



Working Ahead of the Power Curve

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

Ever find yourself scrambling near a deadline to get all the work done? I suspect we have all experienced a time crunch on a project, whether it was a term paper in school, a special project at work, or even a party to celebrate a holiday. As we pull an all-nighter to finish our project just ahead of the deadline, what we are really doing is lowering our chances of a successful effort.

The alternative is to arrange your life so that you can complete your work well ahead of the due date. My mentor used to refer to this as "working ahead of the power curve." There are many advantages of getting the work done early. Here are six obvious advantages:

1. You have more time to polish the work, so the quality is significantly higher.
2. You can do dry runs of the material, so your work comes out more professional looking.
3. You can relax and not be uptight about working close to the deadline. That also improves the quality of the material along with the quality of your life.
4. You get the reputation as an organized person who has his or her act together.
5. You can spend some time looking at potential problems that might arise and have contingencies ready to go.
6. Since you know you are prepared, you appear more confident and relaxed when the event arrives.

With the help of my mentor, I got the idea of doing this many years ago. It sounded impossible to me at the time because, like everyone else, I was always so backed up with dozens of projects. Actually, it was not as difficult as I thought to get into the habit of tricking myself into believing the deadline was a week or two ahead of the actual due date. Once I experienced the tremendous benefits of working ahead of the power curve, as described above, I have tried to work that way ever since. There are still some times when things get just overwhelming, but when that happens, I just get up earlier to keep things moving.

Try the formula of working ahead of the power curve in your life. If you can acquire the discipline to do it, you will find that the quality of your work will rise, while at the same time your stress level will go down. It is a life skill well worth cultivating.

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