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WELCOME TO THE BOOK,

# 12 LAWS OF SUCCESS IN LIFE AND BUSINESS

Look around you. Do you know anyone or see anyone who's highly successful? Someone on TV... or in the news... or at your company... or in your circle of friends? Someone you respect and admire who seems to have it all together? Who leads the kind of life you'd like to emulate?

I'll bet you do.

To earn that success, chances are, he or she lives by a different code of behavior than most others. He makes decisions and takes actions others don't – and gets results they don't enjoy. She manages her time and is willing to push the envelope in ways most people won't – and gets a higher level of outcomes.

Would you like to live that life? You can. Anybody can.

Hi, I'm Rick Houcek, president of Soar With Eagles. I help ambitious leaders and teams to be successful self-motivated achievers. And today, I'd like to share with you in this e-book, 12 important laws, behaviors, strategies of success that can help you improve your life and business.

I'll break it down into 12 chapters, each discussing one success point. We'll talk about... the most destructive behaviors and how to overcome them... specific actions you can take to 'up' your game... how to make better decisions... behaviors to stop tolerating in others... and how to diplomatically push for the outcomes you want. And every one of the 12 strategies I'll share... you can put into practice today. Right now.



# THE DEVASTATING BEHAVIOR

THAT KILLS TEAMS, PARTNERSHIPS, FRIENDSHIPS, AND MARRIAGES.

**LOOK AROUND.** It's not hard to find oncestrong businesses, teams that used to dominate, and happy couples you just knew would be together for life... who now struggle to win, to get along, to communicate... and are in jeopardy of break-up.

The divorce rate has exceeded 50% for decades. (Worse, it exceeds 50% in second marriages too.)

Why is it so difficult to keep relationships on sound footing and thriving?

The answers are many and varied... plentiful enough to keep therapists, clergy, life coaches, and business consultants gainfully employed to help those who seek counsel.

It begs the question: Is there 'one cause' that stands above all others? I think so. I've witnessed it first-hand too many times.

As someone who has led 272 strategic planning retreats for aggressive leaders and teams... participated in 610+ daylong, CEO peer group meetings... coached dozens of CEO business colleagues through partnership troubles... and knocked back beers with too many friends trudging through rocky marriages, many teetering on divorce... it's clear to me that one reason, one behavior, DOES rise to the top in causing tragic break-ups.

It's this...

The fear and unwillingness to talk about tough, uncomfortable, gnarly subjects that matter most, but might threaten the relationship... both in the early days... and on an everyday basis as the relationship matures.

Examples abound...

Many business leaders (CEOs, VPs, managers, group heads) are apprehensive about establishing ground rules for acceptable employee behavior... or do, but don't enforce them... then turn their backs on violators, or give them a pass without discussion, warning, or penalty.

Teams are no better. Many are frightened to talk about the elephant in the room, uneasy that discussions will get ugly, fearful of confrontation, offending others, or losing one's job. So they fake it and remain 'nice'. And the unspoken problem gets worse.

Dating couples avoid critically important subjects before the altar... subjects like addictive behaviors, spending habits, ambition level, mistreatment of the other, fidelity, kids, parenting philosophies, must haves, and won't tolerates... then once legally married, find out they're not in agreement, are now terrified to discuss differences, ill-equipped to negotiate, and miserable living with the consequences.

#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

To put it in current-day vernacular: Time to grow a pair. Put on your big girl pants. Belly up to the bar. Get over your uneasiness, stare down your fear of confrontation... and engage the difficult conversation.

Lacking skills? Seek them out and learn them. Master them. No, they're not easy. But problems don't solve themselves. It takes courageous adults to talk it through, eyeball to eyeball.

For help, find a mentor or support group, attend seminars, read books. 'How To Win Friends And Influence People' by Dale Carnegie and 'Fierce Conversations' by Susan Scott are two excellent books that come to mind.

Years ago, my wife and I established the 24-hour rule to avoid the build-up of anger. Having both been through divorces... and vowing it won't happen to us... we installed a preventive measure. We agreed that if either of us is upset with the other, we have 24 hours to get our act together and bring it up for discussion... with dignity, not anger... or forfeit the right to be mad and throw it in the other's face ever again. We agreed: no fair holding it in, storing it up, then dumping 6 months of grievances in your lap all at once.

It was scary at first, but not long after, we got so comfortable

with it, we effortlessly began doing it in 24 seconds... respectfully. Result: no silent stewing, no escalating tempers, no negative baggage, no fights. We wouldn't change it for the world. And we're not special... if we can do it, anyone can.

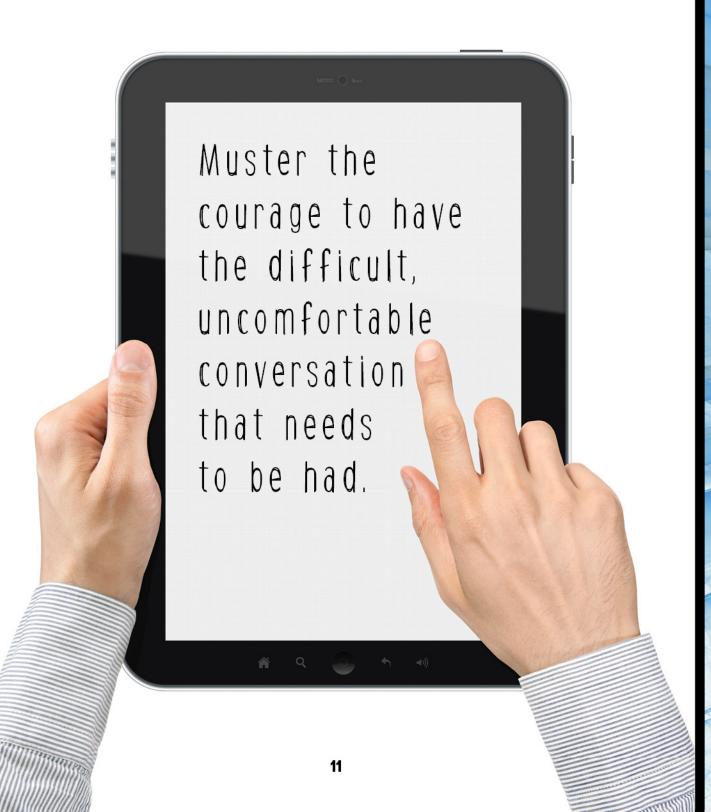
Life is a team sport – in business, in partnerships, in marriages, in friendships, in everything – and as such, the strength of your relationships can make you or break you.

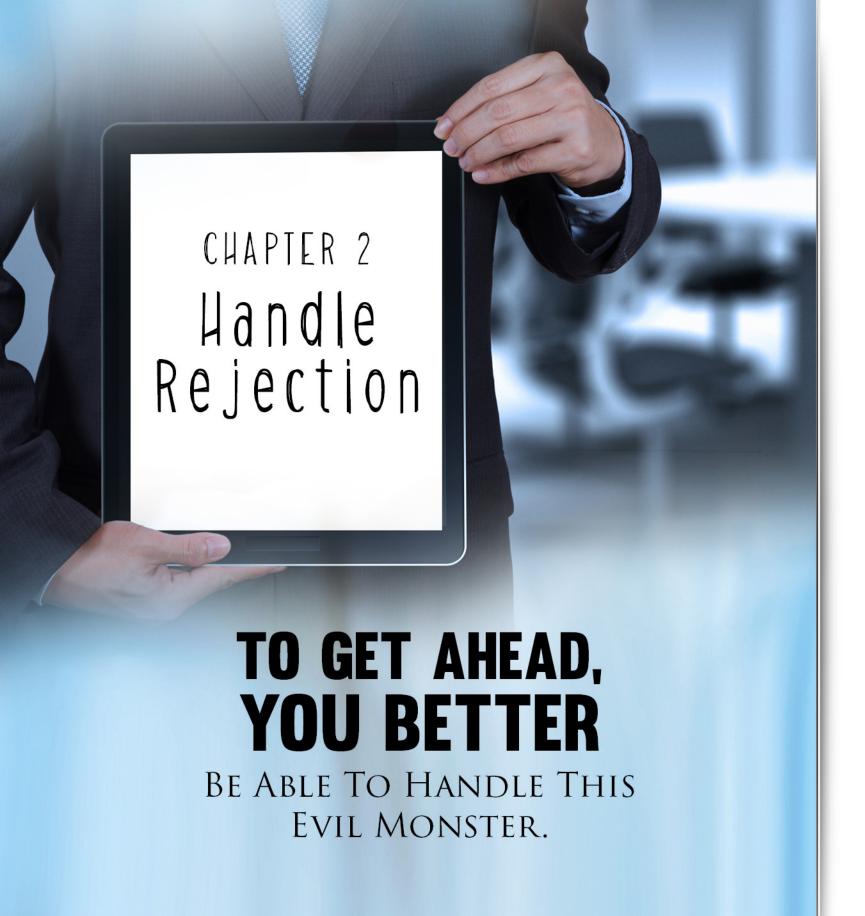
Take action to not let this one devastating behavior – responsible for so much grief and agony – derail your relationships.

