

WINTER 2012
ISSUE

Solutions

PRACTICAL PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES TO HELP DEVELOP THE BEST IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS
FROM THE CENTER FOR MANAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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FEATURE ARTICLE

THE SECRET TO SELF-DISCIPLINE

A short story from Rory Vaden, M.B.A., co-founder of Southwestern Consulting, a self-discipline strategist and keynote speaker, and author of the New York Times bestseller *Take the Stairs: 7 Steps to Achieving True Success*.
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Today's work environment has been dubbed everything from the Age of Distraction and the Age of Inattention to The Multitasking Generation. The bottom line is this: regardless of your job title, we are all trying to accomplish increasingly more with increasingly less resources—whether those resources are money, time, focus, or energy. How can we achieve success—however you define it—given these constraints?

I study successful people for a living, and I believe the answer can be boiled down to one word: self-discipline. It's not a breakthrough idea, and it's certainly not popular. It's an old-school way of thinking that has unfortunately fallen out of vogue, but one that can yield measurable results when applied to the challenges of working in modern business.

Self-discipline can take many forms: the discipline to tackle problems head-on, to manage and protect your schedule, or to stop avoiding the major projects by filling your time with easier tasks. It can also mean simply saying "no" to certain things, in order to free up valuable time and mental space to focus on the things that truly matter.

We can all look at our own situations and identify places where better self-discipline could help us improve the way we work and live. But it doesn't sound easy, and it sure doesn't sound fun. So, what have all those self-disciplined people figured out that we haven't? I've worked with these people one-on-one, and I can assure you they don't enjoy self-discipline any more than the rest of us. It's not that they find it easier to do things that most people don't like doing; it's that they think differently about it. Self-discipline is not about chores, or punishment, or doing things the hardest way possible. It's simply about doing the hard things you know you should do, even when you don't feel like doing them—and then doing them as early on as possible.

This article continues on the next page.

Self-disciplined performers are distinct in the ways they think and evaluate choices. They use a different set of criteria than most people when they make decisions, and it is their decision making process that enables them to choose a path that is different from most. They often choose to "Take the Stairs" while the rest of us stand around looking for an escalator.

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THE SECRET TO SELF-DISCIPLINE

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To help others develop the habit of self-discipline, I offer **seven principles**—truths that I've gleaned from successful people around the world. Self-disciplined performers are distinct in the ways they think and evaluate choices. They use a different set of criteria than most people when they make decisions, and it is their decision making process that enables them to choose a path that is different from most. They often choose to "Take the Stairs" while the rest of us stand around looking for an escalator. These principles of self-discipline worked for them, they worked for me, and they will work for you.

Sacrifice

The Paradox Principle

Do the difficult things now, and things will be easier in the long-term.

To begin to develop the habit of self-discipline, we would all be wise to adopt a buffalo mentality. Let me explain. I grew up in central Colorado. With the Rocky Mountains in the west, and the great Kansas plains in the east, we are one of the only places in the world that has both buffalo and cows. One of my favorite places that I look to for principles of success and the way the world works is in nature, and the way these two creatures, buffalo and cows, respond in nature has some really powerful lessons for us.

When a storm approaches from the west, as storms almost always do out there, cows respond in a very predictable way. They know the storm is coming from the west, so they head east to try to outrun it. The only problem is that, as you may know, cows are not real fast. Before long, the storm catches up to them—and the cows, not knowing any better, keep on running. Instead of outrunning the storm, they actually run with the storm, maximizing their exposure to it. Isn't that stupid?

Many of us humans do the same thing every day. We try to avoid conflict that is inevitable. So often, we try to "ignore" problems, pretending that they aren't that big of a deal, and then we try to run away at the last minute as they're fast approaching. Unfortunately, as most of us have learned the hard way, problems tend to compound when we ignore them, and we end up being exposed to something longer and/or worse than what might have been.

