotage your project. At regular intervals or whenever an Action is completed during the project, fill out the sub-column **Actual** to identify the *actual* "performance" of the project in terms of **costs, income, and deadlines**.

Identify the cause(s) of any **gap** between projections and actuals (use **Remarks** column to note the conclusion of your analysis). If required, decide on corrective measures and modify the Action Plan accordingly.

After a project has been completed, set your feelings aside and look at it systematically. Evaluation is not the same as wallowing in anticipated glory, or in self-pity. Ask yourself some questions. Tell yourself the truth. Which decisions would you have changed? Were they in the planning, or in the project itself? Write out your conclusions so you'll remember them.

A Successful Action Plan Outlines

- What has to happen
- When
- What you've got
- What you need

THE HOMEWORK

HOW CAN I GET ORGANIZED?

Early CBC Radio drama is lost forever, because the masters were destroyed or recorded over. Silent film footage, including the masters for classic movies, is still being found in barns and lockers. The Canada Council Art Bank was revitalized simply by conducting an inventory of its warehouse. Museums have made much more of their collections available to a broad audience through digitization.

Things appear in your life, are dealt with or put aside, are thrown away or stored for the future. Ideas, finished products, bills, letters, cheques: they are all part of your work and its administration.

Nothing in life happens without organization, and the best organization depends on:

- Space to work
- The grouping of linked items
- Storage
- Access

A room of your own

Even if you are a writer, and certainly if you are not, it is important to keep your art and its administration separate. Timothy Findley (*Not Wanted on the Voyage*) built himself a little writing house in his garden. Your solution can be simpler, but be sure to allow space for your work and for its administration.

If you can spare part of a room, you can:

- Install shelves
- Make a desk from a pair of two-drawer filing cabinets and a used door and add the best desk
- chair you can afford

Cost? Go to charity stores and pay very little. You can pay more by buying new, but why bother?

If space is short, you can set up a portable office. As a suggestion, you might have three accordion files near a telephone. Label them:

Current: one or two projects, contact lists, agenda.

Active: other ongoing projects and plans that do not immediately require attention, reference stuff, your expense receipts, and income paperwork.

Archives: household, insurance and bank paperwork, defunct or on-hold projects.

Plus:

Stores: a box of old paperwork – under the bed?

Current

Standard advice (“Only touch a piece of paper once”) only works if you have a regular routine involving few variables. This is not our life. Whatever you can simplify and organize, however, will save time, in both your art and its administration.

Active

Let each project’s files grow organically and add new sections as the structure becomes clear to you. Each project begins in its own container; as soon as sections become apparent, give them their own containers.

Archives

Back up computer files regularly, both on the computer’s hard drive and on CDs, DVDs or other portable media.

- Make extra back-up CDs containing data for large projects and store these off site, perhaps with a relative or friend.
- Keep earlier drafts of work, so you can return to them if necessary. A recycled-paper basket, seldom emptied, means that weeks later, you can dig out discarded documents and give a sigh of relief.
- Record your professional work the best way you can afford.
- Keep all reviews and articles, even negative ones, whether from print or electronic sources. Remember, there’s no such thing as a bad review, so long as they spell your name right.
- A record of your work and all associated reviews and articles can prove vital when dealing with clients, insurance companies, lending and granting bodies, and to remind yourself of what you’ve done.
- Check all your files regularly, to move them up to **Current**, or down to **Storage**.

Storage

A dry basement, with files stuffed in banker or liquor-store boxes, and clearly labelled, may pay off unexpectedly years down the line. If circumstances warrant rent a storage locker for this purpose. Canada Revenue Agency requires you to keep your tax files for six years after filing.

HOW DO I ASSESS A PROJECT EFFECTIVELY?

Writing a book, making a film, mounting an exhibit, cutting a record, or producing a show. Responding to a job advertisement, entering a competition, or applying for a grant. Whether you're taking on someone else's project, or defining your own, good planning will save you time and energy. It may make the difference between success and failure.