Here's a closing power thought from the book "Difficult Conversations: How To Discuss What Matters Most" by Stone, Patton & Heen:

"Changing how you deal with difficult conversations takes work. It can feel threatening. Breaking out of your comfort zone is rarely easy and never risk-free. But better the ache of muscles from an unaccustomed workout than the sting of wounds from an unnecessary fight."

Well said.





**ROGER GOODELL,** NFL commissioner, once said in an interview that, after college, he decided he wanted to work for the NFL, so he pursued that course... but was rejected by them 50 times. "I handle rejection well," he said. "I stuck with it. I think in the end, they got tired of getting my letters."

He's not alone. Elvis Presley's 8th grade teacher told him he didn't have an aptitude for singing. Yet Elvis, later known to all as 'The King of Rock and Roll', achieved legendary musical and vocal success.

Emmy Award-winning broadcaster Sally Jessy Raphael was fired 18 times over a 30-year career.

"I could have let those 18 firings prevent me from doing what I wanted," she said in a Reader's Digest article. "Instead, I let them spur me on."

Ah yes... rejection. That ugly, vicious monster many people let stop them dead in their tracks and sabotage a promising future. All because they couldn't get over the pain, saw it as a deathblow, and quit.

Only a small minority has the grit and tenacity to overcome repeated rejection. And that's a good minority to be in.

"I take rejection as someone blowing a bugle in my ear to wake me up and get going, rather than retreat,"

says actor Sylvester Stallone.

An unknown author named Theodor Geisel (GI' sul) was rejected by 27 publishers for his first children's book, but he pressed on. #28 took a chance. That book – written by the man we came to know as Dr. Seuss – sold 6 million copies. Oh by the way, he went on to write 44 books in total, translated into 15 languages, that sold more than 200 million copies. Not bad for a guy rejected by 27 publishers.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur's childhood dream was to attend West Point. He applied, but was rejected twice. He didn't quit, and was accepted on his third attempt. A brilliant military career would never have gotten launched... had he given up.

Cary Grant, Richard Burton, Tom Cruise, Harrison Ford, and Liam Neeson are acclaimed as some of Hollywood's finest leading men – yet all have suffered Academy Award rejection, having never won the coveted Oscar. None let it stop them from brilliant acting careers.

#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

Hard to put it any better than Walt Disney himself:

"You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you."

Elite soccer star David Beckham got his teeth-kick at age 13 when told by a coach that he'd never play for England because he was too small and not strong enough. That rejection strengthened Beckham's resolve... he not only played for England, but was 6-time team captain, earned global popularity, and later became the face of soccer worldwide.

#### Here's the best 3-step medicine for rejection:

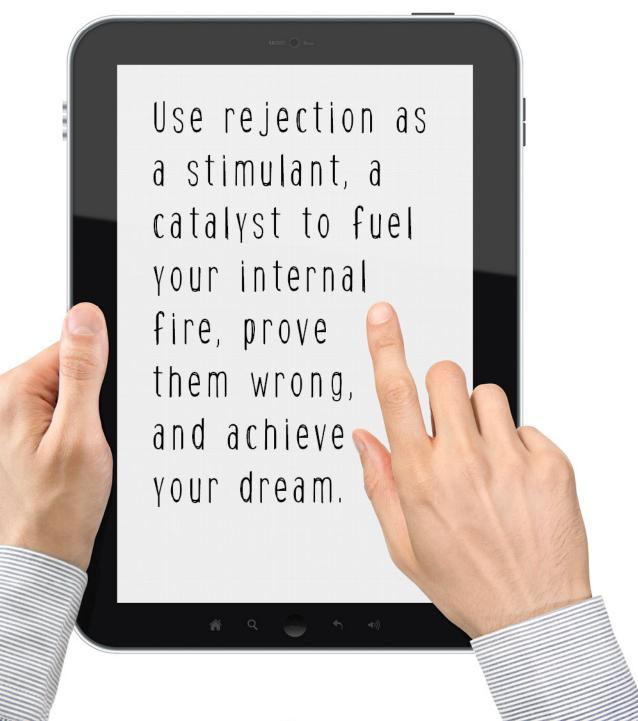
- **1.** Ignore it. Inwardly laugh in the face of it.
- **2.** Use it as an adrenaline stimulant to push yourself forward. It's rocket fuel.
- **3.** Resolve to prove the rejecters wrong. Grit your teeth, clench your fist, and inwardly tell yourself: "Oh yeah? I'll show you."

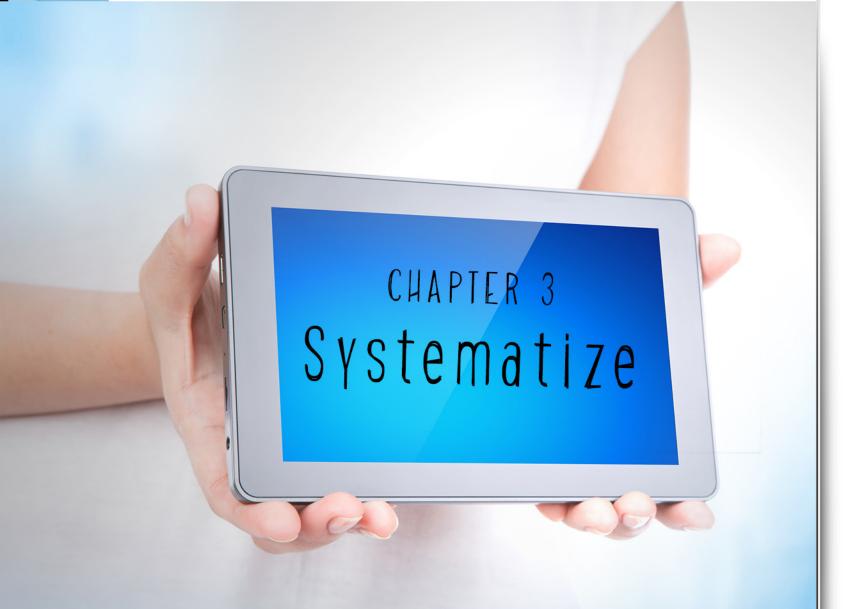
That's exactly what Tae Bo founder Billy Blanks did when, as a kid, his instructor sent him to the back of the class because he couldn't keep up. Blanks used his anger productively, becoming the first in his class to earn a black belt, followed by black belts in 6 different martial arts disciplines, and 7 world karate championships.

# TREAT REJECTION AS YOUR FRIEND, YOUR INSPIRATION, YOUR ACCELERANT. ALL THESE WINNERS DID. YOU CAN TOO.

Here's a closing power thought by author Mark Amend:

"Rejection doesn't mean you aren't good enough. It means the other person failed to notice what you have to offer."





#### DO YOU REINVENT

THE WHEEL UNNECESSARILY?

In the early '80s, I took a 10-session night school course in remedial car maintenance, so I could change my own oil, do easy engine fixes, and save a few bucks. Class students were all car idiots like me, who thought a fan belt was a stiff drink at the ballpark.

#### One night the instructor said (paraphrasing)...

Take a look at this \$10,000 car. If a single mechanic was handed all the parts, could he build that car from scratch as fast and cheaply as the factory? No way. He'd put that car together, A to Z, one part at a time, before beginning the next car. Each car would take weeks or months, and at that pace, he'd only be able to make a few cars in a year. So to recoup his time investment, he'd have to charge a fortune, making the car unaffordable to buy. But because car manufacturers use assembly line mass production, building many cars at once — not one at a time — each one in a different state of completion at the same moment, they can crank out hundreds of cars in the same amount of time, and pass on the savings to the buyer, making each car affordable.

His point was simple, and so profound: **nothing beats a repeatable, formulaic system.** 

Because of him and many other wise people I've known or studied, I learned that **structured systems are a magical means of efficiency** – of getting more done in less time at lower cost.

Over the course of my life, I have attempted to systematize as many routine activities as humanly possible – from simple personal ones like bill paying, yard work, and running errands... to complex business activities like the 123 critical steps of preparation and follow-up for one of my strategic planning retreats... a repeatable marketing system of more than 64 contacts per year to my clients and prospects... and my elaborate collage of 'warm-up drills' for one of my keynote speeches or teaching seminars.

#### Each one... an efficient system.

I'm far from alone. Successful pro athletes create and use consistent routines of pre-event activities to get 'into the zone'.