What buffalo do, on the other hand, is truly unique. They wait for the storm to cross right over the crest of the peak of the mountaintop, and as it arrives, they turn and charge directly into the storm. By running at the storm, they run straight through it as the storm passes overhead, which minimizes the amount of pain they experience. If only more of us would tackle life's inevitable, unavoidable problems the way the buffalo do—head-on.

The key insight that ultra performers have is that problems that are procrastinated on are only amplified, and we're the ones who pay the price. There's a great deal of strength—and strategic payoff—in charging at our most challenging circumstances head-on.

Commitment

The Buy-In Principle

The more we have invested into something, the less likely we are to let it fail.

A man named Bob is in a restroom, standing in front of a urinal—and he is suddenly in a bit of a predicament. Somehow he's managed to drop a \$5 bill into the urinal. Just as Bob is looking down thinking about what he's going to do, another gentleman named Dave happens to walk into the restroom. Dave sees the \$5 in the urinal, assesses the situation with an empathetic sigh, and then says, "Oh, that's a tough decision. What are you going to do?" Bob thinks about it for a moment. Looks at the urinal, and then looks back at Dave. A split second later Bob pulls out his wallet and out of nowhere grabs a \$50 bill and throws it into the urinal. In shock, Dave exclaims, "Man, I can't believe you just did that. That's fifty dollars!" Bob looks back at Dave, cracks a smile, and replies, "Well, c'mon, you don't think I'd stick my hand in there for just five bucks do you?"

This is an old story, but it illustrates something that is critical in your ability to be more self-disciplined. I call it the Buy-In Principle of Commitment, and it simply states that the more we have invested in something, the less likely we are to let it fail.

Think about something you're trying to achieve—how committed are you? How invested are you in achieving that goal? What's the cost of failure? By investing more time, energy, money, and focus

into your commitments, when things get tough you will ask yourself "how can I pull this off?" rather than relenting to the question "should I try to pull this off?" Increasing your investment into your dream increases the likelihood of your success. So where do you need to be throwing that \$50 bill?

Focus

The Magnification Principle

When we have diluted focus, we get diluted results.

If you were to lay a piece of paper down on the asphalt on a hot summer day, nothing would happen to it, but if you held a magnifying glass between the piece of paper and the sun, the paper would catch on fire. Why? Because focus is literally power. Sunlight focused enough creates enough energy to set a piece of paper on fire. Water focused enough, or streamlined enough, can cut through steel. The Magnification Principle of Focus simply states one of life's most important truths: that *Focus Is Power!*

To achieve focus, we must minimize the amount of distraction that occurs in life. And distraction typically manifests itself as procrastination. **There are three basic types of procrastination.**

The first is classic procrastination.

This is consciously delaying what we know we should be doing. You may or may not be willing to admit that you struggle with this problem, but most of us do in at least one area of our life.

There is, however, a more dangerous type of procrastination that's

increasingly prevalent in the workplace today. It's dangerous because it is unconscious, subtle, and invisible, yet all too real in terms of the damage it wreaks. It's a pattern of behavior I first diagnosed in myself, and I call it **creative avoidance**.

Creative avoidance is unconsciously filling the day with menial work to the point where we end up getting busy just being busy! When I discovered this problem for myself, I realized that all day long I would be answering emails, pushing paper, chitchatting with coworkers, spacing out, running personal errands, and so on. At the end of the day I had "worked" all day long, but didn't have much to show for it.

This article continues on the next page.

4 Outcomes of Character-Based Leadership

As our world becomes more complex, with more activities and beliefs tugging for attention on the world stage, what difference does leadership make? And why would anyone promote a particular type of leadership?

A friend once said his training as a triathlete changed when his attitude changed from practicing for a triathlon to deciding he was a triathlete. There is a difference between attempting a triathlon and becoming a triathlete. There is a difference between teaching a lesson and being a teacher. And there is a huge difference between leading an activity and being a leader. Being a leader produces four key outcomes that will help your team or organization thrive:

Your behavior emanates from who you are. Your actions and your perception of yourself will align. You'll be open to criticism because it will help you improve. You'll get up more times than you're knocked down because that's who you are.

