

IMPRESSION: a characteristic, trait, or feature resulting from some influence, a telling image impressed on the senses or the mind



It's time for positive

CHANGE

NO Excuses

Eliminate the Impulse for Excuse-Making

UXL, February 2013



Intro

Let's face it, you're not fooling anyone. Your eyes are twitchy; your voice is quivering; you are shifting your weight back and forth as you speak. You are spouting excuses and no one is buying it. And not only is no one buying it, no one is terribly impressed with you at the moment. How did you get yourself into this situation? How did you begin to feel so cornered and anxious that

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 Forward



from the
UXL BLOG

Patience: More Than a Virtue



We've been told "patience is a virtue" since we were little. Is there any real truth to this common

you had to resort to excuse-making? I'll give you a hint: knowing the roots of your excuses is just as important as dealing with their consequences. Making good decisions about the projects you take on and the promises you make is key to eliminating bad excuses from your life. It starts with you and self-management.

It's About Self-Management

If you find yourself in a position where you need to justify your actions, the first step is to examine how you got there in the first place. Why have you been making excuses to your boss? Your co-workers? Your spouse? Have you taken on too many projects and stretched yourself too thin? Did you forget to write down a deadline and let it slip through the cracks? Are you having trouble balancing your work and life? There are many reasons we make excuses, but oftentimes the core of the problem is poor self-management. In our rushed, deadline-heavy world, it is easy to stretch ourselves too thin. It is easy to take on projects that we really shouldn't touch. We often have our hands in many cookie jars and, as a result, can over-commit ourselves or make sloppy work of our projects in order to get them out of the way and move on to the next thing. Good self-management is two-fold. It revolves around saying YES to the right things and having the courage to say NO when expectations are unrealistic.

Saying YES

When you are given an opportunity to take on a new project, task, leadership role, etc., look before you leap. Just like you do your research before buying a new car, so too should you take a step back and examine your potential project before you commit to it. What skills will you need to perform the task? Are you qualified to take it on? Do you have enough time? Who are the key players in the new project and how do you fit in with them? Asking good questions is key to figuring out if you can adequately perform your new assignment. Once you begin your new assignment, don't forget about the importance of asking good questions. If you find yourself in the thick of a frustrating project, ask yourself why things turned south. What questions do you need to ask

saying? Let's talk about it [here!](#)

Tricks to Becoming a Great Persuader



Persuasive skills are a must-have. To be successful in your endeavors, whatever they may be, you'll need to convince others that you are worth their time. These [Five Steps](#) will start you off on the right path.

Empathy: The "Glue" to Any Good Community



A team of psychologists and researchers recently came out with a book titled, "The Compassion Instinct." Among many other interesting insights, they lay out some active steps to making a community truly grow. More [HERE!](#)

to set things straight and ensure your expectations are aligned with the expectations of your client/boss/co-workers? By asking the right questions and aligning your expectations, you will be better equipped to do the job right and won't have to make up excuses for lack of performance on your part.

Saying NO

I have learned the hard way that sometimes it is best to simply say no to a project. Be honest with yourself. If you feel like you are under-qualified for a task or if you're feeling over-stretched at the moment, don't be afraid to just say no. If you take on a task you are not mentality prepared for, you'll likely find yourself making excuses later. At one point, I found myself working with a client to revise her résumé. From the get-go, I could tell we were thinking on two different planes. She essentially wanted to hand me her résumé and have me "fix it" without any direction or guidance on her part. When I took a stab at revising her résumé and whittling it down from six pages to a more manageable length, she got defensive and accusatory, asking me if I had any experience working with people in her specific profession in the past. I had, I told her, but not exactly in the same capacity. So, we kept working and butting heads and I found myself making constant excuses for my work. Then, I had a realization: my work wasn't at fault (I had, after all, successfully revised dozens of other résumés), but my communication was. I had not adequately hashed out the project before I agreed to take it on. I didn't ask the right questions, such as, "How do you see my role in revising your résumé?" or "How technical would you like your résumé to be? Do you require assistance from someone with a similar career background?" And even if I hadn't asked the right questions from the start, I could have started asking clarifying questions when I sensed things taking a turn for the worse. Questions like, "how would you have liked things to go?" or "Can you describe your vision for the final product?" are open-ended and allow your client or boss to talk freely about the project at hand.

No Excuses

No one likes to hear excuses. Be pro-active. Manage yourself well and know your limits and weaknesses. If you do not feel qualified to take on a task, be honest and talk things out. Maybe you can tackle certain aspects of the project while leaving other parts to someone else.

No excuses means setting yourself up for **success**. It also means gracefully handling situations in which you're at fault. Don't waffle or dance around the issue.

Confront it face-on, accept the blame, and articulate a game-plan to get you back on track. Your employer or client will most likely appreciate your honesty and you can then begin to work with them to re-focus your project and get it to where it needs to be. Assuming personal responsibility for whatever the cause may be (taking on something not well aligned to your strengths, over committing, procrastination, lack of adequate preparation) can actually benefit you in the long run.

Remember, most people can see right through excuses and our perception of "excuse-makers" is typically not a good one. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else."

Best of luck,



Margaret Smith

Founder, [UXL: Creating Successful Leaders](#)



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Margaret Smith believes in the strength of your organization.

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Margaret is a career coach, speaker, licensed Insights Discovery practitioner, and adjunct professor at St. Kate's University with 27 yrs experience as a Senior Leader for 3M.

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