#### Each one... an efficient system.

Stage performers pre-rehearse their lines hundreds of times before the curtain goes up, often alone in their dressing rooms.

#### Each one – an efficient system.

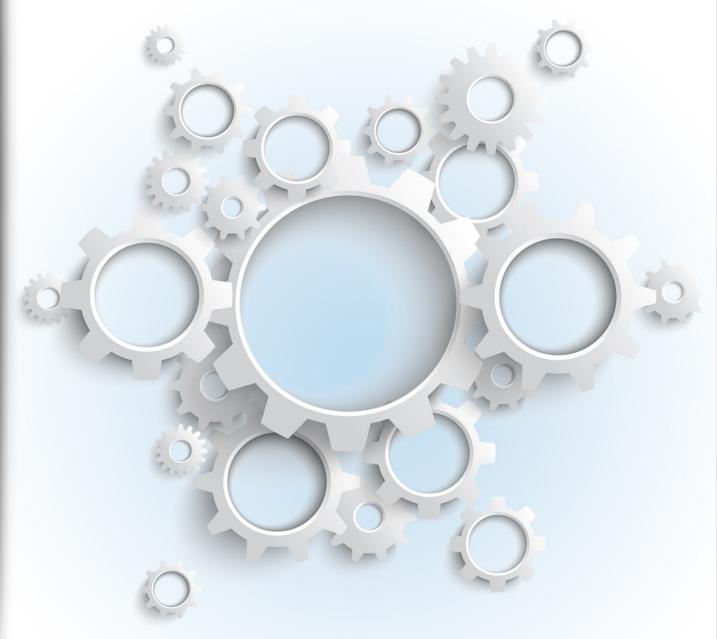
Airline pilots run through a pre-flight checklist before each takeoff.

Each one... an efficient system.

Elite military teams rehearse mission sequences multiple times before the actual strike.

Each one – **an efficient system.** 

A huge key to life success: systematize whatever you can!



#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

How many repeatable systems do you have in your business – in marketing, operations, IT, accounting, R&D and HR?

How many do you have in your life – with your spouse, your kids, hobbies, and home responsibilities?

Are they in writing? Formulaic? Structured?

I'll grant you, some activities are probably better left unsystematized. A few. But not most.

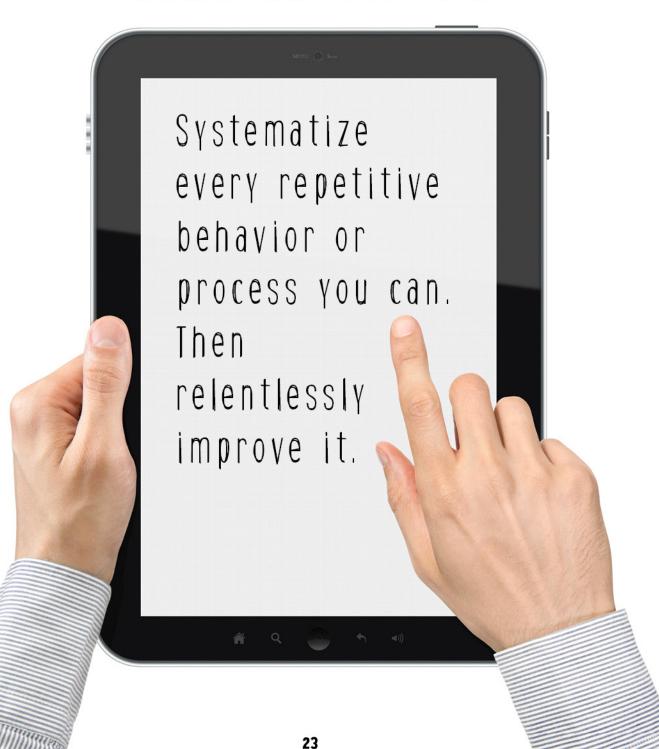
A consistent theme among high achievers is: the eagerness to create systems... to use them faithfully... and to continually improve them. And in so doing, they save time, energy, money.

You can fight systematization if you wish, but if you do, you're destined for a life of re-inventing the wheel each and every time you perform a routine task. How smart is that, really?

Better to mimic the behavior of winners: systematize everything you can.

Here's a closing power thought from W. Edwards Deming, mathematician, statistician, business consultant, legendary creator of quality control methodologies that have helped businesses worldwide install efficient, trackable systems:

"Improve the process constantly and forever."





## WHAT 'SUCCESS TRAIT'

PRECEDES ALL THE REST?

#### IF YOU ASKED ME FOR THE #1,

hands-down, BEST success trait of all time... the one that, if you did just IT, and nothing else, your success would be virtually assured...

...I would tell you there isn't one... that it's a flawed question from the get-go.

Flawed because it assumes success is that easy, that effortless, that undemanding. Far from it.

Personal development pioneer Earl Nightingale said:

"Success is unusual. So it takes unusual behaviors to achieve it."

And I would add... lots of them.

Yet still, I get asked all the time, "Rick, what's the one thing...". Ugh! Frustrating.

Everyone wants that one guaranteed shortcut. What they really want is to avoid the hard work of mastering all the rest. Beware the charlatan who claims to have the silver bullet... the magic elixir... the 'one' ingredient.

In truth, there are easily 30 or 50 or 70 success traits. No, you don't need them all, but good to know what they are. Master all you can.

Okay. Now, all that said, I definitely WOULD tell you there is one trait, one behavior, that precedes all the rest. That sets the others in motion. That greases the path.

It's simply this:

# GETTING STARTED NOW EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT READY TO OFFICIALLY LAUNCH.

Most people procrastinate. They wait for everything to be just peachy, for all the Is to be dotted, Ts to be crossed, for 100% of the facts to be in... and often miss the opportunity altogether. Too late, game over.

Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf said:

it's easier to fix something moving in the wrong direction than to get something moving in the first place – so get it moving and if we have to, we'll fix it.

Those are words of genius. Pay attention.

Business consultant Brian Tracy concurs. He says there are only two outcomes when you take action: you succeed or you fail. If you succeed, you do more of it. If you fail, you learn valuable new information, allowing you to course-correct, adjust your action, and go again. Keep repeating this process.

Therefore, any action is better than no action because what you learn will eventually get you onto the right track.

#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

Got anything noodling around in your brain, just waiting for movement? An idea you seem paralyzed to start? Maybe something you want to be, do, or have?

My rule of thumb: When a new idea first geminates in my head, I take the first action on it **THAT VERY DAY**, *before I go to bed that night*. Even if first action is merely to Google data to research the idea's viability. Or phone a friend to talk it through. Just get started.

Here's a note to the doubters: No, this doesn't suggest you stick with an idea that proves later to be bad. But if you never get started, how will you really know?

The law of inertia says a body in motion tends to stay in motion and a body at rest tends to stay at rest. So get up from rest... and into motion.

#### EARLY. FAST. NOW.

Don't wait for a sign from the stars that the time is right. It won't come. People who make history get off their derriere swiftly, vigorously... and act before they're ready.

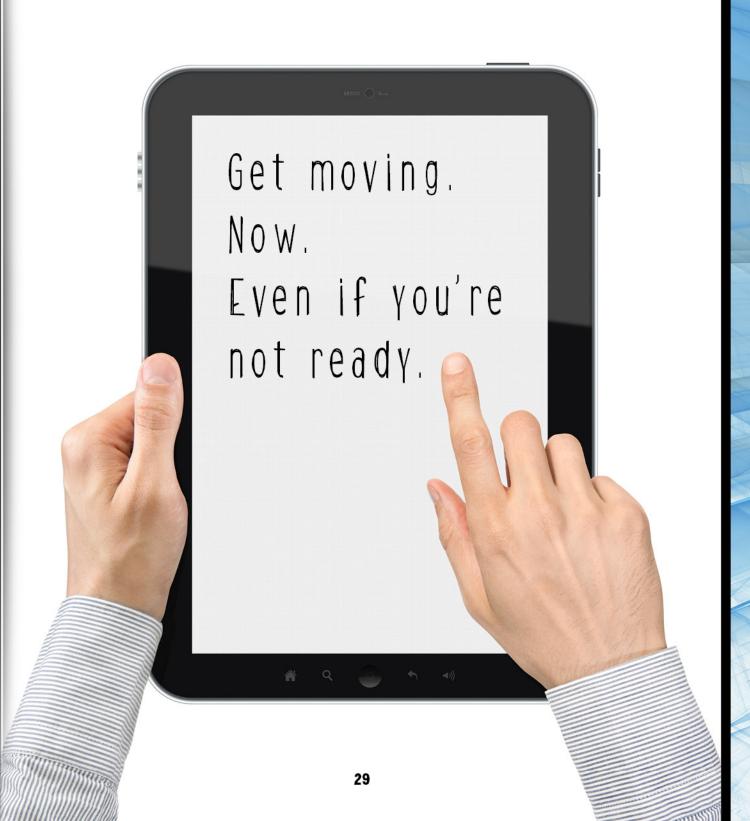
Paul J. Meyer, founder of Success Motivation Institute, said: "Obey the impulse."

