

# Nine Habits That Cause Us Unnecessary Trouble

By  
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Most of us are talented at excusing personal habits as trivial idiosyncrasies or minor infractions. Yet, they can come together to form a clear picture of who we are in the eyes of others.

Here are nine habits, among many others, that we can easily overlook or ignore. However, if we do, they can cause us unnecessary trouble, both personally and professionally:

## 1. Winging it

What is it? It's assuming we're so smart or experienced that we don't need to prepare for a presentation. It starts out innocently. We run out of time and decide to "wing it." Before long, it's a habit. By then, we've convinced ourselves that we're getting by with it. Don't kid yourself. Everyone knows—customers, prospects, co-workers, and the boss.

## 2. Thinking we're indispensable

"Which of us can resist the temptation of being thought indispensable," wrote Margaret Atwood. When leaving to take a new job, some want to think they're leaving a hole that can't be filled. But, as Dene Ward notes in Medium's *The Ascent*, "The reality is that every organization can survive a departure, unless you are a sole proprietor!" It's much better to leave a legacy of quality performance and training a capable replacement.

## 3. Missing deadlines

No matter the task or assignment or how much pressure is put on some people, they're still late, even though they may be bright, capable workers. Missing deadlines can a form of job protest, like slowing down a production line. A better way is to establish credibility by being on time and then speaking up. Others are more likely to listen.

## 4. Saying yes but no intention of doing it

It's a good way to get off the hook for the moment, but it comes back to bite us. In the workplace, it's called Task Avoidance. Yet, it doesn't solve a problem, it only delays facing it, creating doubt and undermining personal trust. Even though it may be stressful, many people repeat it throughout their work lives.

## 5. Not taking time to communicate effectively

A *Fast Company* article states, “Communication was the most commonly required skill in job opportunities posted to the platform in July and August” of 2020. This is no surprise, since tens of millions are working remotely, due to the pandemic. In spite of the available technology—virtual meetings, texting, email, and, of course, the phone—we have become “silos of one.” The article points out that four of the top 20 most popular LinkedIn Learning courses “deal directly with communication skills training, and three address a related skill, such as ‘Remote Learning Foundations’ and ‘Learning Personal Branding.’”

## **6. Not being aware of what’s going on around us**

“When they were fired, 68% of participants noted they were surprised—they had not seen it coming,” according to a *Forbes* article. How does it happen? We all see what we want to see and filter out anything that doesn’t fit the picture of ourselves. An employer tells of a 20-year key worker who cried when told the company was closing, even though the information she worked with every day contained obvious clues. She couldn’t see them. This is why questioning our thoughts and ideas helps improve awareness.

## **7. Not having a plan**

With so many ways to vote in the recent election, urging everyone to vote wasn’t enough, particularly during the pandemic. To make sure our vote would be counted, we were urged to have a plan. That was good advice. As a famous author reminds us, “A goal without a plan is just a wish.” And we all know what that means.

## **8. Ignoring details**

With student debt weighing down the future of millions of Gen-Zs and Millennials, many claim they didn’t understand what they were getting into. Some say they signed contracts without reading them or having a trusted person review them. Now their lives are on hold. If we assume everyone is honest, we can find ourselves in trouble. We believe it when told, “Don’t worry about it. It’s all standard boilerplate. Just sign here.” As they say, “The devil is in the details.”

## **9. Leaving it until the last minute**

Some claim procrastinating makes them more creative. They may be on to something, since the subconscious mind has more time to do its work. Perhaps, but it’s also true that quality output doesn’t occur with the first pass or initial draft. It requires extra time, for review, additional thought, reworking, and polishing. If that isn’t enough, last minute leaves no room for something going wrong. This is also when we hear the excuse, “I didn’t have enough time.”

There is a long list of other habits that can cause unnecessary trouble. If you take the time to make up your own personal list, you may avoid bothersome problems and move forward faster.

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