

# Wroten & Associates

## February 2013 Leadership Insight

### Perfectionism: The Good and The Bad

"Striving for excellence motivates you; striving for perfection is demoralizing."

- Harriet

*Braiker*

The term "perfectionism" is attributed to those who pursue flawless work and set unrealistically high standards and goals. Are you a perfectionist? Do you feel there is a right and wrong way to do most tasks? Do you expect to do everything well and if you don't, you become self-critical and demoralized?

A small amount of perfectionism is a good thing. Perfectionists often produce excellent work. However, their excessive attention to details and reworking of projects can cause many problems within a team. When you focus on perfection as a criteria for all of your objectives, you are being unnecessarily harsh on your self. Negative traits of perfectionists have been identified as low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, increased levels of stress, and difficulty getting along with others. In addition, research has shown that perfectionism is the leading cause of procrastination. Perfectionists often procrastinate as they tend to think that they do not have the right skills or resources to complete a task perfectly, creating missed deadlines and the potential for increased conflict with co-workers.

So, how can you grab the positive traits of the perfectionist and minimize the negative side of perfectionism? According to Employee Development Systems, Inc., overcoming perfectionism requires changing ways of thinking. For instance, stop comparing your work with others. Let go of the need to control everything. Sometimes perfectionism is a tactic used to try to manage our stress level, however the opposite is true, more stress is caused and not relieved. Practice stress relief. Step away from the project or task, take a break, interact with coworkers and you will feel more focused when you return to the task. Setting manageable priorities is important. It is impossible to complete every task perfectly, prioritize the most important things and spend most of your time on those. Setting a time limit for the completion of a project and honoring that time limit is critical.

Perfection can be a standard to aim for, but it becomes negative and unhealthy when it is the **only** standard acceptable.

**Wishing you an (almost) perfect and insightful month!**

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