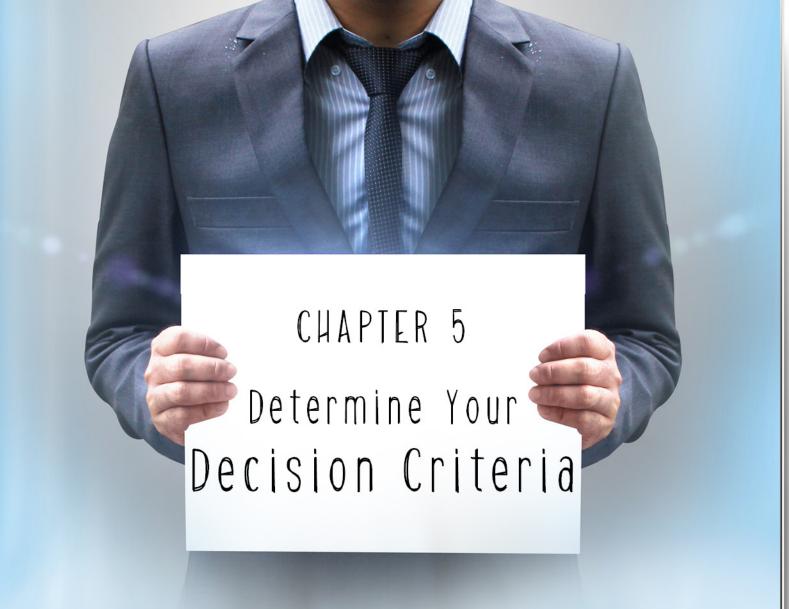
Nike said: "Just do it!"

See a pattern?

Here's a closing power thought from Mary Kay Ash, author, philanthropist, founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics:

"Ideas are a dime a dozen. But people who implement them are priceless."





#### **5 DISTINCT TRUTHS**

ABOUT EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING.

#### BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Winston

Churchill was loved by many, loathed by some, but respected by all for his bulldog tenacity and burning will to succeed.

No one can argue his triumph in protecting England from the onslaught of Hitler's attacking armies and helping bring a victorious end to World War II. As a wartime leader, he faced thousands of decisions with life-or-death consequences for his soldiers and countrymen.

But even long before WWII – over a decade earlier in World War I – Churchill was a member of Britain's Naval Admiralty. In 1915, he was the scapegoat for a debacle that became known as 'Churchill's Folly', a failed military mission in the Dardanelles, resulting in his dismissal from the Admiralty.

In his book, "Churchill on Leadership", he wrote,

"My one fatal mistake was trying to achieve a great enterprise without having plenary (full) absolute authority which could so easily have carried it to success."

From this experience, he then laid out what he called his "5 distinct truths" about decision-making. At minimum, he said, success requires:

- **1.** That there is full authority.
- **2.** That there is a reasonable prospect of success.
- **3.** That greater interests are not compromised.
- **4.** That all possible care and forethought are exercised in the preparation.
- **5.** That all vigor and determination are shown in the execution.

# AN EXCELLENT CHECKLIST, WOULDN'T YOU SAY? I WOULD EVEN ADD ONE MORE...

**6.** Adjust as you go, as you gain valuable new information.

When we watch leaders from afar and see the results of their choices, we don't always have benefit of knowing the criteria they used for making the decision in the first place.

But in revealing this list of 5, Churchill has pulled back the curtain on what made him tick... and we can all learn from it... business leaders, parents, coaches, politicians, military, and average Joes alike.



#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

Since you, like everyone, make important decisions every day in all areas of your life – family, business, health, finance, career, adventure – it behooves you to establish your own bedrock 'truths' for weighing options and making decisions.

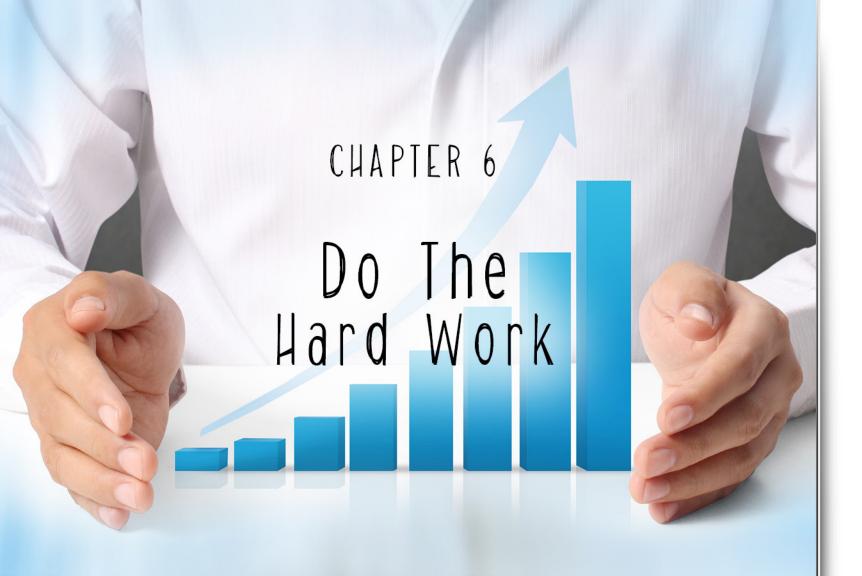
This works for teams too. It's a worthwhile exercise to gather the troops and hash out a collaborative list of decision-making criteria you'll all live by.

Will you get started on this today? Will you create YOUR decision-making criteria? Or, if Churchill's resonate for you... why not use his as a starter set?

Here's a closing power thought from the 1890 book, "The Principles of Psychology":

"There is no more miserable person than one in whom nothing is habitual but indecision."





# THE TRUE STORY

BEHIND SUCCESS AND WEALTH...
AND HOW IT IS ACHIEVED.

**IF I OFFERED YOU** 2½ hours of fun, glory, to be the envy of thousands, adored by millions, and enough money to last you a lifetime... would you take it?

Sure you would. Who wouldn't?

But what if I told you that, to earn it, you had to endure 6 months of brutal, body-pounding, bone-jarring punishment, sometimes in torrid heat, sometimes in frigid blizzards... all while risking concussions, broken bones, paralysis, and other painful, life-altering injuries...

...NOW would you take it? Uh-huh, not so quick to raise your hand this time.

Well, what I just described... the glory, fame, money... and pain, suffering, and risks... is the real life of an NFL football player. The entire season for each player is, surprisingly, only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

Don't believe me? Do the math. Each 60-min. game is only 13 minutes of 'real action', of actual playing time (that's documented). Multiply 13 minutes times 22 games (4 preseason, 16 regular season, maybe 2 post-season). Divide by 2, since every player's on offense or defense – half the game. Total time played per player, per year:  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

Here's another (chronicled in "Little Bets" by Peter Sims) ...

Chris Rock is an A-list stand-up comic who has earned appearances on Leno, Letterman, Kimmel... he's had several HBO specials... a TV show of his life... he's starred in several movies... and he's had a great deal of resulting fame and wealth.

And do you know how he achieved all that? Here's what he does...

In order to create hilarious, knee-slapping, bomb-proof jokes – not just in the beginning of his career, **but even now as a seasoned vet** – he spends 6 to 12 months working 5+ nights a week in obscure, small town comedy clubs, testing hundreds, maybe thousands of jokes – most of which fail – just to find the VERY FEW that generate enough laughs upon which to build...

...one 60-minute routine.

Would you spend all that time and trouble... up to a year... for 1 hour of output? Most people wouldn't.

Personal development industry pioneer Earl Nightingale said:

"Success is unusual. So it takes unusual behaviors to achieve it." Amen.

What's my point in all this?

The vast, lazy majority bellyaches:

Why should anyone make millions for one hour of work? They're overpaid. I'm underpaid. It's not fair.

But they fail to see – or refuse to acknowledge – or flat-out deny – the many long hours, weeks, months, and years of pain and sacrifice that go into the creation of that 60 minutes. And if they DID acknowledge it, they themselves are unwilling to put in the same time, sweat, effort, sacrifice, and repeated rejections and failures to create their own success and wealth.

That's fine with me. It's their choice, and I honor their right to make it. But I draw a line in the sand when I hear someone scream that **the rich are just lucky and I'm not**. And worse, demanding a sharing of the rewards. Baloney.

