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Slow Down

Slow Down, We All Are Moving to Fast!

Thomas Helen and his team in Norway fixed three cameras on the side of a train. The peaceful video was broadcasted for seven hours and 12 minutes. 1.2 million Norwegians watched part of the program. The new sensation is known as Slow Television (TV). The deeper in thought a person gets into an event the more interesting the action becomes. More productions of slow TV have been produced. There is National Firewood Night that runs for eight hours. There is All About Salmon Fishing for 18 hours and knitting for National Knitting Night that took nine hours. The Norwegians also read cover to cover of hymns that took 60 hours. The longest slow TV filmed was a 5 1/2 day boat cruise. I know many might think that it must be hard or boring to watch something like slow TV, however, it is something that is happening in real time, and watching something exactly as if we were there has created a buzz around this type of television. We are living in a time where a predictable, coherent story, and context seem exotic or taboo. People are longing for some kind of connection to an unbroken story and slow TV offered to give it.

Social scientists suggest that if we do slow down it will produce more original ideas. I am a person whom takes in every experience and sees how it may impact my life. In other words, I am absolutely in love with learning. As I was listening to a Ted Radio Hour on NPR to an episode called Slowing Down I thought everyone would also find this fascinating. In this paper I explore how slowing down will produce more creative and genuine ideas. I target a specific sample of the population is known as originals. While taking it slow maybe challenging but can be important for all of us. Slow TV serves a need for people. Trying to tell a story in full length can be a window to the world. If you go on one of these journeys you can experience the same slow way that makes you appreciate the slowness. It gives a person some control back. Is slow TV only for Norwegians? The answer is no, and it is even on Netflix!

Most Americans hate inefficiency and do things as quickly as possible even though it may compromise quality standards. A matter-of-fact, people like my dad, could be classified as a procrastinator. A Pennsylvania State psychologist coined this phenomenon as procrastination (Khazan, 2014). It is the tendency to complete, or at least begin, tasks as soon as possible, even at the expense of extra physical effort. I know most of my procrastinators out there get extremely worried right before a huge deadline, job interview, or paper is due, however, a procrastinator feels that same anxiety a few months before a deadline. These people feel like they are going to have an anxiety attack. For those persons slowing down is extremely difficult but it can be beneficial; especially for creativity.

Dr. Adam Grant, a Wharton professor of Organizational Psychology and author of, "Give and Take and Originals," was asked by four students in August if he would invest money in their company. The four students wanted to disrupt an industry by selling stuff online. Dr. Grant asked if they spent the summer on this project. The student replied no. Six months goes by and a day before the launch of the site the students approached Dr. Grant again to ask if he would invest. Long story short, Dr. Grant declines to invest in the company because the students spent six months debating over what to name the company. The students name the company Warby Parker (<https://www.warbyparker.com/history>). The company was recognized as one of the most innovative companies and valued at over a billion dollars (<https://www.warbyparker.com/>). Why was Dr. Grant so hesitant to invest?

Dr. Grant's research is on participants who are called the "originals." An original is a person who does not conform to popular trends (Grant, 2016). The originals are people who have new ideas but take action to champion the ideas or challenge the norm. The results that Grant's research team found was this beautiful inverted U-shaped curve on creativity and the chronic procrastinators had to rush ahead with his or her first idea which was usually the simplest (Grant, Ted Talk). The person did not have enough time to work out the creative ideas but also procrastinators were also found to be less creative and led to rushing ahead with the most conventional, first ideas, and thus made mistakes of thinking in a step by step way. The originals who started work early and then put it away for a while and then came back to the activity were more likely to exhibit divergent thinking and incubation and that significantly increased creativity scores. We all know many procrastinators in life but is it really a bad thing in regard to creativity?

In a discussion with Katie Couric of the NBC Today Show about how he writes and why he procrastinates, Aaron Sorkin, the creator of the television series "The West Wing" said, "You call it procrastinating; I call it thinking," (Oppong, 2017). If we look back in history at people like Leonardo da Vinci; he painstakingly worked on and off for 16 years on the Mona Lisa. He felt like a huge failure and wrote as much about his depression but some of the divergences he took in the optics transcends the light that makes the painting so beautiful today (Isaacson, 2017).

What about Martin Luther King Jr. The night before the March to Washington he was up till 3 AM writing and rewriting his speech (Hampson, 2013). As he was waiting his turn to speak; he was still scribbling notes and crossing outlines. After about 11 minutes into his speech, he goes off script to say four words that still can be heard till this day, "I have a dream." By delaying the task of finalizing his speech till the last minute, he left himself open to a wide range of ideas and because his speech was not set in stone he had freedom to improvise. I think most will question what happens when we put something away why does it get the gears to start turning in our brain?

