

**Book Review  
Eat That Frog!**

**21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time, by  
Brian Tracy. Bennett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. ISBN 978-1-5230-9513-1**

*<sup>1</sup>Asif Maqbool Dendru*

Academic interest in time management is not a new phenomenon. As early as the 1950s, the problem of how to manage time was discussed, and several authors proposed methods on how to handle time issues on jobs such as writing work plans on paper so-called ‘to-do lists’. Organizational literature concerning time management has attracted even more importance during the last two decades. (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002) emphasized that the time dimension of work has assumed more importance, owing to the expanding global competition and increased demand for instant availability of goods and services. (Garhammer 2002, n.d.) has highlighted that the increased pace of life is reflected in doing things faster (acceleration), contracting time expenditure (e.g. eat faster, sleep less), and compressing actions (making a phone call while having lunch). Other studies have analyzed the perception of time in the context of organizations (e.g. (Palmer & Schoorman, 1999) and employees’ experience of time pressure (e.g. (Jackson & Martin, 1996); (Major et al., 2002); (Teuchmann et Al, n.d.).

Apart from the work of research articles, many books have contributed to the dissemination and enrichment of knowledge on many dimensions of the subject of time management, covering topics such as organization, focus, and defeating procrastination. Less, as the saying goes, is more, when it comes to the book titled ‘Eat That Frog!’ written by Brian Tracy. Although small in terms of the number of pages, the book is huge in content; offering deep insight into the bad human habit of procrastination and the remedies thereof. An international bestseller, the book has already sold 1.6 million copies worldwide.

Living in the 21st-century world with competition looming around everywhere, in every aspect of business, there is a need to add value to everything we do and optimize every available resource- our time first. A deterrent to this, like Tracy, I too have the problem of procrastination, and I think the reader might have it as well. Both Tracy and I, and perhaps the reader also, never have enough time to do everything required to be done; work ranging from personal responsibilities, endless emails, projects, and piles of official work to dispose of.

In the book, Brian Tracy aptly points out that we are all overwhelmed with too much to do within too little time; meanwhile, new tasks and responsibilities just keep rolling in, like the waves of the ocean. Offering a solution, the book while elaborating on the underlying complexities of procrastination, presents the key insight forming the heart and the soul of the book as one’s ability to concentrate single-mindedly on the most important task, to do it well, and to finish it. This task is called the ‘frog’ by the author, referring to the biggest, most important task, the one we are most likely to procrastinate on if we don’t do something about it (page 2). According to the author, the key to eating the ‘frog’ lies in action. Quoting Mark Twain, “if the first thing you do each morning is to eat a live frog, you can go through the day with the satisfaction of knowing that that is probably the *worst* thing that is going to happen to you all day long”, Tracy stresses that everyone’s “frog” is the biggest, the most important task on hand, which one is most likely to procrastinate; the reason being lack of timely action on it. In essence, the author prompts the reader, even average it be, to develop the habit of setting

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<sup>1</sup> Ph.D Scholar, Department of Management Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar;  
email:asifmaqbool@gmail.com

clear priorities and getting important tasks completed quickly to rise above any genius who talks a lot and makes wonderful plans only to achieve little results (page 9-10).

The focus of the book lies in increasing the readers' overall level of productivity, performance, and output that contribute to the organization's success. Interestingly, rather than dwelling on various psychological or emotional explanations for poor time management, or lengthy departures into theory or research, the book explains specific actions to be learned by the reader for betterment and faster work results. These actions are presented as a bouquet of twenty-one methods and techniques in the book to bring about fast, predictable improvements in performance and results.