As entrepreneur advisor Dan Kennedy says:

"The marketplace is perfectly willing for anybody to be as rich as they decide to be. Also as poor as they decide to be. Most people see success all around them while giving no thought to principles behind it or to duplicating it for themselves."

#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

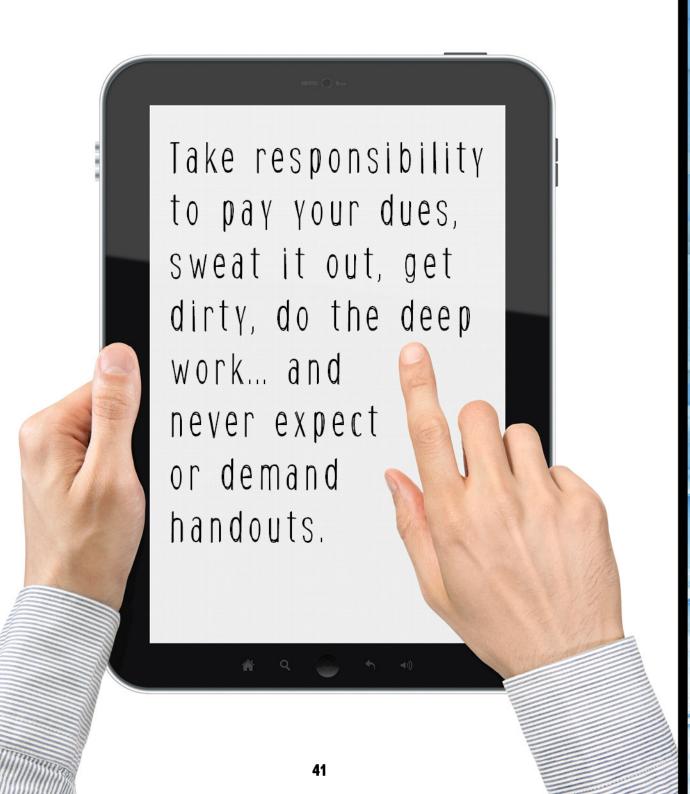
Here's a big success secret: study the masters, learn what they do, and duplicate in your own life.

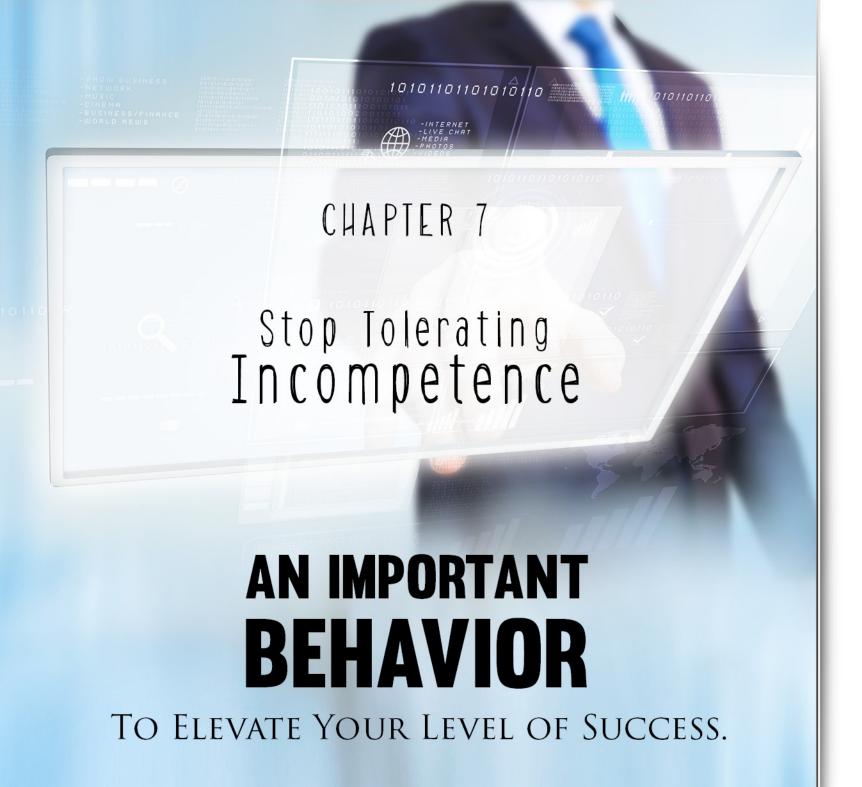
You, me, and everybody... we're all in charge of our **own** personal work ethic, our **own** level of determination, our **own** willingness to learn and apply, and our own financial earnings.

If it's not happening for you, don't blame others, don't cry foul, and don't demand wealth redistribution. Just look in the mirror to find the cause. It's staring right back at you. You can fix it.

Here's a closing power thought from Colin Powell, 4-star U.S. Army general, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary of State:

"A dream doesn't become reality through magic. It takes sweat, determination, and hard work."





# "YOUR WEAKEST KEY SKILL SETS THE HEIGHT OF YOUR INCOME"

are the sterling words of Brian Tracy, world-renowned personal development coach.

We all have a weakest key skill. Some people have several. But if you just focus on your ONE BIGGEST that trumps all the rest – and fix it – you'll experience dramatic improvement.

Let me tell you a giant weakness...

In my 35+ years of leadership, coaching and training, here's one of the most corrosive, debilitating behaviors I see people living out daily: **tolerating incompetence in others**.

I've known CEOs, VPs, department heads, managers – responsible people in top leadership positions – who tell me stories of direct reports who repeatedly do marginal work, miss critical project deadlines, are lackadaisical about customer excellence, chronically late for meetings, and damage morale. They shake their head in disbelief that an employee would do such things, but they won't confront the offender.

My response:

"Seriously? You've done nothing? This is on you. Yes, their behavior wreaks of incompetence, no argument. But you're complicit in that you're tolerating it. You're the leader. When will YOU get fed up and demand that it cease?"

In the right situations, I'm first to admit, being tolerant and patient is good. But a responsible person must also know when **NOT** to be. When to draw a line in the sand. When to stop the madness.

Like, look at all the politicians (in both parties) who are guilty of violating public trust in some horrific way, yet suffer **ZERO** consequences. They just flat get away with it. They don't hold each other accountable – they tolerate it.

In a restaurant recently, I ordered a hamburger with barbecue sauce on the side. He brought the burger... no sauce.

Okay, honest mistake. I smile and reminded him – he offers no apology – and shuffles off to get it. Then he disappears. Can't see him anywhere. Vanishes.

Time passes, burger's getting cold. I wait, impatience growing. Now I'm fuming.

He finally re-appears 10 minutes later, slides the sauce across

the table, says "Here ya go", no apology for the delay, and starts to run off.

I say politely:

"Stop. Did it occur to you that I wanted this ON my burger, not for dessert. I haven't taken a bite, and now it's cold, so please take it back and re-heat it. Exactly how soon can I expect you to return?"

He answered, then scurried off, still no apology.

THAT's incompetence.

I was not a happy camper, and I told the manager the full story upon exit. I had an obligation to. Had I been manager, I'd have wanted to know.

#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

If you're in a position of authority and your knees quiver when you must confront someone's incompetence – and you're tempted to cut and run – time to grow a pair and engage the conversation.

In the words of my late friend, Maurice Mascarenhas: "If you don't give corrective feedback, you rob the individual of the chance to improve." He's right.

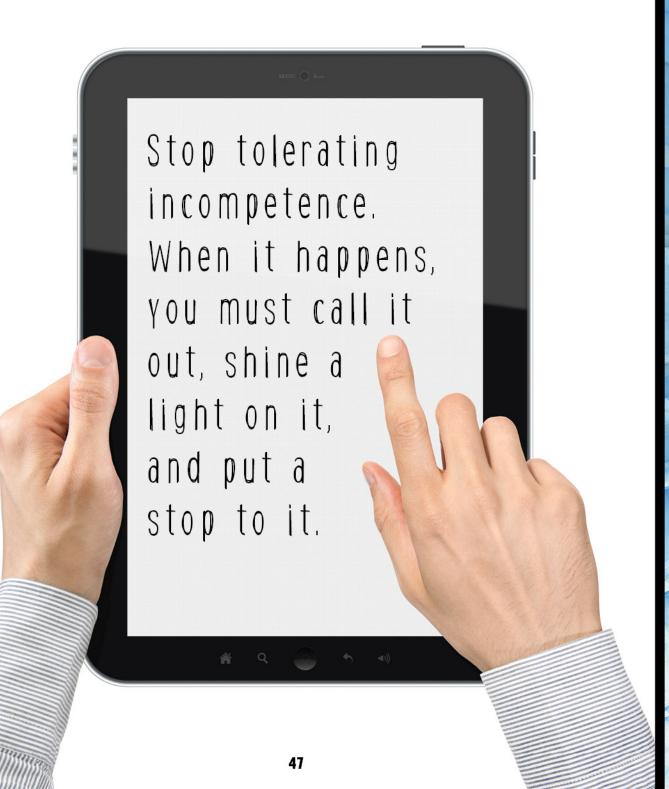
As a leader, you cannot permit that in yourself. You cannot sidestep or abdicate this responsibility.