You'll energize yourself. There's inner peace that comes from being who you are. You will develop integrity as you line up your behavior with your desire to be a leader. That growth and integrity will bring life and energy to your environment—and you'll have energy to invest in others because of what that investment does for them, not simply for what it might do for you.

You will invest more than you withdraw. Being a leader doesn't mean being a drill sergeant; it means learning to influence others to freely choose to participate. No sales or manipulation will produce people who freely contribute for the long run. Only investing in the lives of others will create genuine allies — those who will become loyal, honor their commitments and stay in for the duration.

The circle of life will energize the team. Your investment in others will encourage them to do the same. Their investment in the team and in the other members will multiply the energy and results of the group. By bringing life to your team, they bring life in return to you, your team and your customers. Sustainable long-term positive results for your team result from each team member benefiting from their involvement.

THE SECRET TO SELF-DISCIPLINE

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I was engaged in activities all day, but I wasn't making progress. I was being efficient, but I wasn't being effective. I was doing things right, but I wasn't doing the right things. As the old quote goes, "In the absence of disciplined focus, we become strangely loyal to performing daily acts of trivia." If there isn't a defined objective or outcome for the activities you're engaged in, stop doing them.

The **third type of procrastination** is another one that often goes unnoticed—and it tends to affect the very people who aim to achieve. **It's called "priority dilution."** Priority dilution is most commonly found in high-performing people—the ones who are the most busy, competent, and overwhelmed. They have so many emails, meetings, objectives, family matters, and other responsibilities on their plate that they can start to lose control of their effectiveness.

While Priority Dilution has nothing to do with being lazy, apathetic or disengaged, the result is the same: we delay on the day's most important activities by allowing our attention to shift to less important but perhaps more urgent tasks. As my friend the author David Allen describes, "Rather than doing what we know needs to be done, we're constantly falling victim to whatever is latest and loudest." Our experience coaching hundreds of clients is that, for today's intellectual workforce, discipline is about focusing on what's most important, learning to let go of minutiae, and being okay with delaying the less important tasks to an appropriate time. As it turns out, the most important skill for the next generation of knowledge worker is not learning what to do but rather determining what not to do, and instead focusing on key objectives. It's only as we embrace the incredible volume of noise in our work and our lives that we can silence it—or at least reduce it to a dull roar. Ignore the noise. Conquer the critical. Manage the minutiae.

Integrity

The Creation Principle

You think it, you speak it, you act it, it happens.

One of the major causes of pain in today's escalator world is that most people don't realize the impact of their words on themselves and others. Words have power—the power to add meaning, and the power to diminish meaning.

The Creation Principle of Integrity states that all of creation follows a simple and powerful pattern: You THINK it. You SPEAK it. You ACT. It HAPPENS.

Words are the first manifestation of ideas or thoughts into the real world. At their origin, those ideas exist only in your mind, but once they have been spoken or written, then they exist and have the power to shape the world around us. The moment we galvanize our thoughts into words marks the onset of creation.

Unfortunately, we don't recognize the simplicity of initiating the creation process, and so we often don't place appropriate value on the use of our words.

Here is a checklist of seven basic guidelines for preserving and harnessing the power of your word.

1. Think before you speak.
2. Choose your words carefully.
3. Do what you say you will.
4. Be where you promise you will.
5. Resist the urge to use emotionally charged, untamed language.
6. Assume the "mic is always on" and that everyone will hear everything you say.
7. Use empowering language when speaking about yourself and others.

This article continues on Page 5...



How to annoy your employees and alienate people

By Ritika Trikha, Writer for CareerBliss.com

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With a never-ending to-do list, meetings and pressure to do more with less, it can be easy to let essential courtesies in your day-to-day interactions slip through the cracks.

It might not seem terribly detrimental in relation to your top-level priorities, but your day-to-day communication style can make or break your reputation as a good boss — one worthy of high-esteem, trust and respect.