You'll get to the section on preparing The Action Plan soon, but first decide if the project is right for you, right now. You have four questions to answer:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. What is it? | Define the project |
| 2. What will I gain? | Look for your advantages |
| 3. What will it cost? | Measure all the disadvantages |
| 4. Do I have time? | Scheduling |

Define the project

A project may be your own idea, or a commission or opportunity defined by someone else.

Someone else's project

The name is not the definition. The theatre board may not **really** want an "innovative" artistic director if they're offering only a one-year contract.

Look carefully at what they tell you, but also try to hear what they're *not* saying. The first part of your project is persuading them to consider you. What are they expecting to see in an application or a proposal, or hear during an oral presentation? You can get advice on the written and unwritten rules from your professional network, your association, or from a professional service organization.

Your own project

Step back for a moment. What attracts you to this particular idea? What will it gain you? There may be a better way to achieve your *real* goals. That's your real project. Changing your project now is easier than waiting until you have invested time and money in the old version.

If you do change your mind as the project goes ahead, treat each change of direction as a new project. Stay focused and always keep your eye on the target. If you don't know where you're headed, how will you know when you've arrived?

Look for your advantages

What do you want to gain from the project? There may be many possible benefits, but which is most important? How does this affect your overall career goals?

Reputation
Artistic development
Recognition

Learned skills
Hard cash
Chemistry between yourself and others involved

What you want will affect your decisions in planning. If you are building a reputation, it may be worthwhile being an unpaid intern in a well-known workshop. If you need cash right now, that project would be a poor choice. Does the project itself pay you, like a writing commission, or will it be a tool for attracting money in the future, like cutting a demo?

Measure the disadvantages

What will you lose by doing the project?

Reputation: Is it worth a hefty fee to be the corporate voice for Sewage Appreciation?

Artistic Development: How much work will you do on the Great Canadian Novel while you are co-writing an animated series for hand-held devices?

Money: Deal with the cash-flow details later; this is just the big picture. Can you afford to take time away from your set design job to launch that play on this summer's Fringe theatre circuit?

Scheduling

When should it start? How long will it take? When must it be finished?

What else are you doing in this time slot?

If you can't do it now, what must change to make it possible in the future? Should you start planning earlier next year? Do more preliminary work ahead of time? Earn money now to buy time for this project later?

Don't rush the four preliminaries:

- The definition
- Your benefit
- Your cost
- The time factors

If the project still interests you, talk about it. An outside eye, expert or not, will give you a whole new perspective.

If you can't explain the project, perhaps your understanding of it is still unclear.

If you're concentrating on the big idea, perhaps you've missed the obvious problem: your working model of a giant Blackberry in ice may be a fascinating idea, but the timing might not be right if it is to be shown at a summer festival.

At this stage, try to look at everything, but don't get bogged down in details. Time enough for that when you're sure this project is worth doing.

Don't be afraid to abandon a project that will prove too troublesome or costly.

HOW DO I DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN?

If you want to try the project, an action plan tells you how you can succeed. An action plan lays out what has to happen and when, what you've got, and what you need. It differs fundamentally from your business plan. A business plan is a strategic map setting out your overall goals. An action plan presents an operational map related exclusively to one project.

A photographer collects interesting shots for stock photo agencies while on assignments to exotic locations or on vacation. In five years, she has built a clientele of specialty magazines, and her stock photographs provide an increasing income. A magazine shoot for a Swiss hotel is a fairly standard project for her, but she still needs an action plan.

Look at your Project Assessment – what will your advantage be? Most projects serve more than one purpose, but if you're mainly after cash, you'll use a different approach than if you want to build your reputation.

Look for the logical sections of the project, then look at each section. Be methodical; work through each section in detail. Be thorough; don't skip elements because it seems obvious. Look at each section to be sure it really is as standard as you thought.

Starting

After the first decision (making the commitment), each step in the project will depend on the one before. Be realistic about scheduling: don't count on everything working out on time. Build in some room to manoeuvre.