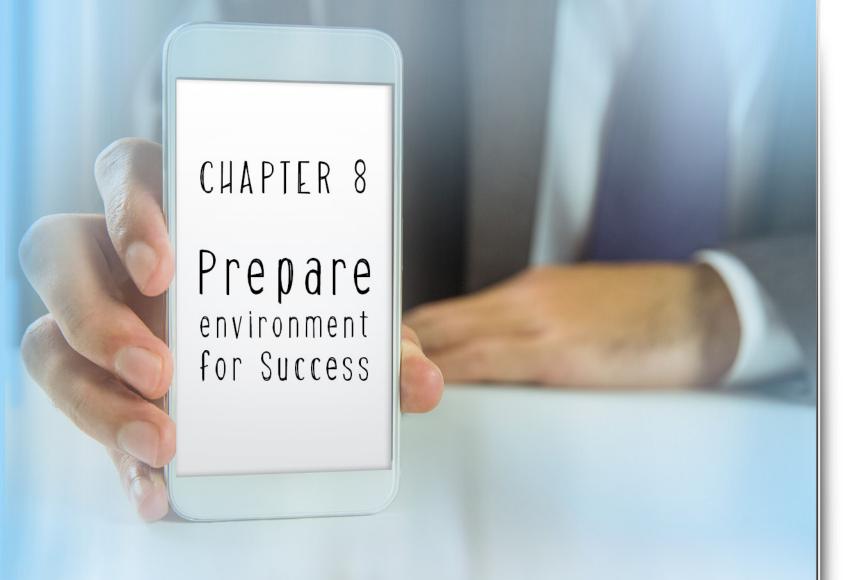
If you do, rip the stripes off your sleeve and demote yourself. You're not ready to lead or manage others.

Be better than that.

Here's a closing power thought from Peter Drucker, professor, management consultant, author of 39 books and countless articles, hailed by **Business Week** as "the man who invented management":

"Executives owe it to the organization and to their fellow workers not to tolerate non-performing individuals in important jobs."





## THE FORGOTTEN DRIVER

OF 'PEOPLE PRODUCTIVITY'.
ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION TO IT?

# MY WIFE AND I RECENTLY TOOK A LONG WEEKEND VACATION.

Checked into the hotel, wheeled our luggage to the room, and before I could mumble "Now where did that maid hide the remote?", my wife Robbie had found it and was bathing it with a Clorox hand-wipe. She repeated this with the phone receiver, all doorknobs, drawer handles, and everything else that all guests touch, but maids seldom clean.

This is her travel ritual. She transforms our room into a germ-free O.R. where doctors could perform open heart surgery.

Years ago, I asked her why.

"Genetics," she said. "When I was a kid, my mom did the same thing."

On vacation, the drill was, she and her sisters and her dad sat in the car while her mom ventured in with homemade hazmat gear... face mask, rubber gloves, bucket, rags, brushes, and a bottle of pure ammonia... and sanitized the room from stem to stern. In 30 minutes came the "all clear".

Robbie inherited this obsession, and I'm grateful. Why? Well, left to my own devices, I'm the guy exercising on the floor with my shirt off. Not any more!

All this got me to thinking...

Hmmm, what she and her mom are really doing is:

## PREPARING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS.

Hey, isn't that what every good leader should do?

I've been to restaurants with trash littering the parking lot, filthy restrooms, sticky tables – I'll bet you have too – giving me a lousy feeling about the cleanliness of the kitchen and the food I'm about to eat.

What about manufacturing plants where lighting is dim, tools strewn about, and safety is lax?

Or poorly-designed corporate offices that don't make use of intelligent space efficiencies?

Each of these, quite possibly, has a leader who is not **demanding** the environment be prepared for success.

Now, here's exactly the opposite...

Professional baseball teams play on immaculate fields with frequently-cut, weed-free grass and chunkless dirt. **They prepare** a pristine environment before every game.

Musicians monitor the acoustics in a music hall to provide exceptional sound to every patron's seat. They do sound checks before every concert.

Farmers till the soil, plant the seeds, add nutrients, and water repeatedly... **preparing the ground for success... or nothing grows**.

Wedding planners meticulously orchestrate all events – the rehearsal dinner, wedding ceremony and reception – with rehearsal run-throughs, room decorations, table settings, flowers, music, food... preparing the environment for success.

When I lead strategic planning retreats for clients, I get access to the meeting room the day before and spend 3 to 4 hours doing my 32-step set-up ritual... **preparing the meeting environment for success**.

When I deliver keynote speeches or workshops, I never walk onto the stage blind. I get into the room in advance – day before, night before, or morning of – preferably empty, to check lighting, acoustics, audiovisual positioning, and lines

of sight from every seat – to calibrate my space, timing, and walking patterns – often moving tables, chair, and plants around to suit me... **preparing the environment for success.** 

What about you? What could you be doing better in your warehouse, your plant, your office, your store, your field,

your work space, your desk... in product displays, client presentations, meeting orchestration... to prepare YOUR

#### environment for success?

Are there design flaws, general sloppiness, or bad people behaviors that have crept into your workplace unnoticed... **setting you up for mediocre performance?** 

Heck, at home, you'd never invite party guests to a messy house, would you?

#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

It might be a good idea to form internal task forces to tackle this. Or bring in a trained outside observer for a fresh eye. To create exhaustive lists of procedures and tasks to help you create, in advance, a well-prepared environment of success.

And remember to **see it through your customer's eyes** — not just your own. What atrocities does your customer see in your environment every day... that you quit seeing long ago?

Leaders must drive this. Relentlessly... thoroughly... daily.

#### Here's a closing power thought from actor/musician, Kevin Bacon:

"A good director creates an environment, which gives the actor the encouragement to fly."





# YOUR FLAIR? YOUR PIZZAZZ?

when a sight confronted me I'll not soon forget.

It was a cute little old lady – had to be in her 90s – under 5-feet tall, shuffle-stepping ever-so-slowly to board the flight, cane in one hand, and guided on the other arm by a younger lady, I presume her daughter. She was very well appointed in dressy slacks, blouse, blazer... and a baseball cap.

As she got closer, what I saw next startled me. The logo on the cap was – are you buckled in? – **Victoria's Secret**. Hardly what you'd expect from a great-grandmother.

A smile broke across my face. Now here's a fearless matriarch, I thought... with some serious 'sass' going on.

I concocted a story in my head – that she was the type who refused to be told by anyone what she couldn't wear, couldn't do, couldn't say. That underneath her elegant matronly exterior was a fiery, tenacious, gutsy lady... high-spirited, full of life, and comfortable in her own skin. At her advanced age. Good for her!

And that's my message here:

Where's your spunk? Your boldness? Your sense of dash, derring-do, and defiant individualism?

No, I'm not talking about going overboard... to the lengths of rudeness, disrespect, or ugliness to others. Or engaging in the illegal or immoral. Never that.

I mean stepping into your power so strongly, being so confident and brave, head held high, shoulders square, that you'll courageously dance to a different beat and break a few rules. And not give a hoot if the world cringes or disapproves.

Would it shock you to learn the most successful people are relentless rule-breakers?

Crowd-followers they're not – they blaze new paths. Conventional methods they disdain – preferring to invent their own. In business, they defy industry norms, carve new niches, pursue the un-obvious.

Look at the business icons:

Bill Gates, Sheryl Sandberg, Richard Branson, Ursula Burns, Jack Welch, Walt Disney. Trail-blazers all.

Elite sports figures:

Serena Williams, LeBron James, Peyton Manning, Lindsey Vonn, Danica Patrick, David Beckham.

In the media:

Oprah Winfrey, Barbara Walters, Bob Costas, Diane Sawyer.

You pick the walk of life – any walk – and you'll find a tiny sliver of elite performers who stepped outside the norm and took an unconventional path to prominence.

Don't believe me? Pick one – any one – and go read their biography. They veered off the heavily-traveled main

thoroughfare, down a dark, bumpy, dirt road. Often on purpose, occasionally by accident, but always to unattach from the crowd.

As poet and award-winning author Maya Angelou said,

"If you are always trying to be normal, you'll never know how amazing you can be."

#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

If it's success you seek, lesson 1, I believe, is ignore what the world expects you to be, where it expects you to go, how and when it expects you to arrive. That's your decision and no one else's. I promise you, the view is better when you're not jammed into the center of the herd.

Lesson 2 is ignore the inevitable boos, criticism, and disapprovals. Oh you'll get them – often from those closest to you. It will test your resolve.