Don't get me wrong. You can't please every employee (nor should you try). You can, however, consistently take measures to make employees feel more valued as a whole. For starters, avoid the following seemingly small-scale (yet common) missteps that can tarnish your reputation:

Ignoring that urgent e-mail or meeting request. Few things are more frustrating for employees than waiting for critical feedback or approval from you. By neglecting to respond to their urgent requests, you're essentially acting as a roadblock for your employees instead of empowering them to succeed. Here's when it really harms morale: If you frequently delay employee progress by failing to respond, your team will feel that they can't be held accountable for completing tasks. After all, projects pending your approval are out of their hands, right? Cue the blame game.

Solution: Even if you don't have time in your schedule to offer feedback or approval to one team, make sure you respond with something. Give them a rough estimation of when you'll be free to maintain momentum.

Not recognizing everyone involved. This is easier said than done. All too often, work will go unrecognized — a direct cause for resentment, especially among hardworking lower-level employees. It's hard to keep track of everyone's contribution, but a little goes a long way. A simple nod, smile or thank-you to your key players is sometimes enough of an acknowledgement.

Solution: During your regular team meetings, allow everyone an opportunity to offer a shout-out to congratulate or thank colleagues for critical accomplishments. For instance, one employee might say, "I couldn't have made that pressing deadline without Tom's killer researching skills." This employee shout-out serves to allow the speaker to share their accomplishment and to shed light on Tom's contribution as well. Two birds, one stone.

Off-the-cuff remarks. Your team thrives on your feedback. Remember this. If you fail to give constructive criticism thoughtfully, you'll start to blur the team's vision. Without a clear vision, your team's chance of doing a great job will dwindle to zero. Your feedback should align with the company's goals. Frequently changing your mind or throwing a wrench into the works is another recipe for resentment. A foggy team vision raises questions such as "What does he want from us?"

Solution: Give feedback and give it often — and make it consistent with what you said before. Great feedback requires a small investment of your time. Employees will be much more receptive and understanding if you can clearly explain how your suggestions better aligns with the end goal. The best way to be consistent is to follow up on your suggestions. Note the positives and give feedback on areas of improvement.

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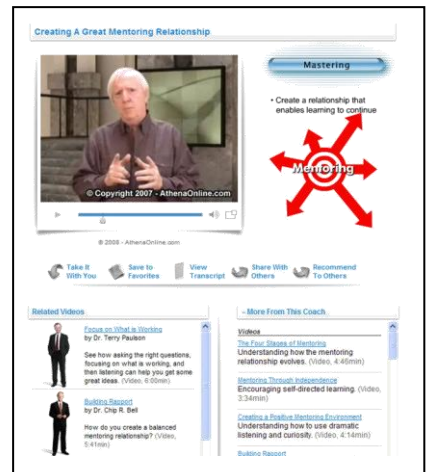
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Wisdom of the Ages

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The Manager's Intelligence Report



If you gathered 100 experienced managers together and asked their advice, they probably wouldn't say much about corporate business strategy. Instead this is a good idea of what you'd hear:

“Don't be afraid of the phrase, 'I don't know.'” If you don't know the answer, don't bluff. If you're at fault, take the blame. If you're wrong, apologize. A wise person once said, “If you tell the truth, you never have to remember anything.”

“Never gossip.” And if someone wants to gossip with you, politely say you're not interested. The old adage rings true: When someone gossips, two careers are hurt—the person being talked about, and the person doing the talking.

“No task is beneath you.” Don't think you are above anything. Be the good example and pitch in—especially if the job is one that nobody else wants to do.

“Share the credit when possible.” Managers who spread credit around look much stronger than those who take all the credit for themselves.

“Ask for help.” If you think you're in over your head, you probably are. Before it gets crazy, ask for help. You'll save yourself from embarrassment, and likely make a friend and ally.

“Keep your salary to yourself.” Discussing salary is a no-win proposition. Either you'll be upset because somebody is making more than you, or someone will be upset with you.

“When you don't like someone, don't let it show.” Especially if you outrank them. Never burn bridges or offend others as you move ahead.