Finishing

Imposed deadlines are only part of the story. You will probably have to combine parts of the project with other commitments: artistic, personal, or drudge work. Some sections will allow overlapping more easily than others.

Skills and materials needed

You are unlikely to have all the skills, tools, and resources you need. Should you acquire them? Work around them? Or ask for help?

People needed

You may have the skills you need, but do you have the time? Do you want to hire the skills, or take on partners to share in the creation? Could you run a group? Is administration going to frustrate you? Could you delegate those tasks? Will the chemistry of the people you hire adversely or positively affect your project?

What the co-workers will need

Some will take a share of the profits and/or royalties; some will need cash. Some need publicity, so your contract will have to allow for their separate credit. Some want creative input, which may slow the project down.

Cash flow

What will this section cost? If you're relying on money coming in, what are the guarantees of that money coming? When does it arrive?

Can you afford to begin? Can you pay your helpers, or will they wait until the cash arrives? Will you be able to afford to finish? And eat as well?

This is not a linear process; you'll go round and round, adding details and removing obstacles.

Our photographer knows that technically she can handle the job, it's a familiar type of assignment, and the suggested fee is normal. Should I be pushing for a higher rate? She checks the magazine's travel dates. Yes, they fit with the next bookings and there's time to do the lab work before I'm off again. The details of the shoot will be organized for her, but she should make sure to get some slack. There are plenty of mountains in photo libraries, but cuckoo clocks and high tech might be an angle. Is there someone at the studio who has computer contacts? I could give them an honorarium; the fee from the last job finally came through. More checking to do; looks okay so far.

When you have divided the project into a series of single actions, you can use this sort of layout to help your planning. Then, in a simplified form, use it as a reminder of the structure of your project. Note that the Resources column can be divided into two columns: one for personnel and one for other resources. This may be required if you are engaged in a project that involves a lot of other people, such as mounting a stage production or a music festival.

Use this guide to develop your next action plan

Actions	Resources	Budget		Timeline		Remarks
		Projected	Actual	Projected	Actual	

Actions

What has to be done in this phase of the project?

Resources

What is needed for the success of this phase? This may be a skill, personnel, a service, raw material, etc.

Budget

What will this phase cost? What money is coming in? Beware of delays to grants, advances, etc.

Timeline

When does this phase have to be finished? This may be an outside deadline, or part of your scheduling later phases.

Remarks

What other information is useful? Use this space also for your evaluations as the project goes on and afterwards.

ACTION PLAN EXAMPLE

Actions	Resources	Budget	Timeline		Remarks	
		Projected	Actual	Projected		Actual
1. Prepare equipment & supplies	Photo gear fine, but need telephoto	\$625	\$565	June 5	June 11	Always ask for discount. Worked this time.
2. Make travel & accommodation arrangements	Travel, agent and destination website	\$1,000 (Air) \$625 (B&B)	\$1100 \$530	Book by May 31 Seat sale.	May 28	Don't forget taxes and airport fees next time! Canadian \$ stronger better rates on B&B
3. Establish contacts	Travel, bureau, location, reps.	Free services?	Yes	Contact by May 15 latest	May 14	Complimentary accommodation possible through this contact
4. Sell shots	Travel mag, hi-tech mag (on spec)	\$625 \$1,250	\$375 \$565	July 5 July 15	July 10 July 30	Extra for website use negotiated. Foot in the door, but is there \$\$\$ here?

Checklist

- As you plan, ideas about other sections or other projects will occur to you. Carry your notebook. Don't lose the thread.
- Look at the whole picture again as each new answer provokes more questions. Don't get bogged down in the details.
- Tell yourself the truth. Don't be too proud to realize that the idea that looked so great has turned out to be a monster. Abandon the project if that's the best course of action.
- Talk your action plan over with a mentor, with your collaborators, with your client. Can you run a mini-project to try it out?
- You can never be quite sure your plan will work. Eventually, you'll have to make a leap of faith. Or not.
- No action plan fully matches reality. If it's your project and the details change as things go on, don't be afraid to revise the plan. If it's their plan, keep your client up to date in case your contract needs changing. If the client changes the specifications, what about the resulting costs?

