

Feeling Stuck? Try This

BY CHRIS GUILLEBEAU

Getting started is the key;
once you do, it's surprising what you can accomplish.

IF YOU'RE INVOLVED in any kind of creative work, you and inertia are probably well acquainted. I wish I were an exception, but no—inertia and I are mortal enemies.

Every day I get up and fight a battle against that beast. Sometimes I win; sometimes I lose. Sometimes we get “stuck” in something and have a hard time figuring out what to do next. If you're feeling stuck, try one or more of these ideas.

Initiate instead of responding. Move the ball forward. Somehow, do something to advance the cause. Review existing projects and find one single action you can do to keep things moving along. If that doesn't work, start something new.

Don't be insane. Remember Einstein's definition of insanity: “Doing the same things over and over while expecting different results.” For different results, try something new. Ironic, isn't it? Inertia loves doing the same things over and again.

Continually question the status quo. Are things good enough? No? Then see the previous idea. Could they be better? Change it up! Do something completely different.

Carry a notebook everywhere you go. One of the most important principles for getting things done is, “Write everything down.” I don't actually write long blog posts and manuscripts when I'm constantly on the go—I find it hard to concentrate in short bursts of a few minutes. But I do outline, and I do write everything down.

Give up. (Temporarily.) Step away, purposefully. Take a meaningful break. Think about what needs to be done, then step back and do it.

Put on the running shoes. There's an old saying about running and motivation: “50% of running is putting on

your shoes and getting out the door.” I'm not sure it's a full 50%, but hey, it's something. In other words, resistance prevents us from getting started. Once we're under way, it's a lot easier.

If nothing else, help someone. I wrote about this during my 2009 Annual Review series and people liked it: if you get up in the morning and can't think of anything to do, spend your time helping someone. What that looks like depends on who you are and what you do. It sure beats reading the online news over and over, doesn't it?

Do something that creates a deliverable or outcome. Productive online tasks include:

- Uploading photos to Flickr
- Writing a recommendation for someone on LinkedIn
- Leaving comments (non self-promotional ones) on someone's blog
- Listing something for sale on eBay
- Writing a note to your newsletter
- And so on... if those don't apply to you, think about what does.

Apply for a scholarship, competition, or contest. Someone has to win all of those awards. The old Wayne Gretzky advice applies here: “You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.” Therefore, take shots.

When considering different opportunities, don't wait too long to decide. Should you learn Spanish or Chinese? Well, if you think about it for a year, you'll have lost a year's worth of learning. If you *really* can't decide between two options, you can either a) flip a coin, or b) find a way to do both. Better to start, then change later if you want.

Set a \$100 Business Hour. I'm grateful to Barbara Winter, one of our group and a fabulous author with her own tribe, for this concept. When you set a \$100 hour, you spend as long as you need (up to an hour) brainstorming different ways to make \$100.

Yes, I know that life is not all about making money, but if you're an entrepreneur or otherwise self-employed, you have the imperative to bring in the funds. Also, once you figure out how to make \$100 from a new source, you can probably increase the amount with less effort. It's a fun exercise—learn more at www.joyfullyjobless.com/business_ideas.html.

Just as we all fight inertia in some form or another, we all get stuck. When it happens, the choice is to waste a workday (or more), or find a way out. Let's not waste any time. Let's get out of being stuck!

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Chris Guillebeau is a writer, world traveler, entrepreneur, and lifelong learner. Read more at The Art of Non-Conformity blog (www.chrisguillebeau.com) where this article first appeared, and through which he pursues his mission of helping people live unconventional lives, make their own choices, and change the world.

Have an opinion you'd like to share in “Topping Out”? Send your feedback to Tom Klemens, senior editor, at klemens@modernsteel.com.