

**The  
On-Time,  
On-Target  
Manager**

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# **The On-Time, On-Target Manager**

**How a “Last-Minute Manager”  
Conquered Procrastination**

**Ken Blanchard  
Steve Gottry**



WILLIAM MORROW

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To all who want to take charge of  
their lives and become everything  
they want to be

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## Foreword

**J**ust as sports teams have winning seasons and losing seasons, so do organizations of every kind.

And just as any sports team can experience setbacks and injuries, so can any business. Often, the most devastating cause of these is procrastination. A member of your team who is habitually late can cause tremendous harm to other players. It could be in the form of added stress for everyone, financial loss, or even failure of the enterprise. Thankfully, there is a solution to this problem—and you are holding it in your hands!

Ken Blanchard and Steve Gottry have knocked it out of the park with *The On-Time, On-Target Manager*. This book not only offers a rock solid plan to help procrastinators get on track, but it also provides a foundation for making day-to-day decisions based on the highest moral and ethical standards.

It's only natural for sports fans to hope that their favorite team will have a winning season each year. Similarly, shareholders, employees, and customers expect that their company or nonprofit is going to prosper and grow year after year.

Yet both of these expectations are unrealistic—even if top-quality leadership is in place. Having a great manager of, say, a baseball club does not necessarily guarantee a winning record or a play-off berth. Too many other factors come into play. The short list would include the strength of the competition, the nature of the schedule, and injuries to players.

Strong competition is a major factor in any sport. A baseball team that has hitters such as Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Willie Mays, Henry (Hank) Aaron, Stan Musial, Reggie Jackson, Mark McGuire, Sammy Sosa, or Barry Bonds is likely to enjoy success. A team that has pitching strength—with the likes of Cy Young, Nolan Ryan, Don Sutton, Bert Blyleven, Roger Clemens, Randy Johnson, or Curt Schilling—is going to win games. They have a competitive edge. That makes it tough for the home team. Add a tough schedule in a tough division, and things become even more challenging. Mix in injuries to key players, and many of the fans are going to be unhappy with the way the season will likely play out.

I'm sure you can easily see the parallels in the world of business, education, and nonprofit organizations.



Competition will always be keen. Your “pitchers”—salespeople—are going to be pitching against some of the best in the business. Some heavy hitter out there is going to do everything possible to out-design your products, undercut your prices, or perform better in terms of service. By putting Blanchard and Gottry’s on-time, on-target principles into practice, you and your team will be in a strong position to go for the win. No matter who you are or what you do, you will gain powerful insights from this quick-read book.

—*Jerry Colangelo*, chairman and CEO,  
Arizona Diamondbacks and Phoenix Suns

## *Introduction*

**T**his book may not apply to you at all. But chances are, it applies to someone you know. A coworker. A direct report. Your boss. Possibly even your spouse or one of your kids.

This book is about a diabolical career killer that is lurking out there every day. In fact, it's far worse than a career killer. It destroys organizations, marriages, families, relationships, fortunes . . . even entire lives.

It's called "procrastination." In just five letters, it's known as "delay." It's when you put off doing something until later. But, as we said, this may not apply to you.

The rest of us, though, have battled with this insidious enemy at one time or another. When we were in high school or college, we waited until the last minute to write an important paper or study for a final exam. Then we stayed up all night to do our duty—and we barely functioned the next day.

On the job, we sometimes even miss important deadlines as the result of procrastination. Or we accomplish all of the meaningless tasks before we get to the important things.

In our homes, we're often too busy or too tired to read stories to our children. "It won't hurt anything if I wait until a better time," we tell ourselves. Then, when they're in college, we wonder why the "better time" never materialized.

We rationalize, justify, and explain. As a result, our jobs, spouses, children, and health all suffer. All because we "put it off" or do the "leastest" first and the most important last—if at all.

Although this may not apply to you, you should be aware that procrastination is far more universal than you might imagine. It isn't a condition that pops up out of the blue, either. It has roots that run deep and must be understood.

People often procrastinate because they don't have a clear picture of what's important. And knowing what's important involves knowing where they've been, where they are now, and where they are headed.

They procrastinate because they don't understand that delaying action can lead to poor decisions and poor performance—and separate them from good results.