HOW DO I USE THE ACTION PLAN DURING THE PROJECT?

Once the project starts, real life rears its ugly head. Nothing will go exactly according to plan. If the project is well structured, the anticipated profits can survive the worst of disasters provided you are tracking their development, allowing you to adjust the plan in time to fit the new reality.

You are bound to forget and misjudge things. Planning and tracking in detail lessens the likelihood that unforeseen events will sabotage your project.

If your plan is sufficiently detailed, changes within any action can be dealt with and their impact contained, with minimal bad effect on the rest of the project. However, if you have a coarse-grained action plan, which breaks the project into large chunks, any change will be well advanced before you catch it.

Look at our photographer's Action Plan. Without setting herself deadlines, she might have missed advice on the computer tie-in because of her friend Miriam's holiday. If she hadn't checked on the visa situation in good time, everyone else may have assumed she'd done it, and she may be denied access at a border.

Tracking her progress through the plan as she goes, she can see if there's another supplier of special lenses, filter, or film when Gene's is out of stock. She has time to track down her old apartment sitter, who moved out on her boyfriend. And she will talk to Susi the writer before the contract negotiations, and find out that she wants underwater mountain stream shots.

At the end of each action, before you evaluate it (see the next section), make sure it really is finished. Have you got the film stock, or has it just been promised "in plenty of time?" Do you need to look for another source, or is Gene's reliable enough to trust? Should you set another deadline, to check up on them? Don't rely on the availability of materials while on location without checking with reliable sources.

Planning and then checking the plans may sound like overkill, but it's not. There is no need for irrational apprehension, but you can be fairly sure the one thing you assumed would be all right, won't be. Murphy's Law never sleeps.

Make sure that a projection (**sub-column Projected**) for each **Action** listed in the Action Plan is made – as appropriate – in terms of **Budget**, and **Timeline**).

At regular intervals or whenever an Action is completed during the project, fill out the sub-column **Actual** to identify the *actual* "performance" of the project in terms of **costs**, **income**, and **deadlines**.

Identify the cause(s) of any **gap** between projections and actuals (use **Remarks** column to note the conclusion of your analysis).

If required, decide on corrective measures and modify the Action Plan accordingly.

HOW DO I EVALUATE A COMPLETED PROJECT?

“The unexamined life is not worth living.” – *Socrates*

After a project has been completed, set your feelings aside and look at it systematically. Evaluation is not the same as wallowing in anticipated glory, or in self-pity. Ask yourself some questions. Tell yourself the truth. Which decisions would you have changed? Were they in the planning, or in the project itself? Write out your conclusions so you’ll remember them. If it was an outside project, get your clients’ views, from whatever evidence is available. You might try asking them. Use the same headings as your Project assessment:

Formal aim – Your personal project ...

Questions	Yes or No	Comments
Did you achieve your aim?		
Did you change it?		
Should you have?		
Did you plan the change, or did it just happen?		
Did you realize that you had changed it? What did you do then?		

Formal aim – Someone else’s project

Questions	Yes or No	Comments
Did you achieve the aim as described?		
If not, was that because their aim had changed?		
Were you given a real chance at the new aim?		

What did I gain?

Questions	Yes or No	Comments
Did they sign off and pay you?		
Will they hire you again?		
What feedback did you get?		

Did you explicitly ask for feedback?		
Did they say they were pleased?		
Did they think their objectives had been achieved?		
Reputation Are new doors opening to you?		
Have you been recommended for more ambitious projects?		
Did they certify you? How useful has that been?		
Are you more hireable, or less?		
Learned Skills With or without a formal qualification, did you gain a skill?		
Was it what you set out to learn?		

