

How time management is like eating elephants and frogs

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One of the best ways to learn how to estimate time for a task is to keep track of how long tasks actually take to complete, and the next time you tackle the same type of task you will know how long it will take.

Here's an example of using this "small bites" strategy. I recently worked with a busy small business owner, his file cabinets were jammed full, and he had piles of papers all over his desk. He couldn't file anything more and he couldn't find anything. It was negatively affecting his productivity and company overall. So, we started by choosing a desired completion date and making a checklist to map out the steps involved to get there:

- First step was to go through the filing cabinets, one-by-one, to shred and recycle all of the outdated files (it's hard to file papers when you can't open the file drawers). This part of the project took several weeks to finish and we referred to the checklist for encouragement that showed our progress.
- We listed each file drawer as a separate step so he could see the progress.
- The next step was to sort all of the piles of papers on his desk and put them into folders. This aspect of the project felt daunting to the client, so we broke it down into even smaller manageable steps. One hour of sorting each morning (no more!) when he was feeling focused.

After we completed those steps, the client could easily access and manage all of the information to run his business efficiently and had an organized and clean desk to work on. The project was completed on time, and did not feel overwhelming, because we broke it down into smaller (bite size) steps.

This same approach can be used for any home project. A closet, drawer, or even a garage can be broken down into steps, scheduled on a calendar with a date for the desired completion of the project.



Frogs - Undesirable Tasks

So, what do frogs have to do with time management? A frog represents an undesirable or difficult task – like eating a frog (not to offend anyone who loves frogs legs). ... continued on Page D14

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