They procrastinate because, while they are interested in getting certain things done, they lack a commitment to broader goals, higher ideals, more important tasks, and other people. There is an enormous difference between being interested in

something and being committed to it. Consider the matter of exercise. Interested people will make all sorts of excuses as to why “today” isn’t the right day to work out. “I’m tired, it’s raining, I have too much going on in my life right now, missing one day (or week or month) won’t hurt.” In contrast, the committed people don’t know about excuses: they only know about results. “This is something I’m going to do for myself. If it’s too hot or it’s raining, I’ll do a speed-walk in a shopping mall.”

It all comes down to three concise issues:

- Lateness,
- poor-quality work, and
- the stress that results from procrastination.

That’s the problem in a nutshell.

The solution is found in the pages of this book—in the story of “Bob the Manager,” who discovered the Three P Strategy and gained victory over procrastination to become on-time and on-target in every area of his life.

The first “P” helped Bob conquer lateness.

The second “P” gave him the keys to improved quality.

The third “P” helped him reduce stress for himself and his coworkers.

Right now, you might be thinking of a person—or several people—who could benefit from our message. But the question is, how do you give this book to people without offending them?

Our answer is very straightforward. You explain that while they may not be procrastinators, *The On-Time, On-Target Manager* offers a strategy that will make them more effective in every area of pursuit. Tell them, “The Three P Strategy even worked for the two guys who wrote the book.” Yes, we are both natural born procrastinators, we have applied these simple techniques in our own daily lives, and they have made a difference.

This statement is obviously true. After all, we actually finished writing the book and even delivered the manuscript to our publisher on time!

Do yourself (if you’re a procrastinator) and the special people in your life a favor—share the powerful message of *The On-Time, On-Target Manager*.

—Ken Blanchard and Steve Gottry

*Late for a Very Important Date*

**B**ob the Manager woke up earlier than usual one Monday morning. He always set his alarm for 6:00 A.M. so he had time for a half-hour walk around the small lake that was two short blocks from his house. This day, though, his alarm went off at 5:30 A.M. That's because he had a 7:30 A.M. breakfast meeting with his boss, Dave.

Bob was a little apprehensive about the meeting. He wasn't sure his longtime dream of being promoted from Team Manager to Group Manager was coming true, or if the meeting would spiral downward into an unwelcome discussion of a few minor "performance issues" in his past.

In any event, by rolling out of bed a half hour earlier, he'd have time for his walk and would still be able to make the meeting on time.

Bob completed his brisk walk, took a quick shower, sprayed on his favorite cologne, got dressed, and tied a perfect knot in his most "corporate" tie. He



hadn't worn a tie for several years—what with the advent of relaxed dress codes in the business world—so he struggled a bit with that stupid knot.

Then he strapped on his very expensive, highly accurate Swiss watch and noted the time. *Oops!* He was running a tad behind. Getting dressed “just right” had taken more time than he'd anticipated.

*Not to worry*, Bob the Manager thought. *I can make up some time on the road*, he assured himself. He threw his PDA—his palmtop computer—and his sleek aluminum-clad laptop into his computer bag and got into his car.

He glanced at his watch again. He compared it with the clock in the car. *Yep. Still running behind. Better call Dave.*

When he reached the next red light, Bob the Manager dug through his computer bag, found his PDA, looked up the number, and called his boss.

“Dave here,” said the voice on the other end.

“Dave, this is Bob. I'm running a little behind. Are you at the restaurant yet?”

“Yes,” said the voice. “And so far, you're fifteen minutes late.”

“I know. I've run into traffic,” Bob said, even though he knew that traffic this day was no worse than usual. He could easily have allowed for it if he had

thought things through ahead of time. "I'll get there as soon as possible."

"Good," said Dave. "I've got a full day going here."

When Bob arrived, he parked his car and practically ran to the door. He was out of breath when he walked inside and scanned the restaurant for Dave.

"About time," Dave said when Bob approached the table.

"Sorry, Dave. I hate to keep you waiting," Bob huffed and puffed, still gasping for oxygen. He took his seat and looked at Dave with considerable embarrassment.

Dave hesitated for an uncomfortable length of time before he finally responded. "Bob, how long have you been with Algalon Micro?"

"Six . . . no, seven years, I think."

"Seven is about it," Dave agreed. "And what concerns me is that in all that time, you still don't seem to have grasped what's really important to us."