<p>Artistic Development</p> <p>Can you identify a change? Was it the change you planned for?</p>		
<p>Have you become a better artist?</p>		
<p>Is your focus clearer, or more confused?</p>		
<p>Money</p> <p>Did you make more or less profit than you thought?</p>		
<p>In either case, were the profit estimates wrong?</p>		
<p>Would a better set-up or tighter ongoing control improve things?</p>		
<p>Did they cover extra expenses they forced on you?</p>		
<p>Did you get paid in full and on time?</p>		
<p>Did your contract make allowances for these eventualities?</p>		

What did it cost?

Questions	Yes or No	Comments
Reputation Did any failures on your part, either real or construed, hurt it?		
Will these problems affect your future work?		
Artistic Development Have you changed your view of such projects or clients?		
Did they use your input, or treat you like a Great Artist slumming?		
Money Did you lose less or more than expected?		
Were the project costs wrong?		
Were they sympathetic – did they try to minimize your costs?		
If you lost more than expected, can you catch up now?		

Scheduling

Questions	Yes or No	Comments
Were the deadlines set in stone?		
Were you in danger of losing the commission or future ones?		
If you finished ahead of time, was this welcomed or questioned?		

After you have worked through an evaluation, take it to a mentor, someone whose opinion you trust. Beware of benevolent lies people may tell you what they think you want to hear rather than the truth. Listen for what they don't want to talk about.

Nothing is all good or all bad. Your worst experience may have taught you one essential skill, or given you one vital contact.

Go back over your notes of old projects: see if your new perspective has changed your old conclusions.

This whole exercise will have been wasted if you don't learn from your mistakes and change what you do. You must learn to avoid some of your favourite traps.

ACTION PLANNING

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What's The Plan For?

Determine what your priority is regarding planning for work. For most artists, simultaneous planning is required if you are working on several projects. At the very least, you have two focuses - your personal life and your work.

Purpose of the Plan

Why are you making this plan? Is it grounded in your personal mission statement and work vision? How do you plan to use it? Making sure your plan fits into your "big picture".

Current Reality

What is your work situation now? What are the factors affecting that situation? Remember, it is only by dealing honestly and realistically with your life that you can ascertain your priorities. Shift your reality, not your vision.

Goals

What do you want to accomplish? What do you truly want and need to do? What are your priorities? What will be ongoing, what is a one-time activity? How can you break down large goals into more manageable steps? Remember, a goal can be changed once you've begun. Setting goals and priorities is more of a process than a final decision.

Benefits of Achieving Goals

What will change if your goals are met? What differences will there be to your professional and personal life? This part of the plan reinforces the meaning of your efforts.

Potential Courses of Action

How can you begin to achieve your goals? How can you simplify them? What possible courses of action are open to you? What kinds of preparations must you make? This is an opportunity to evaluate your ability to manage time. Use a day planner, determine how long particular tasks will take to complete, know your internal energy clock, and make your workday productive.

Resources

What do you have on hand to assist you in meeting your goals? What else do you require? Resources are whatever gives you energy and moves you forward. They can range from tangible items like a car to talents such as humour.

Your Human Resource Team

Who are the key people who can assist you in achieving your goals? Which family members, friends, peers and mentors will you include in your process? You may need to expand your resource team to include people you don't know (for example, a librarian or an advisor from a professional association). Your human resource team serves as a reminder that the process of carrying out a plan does not necessarily have to be a solitary one.

Potential Barriers - Solutions

What obstacles currently exist in your personal life that may prevent you from reaching your goals? In your professional life? What can be done to overcome these barriers? Who or what can assist you? What's the worst thing that could happen to you? Planning for and anticipating difficulties makes it possible to respond to them directly and to keep your process moving forward. Don't deny your fears: the more realistic you make them, the more manageable they become.

Rewards

What people, places, and activities make you feel good? An artist's life does not have to be one of hardship (lots of people already think that!). After a tough day during which you've accomplished several key tasks, it's time to reward yourself. This is a way of acknowledging your accomplishments and giving you the energy to do it again tomorrow. Keep the reward tangible and simple. Give yourself your first reward when you finish writing this plan!