“Let it go.” What shouldn't happen often does: You weren't given the project you wanted, you were passed over for promotion, etc. Be gracious and diplomatic...and move on. Harboring a grudge won't help your career.

“When you're right, don't gloat.” The only time you should ever use the phrase “I told you so” is if someone says to you: “You were right. I really could succeed at that project.”

THE SECRET TO SELF-DISCIPLINE

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Schedule

The Harvest Principle

Focused effort is amplified by appropriate timing and regimented routine.

Farmers have a harvest each and every year. It's one period of the year when all of their crops must be taken up at just the right time in order for their survival. Do you know how many hours the average farmer works per day during harvest season? About eighteen.

They work so hard because there is a short window of opportunity when the harvest must be captured. It doesn't matter if the farmer would rather work eighteen hours a day at some other time of the year, because the harvest is the only time of the year that will produce the type of results needed to make life work. Instead of evaluating, in the “heat of the moment,” whether or not he feels like working, the farmer instead sets up his life in a way that allows him to prepare for the coming harvest time so as to maximize the reap.

Whether or not you've ever stepped foot on a farm, the law of the harvest is one you need to become intimately acquainted with if you are committed to developing the habit of self-discipline. The Law of the Harvest says: Focused effort is amplified by appropriate timing and regimented routine.

Why are we talking about farming? Because within this law of the harvest lies the best available solution to the modern world's number one problem: time.

With an infinite number of options vying for our attention, just deciding how best to spend our time and fit everything in is a major cause of stress today. The simple solution to the problem is not doing everything that we can do in a day, but rather to do everything we should do in a day. Instead of asking, “Am I spending enough time on this activity?” we should really be asking, “When is the best time to be focused on this activity?”

The world we live in is constantly changing, and therefore requires a more nuanced approach than the work/life balance mantra that's become ingrained in our culture. Life's tragedies and triumphs, tasks and trivialities seem to follow ebb and flow of up and down, more and less. Life, like nature, operates in seasonal periods of intensity and decline much more like a harvest. This is where the farmer's law of harvest comes in.

There are all kinds of seasons in life. We have seasons of education, seasons of independence, seasons of love, seasons of growth, seasons of new beginnings, seasons of sickness, and seasons of health. A “season” as I am describing it here could be as long as a few years or as short as a few minutes. Much of the anxiety I've noticed in the lives of my coaching clients is due to the fact that they are trying to take on too many seasons at once, and some of them are naturally conflicting.

We need to be more intentional in planning and aligning our seasons in a realistic fashion. Instead of asking ourselves, “How can I fit more in?” we should be asking, “What season(s) is my life (or my day) in right now, when is the right time to be completing its associated activities, and what are the right things I need to do to maximize my harvest of this season?” Instead of asking, “How much can I get done today?” we should be asking, “What is the most effective thing I can be doing right now with the time I have available?”

When we are aware of the season we are in and focused on maximizing the results of that season, we have natural clarity about our priorities, and as a byproduct we get amplified synergy of our results. This small shift can yield massive results.

This article concludes on Page 8...

