

Why Committing to Becoming 1% Better Every Day Can Turn Everything around

Everyone wants to achieve a degree of excellence in their lives, whether that means developing a killer business that takes the industry by storm, and revolutionizes how things are done, or whether it means being the best possible spouse, parent, or friend we can be.

To that end, it pretty much goes without saying that, at any given time, hordes of people are doing their best to carry out ambitious plans for self-development, in the pursuit of that elusive and much-craved “excellence.”

Does your business involve a decent degree of marketing? Then, no doubt, you’re interested in applying next level channel marketing strategies to really kick things up a notch. Are you perhaps not in the best physical shape of your life, but really want to be? Then, you’re probably also one of the millions of people who sign up for the gym each January, in order to make good on a New Year’s resolution to get fit.

The only problem is, it’s legitimately difficult to become “excellent” in any given domain. Not only that, but it’s typically difficult even knowing how to begin setting about pursuing excellence in many dimensions of life.

The thing about big plans is that they are difficult to execute, difficult to keep track of, and are prone to all sorts of hiccups and mishaps along the way. It’s for this reason, among others, that Scott Adams – the famous creator of the Dilbert comics – advises that people should forget about goals altogether and should focus on “systems” instead.

According to Adams, “systems” are the daily routines and rituals that you act out, that move you closer to success and prosperity in a given area; whereas goals are about setting a target for some point in the future, and then living in a state of permanent dissatisfaction and disappointment, as a result.

There are good critiques to be made of Adams anti-goal stance. But there’s no denying that focusing on certain daily “systems” can be a powerful way of achieving excellence in work and life.

One “system” that has been promoted by many serious business and lifestyle gurus, is the pursuit of becoming “1% better” in a given area, each day.

Here are a few reasons why committing to becoming 1% better every day may turn everything around for you.

Because it’s a realistic scale of achievement and progress

To use the analogy of fitness, once more – setting yourself a goal like “I’m going to run an ultramarathon,” when you currently can’t even jog 1 mile without wheezing – or setting yourself a goal like “I’m going to bench press 300 pounds,” when you currently can’t even do a single push-up – may well not be the most productive way forward.

Among other things, setting yourself these kinds of major, ambitious goals right out the gate, puts you in a position where the scale of achievement and progress you’re aiming for is extremely difficult to conceptualize, or believe in.

It's not that you can't achieve those feats – it's just that, until you get closer, you may struggle immensely to “believe in” them, or to feel satisfied by the progress you're making along the path.

Striving to become “1% better each day,” on the other hand, represents a realistic scale of achievement and progress that just about everyone can believe in, regardless of where they're starting off from.

Of course, “1%” isn't a perfectly mathematical calculation, here. It's just a euphemism for making small, but consistent, improvements every day. Perhaps you went for a 10-minute jog yesterday and felt exhausted. So, today, try to go for an 11-minute jog. This will be achievable for you, and you will feel good about achieving it, too. Then, tomorrow, you can go for a 12-minute jog. And so on.

After a year, you're likely to be in such a dramatically superior position in life, that it's hard to believe how far you've come.

Because momentum is a large part of what success in business is all about

Success in business, specifically, has plenty to do with things like innovation, and hard work, but there's a good argument to be made that the most important skill for any aspiring entrepreneur, is simple grit, determination, and consistency.

Of course, this applies to just about everything else in life, too. It's rarely the people who come out with a single dramatic “flash in the pan” burst of hard work who really innovate and transform things and secure themselves a place in the annals of history.

Far more often, it's the people who turn up to work every day, whether or not they feel like it, and who keep iterating and optimizing, and moving forward, until things come together.

Focusing on becoming 1% better every day is a great way of building that sort of momentum, and of developing the kind of “staying power” that can really move mountains over time.

Striving to become 1% better every day is also a great antidote to the all-too-common tendency of many aspiring entrepreneurs, to want to spend an inordinate amount of time at the “drawing board,” as opposed to making things happen.

When you know that it's about the journey along the road of incremental improvement, rather than the “single miraculous action,” you give yourself permission to actually get started, and work out the kinks along the way.

Because it will prevent you from backsliding

Setbacks inevitably happen, and you're not always going to be in a better position, business-wise, today than you were yesterday.

All the same, one of the great things of striving to become 1% better every day, is that it puts you in a great frame of mind to avoid backsliding, and to fight against the ever-present threat of entropy.

Even if a crisis occurs in your business, and puts you on the back foot, striving to become 1% better will keep you pointed upwards, and will remove your excuses for compromising, or taking the easy way out.

Ultimately, guarding yourself against the tendency to backslide is just as important as anything else, when it comes to consistency and the pursuit of excellence.