

## BIRD BY BIRD

Next, you've got to figure out how to get it all done. Marketing's not your regular job, but you could work at it full time, given all there is to do.

And don't forget...how do you stay on track and motivated? Sure, it's one thing to be inspired during a marketing workshop or by ideas from a book. But then the reality of execution sets in.

Believe me, I feel your pain. Working on some major, next-level projects of my own right now, it's tempting to stick my head in the sand and say forget it. Since I'm writing from the beach this week, it literally would be that easy.

Instead, I'm taking it "bird by bird."

Author and writing teacher, Anne Lamott, coined this term to encourage budding authors in her book, *Bird by Bird*. The phrase refers to a school report about wild birds that her younger brother had to write as a child. He put it off until the night before it was due. Sitting at the kitchen table, surrounded by piles of books, he was overwhelmed and frozen by the task at hand. His father, also a writer, told him to just take it bird by bird...first write about one bird. Then write about another bird. Then another. Before he knew it, his report would be done.

Faced with your own pile of marketing tasks? Here are some things you can do to take it bird by bird:

1. Don't start with a whole bird. Start with some feathers. A beak. The feet. My point is, just start on one, tiny thing...like spend 15 minutes brainstorming your Positioning Statement (and if you don't know what this is, email me!). Then stop. Come back to it tomorrow and spend 15 more minutes. Eventually, you'll be done.
2. Be okay with lousy first drafts. Creativity experts know this. Famous authors count on it. Whether you're working on your website, a client proposal, deciding where to network or writing an actual article, just get the ideas out of your head and onto paper. Don't worry about complete sentences, clever themes or specifics. The point is to just start.
3. Invest by carving out the time. If you want to attract more clients for the long haul, you've got to carve out time to work on this stuff. It won't happen by itself. Look at it as an investment in what matters most to you (your future? your sanity? your family? your freedom?). Then carve out the time to invest. Start small – 15 minutes of uninterrupted, honest-to-god-I'm-not-going-to-do-anything-else time every day – then expand to 30 minutes and more. I've found that the daily discipline is what makes this magic.
4. Protect and guard this commitment. Others will try to lure you away (that crucial client meeting...the latest staff crisis...family and friends), interrupt you, to make their needs more important. Don't take the bait. Make your commitment to this investment more important. Julia Cameron shows us how to keep from being "blocked by falling in with other people's plans for us," in *The Artist's Way*.
5. Use a timer. Okay, I know this sounds anal...but it works. I learned this from my friend, Susan Rose, whose book, *'Bourbon? Babes, comes out this fall*. Now I'm addicted. Instead of stressing about the time I don't have, I simply set a timer and do the work. When the alarm goes off, I stop. It's very freeing, since I don't have to decide when to stop – the alarm decides for me. Try this every morning for a week and see how much you accomplish.
6. Show up and see what happens. Carving out the time to work on marketing is half the battle. The other half is being open to what you come up with during the time you've set aside. The best ideas will come to you if you don't pre-judge your efforts. Why put that kind of pressure on yourself?
7. Be gentle with yourself. Remember lousy first drafts? Again, go easy. Take a page from *The Artist's Way*, where Julia Cameron encourages us to "go gently and slowly...no high jumping, please! Mistakes are necessary. Stumbles are normal. Progress, not perfection is what we should be asking of ourselves."
8. On the other hand, no whining. In his *Little Red Book of Selling*, Jeffrey Gitomer gives us a tough love message that, when in doubt, give yourself a swift kick in the rear (his words are less delicate, but you get the idea). His main advice: no whining and kick your own a--!
9. Don't go it alone. Yes, you have to carve out the time, show up, and stop whining. But you don't have to go it alone. Create a system of support. Schedule a weekly check-in meeting with someone. Subscribe to marketing e-newsletters and online groups. Start a Marketing Book Club and meet monthly to share ideas. Join one of my Marketing Action Groups, Online Discussion Forums, Marketing BootCamps or Advanced TeleClinics. Get marketing coaching. The best athletes, performers and executives have ongoing support...why not you?

Getting started is the hardest part. I promise you, that once you carve out the time and just start, you'll notice progress. And that progress – however small – will act as a magnet. It will attract you to the work of being a marketer, in ways that you can't imagine now.

To Julia Cameron's point (she uses the word 'artist' where I use 'marketer')

"Remember, that in order to recover as a marketer, you must first be willing to be a bad marketer. Give yourself permission to be a beginner. By being willing to be a bad marketer, you have a chance to be a marketer, and perhaps, over time, a very good one."

### References

Cameron, J. (1992, 2002). *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. New York: Tarcher Penguin.

Gitomer, J. (2004). *The Little Red Book of Selling*. Austin: Bard Press.

Lamott, A. (1994). *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor Books.

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