Rarely are people lazy about everything all the time. The idea of laziness is just being discouraged by something that is extremely difficult. The psychologist Ian MacGregor has substantial research on compensatory conviction (MacGregor, 1999). Compensatory conviction is defined by person's attempt to start fleeing away from serious uncertainty. The person then develops all this passion for something else that helps him or her escape from the thing she or he is trying to get out of their field of vision. What happens is when we try to procrastinate or put things off; we are pursuing things that could potentially be combined with that thing we are putting off. A person looks at a multitude of different ideas when that individual is trying to solve the same problem he or she had in the first place and end up feeding into the original problem.

Most people are always consistently moving forward and we often forget to stop and reflect. We limit ourselves by our narrow thinking and thus patterns or habits are formed. We all toil away at something and most often if we put the project away for some time and then come back with a totally different and new perspective. The research conducted by German psychologist, Bluma Zeigarnik in 1927 wrote about the Zeigarnik affect on memory (Oppong, 2015). The affect is shown that we have a better memory for incomplete, rather than, complete tasks. Most have a to do list in our heads and when something gets completed or checked we go probably forget details other than the action was completed. Incomplete tasks, however, always stay active in our minds to, eventually, be completed. Those ideas have to stay active so we do not have to redo the details. We often remember where we left off and that increases our efficiency. Wait, Chad, you are saying when I put something off, it stays active in my mind.

We can draw a prime comparison to a well that continuously gives water. We can keep coming back to the well because it is like in an incompleting task. When we slow down, we can keep tasks in our working memory and can be excellent for incomplete tasks. This is why truly original ideas are quick to start but seem to not stand the test of time. Most of the time the intuitive thinkers are often filled with doubts and a lot have a backup plan just in case the original does not work. On the surface, if we picked a brilliant idea and portray any doubt we are giving that lack of originality. The originals do sense, if not more, fear than the rest of the population but the distinguishing factor is the management of that emotion. Many might wonder do originals fear doubt?

In my research, I found there was two types of doubt. One is Self-Doubt and this type is paralyzing and leads us to freeze in the moment (Grant, 2016). The other type is Idea Doubt. This type of doubt is energizing and it motivates us to test these claims, to experiment, and to refine the end product (Grant, 2016). Instead of throwing in the towel and quitting a person needs to keep refining her or his work draft after draft. How do we then get to completion?

It is about the type of person who is a leader and can take the initiative to doubt the default and look for a new or better option. If that process is done well; the possibilities are the opposite of déjà vu (Grant, Ted Talk). It is called vu jàdé (Grant, Ted Talk). It is an experience for a problem you have seen a million times and during the millionth and one; is viewed through a different set of lenses. The takeaway message is when a person feels doubt, to not let it go. What about fear?

Originals feel fear too. He or she is so afraid of failure but what sets us apart is our inability to keep trying. The originals know in the long run our biggest regrets are not our actions but are inactions. The things we wish we could redo or chances that are not taken. The percolating question I have now is can procrastination be considered constructive or destructive?

I think we can say when we actively grappled with a problem and are quick to start but so to finish we will allow the maximum of our creativity. The ideal way is to start fast generating numerous ideas and then finish slow which allows for new insight and get skilled in our work again. The part is finding a balance between productivity and creativity modes on a project. Is this a real truth in today's society?

We live in a world that requires instant feedback and that information has to be available immediately. We live in a much faster world and that trajectory is only moving in one direction. The difference is in 20 years, life will be unbelievably faster than it is today and even in 40 years that speed is unimaginable. On the most insightful explanations is the faster we move the less we reflect on things. We can liken that to being smarter and wiser.

This is a depiction process of most creative thinkers:

1. This is awesome!
2. This is tricky.
3. This is crap!
4. I am crap.
5. This might be okay.
6. This is awesome!

The key to being original is skipping step four. You always say the first few drafts are always crap and I am just not there yet. Many might wonder how do I get there?

Research can predict by what web browser you use. Firefox and Google significantly outperforms Safari and Internet Explorer users in regard to creativity and are 15% more likely to stay in one's job

(Grant, Ted Talk). If we unpack this idea more we see a clear difference between these two categories. Safari and Internet Explorer has already been preinstalled on a computer as a default. You accepted the default option that was handed to you. If you wanted to use Firefox or Google you had to doubt the default and asked if there is a different option out there and then being resourceful and downloading the new web browser. When a person hears about this experiment; he or she thinks that all I have to do to be better at my job is download a different web browser.

To be smart is the speed at which we can process complex information. If we never take a step back to process and pause to ask what if this information is not true then my assumptions are then going to be wrong. That equates to winning a bunch of battles but losing the war. Looking at Grants research, we see slowing down can create more creativity. The first thing that separates originals from others is to be original you do not have to be first. For example Facebook waiting to build a social networking site after MySpace was created. Look at Google, waiting years after AltaVista and Yahoo. New ideas are rarely created. It takes much to improve it an idea than it is to create a new idea from scratch.

We should doubt the default. When the in doubt, seize the day. Good news, we are not called to be judged on your bad ideas. When we look across industries and asked people about their biggest idea, 85% stayed silent instead of speaking up. The reason why he or she did not speak was because of being embarrassed. The takeaway from this paper is to be original, one does not have to be first, the person just has to be different and better.

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