Most people are derailed right here, from the very start, unable to jump those two attitudinal hurdles – queasy about

upsetting anyone – unwilling to risk disfavor – and sadly sacrificing high achievement in the process. If that's you, fine, no judgment. But I don't believe it is – or you wouldn't have come this far.

As for me, I forever want the image of that bold, zesty granny in the Victoria's Secret cap burned in my memory... a vivid reminder to take the road less traveled.

Here's a closing power thought from Thomas J. Watson, Jr., chairman and CEO of IBM during its most explosive period of growth:

"If you stand up and be counted, from time to time you may get yourself knocked down. But remember this: A man flattened by an opponent can get up again. A man flattened by conformity stays down for good."

#### SUCCESS LAW #9

It's okay — sometimes even necessary — to boldly show some spunk and pizzazz, to violate the norms of accepted practice and blaze your own trail.

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### ULTRA-SUCCESSFUL DEALMAKERS – people who do high-stakes

**DEALMANLIN** – people who do high-stakes negotiations for a living – often say their #1 rule of thumb is: always have walk-away power.

Or said another way:

Never get so emotionally attached to an outcome that you won't walk away from a bad deal.

There are easily 100+ negotiating tactics worth learning – all are important – but few top that one.

Why? Because if you're not willing to terminate a deal – if you have no point of rejection – no uncrossable line in the sand – no intolerable outcomes – you'll cave in to ridiculous demands and leave with a deal you hate.

Same principle goes for 'life in general'.

Yet I see people so hungry to be liked, they'll surround themselves with toxic friends, because they'd rather be accepted by losers than be alone. Where's their self-respect?

I see company leaders who pardon or ignore repeated lousy performance or bad behavior from an employee, and do little or nothing about it. Where, I'm compelled to ask, is their point of intolerance?

I'm amazed to see people publicly nod approval and 'go along' for fear of upsetting others – who privately reveal their disagreement. Huh?

Men who beat their wives are brutal thugs who should be locked up for life. But what puzzles me most is the high number of battered women who won't leave. **Staying** is the safer option?

Every choice I've just described is a bad deal. And yet the people who make these choices will explain them away as... low self-confidence, shyness, fear, or low self-esteem. Even 'the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know'.

# REALLY?? THOSE ARE ACCEPTABLE REASONS TO SETTLE FOR A WRETCHED DEAL?

#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

Plain and simple, you get what you tolerate.

- **1.** What are you putting up with in your life that, in your private moments, you hate yourself for allowing?
- **2.** What have you not walked away from that you know you must?
- **3.** What have you not put an end to anything that, down deep, you can't live with?



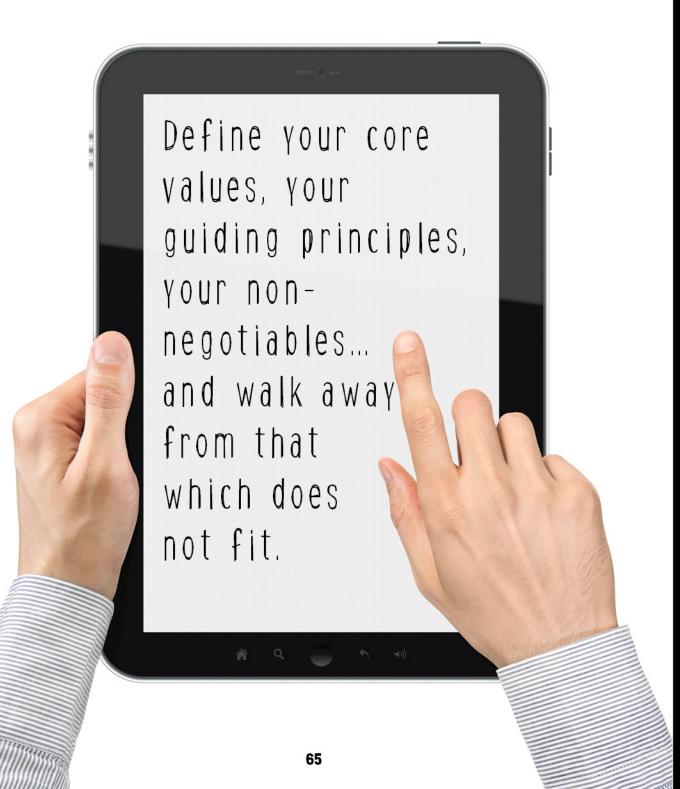
A dead-beat employee? A tyrant boss? A relationship gone sour and unfixable? A job you have no passion for? Verbal or physical abuse from a friend, co-worker, or family member? Your own self-destructive habits? Delaying your dreams?

One of the most noble and self-respecting gifts you can give yourself is crystal clarity on your own non-negotiables... on what you won't tolerate... on where 'yes' ends for you and 'no' begins... on knowing what you stand for and what you won't stand for... on what, in negotiator's parlance, you'll walk away from.

### IT'S A GIFT YOU DESERVE. UNWRAP IT TODAY.

Here's a closing power thought from Alexander Hamilton, U.S. founding father, statesman, first secretary of the treasury, Army general:

"If you stand for nothing, you'll fall for anything."





# DO YOU GIVE UP TOO EASILY?

AND TOO SOON?

Of course you have... at some points in your life. Who hasn't?

But if you worry that it's become a habit to cash in your chips at the first sign of trouble, take heart.

Many famous people and successful companies have suffered crippling setbacks... but soldiered on and bounced back. We can take inspiration from them.

#### Here's a sampling...

Physicist and scientist Albert Einstein did poorly in grammar school and failed his first college entrance exam.

Automotive icon Henry Ford went bankrupt his first year in the auto business, then his second company failed two years later.

R.H. Macy, department store founder, went broke with his first three stores.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur's youthful dream was to attend West Point, but was turned down twice. On his third attempt, he was accepted.

Fred Astaire, dancer on stage and in film: his career almost never got off the ground when he was told early-on that he was clumsy and couldn't dance. An unknown author named Dr. Seuss was rejected by 23 publishers for his first children's book, but he didn't quit.

And #24 took a chance. That book sold 6 million copies.

Did you know these companies have gone bankrupt: Aunt Jemima, Borden's, Pepsi, and Quaker Oats. All rebounded.

Lee Iacocca, creator of the Mustang, was terminated as president of Ford Motor Company before becoming the legendary chairman of Chrysler.

**Kathryn Minshew**, founder and CEO of The Muse, approached 150 investors to fund her startup. 148 said no, only 2 said yes. She never gave up, never threw in the towel. And, she launched.

And how many major league baseball managers and NFL head coaches have been let go, only to get re-hired and win a World Series or Super Bowl as leader of a different team?

I even knew a manager whose sales team had an average win rate of 1 in 3, but rather than cry over the 67% failure rate, he and his team celebrated every loss, because to them, it meant a win was only 1 or 2 presentations away. Now that's optimism!

The point should be clear. These people, these leaders, these companies, saw failure not as an end-all, but as a mere learning point... a launching pad... a blip on the radar screen.

They kept going. And eventually won.

#### **ACTION FOR YOU:**

Have you given up a bit too soon on something lately? Would you like a do-over? It may not be too late to reengage... to start fresh... to go after it again.

Or if that opportunity is past, try a new pursuit.

Every 'winner' before you has faced roadblocks. They ultimately won because – rather than turn tail and go home – they dug in and found a way around it.

As a kid, Tom Monaghan, an orphan ushered in and out of foster homes, dreamed of one day playing shortstop for the Detroit Tigers. He didn't have the talent, but years later, after founding and successfully running Domino's Pizza, he bought the Tigers.

Success comes in strange ways. Repeated failures are often necessary ingredients of success. Stay with it.

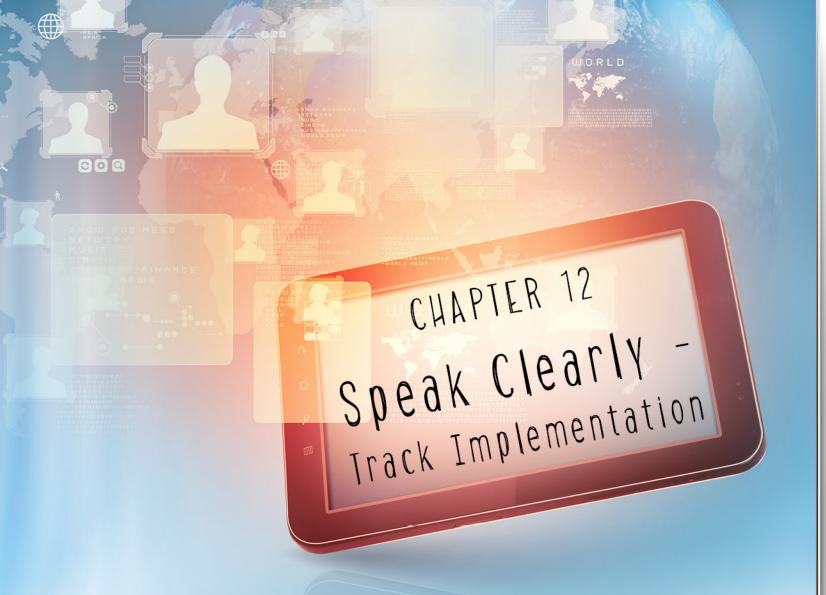
Here's a closing power thought from inventor Thomas Edison, who was awarded 1,368 separate and distinct patents. He 'failed' over 10,000 times on his way to successfully inventing the incandescent bulb... then failed another 3,000 times before inventing the filament:

"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."