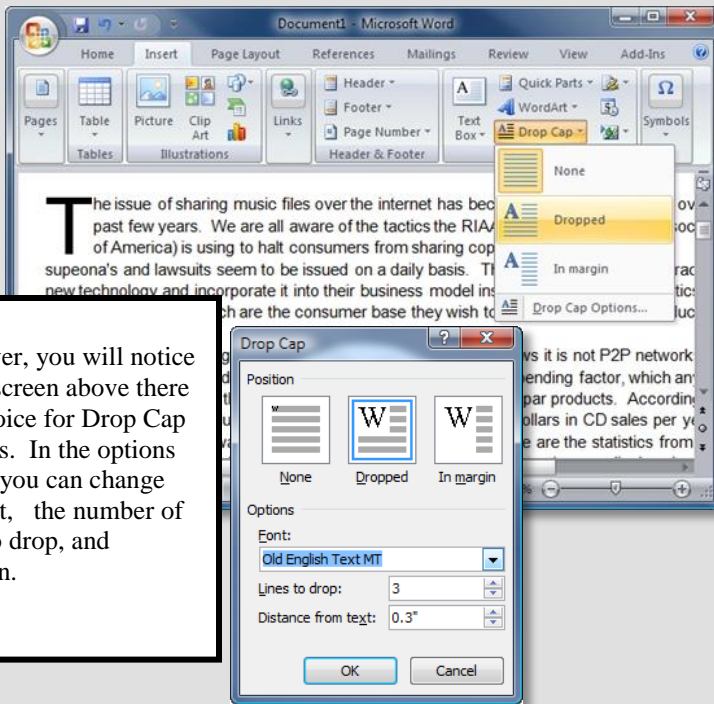
Microsoft Word 2007 Tips

From the Center for Management and Professional Development's
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Add Emphasis to Paragraphs with Drop Caps in Word 2007

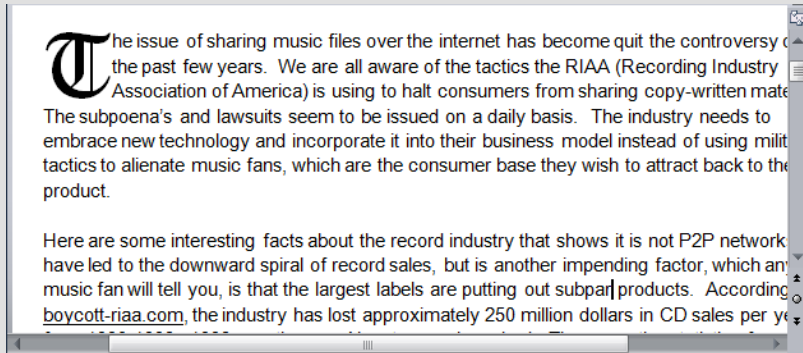
Did you know you can add emphasis to your Word 2007 documents by using Drop Caps... those big letters at the beginning of a document or paragraph that make your document look really professional.

Click the beginning of the paragraph you want to emphasize. Then click the Insert tab on the Ribbon and choose Drop Cap. You can scroll to any of the three preset Drop Caps and the document will change with your choice. By default it will drop by three lines.



However, you will notice in the screen above there is a choice for Drop Cap Options. In the options screen you can change the font, the number of lines to drop, and position.

Here is the result after choosing the stylish Old English font. (You might want to change the regular font to match)



Using Drop Caps for every paragraph is probably overkill. Used sparingly however, it can be a nice creative touch!



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DR. ZIMMERMAN'S COMMENT

When American mothers are asked what they want for their kids, by far and away the most common response is ... "I just want my kids to be happy." However, in a similar survey of Asian mothers, the most common response is ... "I want my kids to be successful."

Neither one of the answers is bad, but whatever happened to "wanting our kids to be good?" After all, we've all known people who should have risen to the top but didn't. Their talent made them stand out, but their lack of integrity made them sit down.

In my programs, I tell my audiences that the true champions are more than happy or successful. They're good, character-filled people as well. But what does that mean? Character? It's almost a forgotten word in today's culture.

Dr. Charles Swindoll equates character to courage. He says, "The real tests of courage are much quieter" than such things as bravery on the battle field. "They are the inner tests, like remaining faithful when nobody's looking, like enduring pain when the room is empty, like standing alone when you're misunderstood."

But I especially like the definition of character given by one of my clients, Hearth and Home Technologies. They expect their sales people to be people of character who demonstrate "personal integrity" ... which means doing what is right even "when no one is watching."

For many people, it's difficult to grasp the real meaning of character, courage, and integrity. So I would say that it includes these 3 behaviors ... for starters.

CHARACTER IS BEING HONEST WITH YOURSELF.

People of character ... the true leaders in this world ... refrain from denial. They don't fool themselves, and they don't lie to themselves ... because they know that would be self-defeating. As Anne Morrow Lindbergh noted, "The most exhausting thing in life, I have discovered, is insincerity."

