Working on the wrong task

Tom Rochette <tom.rochette@coreteks.org>

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1 Question

How can you tell when you're working on the wrong task?

2 Answer

You may be working on the wrong task because priorities have changed. To determine if that is the case, you should ask yourself whether completing the task provides value, either to you or your users. If the answer is no, drop the task. If the answer is yes, you should determine if it is the utmost important task at the moment. If the answer is no, then figure out which task is. If the answer is yes, then proceed.

You may be working on the wrong task because you don't have the necessary information to complete the time in an appropriate amount of time. If you find yourself spending most of your time gathering information instead of accomplishing the task that should be done with the information you need, then it may not be the right time to do the task yet. You may have to create a prior task which is to acquire the necessary knowledge to execute the original task.

If you notice that to complete your task there are pre-requisites that should have been completed, then you should work on those instead of the task with those dependencies. In some cases you may realize that you can't accomplish a task because you don't have the tooling necessary or the technology to accomplish the task is not available yet.

As I suggest in my article Given that you define a ROI on a task, when should you stop working on a task and abandon it given its cost?, you should estimate how long you expect for a task to take. At the half time, you should evaluate whether you'll be able to complete the task by the estimate's deadline. If you can't, then you should either drop the task (if you can), or look for alternative ways to get the task completed, either by asking a more experienced person or by simplifying the task.

3 References

- Given that you define a ROI on a task, when should you stop working on a task and abandon it given its cost?