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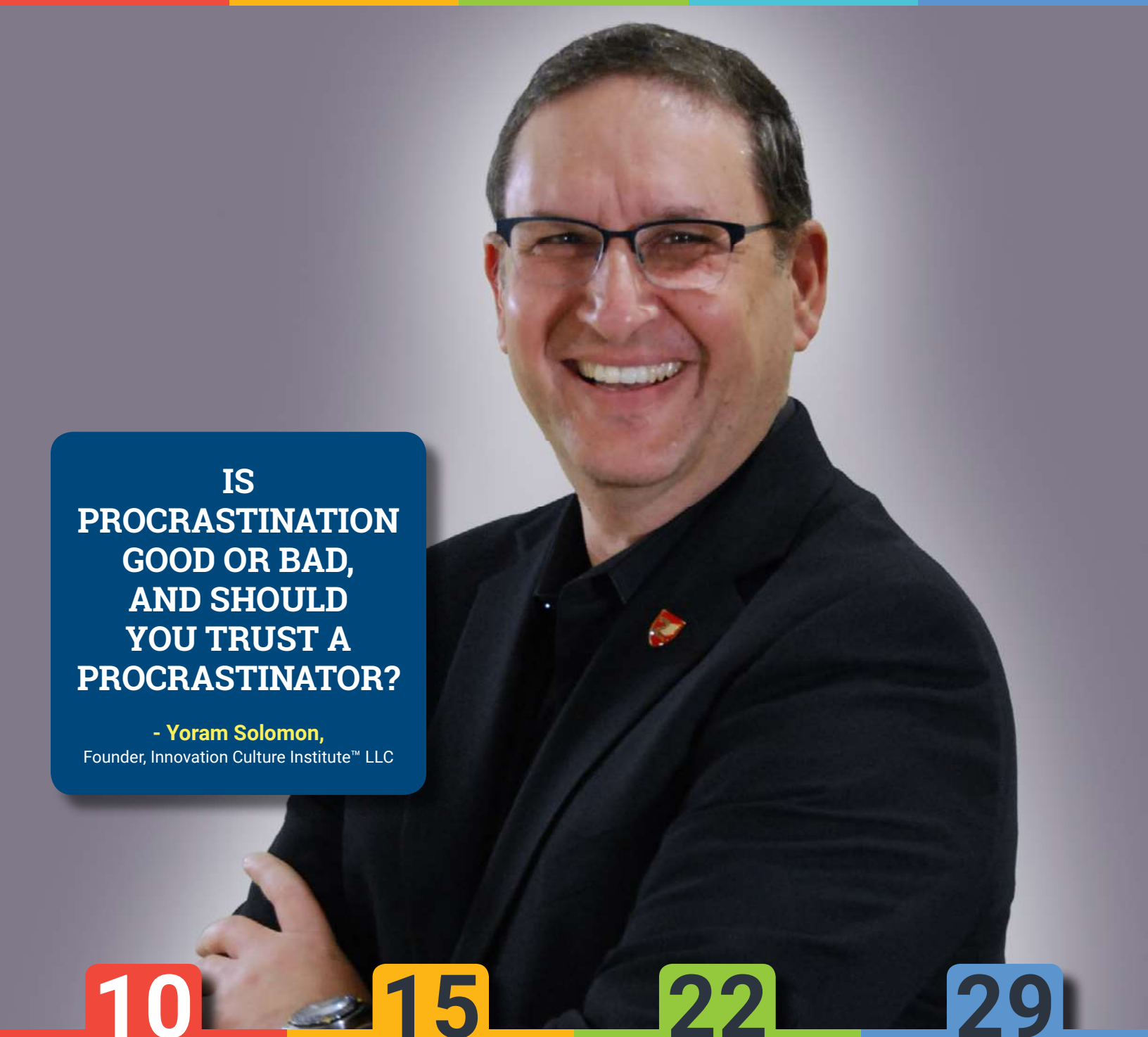

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# Is Procrastination Good Or Bad, And Should You Trust A Procrastinator?

## How to decide whether to procrastinate or not

By Yoram Solomon, Ph.D., Innovation Culture Institute™ LLC

A very famous preacher was procrastinating until the last minute on writing a very public speech he was to give. He went on stage without having the entire speech completed. He was a procrastinator. Then, on stage, at the last minute, he added four more words to it and decided to start his speech with the words: "I have a dream..."

