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# NEWS

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**Note: Klaus will lead “soft serve” parties in select cities in conjunction with the book’s launch. Soft serve parties are an easy and fun way of serving up the soft skills so you don’t have to learn them the hard way. Klaus reveals essential but often-ignored soft skills lessons for the workplace interspersed with lively, experiential exercises. The program lasts about two hours—and, yes, soft serve ice cream tops off each event!**

## Is Your Procrastination Trying To Tell You Something?

*Listen carefully! Here are four helpful things it might be saying.*



“Procrastination has become synonymous with avoidance behavior and being lazy, irresponsible, or a goof off. But it can also be the source of useful information about what it takes to get the job done,” says Berkeley, California-based Fortune 500 communication and leadership coach Peggy Klaus. What messages might your procrastination be sending you? Here are a few possibilities from Klaus’s latest book, *The Hard Truth About Soft Skills—Workplace Lessons Smart People Wish They’d Learned Sooner* (Collins, February 1, 2008) which features 54 lessons that highlight how soft skills mastery is the key to hard success.

**1. You don’t have everything you need to move forward.** Often people put things off when they don’t have the facts, finances, manpower, or some combination thereof to get the job done. Instead of recognizing this early on and taking care of critical gaps from the get-go, they plow forward. As deadlines loom, the situation only worsens until they’re under pressure to move ahead with half a deck in half the time. At that point, they can either proceed and do the job poorly or start making excuses about why they’re not going to meet the deadline. But the boss doesn’t want an e-mail 24 hours before the due date asking for more information or resources. And pointing fingers or blaming are ineffective at best and childish at worst. Deadline disasters are easily avoided by taking the time upfront to fill the holes.

**2. You need more “percolation” time.** A writer Klaus was coaching lived in a continual state of panic from being behind on her projects. When asked to dissect how she was tackling assignments from start to finish, the writer recognized something about herself for the first time. “As much as I try, the process can’t be rushed,” she told Klaus. “I can’t go straight to the computer and start writing. I need to allow time for my ideas to simmer, often as I go through the day—running errands, driving the kids to school, or even while mowing the lawn. This is how I best absorb information about the topic and tease out how I want to work the piece. I can’t skip this stage.” What the writer had been calling procrastination was actually a significant part of her creative process. Once she acknowledged the importance of percolation and factored enough time for it into her schedule, she stopped feeling rushed and frantic.

**3. You really do need to improve your time-management skills.** While some people seem to come out of the womb with their day planners in hand, others need to sharpen their organizational skills—and sometimes, what our procrastination is telling us is simply that. Klaus says three of the quickest ways to make improvements in this arena are as follows:

- **Get organized.** The number one way to do that is by having a good calendar system that works for you—either on your computer, on your PDA, or using the old-fashioned paper version. It doesn't matter which method you use, just make sure that you pick something you can religiously stick to.
- **Stop being an optimist.** Being an optimist is a wonderful quality, but it has its limits when you don't leave yourself some wiggle room for the "what ifs" when making promises. How much wiggle room you need is a judgment call based on time constraints, knowing yourself, understanding your work environment, and how much you are depending on others. A good rule of thumb is that the more people involved, the more slack you should allow yourself.
- **Chunk it out.** Sometimes people don't plan well because they guesstimate based on the entire project rather than breaking things down into smaller pieces, then setting timeframes and schedules for each part. The more you break the project down into manageable chunks, the more accurate your scheduling will become.

**4. It's time for a change.** If you have the resources to get the job done and are already on top of your time-management game, but still find it hard to do the work, then your procrastination might be saying you are feeling bored or unchallenged and it's time to try something new. Find ways to get out of your rut by first considering opportunities within your current position, company, and career. Then look elsewhere, if necessary. Nothing fuels procrastination more than losing your enthusiasm.

Visit [www.peggyklaus.com](http://www.peggyklaus.com) for a complete synopsis of the latest soft skills research and for an online "Take 24" automated self-assessment quiz that tests and tallies an individual's soft skills savvy in a number of key arenas. People respond to 24 items online and receive instant feedback on which soft skills areas they need to improve, along with customized advice from Klaus.

#### **About The Author**



Peggy Klaus trains professionals world-wide at leading companies which include Credit Suisse, Disney, UNICEF, and Kaiser Permanente. Author of *BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It*, she has been featured in a wide range of media including the *Today Show*, *20/20*, *The Early Show*, *BusinessWeek*, *Fortune*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *the New York Times*, *Investors Business Daily*, *O Magazine*, *Working Mother*, *Pink*, *Glamour*, *Allure*, *Self*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle*. Klaus has lectured at Harvard; the University of California, Berkeley; and Wharton. She lives in Berkeley, CA.

#### **The Hard Truth About Soft Skills: Workplace Lessons Smart People Wish They'd Learned Sooner**

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