

Big-Picture Productivity: Good Enough vs. Perfect

Module 4, worksheet 2

Do you tend to procrastinate? Does your perfectionism prevent you from starting or completing projects? This worksheet will help you get past those obstacles. We will define a “good enough” version of your project’s outcome(s) that will allow you to do the work, even if it is imperfect.

Step 1: Pick a project

Choose one of your key projects that you’ve been procrastinating on, or where perfectionism is stopping you from completing it. Write down the project:

Q: Which key project would you like to make progress on?

If you followed the instructions in Module 2, you’ll have answered a few questions about this project’s outcome already, when you added it to Notion or wherever you store your projects. For reference, those questions are:

- How will this project help me achieve my goal?
- What do I want this project’s outcome to look like physically?
- Emotionally?
- And financially?

Take a look now at how you answered those questions. Or, if you did not answer those questions, answer them now. When you’ve done that, move on to step 2.

Step 2: Define “not good enough”

Let us first define an outcome for your project that is clearly *not* good enough. What would it look like if you bombed this project? What would *failure* entail? What would we see if you just completely did not deliver on the result? Consider the physical, emotional, and financial outcomes (if applicable).

Example: My new website never got published. It’s just sitting, partially done, in my dev environment. I feel disappointed.

Example: I scripted 11 of the 25 new training videos, but didn’t get around to recording any. I feel strong resistance against writing the scripts for the remaining videos.

Example: My academic colleagues and I didn’t get our study off the ground. We kept discussing how to improve the study design and were never satisfied.

Q: What outcome for your project would clearly *not* be good enough?

Step 3: Define “perfect”

Next, let’s swing to the other extreme. What would a perfect outcome be like? (If using the word *perfect* bothers you, then substitute *ideal* for perfect.)

Example: I launched an entirely new website, which is comprehensive, with consistent branding, and which is bringing in new sales like never before. Life is amazing!

Example: All 25 new training videos are done and look super slick. Every new team member watches them as part of their on-boarding training and they’re so clear, I haven’t received a single question about them. I don’t have to answer any questions personally anymore!

Example: We ran our study in three separate locations with a ginormous sample size. It went off without a hitch. The results confirmed our hypothesis and we published a paper in *Nature*.

Q: What would be the perfect outcome for your project?

Step 4: Define “good enough”

Finally, let’s sit in between “not good enough” and “perfect”. In other words, let’s define “good enough”.

What would be an acceptable outcome of your project? Not the perfect or ideal outcome—but an acceptable one? It might be smaller in scope, but still useful. It might not generate quite as much money as you would have liked, but still enough to have made the project worth it. Perhaps you’ll have created something you’re proud of, even if it needs more work later.

Example: I launched a redesigned home page for my website. The other pages still need work, but the home page is the most-visited page, and it looks and converts great now.

Example: The five most important training videos are now up. People have been asking questions that will be answered in the remaining videos. For now, I’ve been answering those questions via email. This is already a win because I get way fewer questions than before.

Example: We ran a smaller version of our study with an imperfect study design. The sample size was too small and the design was too flawed to draw definitive conclusions, but we learned a lot and we’ve already got a bigger, better study scheduled for next month.

Q: What would be the “good enough” outcome for your project?

Step 5: Adjust your project according to the “good enough” outcome

Now, head back into Notion (or wherever you keep your projects). Change the scope of the project to reflect your “good enough” outcome.

Do the same in your task manager. Change the name of the project to reflect the “good enough” outcome. Change the tasks that comprise the project so that they will lead to the “good enough” outcome. If there are tasks that you don’t need to complete to get to the “good enough” outcome, put those in your Someday / Maybe bucket or list.

That’s it! Godspeed!