People of character "take stock" of themselves. Charlie Gomez, the vice president of a major insurance company, affirmed that. At a conference where the two of us were speaking, Charlie challenged all the insurance agents in the audience to "take stock"... by asking themselves the following questions:

- Are you happy with the direction your business is going?
- Are you getting the results you want?
- If so, how do you continue to get them? If not, what do you want to change?
- Is your staff doing what you want them to do?
- Who is leading your staff? Is it you?

As Charlie said, "You need to know" these things because they're all a part of the "recipe for success."

Do you take time to assess yourself, where you are, and where you'd like to be? Do you take time to take an honest look at yourself and what you're doing?

CHARACTER IS BEING HONEST WITH OTHERS.

No distortions. No little white lies. No false fronts. No bravado. No failures to tell the truth. Character comes out in plain, simple ... but tactful ... honesty.

One pompous Colonel had a hard time with that, however. Having just moved into his new office and sitting at his new desk, a Private knocked on the door. The Colonel told the Private to enter and then quickly picked up the phone and said, "Yes General, I'll be seeing the Brigadier this afternoon, and I'll pass along your message. In the meantime, thank you for your good wishes, Sir."

Feeling as though he had sufficiently impressed the Private, the Colonel asked, "What do you want?"

"Nothing important, Sir. Just here to hook up your telephone."

You have to exhibit REAL honesty all the time. After all, you can spend years building an honest reputation, and you can destroy it in one minute with one stupid lie. The papers are filled with such stories. As consultant Faith Baldwin notes, "Character builds slowly, but it can be torn down with incredible swiftness."

There's simply no shortcut to honesty with others. As one person said, "A man's character is like a fence. It cannot be strengthened by whitewash."

And finally,

CHARACTER IS BEING OPEN TO THE HONEST FEEDBACK OF OTHERS.

Hey, being open to the feedback of others might even save your life. Take the man who was bothered with continual ringing in his ears, bulging eyes, and a flushed face. Over a period of years he went to doctor after doctor. One took out his tonsils, his appendix, another pulled all his teeth... all to no avail. Finally, one doctor told him there was no hope -- he had six months to live.

The poor fellow quit his job and decided to live it up in the time he had left. He went to his tailor and ordered several suits and shirts. The tailor measured his neck and wrote down 16 and 1/2. The man corrected him: 15 and 1/2. The tailor measured again: 16 and 1/2. But the man INSISTED that he'd always worn a size 15 and 1/2. "Well, all right," said the tailor, "but don't come back here complaining to me if you have ringing ears, bulging eyes, and a flushed face!"

Some people find it difficult to receive feedback. As one person noted, "A skeptic is a person who -- when he sees the handwriting on the wall -- claims it to be forgery." Other people have a hard time with feedback because they pretend to know everything.

How would people describe you when it comes to feedback? As being open and receptive? Or closed and defensive? Character comes from the former, not the later.

THE SECRET TO SELF-DISCIPLINE

Continued from Page 5

Faith

The Perspective Principle

Our ability to have peace about failures, setbacks, and tragedies is directly proportionate to the term of our perspective.

I once had the good fortune of listening to Eric Chester who is one of the world's most renowned motivators and youth experts. Eric performed a physical demonstration that has permanently etched itself into my memory and into my life philosophy on perspective.

Eric had two student volunteers hold either end of an 80-foot-long tape measure. "The average male life span is about eighty years," said Eric. "Since there are twelve inches in a foot and there are twelve months in a year, then each foot on this tape measure represents one year of your life. And each inch represents one month of your life. So here now, stretched out in front of you, is the appropriate to-scale view of your entire life." According to Eric's tape measure timeline, a "bad day" wasn't even visible. It was only about one-thirtieth of one inch. With enough perspective, all of our failures—and successes—are reduced to their appropriate size.

Every day our frustrations, our losses and our problems are so big; if we view them only with the limited perspective of how it affected our day. But when you look at your life with the perspective of the entire 80 feet, the challenges of today are often only a speck of dust on the timeline of our life.

