

Success habits

Small steps add up to big results

I am privileged to work with people who are categorized as the best of the best, the top 5 percent of all performers. Most people think that a top performer is lucky because he or she was born with an exceptionally high I.Q. or special talent, but high performers achieve results that others do not because they develop and maintain success habits.

Success habits are the disciplined thoughts, actions and activities that, over time, transform into extraordinary results. Habits are like mental muscles. When they are flexed repetitively in a deliberate manner, they sculpt energy and potential into powerful results.

Most people believe that willpower is the key to success. While I agree that willpower is a fundamental and critical contributing factor, willpower can be worn down over time. People find reasons to give in a little, then a little more, then they give in just enough to convince themselves that they have failed, at which point, they give up. Old patterns re-emerge, sometimes with a vengeance.

Do you know people who have lost a great deal of weight and gained it all back again, and then some? Or how about the sales person who when threatened with termination, produces a full calendar with qualified leads, but nine months later he's back at square one with an empty pipeline enduring yet another disciplinary discussion?

Compelling outcomes are the basis for achieving high performance. Why? Because they create sustainable actions and behaviors. When your outcome is compelling, it ignites a steadfast commitment that enables you to overcome extreme difficulty and push forward. It's the difference between "want to do" and "will do

– no matter what happens!"

Are you in the habit shape that you need to be in order to achieve your desired outcomes?

To fine-tune your success habit strategy, consider these five components:

1. Define your compelling outcome.

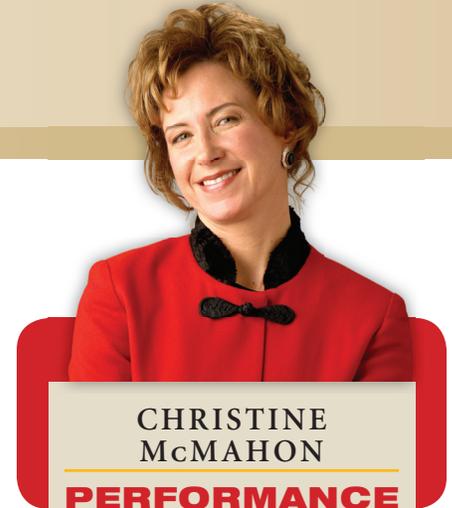
Ask yourself: Why is this important to me? How will I, or my situation, be better as a result of achieving this goal? What excites me about this goal? What am I willing to invest to make this happen? What

am I willing to give up? What happens if I do nothing?

A well-defined outcome makes you want to take action. It ignites excitement, energy and directed passion.

2. Acquire knowledge and understanding.

You can shift odds in your favor by avoiding the reasons why others have failed. Opportunity favors those who are best prepared to take action. The path to success may force us to abandon what we know. Strategies that served us well in the past, may become obsolete in the face of a new challenge/opportunity. We may be required to un-learn, and then re-learn in order to fully leverage the potential of



a situation.

While it may look from the outside that success follows some people, this is an illusion. Success follows those who are willing to do the work, get back up when they are knocked down and find alternative options when faced with a dead end. Knowledge – the right kind – is power when building a success habit. Top performers prefer to invest their time, effort and energy as opposed to spend it.

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3. Take small incremental steps.

Success doesn't happen via a quantum leap. Rather, it happens as a result of small incremental steps that when accumulated over time can result in a quantum leap.

We've all heard stories about people who win the lottery and within five years are either broke, or back to the same level where they began. In the book "The Millionaire Next Door," authors Thomas Stanley and William Danko reveal how most millionaires build their fortune by investing early, often and consistently. Most did not have huge sums of money to begin with – and in fact, are affectionately referred to as "tightwads." They know where every dollar goes and are

very intentional in how they invest. They subscribe to a success habit of redirecting as much money as possible to achieve their desired outcomes. They forego immediate pleasures in lieu of a long-term quality of life.

4. Anticipate challenges and devise solutions.

The path to success is often met with great resistance. While some resistance is likely to initiate from unknown sources, other pressures may emerge from those closest to you – including those people who you think you can count on for support. Change can be threatening to some people. When you embrace new challenges, you grow, expand and develop new competencies. In other words, you change. This can be uncomfortable territory for some because they liked you the way you were.

You might also encounter resistance from within. When you attempt to break an established pattern, you might encounter great resistance. Everything we do serves a need. If we crave chocolate and consume it to excess, that chocolate is filling a need, whether you are conscious about it or not. If you want to be more organized, then you need to become conscious about how being disorganized serves you.

One of my clients revealed to me after a series of heart-felt questions that, “Having stuff on my desk reminds me of my mother who passed away when I was 8. She always had stuff on tables, counters and her bureau. It makes me feel secure.”

Unless you become aware and make

peace with these latent needs, resistance may surface, and potentially circumvent your success. Beneath each habit is a feeling that serves us. The mistake people make is that they inadvertently think that they are addicted to the actual activity when in fact, they are addicted to the feeling that activity gives them. In order to change the association, you must first identify the need, and then find an acceptable alternative. This work is important. Those who skip this step, often experience some level of self-sabotage.

5. Develop your roadmap and chart your success.

After you’ve gathered your “intelligence,” devise your strategy. For some people, the plan resides within their head, for others, it’s a step-by-step roadmap complete with assignments and timelines. The complexity and number of players will dictate the appropriate approach.

The only person who can make you extraordinary is you. Building a success habit does not require monumental action. Rather, it requires clarity, commitment, an unflinching resolve and many small, incremental steps. This combination when properly balanced produces massive success.

If you would like to continue the conversation about how to develop and maintain success habits, register for my next free tele-seminar on Wednesday, April 14th at www.christinemcmahon.com. ■

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