Evaluation

Are the actions identified in your plan being carried out? Have unforeseen snags occurred? The great thing about plans is that they can be changed. What is important is to not change your vision. Evaluating your action plan allows to assess your process and see if it's working for you. Perhaps the goal was unrealistic and simply needs to be revised. Building in the time to evaluate your plan helps you to maintain a grounded viewpoint of your work process and to keep moving forward. Remember: plans are always drawn up in pencil!

The Step By Step Plan

This is the practical layout of your plan, which differs from the foundation discussed above. An example of a step-by-step plan is provided, however this can be customized to suit your own particular quirks and preferences. What matters is that it works for you and becomes a tool you cannot ignore.

Objectives: What do you want to accomplish? What qualifies as having accomplished your objective in order for you to be satisfied? Small, realistic objectives are easier to fulfill and faster to accomplish.

Activity: How will you accomplish this objective? What activities need to take place? Each activity should be a manageable effort, accomplished in small steps.

Who's Doing It: Will there be other people involved? Remember, you rarely do anything completely on your own. Consider how the involvement of others may affect the timing and duration of your proposed activities.

Begin By: When do things get underway? It is often necessary to consider when you want things to be completed by in order to determine when things should start. Are your start dates realistic? Make a commitment.

Evaluation Date: Does your objective have to be reached by a particular date? When must a task be completed? How much flexibility exists, can you revise this date? What if the course of action isn't working out? No one likes the feeling of having let somebody down. Time to revise!

ACTION PLANNING – Worksheets

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DATE (Start - Finish):

PURPOSE OF PLAN:

CURRENT REALITY:

GOALS:

BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING GOALS (List at least 5):

-
-
-
-
-

POTENTIAL COURSES OF ACTION:

BEST COURSE OF ACTION:

RESOURCES:

HUMAN RESOURCE TEAM:

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS/BARRIERS:

REWARDS:

EVALUATION (To be finished at a predetermined date):

STEP-BY-STEP Action Plan Form

Your Focus ↓	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	WHO'S INVOLVED	START TIME
	Mn Ts W Th Fr St Sn			

Prioritize Tasks

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When you prioritize things, you put them in logical order. For example, if your goal is to bake a new dessert, you:

1. Find a recipe
2. Check to see what ingredients you have
3. Buy the ingredient you do not have
4. Take out the utensils you need
5. Mix the ingredients together
6. Bake the dessert

Arrange your tasks in order like the ones above to help you reach your goal in the least amount of time. If you start mixing ingredients and then find out that some of them are missing, you will waste time going to the store in the middle of things. And your dessert may not turn out. Imagine doing business this way!

Follow these tips about tasks:

1. **Make a list.** Even if you have a great memory, you will probably forget to do some things if you get busy or your work is interrupted. Put your list where it is easy to see. Cross items out as you complete them.
2. **Prioritize your list.** Divide your list into the following sections: *Do today no matter what. Do today if possible. Do today if time remains.*
3. **Do the hardest tasks at the beginning of the day.** This is when you have the most energy. It is also when you will probably have the least amount of interruptions. For example, if an employee has a problem, discuss it early in the day. You will be able to listen actively and come up with solutions. Employees will be grateful that they do not have to take problems home with them.
4. **Perform small tasks while doing bigger tasks.** For example, if you are waiting for paint to dry during renovations, start cleaning up, make a few quick phone calls, or make sure you have what you need for the next step of your renovations. This is called multi-tasking.
5. **Break big tasks into small tasks.** You can do small tasks in a short period of time. For example, if you want to learn the names of all of your regular customers, start by greeting at least one customer by name each day.
6. **Do not procrastinate.** When you procrastinate, you keep putting things off for later. Some tasks will be unpleasant. For example, calling clients to say that their payments are late. Remember, you are running a business, not a charity. Do the task so that you do not have to keep thinking about it. This will reduce your stress.