

Eat a live frog!

Mark Twain was famous for his folksy wit and wisdom. One of his noteworthy bits of advice was, "Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day." Wait, before you dismiss that quirky suggestion for starting your day, hear us out.

Gina Trapani of *Fast Company* translates Twain's advice into modern productivity language: Do your worst task first thing in the morning – the first thing you accomplish at work sets the tone for the rest of the day. She clarifies that by "worst" meaning "most important" and the one that you are most likely to procrastinate on.

What's your "live frog"? Maybe it's something you really dread doing or something that seems overwhelming. Maybe it's a project that you don't know how to do or where to start. Mark Twain has an answer for that: "The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex and overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one."

Of course, getting started can be easier said than done. Let's say you have been assigned an important project that you know little about. Get clarification on the objectives, if you need it. Research the topic. Fire up Google and learn who has done a similar project to see how they approached it. Jot down notes from your research and add your own ideas. If it's a complex project, break it into smaller segments. Create a plan and a schedule.

If you are unsure about your direction, ask for feedback at various stages of your work. Submit plans, schedules and initial drafts as you progress. And as *Nike* advises: Just do it!



Here are tips to help you boost your productivity and get the important things done:

- At day's end, make a task list for the next day.
- Put the most important tasks on top. If they are too big, break them up.
- Dig in to your task list right away in the morning.
- Tackle your hardest task first. Don't give in to the temptation to knock off the easiest ones first.
- Don't let email dictate your day. Plan to check it on a scheduled basis rather than as they come in.
- Make folders for incoming email. Filter newsletters and optional mail to check when you have time.
- Shut out distractions. Silence your smartphone's text and social media alerts.
- Focus on the task at hand. Multitasking can make tasks take longer and results slip.
- Save smaller tasks for when you have small pockets of time.
- Take breaks to replenish. Take a short walk or a stretch. Don't skip meals.
- Stay organized. Try to file papers and clear out email junk at the end of each day before you leave.
- Keep meeting times and phone calls to a minimum.

Log in to your EAP online for more tips and webinars on productivity and time management!