#### **SUCCESS LAW #11**

Don't quit, don't give up. Just when you think you're done, stay with it and give it one more try.



# WHY THE BEST LEADERS

SPEAK CLEARLY AND DON'T LET GO OF DETAILS.

There's an old Candid Camera TV gag where a guy sits at a lunch counter and another unsuspecting gent takes the next stool, orders lunch, and the two engage in casual conversation. (It's all filmed for the TV audience, of course.)

The first guy (our gagster) tells the second guy a joke. They both laugh and our gagster finishes lunch, pays his bill and leaves.

Another patron walks in, sits down in the now-empty stool, and orders lunch. Casual conversation ensues, and the joke is now re-told... from second guy to third.

But we notice it's slightly altered in the telling. They laugh and the teller departs.

A new patron sits down and... well, you get the picture.

This goes on five or six times, each patron telling the same joke to the next person to occupy the neighboring stool... and each time, the joke is told a bit differently... something's left out, a new tweak is added, or different language is used.

By the sixth person, the sixth telling, two profound things have happened...

#### First:

We, the viewer, don't even recognize the joke. It's nowhere near the original.

#### Second:

The latest version is not the least bit funny. It's morphed all the way from hilarious to dull.

All this is great fun for TV. Most viewers will have a good chuckle, then turn it off and go back about their business.

But wait. Let's don't miss the deeper message here worth exploring. Especially if you're in a leadership role.

The haunting question...

Any chance this is happening to you in your company? With your team? Or in your family? Even with friends?

Could it be, possibly, that important news, stories, or instructions are being told to one person or a group... then cascading through a chain of re-tellers... ultimately getting to the implementers, who now act on something very different than the original intended message?

Oh yes, highly likely. Like in, every single day likely.

We know miscommunication happens all the time between just two people... the second totally mis-hearing

or misinterpreting the words of the first. It happens in marriages, business partnerships, two friends talking over coffee. So imagine the horrific distortion if continually re-told... A to B... B to C... C to D... and so on.

Entrepreneur and retailer J.C. Penney said "The art of effective listening is essential to clear communication, and clear communication is necessary to management success." Amen.

#### **ACTIONS FOR YOU:**

You MUST get a handle on this. If you're in a leader role – top dog or group head, teacher or coach, mom or dad, or even just a dedicated member of the team or family...

...you must have absolute certainty that critical information is spoken or written with total clarity... cannot be misinterpreted as something different... does not get altered in re-telling... and is heard and understood with pinpoint accuracy ...

...or you can kiss good-bye desired outcomes under your captaincy.

Do whatever it takes, including: put the intended results in writing up-front with crystal clarity... or ask "Just so we're clear, tell me what you heard me say"... or identify timedated milestones that must be hit... or stay involved in

follow-up... or ask for status reports... or push where necessary. Or every single one of those.

Better to be accused of micromanaging (which, by the way, this is not!) than to have ordered a bacon-wrapped filet and been served a ham and cheese on rye.

Brilliant, game-changing victories will not be achieved with confusing, unclear communication... and infrequent, haphazard follow-up.

As leader... be clear... be engaged.

Here's a closing power thought from James Thurber, American author and cartoonist, best known for his contributions to 'The New Yorker' magazine:

"Precision of communication is important, more important than ever, in our era of hair trigger balances, when a false or misunderstood word may create as much disaster as a sudden thoughtless act."



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Well, there they are:

### 12 LAWS OF SUCCESS IN LIFE AND BUSINESS.

To close, let's do a quick review. Here they are again – all 12 – in the order discussed:

- Muster the courage to have the difficult, uncomfortable conversation that needs to be had.
- **#2** Use rejection as a stimulant, a catalyst to fuel your internal fire, prove them wrong, and achieve your dream.
- **#3** Systematize every repetitive behavior or process you can. Then relentlessly improve it.
- Get moving. Now. Even if you're not ready.
- **#5** Create your laws for decision-making, and consistently use them in all important matters.
- Take responsibility to pay your dues, sweat it out, get dirty, do the deep work... and never expect or demand handouts.

- Stop tolerating incompetence. When it happens, you must call it out, shine a light on it, and put a stop to it.
- Create an environment of success in your physical surroundings in all you do.
- It's okay sometimes even necessary to boldly show some spunk and pizzazz, to violate the norms of accepted practice and blaze your own trail.
- **#10** Define your core values, your guiding principles, your non-negotiables... and walk away from that which does not fit.
- H11 Don't quit, don't give up. Just when you think you're done, stay with it and give it one more try.
- **#12** Polish your communication skills to speak clearly and thoroughly... and stay in frequent touch with implementation to ensure a successful outcome.

Now... go put all 12 into play today, and you'll be armed and dangerous. Why wait?

### BE THE VERY BEST YOU CAN BE.

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### WHAT IN THE WORLD IS AUTHOR RICK HOUCEK UP TO?

#### HERE'S SOME OF WHAT HE'S DONE... AND IS STILL DOING...

- Has led nearly 300 high-stakes strategic planning retreats for small and mid-size companies with his proprietary Power Planning<sup>TM</sup> Strategic Retreat process
- Delivered more than 600 live keynote and workshop presentations to audiences of all sizes in the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland on high achievement and peak performance themes
- Led/participated in more than 610 CEO and senior executive peer group meetings over 25 years
- Runs his Leadership Excellence Academy for people in charge Served more than 460 advertising clients in an 18year ad agency career
- Authored 11 audio/ebooks
- Co-authored 7 print books
- Writes an ongoing e-newsletter for growth-driven leaders, change agents, and high achievers
- Was president of Ross Roy Advertising, an Atlanta ad agency and division of the \$700 million Ross Roy Group
- Is member of National Speakers Association
- Recognized in Who's Who Among U.S. Executives
- Recognized in Who's Who in Georgia
- Recognized in Who's Who Among American Student Leaders

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#### ATTENTION CEOS: Are You Operating Without A

Strategic Plan? You're playing blind archery if you are. Worse, there's debilitating confusion among your staff and it's doubtful anyone's telling you. How can they perform in a fog? How can your desired results be achieved when your leadership team isn't bought into a common vision? Here's how to fix it: Rick Houcek leads strategy retreats for small & mid-size businesses using his dynamic Power Planning<sup>TM</sup> process. His Escape-Proof Accountability<sup>TM</sup> system overcomes the crippling effects of lousy execution – the single biggest cause of plan failure. Everyone leaves on the same page. For details, visit <a href="https://www.SoarWithEagles.com">www.SoarWithEagles.com</a>. Be sure to read the priceless praise from prestigious CEO clients about value they gained.

#### ATTENTION MANAGERS: Looking For An Innovative

**Way To Grow Your People?** Consider bringing in Rick Houcek's dynamic "Self-Motivation For Winners" personal goal workshop for your employees. This is 'life planning' at its best – not business goal setting – and it assures staff members you care about them, their families, their lives. Invite spouses too. For details, go to <a href="https://www.SoarWithEagles.com">www.SoarWithEagles.com</a>.

#### ATTENTION MEETING PLANNERS: Need a High-Energy Speaker For Your Next Conference? Could your team use a jolt of inspiration? How about content-rich, battletested ideas on leadership excellence, self-motivation, winner behavior, or personal goal setting? Why not bring in Rick Houcek to speak at your annual meeting, team offsite, or industry conference? For topics and information, go to <a href="https://www.SoarWithEagles.com">www.SoarWithEagles.com</a>. Read what clients have said about

value they gained — their words are gold!

#### A WEE BIT MORE ABOUT RICK...

Rick Houcek's singular company purpose is: To provide high-octane, world-class strategic planning systems for business and life, helping top gun leaders, teams and individuals to succeed 'on purpose, most of the time,' rather than 'by accident, some of the time.'

A University of Missouri graduate, Rick has 4 fanatical life passions: family, health/fitness, helping others prosper through his business and friendships, and playing competitive baseball.

Rick Houcek