If we have enough faith to believe that there is a future coming and we take appropriate account of it, then we would also have a basis for a more appropriate perspective relating to today's issues and struggles. When we lose faith in the future and we lose focus of where today fits into the greater timeline of our lives, then we have no basis for perspective.

The size of today's challenges is measured only against the shortness of today. The extent of our faith determines the term of our perspective, and the term of our perspective determines the size of our problems. Having this faith, this long-term perspective, enables us to make better decisions. It gives us the strength to endure short-term sacrifices. And it empowers you with the conviction of knowing that things will work out for the better if you put in the work.

Action

The Pendulum Principle

Be relentless about making progress while freeing yourself from the demand for perfection.

You can understand everything that we've talked about in this article, but not believe in it. The only way we will know if you believe what you've read is if it actually causes you to make different decisions and take different actions.

Having a self-disciplined mindset means that you don't just recognize your inadequacies; you resolve them. You don't just identify changes you need to make; you make them.

Being a successful person requires you to take action. I believe most of us already know what we should do. The problem is that we don't do it. In my work, I consistently find that people who are struggling with inaction invariably have one of the following three deep-rooted attitudes:

Fear: *"I'm scared to do it."*

Entitlement: *"I shouldn't have to do it."*

Perfectionism: *"I won't try to do it if I can't do it right."*

These all-too-common problems affect people across all professions, ages, and endeavors. You show me a person who is not achieving life at the level they want to be and I'll show you one of these diagnoses. The good news is that they don't need to hold us back.

Fear: Why do so many of us succumb to fear? Because it's more convenient and more comfortable for us to let our dreams disappear than to muster up the discipline and the work ethic to go out and transform them into reality. The payoff of fear is that we don't have to try, we don't have to work, and we don't have to challenge ourselves to test our limits. In other words, when we allow our fears to thrive, we let ourselves off the hook from the work required to achieve our goals. In contrast, the self-disciplined mindset demolishes our fears so that the only option is to work to make our dreams come true.

Action is the cure for fear.

It's okay to be scared. It's okay to be unsure. It's okay to be uncomfortable. Just get started where you are. That is the attitude of the most disciplined and successful people on the planet.

Entitlement: So many of us are frustrated because, somehow, we believe that we are entitled to a life that is supposed to be easier. We want someone else to work the long hours for us, someone else to get us out of debt, someone else to make us feel good about ourselves, someone else to give us what we want. These beliefs are so ingrained and ubiquitous that we don't even notice them anymore.

Entitlement gets us nothing; only action does. I'm not saying I don't want your life to be easy. I do! But ease, comfort, and true satisfaction come through action. They come through working hard. They come from making more sacrifices, getting more done, being more focused, being more frugal, and being more committed. If you don't believe me, find the nearest successful person and ask them!

Perfectionism: Psychologists say that the primary cause of all procrastination is self-criticism. It can feel safer not to begin a daunting journey or not to take on a challenging task because at least we know we won't make a mistake. So instead of working, we wait. We wait for the perfect plan, the perfect time, and the perfect resources. The problem is, the perfect circumstances never show up. What was once a harmless decision of opting for safety soon becomes a limiting lifestyle of inaction.

The irony of this is that mistakes can be our greatest teachers. No one has all the answers before they start. Successful people choose to move forward without knowing exactly where their path will lead, and they become comfortable with imperfection for the short term. They move. They go. They act.

The truth about success isn't always popular, but it is certain. And while it may not be what we want to hear, it is the only guaranteed method of high performance in any endeavor. It can all be summed up in one simple word... discipline.

The challenges we face today are not a matter of skill, but a matter of will. Our problem isn't time management; it is self management. And we're not losing to poor circumstances as much as we're losing to a lack of self-discipline. Self-discipline is the simplest and fastest way to make life as easy possible. Discipline creates the freedom to do anything! And that freedom is the secret to being successful—however you define it, in today's world.