Bob the Manager began to tense up. "I'm really sorry, but what have I missed exactly?"

"This is a fast-moving business, Bob. Technology advances not by the year, or month, or even week. We are on the fast track. My view is that things change daily. As the saying goes, 'The cheese has moved.' And it keeps moving at lightning speed."



“I *do* know that,” Bob reassured his boss.

“If we’re going to compete,” Dave continued, “we have to remain keenly aware of what the competition is doing, and leap ahead of them.”

“I know that, too, Dave.”

“If that’s the case, Bob, why are many of the forecasts you prepare delivered to my office late? Why is every budget turned in at the last possible moment? Why is ‘just in time’ inventory management such an ongoing struggle for your team? As Team Manager, you have the responsibility to make certain that essential events take place on time.”

“Yes, I know, Dave. I assure you, I’m doing my best.”

“Bob, last month you got two days behind in the delivery of motherboards to one of our biggest customers because you failed to order one little capacitor on time. That means our customer lost an entire day of production.”

“I remember what happened exactly,” Bob the Manager protested. “I was buried in paperwork at the time. Sometimes there just aren’t enough hours in the day.”

Dave wasn’t buying Bob’s excuse. “We just got word that we lost that account to Dyad Technologies. Seems they claim that they can deliver the boards on time. Apparently, their other customers are willing to back up that claim.”

Bob the Manager turned red-faced. “I can’t believe we lost that customer. I thought we were in solid with them. It was just one little slipup.”

“This is business in today’s world. According to the people in sales, your little slipup is going to cost our company almost \$200,000 a year.”

“I had no idea . . .”

“Well, now you do.”

“In all my years here, I believe that’s the only time I’ve blown a deadline, Dave. And it’s certainly the first time we’ve ever lost any business because of me.”

“It’s not just the lost business, Bob. It’s your whole pattern of just barely making deadlines. That pattern not only has impact on the quality of your work, but it causes delays in other departments. You always seem to come in right under the wire, and quite a bit of that shows in your work. You rush to get things done when time is running out, and you make mistakes. Some of them have been costly, whether you know it or not. We just can’t tolerate that kind of sloppiness at Algalon. Your work habits are creating stress for your coworkers, and I’m almost certain you have to be feeling the stress yourself.”

“You’re right. I *am* stressed. But I’ve never thought of myself as a sloppy person,” Bob said in his own defense.

“In some respects, it appears that you aren’t. Every time I walk into your office, your desk is all organized and tidy. It’s as though you focus on being ‘Mr. Neat’ rather than on the vital few aspects of your job.”

“That’s not true, Dave,” Bob protested.

“The way I see it, Bob, you simply haven’t determined what’s important and what isn’t. That’s not working for me, nor will it work for Algalon or its customers.”

“What are you saying, exactly?” Bob the Manager ventured with considerable hesitation.

“Bob, you’re a good corporate citizen. You’re one of the most likeable and generous guys in our company,” Dave responded. “In fact, we all look up to you for reaching out to help others in the company and for your involvement in the community. While being a good match for our values is important, so are results. This is a business, and we have to operate it as such. All of the problems you’ve had lately are in your personnel file. It’s all carefully documented. It’s serious enough, Bob, that we’re going to have to put you on probation.”

Bob was completely taken aback. He had gone into this meeting thinking he might even be promoted. Now he was on probation! How could he have been so wrong?

Dave continued, “My friend, there are two things I look for in every key employee. They are *character* and *performance*. You are a person of great character. It’s your performance that falls short. If you didn’t possess character, you’d be out the door. I don’t believe that character flaws can be easily corrected. But I do believe that performance issues can be resolved.”

Bob breathed a silent sigh of relief and said, “I’m ready to work on it.”

Dave’s compassionate eyes revealed his true feelings toward Bob. “I want you to succeed, my friend. You have so much going for you. I don’t want to have to let you go.”

“Dave, I love Algalon. I’ve enjoyed my time here. What do I need to do to prove myself to you?”

“I have a new plan that might help you. When you get to the office, I want you to see the HR Director. She’ll fill you in on the details.”

“Will do,” Bob assured his employer.

Dave offered a stern parting comment. “I hope you can change your ways, Bob . . . or you’ll have to look for another opportunity. In today’s business environment, companies simply can’t afford to have any last-minute managers in their ranks.”