According to Tracy, in the world of business, people are paid and promoted for getting well-defined measurable results and for making a valuable contribution to the organization. To fulfill the expected results efficiently, first and the foremost action is to pick the 'ugliest frog' among the two if one is bewildered by two important tasks on hand – starting with the biggest, the hardest, and the most important task of the day and persist until its completion, to attain high level of performance. As a corollary to this, Tracy suggests resisting the temptation to start with the easier task. While Tracy is correct to the extent that the 'ugliest frog' be eaten first, however, to this writer's understanding, he has failed to take into account the fact that the decision on prioritization of official tasks is generally influenced by official instructions flowing down from the top and also the day-to-day changes in business dynamics within the organization. E.g., the most important meeting on a day may be shadowed by an emergency meeting owing to some unforeseen matters that demand immediate action.

In the book, Brian Tracy introduces the 'Three D's' method – Decision to task completion, Discipline to practice the principles, and Determination until the habit becomes part of one's personality (Page 14) for developing the habit of setting priorities and overcoming procrastination. While Tracy's 'Three D's' is quite comprehensive and an effective technique, the author has simply reproduced some orthodox instruments of planning like written work plans including the master list, and monthly/weekly/daily activity list for performance enhancement and procrastination avoidance. Tracy supplements his arguments on planning with the 10/90 rule which reads (page 16), "...the first 10 percent of the time that you spend planning and organizing your work before you begin will save you as much as 90 percent of the time in getting the job done once you get started." The rule is synonymous with Steven Covey's 90/10 principle on self-control, which also the author advocates applying in the course of taking control of the sequence of events in real-life management. To this writer's surprise and agreement, Tracy does not believe in deadlines; but rather within sufficient timelines, incorporating a buffer time to get the job done well in advance in a relaxed manner.

Further, borrowing from the Pareto Principle, Tracy argues that out of every ten tasks, one or two tasks – "the vital few" - contribute five to ten times the value of any of the other tasks, and often one single task – the 'frog' to be eaten first - can be worth more than all other nine tasks put together albeit being the hardest and most complex, leaving the least important eighty percent - "the trivial many" – that contribute very little to one's performance in all capacities. Given the scarcity of time, the prioritization of the tasks with a long-term view can be based on the anticipation of potential consequences of the choices and decisions and classified as A,B, C, D and E type tasks – A being the highest priority, key tasks that contribute the most to the organization and E the least priority, which can be delegated or outsourced. In other words, first things first (page 28). Moreover, to set priorities, one must set the posteriorities – something that can be done later as well, which Tracy builds on one of the secrets of success of the most famous investor Warren Buffett-say no to everything that is not vital at the moment (page 31). The purpose, the author says, is to balance time – work and

personal - with quality time for work that counts, to spare an adequate quantity of time at home (page 50).

According to Tracy, identification of the highest priority task should immediately be supplemented by everything required at hand including a clean and comfortable workspace to launch immediately towards the first action, and the rest shall follow (page 54), one step at a time (page 57). In the course of work, one must upgrade the key skills, identify key constraints, focus on accuracy, and strive for success by applying physical and mental energies without growing weary. To maintain motivation, there is a need to maintain self-esteem irrespective of feelings of fear, doubt, or even physical fatigue and develop a positive mental attitude (page 73). While amplifying the readers' motivational level to go the extra mile on every aspect of work, and focus complete attention on every task on hand for high performance, Tracy aptly warns the reader of obsession with overwhelming technology and its addiction; emphasizing to treat technology as a servant, not as a master (page 81). To this writer's dismay, Tracy discourages multitasking by justifying it as a mere shifting of attention back and forth (page 87).

In the last chapter of the book, Brian Tracy has summarized all the twenty-one rules and principles that help the reader attain better time management by getting more things done faster and stopping procrastination. The author also has recommended reviewing these rules and principles regularly so they become hardwired into the readers' thinking and actions.

To conclude, the book is a good read for all those grappling with time management challenges amid the inherent tendency for procrastination. The rules prescribed in the book are lucid and easy to follow, albeit mixed with some conventional wisdom, which otherwise every ordinary human possesses. However, the arguments, rules, and techniques presented in the book lack both empirical evidence and theoretical framework; the author has shared his own experience and opinions in the book.

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