What do you think when you hear the word "procrastination?" Is that a positive or negative word to you? We typically think of the word negatively and associate it with laziness, being disorganized, and not being strategic. But did you know that there are positive aspects to procrastination?

This article will first show both the negative and positive aspects of procrastination. It will also give you some advice as to how to decide whether to procrastinate or not. But the most important part is showing you how to determine whether you should trust a procrastinator or not and whether you should be trusted based on your procrastination profile.

### The Bad Side of Procrastination

- You may find out at the last minute that you need more information, but it will be too late to try and get it, or you will no longer have access to it.

- You may need access to someone to discuss your project, but that person will not be available in the short

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window before the project deadline.

- The schedule may get pulled in, leaving you with insufficient time to complete it before the deadline.
- You may experience stress as the looming deadline is nearing. That stress could adversely impact your ability to complete the project on time and at a high quality, not to mention the negative impact on your health.
- Life happens. Something unplanned and unexpected could happen that will have a higher priority over the project, and once you shift your attention to it, you will not be able to complete the project on time.
- The longer you wait, the higher the probability that you will forget about the project or the deadline and, as a result, miss it.
- Missing the project due date for any of the reasons above could impose significant and negative consequences on you.

## The Good Side of Procrastination

- The more time passes, the more ideas you may come across, which would make sense in the context of the project.
- On the same token, you may have more time to think of more (and better) alternatives if you must offer a few in your deliverable.
- With time, you may come across information that may not have been available early on and is available now. Information you use may be more relevant and timelier.
- You give information and ideas already in your head more time to incubate. You cannot force old ideas to combine into fresh ones, and you must give them time, and procrastination will give that processing time.
- You have more time to ask more people for their thoughts, and advice, or use more people as sounding boards for what you think your deliverable should be.
- There is always the probability that the project gets canceled. If you do your part early without procrastinating, you may have just wasted your time and effort.
- The schedule may get pushed out, causing your deliverable to become dated, irrelevant, or simply putting undue pressure on you.
- Even without the schedule being pushed out, as time passes, things change. Your ideas and recommendations may become invalidated given new developments and new information.

## To Procrastinate, or Not to Procrastinate?

- **First, ask yourself if you get stressed over looming deadlines.** If you are, then don't procrastinate. Get it over with and avoid the pressure.
- **Ask yourself whether you have everything you need at the beginning**. Do you have all the information you need? Do you fully understand what you must do? Do you have access to the people or resources you need? Will that access stop at some point? Once you map those out, you can decide whether you can procrastinate and how long. Prioritize the tasks that may have time-limited resources and information.
- **Ask yourself: what is the probability of you having more ideas**, finding better alternatives, having more access to more (or new) information, or that having access to ideas, information, or people could improve the quality of your deliverable? If there is a low probability or impact of those things, you might as well not procrastinate. But if there is a high probability or impact, you may want to wait.
- **Ask yourself: what is the probability of something**



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**urgent happening,** or of you forgetting the deadline? If the probability is high, you might want to start soon and avoid procrastination.

## The Best of Both Worlds

As you embark on (or are assigned) a project, map out all the questions above. Get access to all the information and people you need before they are not available to you. But most importantly, make a draft, a prototype, or something that is good enough (albeit not at the highest quality you can deliver). If something happens, you will still have something to show, and something is typically better than nothing. As time passes, you can refine your deliverable with new information, new ideas, new alternatives, incubation, and access to people to run your ideas by. Your final deliverable will be better but not in jeopardy because you didn't do anything about it and missed the deadline.

## Should You Trust a Procrastinator?

The quick answer is, "it depends." You can determine that procrastination is neither good nor bad in an absolute, universal way. It's not like telling the truth, which is a universal and absolute trustworthy component. Procrastination is a personality trait, and as such, trusting a procrastinator is a relative issue. Different people are simply different in their procrastination tendencies, and it doesn't make them good or bad. Trustworthiness is contextual, which means that you may trust a procrastinator in certain contexts, but not in others—probably depending on the consequences to you. Finally, trust is also asymmetrical, which means that a procrastinator may trust someone who is not a procrastinator. Still, someone who is not a procrastinator may not trust a procrastinator.

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